

Maritime Education – Putting in the Right Emphasis

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ABSTRACT: Education is the first step towards the effective and efficient utilization of the available resources. Same is the case with maritime sector and industry. Our maritime cluster is handicapped with respect to the educational needs and their fulfillment. We need to come up with institutions of world ranking for maritime education. Whether it is port sector or shipping industry, coastal zone development or environment protection, what we need is to have means to educate our people for all tiers and types of organizations in maritime domain.

1 INTRODUCTION

When judged with respect to available economic resources and opportunities, it will be justifiable to call our planet ocean in place of earth. Access to sea and having a coastal zone enriches a nation to such an extent which is beyond the grasp of so many littoral nations. We have to literally educate our masses and policy makers to have the right direction in their future planning and nation building and attract investment in the maritime sector.

Education and awareness is the first step towards the effective and efficient utilization of any opportunity you may have within your reach. Same is the case with maritime sector and industry. Our maritime cluster, to much extent, is handicapped with respect to the educational needs and their fulfillment. We have remained dependent for too long on seafarers' practical knowledge and expertise for employment in shore sector. Like other areas, we need to come up with institutions of higher education for maritime industry. Whether it is port sector or shipping industry, coastal zone development or environment protection, what we need is to have means to educate our people for all tiers and types of organizations in maritime domain.

Purpose of this paper is to discuss, and critically analyze how important it is for a country with maritime potentials and opportunities to promote maritime education for the development of national economy; what are the various factors and limitations that hamper the promotion of maritime education vis a vis the other faculties; and finally, what should be the modus operandi for giving impetus to

existing efforts for much desired promotion of maritime education.

2 BACKGROUND

Pakistan is a large and diverse country having all types of topography with jurisdiction over large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), proudly called the fifth and the largest province of the country. The economic activities that relate to this fifth province are numerous in existence and much more in pipeline. The country's economy is dependent upon sea transport for its key exports - raw materials and agricultural commodities - and imports, mostly manufactured goods. Almost whole of the Pakistan's trade in goods is carried by ships. Coastal shipping is also going to rise in importance with the planned development of the Gwadar Port and Coastal Belt of the country.

The marine space also provides a wealth of resources: minerals such as oil and gas, living marine resources and tourism/recreational resources. It is increasingly recognized that the development and use of marine resources needs to be undertaken in an ecologically sustainable manner to ensure that they remain available for future generations. It is also critical for the industries that operate in the marine environment to do so in a way that minimizes their impact upon it.

Oceans and coasts are also important in cultural and social context. Pakistan has a rich maritime history and heritage. Largest city of the country, namely Karachi, is on the coastline housing largest port

structure, shipping activities and related industrial complex. A large portion of our population live beside or close to the sea or travel to the seaside to relax, and percentage of such people is going to rise in near future with new port structure and coastal development in the plans.

The industries that operate in, or are dependent upon, the marine environment are critical to the well-being of coastal or maritime communities. These industries also make a significant contribution to our national prosperity and growth.

3 CAPACITY BUILDING

Success of the maritime sector is totally dependent on a skilled, highly qualified and motivated human resource at all levels. There is an acute shortage of trained and qualified workforce and managers for maritime sector and industry with reliance on sources of expertise from other industries.

3.1 *Maritime Cluster*

First of all we need to identify what we mean by the Maritime Sector (Cluster). Various sectors of the maritime industry, which collectively form what is known in some countries as the Maritime Cluster, are probably the most diverse and varied within industrial sectors. These include but are not limited to port authorities, stevedore companies, labour suppliers, maritime insurance, maritime administrations, shipping companies, classification societies, ship-building, maritime legal consultancies, maritime security agencies and coast guard officials.

Most of these sectors benefited in the past from an inflow of well educated, disciplined practitioners, namely seafarers, who after serving at sea for a number of years, would come and take shore-based positions.

3.2 *Expansions and Needs*

Use of oceans has expanded much ahead of shipping and new areas of study have evolved like environment, sea-bed resources, fisheries, marine biology, coastal zone management etc. Associated professions like port management, shipping management and international law require dedicated experts and scholars. New world order demands new emphasis on issues like marine security, terrorism, piracy and maritime fraud to ensure world peace in 21st century.

In Europe, research studies funded by the EC indicated that in addition to technical subjects that employers identified as essential for their sector, they also identified a number of core skills that they regarded as important for their staff to be employed

in shore based industry. These included organizational / analytical skills; customer awareness; communication and interpersonal skills; environmental awareness; safety and security; leadership and teamwork; and advanced IT and e-commerce.

It is widely recognized that most of the sea-going officers leave the sea at a certain point in their lives to take up employment ashore in a marine related job. This is the time when they need certain type of education and training so that building upon their sea experience, they can make themselves suitably qualified for the shore based maritime industry.

Shore based maritime sector benefited from the experience and expertise of the ex-seafarers employed in various capacities. Employers in some of these maritime sectors feel that their future is threatened by a skill shortage. Concern about the number of available former officers suitably qualified have sparked a series of research projects which have culminated into multiple governmental actions and industrial led initiatives aimed at buoying up the number of seafarers working in the industry.

3.3 *Problem in Hand*

Measures to support the skills base have been inextricably linked to research into the state of the labour market for marine skills. This market is chiefly composed of former deck and engineering officers, predominantly from the merchant marine.

3.3.1 *British Experience*

Shortage of experienced and suitably qualified officers can be seen as starting with the first empirical research into the problem by Moreby and Springett's (1990) "Critical Levels" study. Close to follow was the work carried out at the University of Warwick, on behalf of, among others the ISF and BIMCO.

The British Chamber of Shipping Report, "Britain's Maritime Skills" made some projected estimates for the future of the numbers of officers, both ashore and at sea. This has been recently updated by a report "United Kingdom Seafarers Analysis 2006" conducted for the Department of Transport, which has alarming indications for availability of maritime skill base in the future.

In UK, the Report of Proceedings of the Committee investigating "The future of maritime skills and employment in the UK", and "British Shipping: Challenges and Opportunities" contain evidence indicating the decline trends in maritime sector and the implications of such developments. The Employment Committee Report (1993) contains submissions from people in the industry voicing their fears concerning the shortage of people to work in the UK shore-side industries. In particular, evidence can be seen being submitted by various shipping industry

related organizations and bodies to a government committee insisting that it is essential that certain key jobs in the shore based maritime industry are carried out by former seafarers for various reasons, and they need to be suitably qualified to undertake these jobs.

3.3.2 *Australian Experience*

Numerous studies over the past decade have been conducted indicating a similar pattern in Australia to that of the United Kingdom. Two publications can be referred; firstly the report by Capt Denis Parson, "Maintaining Manpower and skills requirements for Australian Ports" and second is a document reporting the Senate enquiry into "Workforce challenges in the transport industry".

The first report has examined the skill shortages and their causes. Report indicates skill areas which will make seafarers more transferable to maritime shore based sectors and that included logistics and supply chain management; Information Technologies (IT), and E-business skills; organizational, HR, and management skills; port and terminal management skills; maritime policy and strategic development skills; marketing, commercial, contract and negotiation skills; and finally health, safety and environmental management skills.

Of interest here are extract from various submissions to the Senate enquiry on "Workforce challenges in the transport industry" as follows:

Australian Ship-owners Association (ASA) submitted that it is clear that the maritime industry faces a number of challenges and issues with regard to employment and training. These included lack of awareness and industry profile with existing initiatives having a negligible impact in the maritime industry. ASA also said that while the industry is taking pro-active steps to address the skills shortage, opportunities do exist for other stakeholders, including Governments, to take a more active role.

Australian Maritime College (AMC) submitted that future of Australian economy, national security, and defence is dependent on well trained and high quality maritime human resource, to support both the "sea going" and "shore-based" maritime industries. Based on this, AMC recommended in her submission that the Australian government needs to consider offering additional fee support or fee waivers to encourage young Australians to undertake Maritime Education and Training (MET); and develop well focused initiatives to maximize training within the maritime industries.

Maritime Unions of Australia (MUA) submitted that Australia's maritime industries are continuing to expand in response to growing container trade particularly imports; growth in the export of bulk com-

modities; and growth in offshore oil and gas exploration, construction, production and transportation.

Remedial Measures

The twelfth report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, "The future of the UK shipping industry" published a summary of the committee's findings and was also based upon "British Shipping: Charting a New Course". The committee agreed among other things to establish the importance of shore-based shipping services in UK. After considering the submissions made by various bodies, the committee found that a successful shipping industry would bring many benefits to the UK in terms of income and employment, as well as for strategic and political reasons. They concluded therefore that there is a strong case for supporting the industry.

The strategy adopted in UK was two pronged: a marketing strategy aimed at increasing awareness of maritime careers and to make information more readily available; secondly to widen access to training opportunities and increase the value of officer's qualifications to increase their suitability for absorption in shore based industry.

Better career marketing approach has crystallized into marketing campaigns aimed at promoting shipping to the public as well as to decision makers. The Chamber of Shipping, seamen's unions and some other similar organizations have promoted a number of initiatives to increase the profile of shipping in the UK. One such initiative is the "Fighting Sea Blindness" campaign, which aims to help promote co-ordination of various groups' efforts in relation to maritime issues and employment.

More specific measures included the production of careers videos, posters and information packs for distribution at schools and co-ordination of several web sites, which feature information and links concerning maritime careers and maritime industry. This also included planned attendance of the MNTB at career exhibitions and fairs. These events have also been supported by maritime training colleges.

Project Sea Vision was launched in January 2003, promoted by the UK Chamber of Shipping. This initiative aims to raise first of all awareness of the maritime sector in UK, and its importance in the country's economy; and secondly to generate interest in a range of marine careers. Sea Vision does not specifically relate to shipping and shipping related industries. It encompasses other marine sectors such as ship and boat building, marine leisure, defence, fishing, environment, commerce and so on. The initiative draws together regional and specific centers of expertise in promotion and education. These aim to generate and disseminate career materials to rele-

vant targeted areas, and to provide a public relation vehicle by attending specific public events.

As part of a number of measures taken by the UK Government to support an increase in cadet numbers, it has supported the creation of the Maritime Training Trust by the industry. The trust provides a central point for the receipt and administration of the industry's financial contributions towards supporting further seafarer training. The concept of the trust was that companies could voluntarily contribute to the costs of training seafarers through donating money to a pool, rather than making any direct training investment themselves. This scheme was also aimed at shore-based maritime companies who employ former ships' officers.

4 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Maritime sector has its own set of problems and industry should be aware of skill shortages in the sector and the need for capacity building. These issues have been raised and discussed at different forums; however, there is a lack of a coherent policy, and work program to address these issues.

There are a number of groups and networks actively working on addressing these issues. These activities however, are not coordinated and in isolation from each other, at times creating confusion and duplication of efforts. Perhaps the best way forward would be either a "network of networks" or recognition of one of the groups as the leader.

The turning point for the United Kingdom was the realization of the situation by the UK government, which followed by a raft of policies and actions involving the whole of industry, government and other stakeholders. That is what needs to happen at other places also to put the things at right track in maritime industry.

Pakistan needs to learn from the experiences of other countries like United Kingdom and Australia and has to realize the importance of new emerging study areas linked with maritime industry. We need to educate our young generation in professions like environment, insurance, law, security and financial management linked with maritime sector. Only

through these measures, we will be able to maintain our pace of progress and expand our operations in maritime industry.

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