

# The Role of the Maritime Institutions on the Shortage of Officers

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aimed to determine the role of the maritime institutions in the midst of the shortage of officers in the world manning industry. The quality of instruction and the competency of the professional instructors are seen as an important factor in producing quality graduates who will eventually become officers to man modern ships of today.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Several studies indicate that there is currently a world-wide shortage of officers, corresponding to 4 percent of the total officers (16,000) and the prediction is that by 2012, the shortfall will rise to 46,000 (Kumar, 2007).

The shortfall of seafarers has a negative impacts on the shipping industry as a whole; whereas both the on-board and on-shore maritime related work posts face manning problems that may directly threaten the existence of shipping activity and the sustenance of maritime know-how (Chaterjee, in Kumar, 2007).

Japanese shipping companies plan to hire 10,000 seafarers from the Philippines between 2008 and 2010. (<http://www.gma.news.tv/>). This was stated by the president of the Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council, Mr. Eduardo Manese. He further said that Japan will increase its merchant fleet of 2,223 as of 2006 to 3,000 by the end of 2010, and further to 4,000 by 2015.

The same opinion was shared by Ambassador Stale Torstein Risa of Norway during the two-day International Maritime Conference hosted by JBLFMU last January 29, 2008. He encouraged maritime schools in the country to give importance to quality-based maritime education and training to meet the demands of the global shipping industry. Risa noted that most of the world's global trade is by sea and that globalization has entirely changed the world's trading patterns with new emerging markets requiring more transport services than ever before. Aside from the expanding off shore exploration of petroleum resources the cruise industry also continues to grow. This entails a growing demand for mar-

itime workers. He further stressed: "I believe schools should even seek to follow-up and evaluate their graduates' employment experiences. They should keep track of their graduates and to get feedbacks after spending [SIC] some time at sea and it would be a valuable input in determining if the level of training is adequate, and even offer advice on issues such as job satisfaction."

Indeed the maritime schools today play a very important role in the production of quality of graduates, thus this research.

## 2 THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to determine the role of the maritime schools in helping to solve the problem of seafarers' shortage.

## 3 METHOD

This study utilized the descriptive-qualitative method of research. It employed a historical - narrative approach, using an in-depth interview of the key informants. The participants in this study were the managers of the manning companies and the various representatives of the owners of the shipping companies in the Philippines.

### 3.1 Modes of analysis

"The schools are the producers of seafarers." These are the words coming from the lady president of K-Line Maritime Training Center, Mrs. Virginia Line-sis. She also stated further: "The competencies of the

new graduates are always questioned. One of the issues is the competency of the teachers. These teachers have not recently disembarked from the vessel. So, their knowledge and skills as far as new vessels are concerned are not adequate to teach these students. Teachers are not updated. The competency of the supply at the end of the three (3) academic years of the students is always questioned by the industry. For a company like K-Line with a training center, we augment whatever inadequacy in the skills of the students by giving them the training necessarily required in the type of vessel they will be joining. As far as this company is concerned, we don't assign anybody on board unless he is trained and ready for the job because the confidence of the seafarers even if he is just a cadet is important when he goes on board. He should be able to know the job required of him. And to those with no training center, that would be a very great factor.

She added: "The problem before was always the engine shortage on the engine department. At this point, this is gradually addressed by the school. There must be a balance. The reason for this is that there is a need of a 'bridging program', in order to augment the shortage of the supply in the engine department especially the engine officers. K-Line is the first company to initiate or introduce the bridging program (mechanical engineering to marine engineering) because [SIC] we are now in the third year. In 2005, we had the first batch of 18 marine officers."

Before putting up the training center, Global Training Systems, Inc., of which he is president, Capt. Jose Martinez, a research master mariner, had this to say:

"The instructors are the sole instruments on the education of the students. It is from them that the students hear everyday. In [SIC] everything that they do they must do it well and learn to love it. If they love what they are doing, everybody they shared with [SIC] will also love what you are doing. They have to inspire the students; always give their best in teaching. The English language is very important because this is needed in the profession. Even when students are good in doing the job it is necessary to explain the what, how and why it needs to be done. If you cannot express yourself in English, then it might lead to serious consequences. But if you are conversant in the language then you have an edge."

Mrs. Brenda Panganiban had this to say: "I believe that your school has some qualifying examination. I think that your school should also administer an aptitude test for the marine profession so that you will be able to determine who among the current students are fit to continue in the course. Maybe it can be done after one year, after taking a general course just like in the nursing or medical profession.

[SIC]The minds of the students in the higher level now who passed the aptitude test must be conditioned that they are educated and trained to become officers. [SIC] They should be guided in the way they talk; act, and interact with people. The character, the attitude and the whole personality must be developed. In school it must be emphasized that to become an officer you maintain humility regardless of how far you have gone or become. It is also important to develop the spirituality of the students because when your spirit is strong, your mind and body will be strong as well.

Mr. Ericson Marquez, President of Pilipinas Crown Maritime said: "The source of knowledge will be the schools. But if you continue to produce less and less competent graduates, then 20% are only qualified. Then, 'wala tayong pupuntahan talaga' (we are going nowhere). What is our response? Last year, we did an assessment (MSAP-Maritime Schools Assessment Program). We know which schools can produce how much. We know some school cannot even produce a single applicant to pass our standard. Our standard is not very high. We use criterion reference in establishing the standard. Last year we had a pilot test on this activity. This [SIC] February 1 and 2, we expect that CHED will issue a memorandum for all the schools to participate. Last year JBLFMU did not participate for you had an activity on that day. [SIC] We hope this year you will participate, not that we doubt the quality of your students but we are using the better schools as the benchmark for other schools. Last time we used MAAP as our benchmark, MAAP participated. [SIC] The ninety-four students of MAAP were all on top, only 1 or 2 were not in the top 100. You can imagine how many percent it is as against 56 scholars who participated."

He also narrated: "Last year, we did not promise any incentive for those who performed well, but this year we will. We have already obtained 200 scholarships from OWWA at Php 30,000 each scholar. So, its [SIC] 30,000 each for 100 deck cadets and 100 engine cadets. The grant will be given on their third year. This money will not be paid to them. They cannot be a grantee if they are not a relative of a seaman or they have contributed to the fund. Our agreement is to get the 200 scholars and will [SIC] pay the contribution. Later, the OWWA will refund us. This is open to everybody except for MAAP, PMMA and NSA cadets. This Php 30,000 grant will be added with incentives because we were able to convince Japanese ship owners. We are telling the schools, on the basis of the assessment as endorsed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED); they can prepare a program to prepare them as ratings instead of an officer. They must be taught cooking, ship painting, ship maintenance and welding

and make them the best ratings that we can produce because we need ratings. [SIC]"

He also said "We are not criticizing the schools; the problem is not only in the collegiate level. It starts from the elementary schools and high schools. If somebody from high school cannot add fractions, there must be something wrong. But some of these schools will still accept them as freshmen in college. Now, how can they run ships if they don't know how to add fractions or solve for the volume of an object? This is what we are pushing, but certainly some schools may not like it. This is what is happening and everybody must wake up. We are trying to unify our efforts in the four organizations in the manning and crewing industry. Maybe it's now time that the maritime schools join [SIC] hands in solving the problem of the deficiencies of the graduates in order to help solve the problem on seafarer shortage."

Mrs. Carla S. Limcaoco, the vice-chairman of Philippine Transmarine Carriers had this to say to the maritime schools: "Look at the curriculum. Look at the issue of its relevance in today's world. There are certain subjects that are non-negotiable that students have to study. But are they relevant?"

#### 4 FINDINGS

- 1 There are schools which produce graduates that do not necessarily meet the requirements of the industry. Hence, there is a need to improve on the quality of instruction especially on the professional subjects. Most of the professional instructors are not updated on the latest technology on board and as such, the instructors' delivery is short- changed.
- 2 There are aspects of the curriculum which are not relevant to the present needs of the industry especially with the fast changing phase of technology development.
- 3 There are youngsters today who prefer other courses that are equally financially rewarding as seafaring.

- 4 The school should motivate the students to become officers not just be contented as ratings.

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The schools should intensify the supervision of instruction among the professional instructors.
- 2 The schools need to review their curriculum especially its relevance to the current needs of the industry.
- 3 The schools should be more selective with the new entrants in the course or program.
- 4 An aptitude test must be implemented to the second year level to determine if the students are fitted to be seafarers.
- 5 A continuing evaluation program should be initiated among the students to ensure that quality learning is achieved.

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