

## **Quality teaching for maritime students – An ongoing challenge?**

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*Shipping has faced rough seas and still is. The economical crisis continues. Besides these very challenging and for some shipping companies life threatening times, there are still ships being delivered and all of them need qualified personal.*

Not only the ship owners themselves carry a strong demand, but also the maritime industry consisting of river and sea pilots, governmental organizations like coast guard and customs, engine builders, ship yards etc.

Well known studies have shown a dramatic trend concerning the average age of seafarers in management positions and the high demand for qualified senior officers in the years to come. Hence, the pressure from the industry increased and governments as well as private training providers changed their narrow perspectives. STCW 95 and now STCW 2010 will be the backbone for maritime training and certification.

Apart from the lack of seagoing personal, there is moreover an apparent lack of training personal, which has not been highlighted so far. It is more than logical that teachers at maritime colleges and universities need special skills, which will be headlined in this article.

Looking at the age of seafarers in management positions, age is continuously decreasing within the last decades. Less and less seagoing experience or practical experience is the result of the strong market demand by shipping companies.

Are these seafarers the future teachers at maritime universities? Hopefully yes – otherwise, we will have teachers with absolute no practical background coming from various industries and trying to adopt seagoing experience by literature only. Fortunately, as of today, a lot of teachers in maritime colleges still have a seagoing or engineering background and served several years for shipping companies, gaining a lot of practical knowledge, which is essential for the training of young seafarers. But practical experience is only one of the tasks to be an accepted teacher – what else does one need?

Teachers need to develop competence in explaining quite difficult and complex tasks in a simple manner in order to reach the students and to motivate them. The basic elements of didactics and learning methodology are crucial and a key to the learning success.

Another point at issue is that teachers in maritime colleges bear a high responsibility with regard to the development of interpersonal skills of the students. The past has shown with various examples that human negligence and lack of responsibility caused a lot of major incidents in shipping. The latest changes in STCW and the upcoming MLC convention pay attention to these often excluded factors.

Therefore, teachers need to develop expertise in new areas of training like working in an extreme environment, working together with different nationalities, religions and mentalities and the like. The intensive training of leadership skills is just as important as the development of engineering or nautical skills. Motivation of people in the job and good leadership with modern methods is one of the key elements to teach in future.

The phrase: *"If you are a good leader, I will be a good follower"* should be highlighted for both, teachers and senior officers, on board of vessels.

But there is only one small challenge ahead:

- Where do the motivated, experienced and well trained teachers come from?
- Where is the motivation to change jobs from the industry to the complete different world of working at a maritime college?

Based on my own experience, I would say that teaching offers a lot of direct response and feedback from the students and working with young people is daily brainstorming in every respect. In general, students at a maritime college have the strong intention to get their exams done in the shortest possible time and it makes fun to see them improving day by day and watch their progress.

However, it is essential for teachers to continuously update their know-how and keep track of the latest developments - not only within the technical elements such as engineering, ship building, nautical and forensic developments, the daily shipping business etc., but also within the social aspects and skills, which are not to be underestimated as mentioned.

Being a teacher means daily self-study if you take your job seriously. On one hand, it is a great opportunity to take part of laying foundation for young people's future career development and on the other hand, to work on key issues within shipping whilst taking advantage of the previously gained valuable skills.

Providing practical training is an ongoing challenge – today and even more tomorrow – but also a very valuable career opportunity.