DEALING WITH THE CULTURE OF THE MARITIME MANPOWER
IN A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER

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ABSTRACT
Concurrently, shipping companies’ crucial need for cost cutting is their main motive for recruiting seafarers of various nationalities and formulating multicultural teams on board the ships. This paper seeks to correlate the role of dealing with culture by being socially responsible. The main point of the research is not to examine the relation of human error with accident rates, but to examine how dealing with the cultural issue and managing multicultural crews, is related to the shipping companies’ and the industry’s social responsibility. An extensive literature review on the cultural issue of the maritime manpower, with a focus on the working and living conditions and the management of shipping crews, reveals important parameters of the subject. This analysis is enriched with qualitative data from an aboard case study. Results from the literature review and of the analysis of this single case study showed that managing multicultural human resources has very much to do with the company’s social responsibility. However, more needs to be done, in order to achieve a socially acceptable behaviour of all the industrial actors to its seagoing personnel.

KEY WORDS
Crews, multiculturalism, social responsibility, seafarers, nationality.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The shipping companies are the ‘front-runners of globalisation’ (DNV 2004). Shipping is the industry that can be characterised as the largely international and most globalised one. A series of structural changes transformed the world’s shipping industry to its today’s globalised character. Sletmo (1989) identified four stages in the evolution of shipping, which named them also as ‘waves’ of evolution. The first stage was the era of maritime exploration; the period when the leading parts of shipping were the seamen, the sea and the weather. The second wave was characterised by the use of shipping for maritime power; the period when a few regions were in the forefront due to their national fleets, sailors and seamanship. The third wave was the internationalisation of shipping through the flagging out and the increased dependence upon manpower from the developing countries. Finally, what one can define as the fourth wave of shipping is the evolution of modern ship management companies; the last have developed expertise in operating efficiently and reducing the variable costs with a combination of recruiting low-cost labour from the developing countries, the de-flagging method, and drawing on Western technology and capital.

Obando-Rojas et. al (2004) argue that the long period of ruinous economic competition in the shipping industry had far reaching effects on capital, management and labour. A spate of corporate mergers and takeovers across national boundaries was provoked, along with the evolution of ship management companies and crewing companies providing specialist management and labour recruitment services to owners. In respect of labour, transnational employers reduced variable costs by intensifying the exploitation of labour through reduced crewing levels, extended working hours and registering vessels under ‘flag of convenience’ associated with lower regulatory costs, weak labour rights and lower wage levels. At this point one should take into consideration the fact that the world’s largest fleets are attached to either flags of convenience (FOC) or second registers and the nationalities of these fleets’ crews do not correspond with the flags of their ships (ILO 2001). The last twenty-five or more years, eighty percent of the world merchant fleet is manned with multi-cultural and multilingual crews; this sets the matter of multiculturalism and the management of culture under the spotlight.

This paper presents thoughts and raises questions stemming from an overview of the cultural issue among shipping crews. The paper discusses those thoughts from the viewpoint of the social responsibility of the industry, the shipping companies and other actors. Furthermore, results of an on board case study are giving another picture of the issue, actually, the one that seamen are facing today on board. The following section introduces the reader to the issue of corporate social responsibility and its application in shipping. The management of the cultural issue and an analysis of the working and living conditions of multicultural crews are further down presented. In the next section, the seafarers’ attitudes and opinions towards multicultural working environment, and the researcher’s observations from an aboard case study are presented and discussed. The last section gives the conclusions, and suggestions for further research.
2. BEING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE IN SHIPPING

Being socially responsible means seeking to avoid, or at least try to minimise, the external cost created from one’s activities, which affects in a negative way the society. A company’s social responsibility is related to the social cost derived from the business activities, such as the production of goods or the provision of services. Watts (2000) defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life. In the same vein, it can be identified (Warhurst 2000) as the internalisation by the company of the social and environmental effects of its operations through pro-active pollution prevention and social impact assessment so that harm is anticipated and avoided and benefits are optimised. The concept of this definition is that companies are seeking to seize the opportunities and target the capabilities that they have built up for competitive advantage to contribute to sustainable development goals.

The term ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) has different meanings to different industry sectors. In some organisations CSR is still considered to mean compliance and philanthropy, although some large companies are now placing CSR in a more strategic framework (Lockwood 2004). Monitoring of quality, concern about employees’ health and safety, environmental impact of products and services, and other CSR activities, are usually not taken into serious consideration by firms that their corporate activities are in a business-to-business level. This is the case of the shipping companies, whose services are produced to satisfy the derived demand for the transport of cargoes (Willingale 1998). Especially companies of the bulk-shipping sector were the less interested in investing to advertising or any other activity that may improved the firm’s image. The basic goal for companies of this sector has always been the ability to produce low-cost services. Due to the highly competitive business environment of the shipping industry, the cost reduction of the operational expenses became crucial for survival. In this context, shipping industry created negative externalities, such as loss of lives at sea, damages to the marine environment and maritime frauds, that all contributed to the creation of the bad reputation and the negative public image of the industry (Fafaliou et.al. XXXX). Fafaliou et.al outline the three approaches to the matter of the shipping companies’ behaviour towards CSR. The first approach is the ‘adverse’ one to the notion of CSR, the second is the ‘typical’, and the third is the ‘supportive’ one. According to this approach, the adverse behaviour is practised by the so-called ‘sub-standard’ operators, who represent the minority in the maritime business arena (OECD 1996). The primal goal for the companies of this category is the competitiveness by all means, even if safety and quality are at stake. The typical behaviour, practiced by the majority of the companies operating in the maritime sector goes with the flow of ‘staying simply within the rules of the game’. These companies are operating with the goal to create profits, but with being conformable to the international regulatory framework. Finally, the supportive behaviour is the one performed by the minority of the firms that move beyond the compliance to the legislations and conventions. These companies pioneer new routes to the business field, by complying with non-regulatory standards or even by setting their own standards. The DNV Report (2004) gives a definition of the socially responsible shipping company; it is the one that is working actively to integrate social and environmental concerns in its operation, and which finds a sound balance between the need for operational efficiency, shareholder value and attention to the interests of non-financial shareholders. The ‘supportive’ shipping companies
mentioned above, who run their business in an innovative way and behave in accordance with the expectations of the society and try to minimise the negative externalities, can be considered as socially responsible.

The DNV Report (2004) proposes a set of activities that shipping companies can perform in order to be socially responsible towards the crews from developed and developing countries. Referring to the crews with the same nationality with the one of the ship owner, principal activities may include work with safety health and environmental conscience, provision of optimal communication with the relatives and the outside world from the vessel, welfare and recreation services on the vessel, and training on cultural awareness. Examples of such initiatives in practice may be ensuring the optimal communication technology, high quality on planning process of work rotations, flexibility and support in family matters and problems, etc. Regarding the crews from labour supplying countries, the Report advises the shipping companies to give decent wages to the seamen from developing countries, to fulfil the requirements that the international legislations set and to offer family support and training. Nevertheless, because of the severe competition among the labour-supplying countries, there is a conducive space left for the violation of the seafarers’ human rights by substandard operators (OECD 2001).

3. ASPECTS OF THE CULTURAL ISSUE OF SHIPPING CREWS

3.1 Manning issues and multiculturalism

During the long crisis of the 1980s shipowners of the traditional maritime nations were changing their operational strategies to more cost-cutting survival strategies. Since crewing costs were the only substantially variable element in the voyage costs equation, the most common policy was to flag out from national flags to open or second registries. In many cases the labour cost savings could be –and still can be- achieved by the avoidance of the strict labour regulatory regimes of the national flags of traditional maritime countries, by exploiting the advantages of the cheaper labour, that can be found in Asia, and, more recently, from the late 1980, in the Eastern Europe.

According to the latest results of the BIMCO/ISF Manpower Report (2005) the OECD countries remain an important source of officers, although Eastern Europe has become increasingly significant with a large increase in officer numbers. The Far East and South East Asia, and the Indian sub-continent remain the largest sources of supply of ratings and are rapidly becoming a key source of officers. The Report confirms that the centre of gravity of the labour market for seafarers continue to shift from the traditional maritime countries of Western Europe, Japan and North America towards the Far East, Indian sub-continent and Eastern Europe. The recent Manpower Report suggests that there is a modest shortage of officers worldwide and a continuing surplus of ratings. The worldwide supply of seafarers in 2005 is estimated at 466,000 officers and 721,000 ratings, while the demand reaches 476,000 officers and 586,000 ratings. The respective statistics according to the results from the BIMCO/ISF Report in 2000 showed that the worldwide supply of seafarers in 2000 was estimated at 404,000 officers and 823,000 ratings; the worldwide demand was estimated at 420,000 officers and 599,000 ratings.

Mixed nationality crews are not a new phenomenon, but it became a ‘hot’ issue at the time that mixed-nationality crews were consciously composed (ILO 2002). Nowadays, the
global maritime labour market is characterised by an unimpeded ability for a seafarer of any nationality to search for employment, and by a highly organised international recruitment set of networks, that link shipowners, ship managers, crew managers, labour-supply agencies training institutions and seamen all over the world. Crew composition is contingent upon language compatibility, availability of skills and many other factors, which will be discussed later on. The decision to mix seafarers of different origin and the choice and preference of which nationalities to mix, seems to be affected –besides the level of wages- by a general view on the adaptability or ‘ability to mix’ of nations to a culturally diverse environment. Several surveys by the Seafarers International Research Centre- SIRC have revealed that citizens of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea are normally found only in homogeneous and monoglot crews, probably because of limited English language ability (ILO Geneva 2001). Moreover, when Russians sail in the company of other nationalities they do so usually in ones and twos rather than in larger groups. The survey also shows that while Filipino, Polish and Indian seafarers frequently provide large proportions of crews, they are less likely to form whole crews in FOC ships, and recent research among Greek seafarers and shipping companies shows that Filipinos are most preferred and perceived as the most compatible nation to co-operate with the Greek seamen (Progoulaki 2003; Theotokas and Progoulaki 2004). Moreover, Indians, Filipinos and Poles are, on the other hand, thought to be sufficiently proficient in English and can therefore be more safely mixed with English-speaking senior officers of other nationalities (ILO 2001).

In the planning and/ or implementation of a manning strategy, the alternatives of manning scenarios generally include a single national crew, a composition of two different nationalities (where the cultural distinction of seafarers from developed and developing countries is parallel to the hierarchical distinction to Officers and Ratings), and a multinational crew. While drawing a strategy for the cultural synthesis of crews, one may also take into consideration, instead of the role that the vessel’s flag have (Winchester et.al 2006) the cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1997; Trompenaars 1993) of the potential co-workers on board.

3.2. Working and living conditions among different nationalities

The role of the human factor in shipping accidents has been recognised by plenty of studies (UK P&I Club unknown date) and attention has been given to management systems that can improve ship safety and prevent pollution. Little attention, however, has been given to the working conditions of seafarers on foreign ships, who are the most valuable intangible asset. ‘It seems that every vessel is as good, as the people that navigate her, onboard and offshore’ (Cockroft 2000). Apart from the ethical and moral dimensions, mistreatment of crews affects the safe operation of ships.

The ILO (2001) report supports that only in coastal shipping is the labour market not dominated by crew managers and manning agents. However, this is not the case for the Greek seafarers (Papademetriou et.al 2005). As recent surveys reveal (Progoulaki et.al 2006; Southampton Solent University 2005) the paths used by seamen in order to be hired in shipping companies, may differ. Although the role of intermediates in the stage of selection and recruitment is crucial, it will be analysed in a following subsection. At this point it is quite important to underline the criteria of selecting and hiring a seaman. Because of the special characteristics and requirements of the profession, all hard skills required by Officers
and Ratings are defined in detail by the related International Conventions, Transnational and National Policies and Joint Working Agreements (ISM, STCW, SOLAS, OPA, ISPS). However, in the selection process other factors are believed to be highly influential. The soft skills of a potential Officer and Rating are also important. Soft skills generally refer to leadership, interpersonal abilities, conflict resolution, communication, and others (Harris 2000). An interesting research on the required soft skills and quality characteristics of seafarers is currently en route. Its completion is believed to offer valuable information and can reveal the ‘ultimate’ profile of the seafarer to be hired.

The shipowner’s ability to sidestep labour regulations by the expedient of switching for a national flag to an open or second registry is strongly related to the exploitation of the hiring of low-cost seamen, and thus, reducing the manning expenses. The MORI survey (1998) showed that in the case of wages, there is a variation according to flag, vessel type, nationality and rank. According to ILO (2001), where there is a relatively large pool of adequate skilled and mobile labour, the wage and employment market is more likely to be highly competitive, if not volatile. Taking into account the mobility of the ships and the globalised character of the industry, which also influences the limited ability for intervention by national authorities and international organisations, the compensation levels cannot be characterised as balanced or stable. ILO report (2001) shows that wage differentials in the industry are still considerable, reflecting the gap between seafarers coming from developed and less developed parts of the world. Other surveys (MASSOP 2000; Matthews 2003; Sjofartens Analys Institut 2004) also confirm this fact. Because of the imbalance during the last decades of the global labour market for Officers, according to which the supply is falling short of demand, there is an upward pressure on wages. Finally, the ILO minimum wage and the definition of the overtime rate are unclear, and these leave an unclear space that can affect the level of income and the general quality of working life of the unionised and certainly even more, of the non-unionised sailors.

The cultural and national issue discussed in this paper, is also apparent in the length of contracts among seafarers of different origin. At first, one should note that the continuity of employment for all seamen has not been achieved yet, neither in the level of the international legal framework, nor in practice. The majority of seafarers all over the world work on contracts which cover a single voyage (or tour of duty), while a steady income is not assured. The length of tour varies according to the preferences of the employer and the nationality of the sailor. Other influential factors are the flow of labour from low-cost supplying countries, the relation with the manning agent (which will be discussed later on) and the relationship with the employer- the shipping company. ILO (2001) draws a picture of the matter with some examples, according to which a typical tour of duty for a Rating could be nine months for Filipinos, but a year for Sierra Leonians, and six months for Eastern Europeans. Typical senior Western European Officers’ tours of duty are generally determined by the voyage cycle of the ship and are normally between three to four months, in contrast to their Filipino and Indian counterparts, whose contracts are for nine months. At the end of their contract seafarers are repatriated. It is, however, inevitable that Ratings in particular tend to stay onboard longer than the specified length of their contract or tour of duty, due to the lack of a relief system. Without a proper system, there is a tendency for seafarers to extend beyond the specific agreements within their contracts, in order to avoid paying extra illegal fees to agents for not being left without work for months. For Ukrainian seamen, twelve-month contracts only applied in one percent of cases, but for their Japanese counterparts, it rose to 39% (ILO 2001). The MORI survey (1998) showed that most
common tour of duty was between six and twelve months. The two studies similarly reveal a diversification of the contracted hours of work.

Abuse of crews refers to physical abuses, such as inadequate medical treatment, sub-standard accommodation, inadequate food, beatings, and mental abuse stemming from isolation, cultural insensitivity, psychological pressure and lack of amenities for social intervention. The ICONS report (2000) mentions that non-payment of wages, delays in paying entitlements to families, and even abandonment are additional abuses that contribute to the suffering of a large proportion of seafarers. The International Commission on Shipping in its extended study of safety at sea states categorically that ‘for thousands of today’s international seafarers’ life at sea is modern slavery and their workplace is a slave ship.’ Gerstenberger (2002) in her study presented some of the reasons for the deterioration of living and working conditions aboard merchant ships. She noted that seafarers are work immigrants, but in opposition to people working in foreign countries legally, seafarers do not emigrate to another nation-state, but to the world market; much of the recruitment in the shipping industry of our days is just a trade in human labour power. Matyók’s work (2004) spotlights the conditions under which global merchant seafarers are commonly employed nowadays. Unless these people receive the assistance of unions or special services of seafarers’ missions, they will usually lack the means or ability to seek redress through the flag States’ courts or administrative systems, and are, therefore, usually totally reliant on charity for their subsistence (ICONS 2000).

Various studies (Lane et.al 2001; Lane et.al 2002) focus on issues relevant to national culture and multiculturalism, and their influence on the performance of the industry in areas related to maritime accidents, safety and quality, efficiency, communication, job satisfaction, and others. Several researches have revealed the problems that exist onboard among culturally diverse crews with a focus on particular nationalities (Kahveci and Sampson 2001; Østreng 2001; Progoulaki 2003; Sampson and Zhao 2003). Problems are related to communication among crew members, communication between ship’s crew and third parties at shore or other vessels (MARCOM 1998), linguistic skills (Loginovsky 2002; National Maritime Polytenechnic 2002), power relations on board, discrimination and racism, leisure and recreation, the management skills of senior officers, and the long-term stability of crews.

3.3 The role of the manning agents

The global character of shipping industry allows shipping companies to design their labour sourcing decisions on the basis of the interplay between their competitive advantage and the advantages of various locations for long-term gains. Shipowners’ need to cut their overheads creates them a dilemma; to subcontract to specialist firms the crewing management, or to create wholly or partly owned subsidiaries of personnel management services. Depending on the choice, which can be a synthesis of all alternatives, shipowners can reap several benefits of economies of scale that are hard to be achieved in small fleets. Economies are especially likely to be found in the area of crew management because of the difficulties involved in hiring crews either wholly or in part from cheaper but distant and unfamiliar regions around the world.

As the sources of supply of seafarers shifted from the traditional maritime nations to the Far East, the Indian sub continent and Eastern Europe, manning agencies became an integral part of the system and an intermediate between seafarers and shipping companies.
Their role in the context of the global shipping and seafaring markets has been substantial in reducing the transaction cost and the risk for both seafarers and companies. This role has grown so much, that so the operating companies, as the seafarers themselves, have a dependent and conditional relationship with the agents (Papademetriou et.al 2005). The mixing of seafarers of different nationalities to compose shipping crews, requires specialised knowledge, in order to ensure that these mixed crews will be both low-cost and effective. Leggate and McConville (2002) state that the existence of separate markets for seafarers makes possible to distinguish between groups in the seafaring labour force and to give them differing income. This specialised knowledge includes a universal organisational skill, a worldwide network of contacts with local manning agencies, trade unions, training institutions and marine academies. In these circumstances subcontracting to specialist firms became the last years quite an attractive choice. As ship-management firms have developed and expanded they have become the world’s largest employers of seafarers. Such is the scale of their labour requirements and their consequent need for efficient organisation that they have collectively become a powerful source of labour market stability (ILO 2001).

There is a large proportion of scholars and organisations that examine manning agencies and the role that they play in the seagoing labour supply system. As Cooper (2000) mentions, the instability of the industry is strongly affected by the role of agents, since manning agencies create a working environment, which promotes insecurity, stress and poor motivation among seafarers. The quality of the offered services by a certain percentage of manning agencies has been questioned several times, this owed to the fact that very often agents are involved in the recruitment of seafarers with fraudulent and falsified certificates. Rubullah (2003) also mentions that manning agencies have been involved in several cases of employment of seafarers on substandard ships and abandonment of seafarers in foreign ports. Wu (2004) and Amante (2004) have discussed the illegal activities of several manning agencies in China and the Philippines. We could then speak of the substandard agents, those that are offering services such as falsification of seafarers’ certifications, employment under illegal charges, ‘watch’- and ‘black-listing’ of seafarers. In the new labour-supply nations of South and South-East Asia, at some stage in the process of entry to the industry, costs have been incurred by recruits and their families (ILO 1996). These costs may involve, apart from the recruitment fee to the agent, payment for training in private schools of doubtful quality, and further payment for certification. These illegal payments are long-standing malpractices well known in the industry.

The problematic and illegal in many cases, operation of several manning agencies is part of the clouded and dark side of shipping, which exists along with the substandard ship operators and substandard ships (OECD 1996). Recognising the issue, ILO (2002) supports that manning agencies should be supervised and prohibited from using means, mechanisms or lists intended to prevent or deter seafarers from gaining employment. Also it supports the idea that strict laws and regulations should be enforced, in order to ensure that no fees or other charges for recruitment are disbursed directly or indirectly, in whole or in part by the seafarers.
4. RESULTS FROM AN ABOARD CASE STUDY

4.1 Methodology

The issue of social responsibility is approached with the use of secondary data from an extended literature review. This analysis is enriched with the results of an aboard survey. This kind of survey, known also as the ethnographic method, is qualitative and usually based on interviews and participant observation. Here, the qualitative data were collected with the use of three methodological tools; participant observation, group discussion and personal interview (Hopf 2000). In order to collect the qualitative data, the researcher was placed on a ship manned with three different nationalities. The characteristics of the vessel were the following: Liquefied Natural Gas carrier, flying the Singapore flag, managed by a Greek shipping company, manned with thirty six crewmembers of three different nationalities (eighteen Greeks, fifteen Filipinos and three Spanish). The research was conducted during the summer of the year 2005 and lasted for two weeks. Finally, one should note that the researcher was positioned on board, and conducted the survey independently from the shipping company managing the vessel.

4.2 A few thoughts and comments

Blacklisting has long been seen as the scourge of seafarers in the Philippines. For ‘offences’ such as contacting union officials to complain about unfair treatment, seafarers’ names are circulated among manning agents and they are denied further employment. For a seafarer to be blacklisted means total loss of occupation, loss of income and denial of opportunity to practise one’s trade. It also can lead to loss of the seafarer’s home, inability to fund children’s education and possible break-up of families (ICONS 2000). The gravity of this situation became apparent in the group discussions with the Filipino Ratings on board. Two of them have been blacklisted for a year, while most of them have been unemployed for several months. All of them used to pay fees to their manning agents in order to find employment, while their Union was fighting for their rights. All of them expressed their satisfaction after being employed by the shipping company managing the particular vessel that the survey was conducted. This was because they no longer paid fees or were black- or watch-listed, since this shipping company owned the manning agency positioned in the Philippines.

All Filipino sailors that were interviewed expressed their feeling as being part of the company, while the most important point is that there were Greeks who also perceived their Filipino co-workers as ‘company men’. ILO’s (2001) definition of the term ‘company men’ suggests that they are seafarers assured of continuous employment after leave taken between tours of duty. This term was proper for the case of the interviewed seamen, however, ILO’s definition includes that they may be paid ‘retainer’ holiday pay when they are on leave, which was not practiced, although was desirable by several Greek, Spanish and Filipino seamen.

Seamen of all nationalities on board raised two important and interconnected issues; the length of contracts and the stability of the crew syntheses. The voyage-by-voyage nature of employment in the shipping industry breeds uncertainty and job insecurity, which afflicts many seafarers, especially those from developing nations (ICONS 2000). As a Greek Officer mentions, “being employed in the same ship in continuity, offers the great advantage of
saving time from the familiarisation with the equipment. The same stands for the human resources; it is not applied only to the tangible assets, but also to the intangible parts of the vessel, such as its crewmembers”. As Knudsen (2004) advises, companies should give foreigners proper, full contracts since knowing someone by way of long-term contact promotes mutual trust and confidence, a sense of community and reduces linguistic and culturally-engendered misunderstandings. As a Filipino Rating commented, “This captain we have now is the second time I work with him. I know him since he was Chief Mate. He is very good.” The wish for some continuity amongst the crew applies irrespective of nationality. However appears to be even greater when it comes to foreigners, as it can contribute to the minimisation of communication problems arising from the linguistic and cultural differences, and to the establishment of relationships based on trust. As a Greek Officer remarked “I like being (on board) with people I know, whether they are my friends or not, […] either foreign or Greek. Nationalities do not matter; I had a Greek colleague who made my life on board difficult. But that's not the thing. I will do my job one way or another. But time passes easier when you are with people you know. I always check the crew list before getting on the board”. This matter was also mentioned by other nationalities (Knudsen 2004), showing that taking on a new crew is always an extra load.

The important role of leadership skills was revealed during the case aboard. However, believing that satisfactory working and leisure relations predicate managerial aptitudes and respect for employees is a rather simplistic viewpoint. A young Greek Officer said that “every nation can understand kindness, you have to treat all of the crewmembers in a human way; kindness is the remedy”. While this opinion reveals a positive attitude towards the cultural issue, in the case of culturally diverse crews it seems even more important and socially responsible, that the Master is prepared for the task and master by considerations to cultural differences. With regard to this, a Spanish Officer who have attended seminars on the subject of cultural awareness, believed that ‘leadership changes when the culture changes’. Certainly treating all crewmembers in a human way is a socially acceptable behaviour, but cultural diversity in a restricted environment is a sensitive matter, which requires a pre-planned training. Relatively, a Greek Officer comments “Definitely there should be course on the subject of multiculturalism. It could be organised by the shipping company, or even better, by the state. It should be applied not only to the Bridge Officers, but also to the Deck and Engine Officers. This would be very helpful, but requires work and cooperation between the shipping companies, the government and marine academies”. One final but important point is the general opinion of Greeks towards the Asian seamen, and the reverse; how do Filipinos feel about Greeks. A Greek Rating said that “When Asian crews begun to be hired on board Greek vessels, it was a difficult and strange situation. They were ‘barbarians’, but we also treated them in a barbarian way! I admit that. […] Asians on this particular board are selected and are evaluated as accepted ones. They are in the same company for many years. This is good. They even speak a few Greek!” Relatively, two Filipinos AB commented that “Greeks are ok! […] Yes, Greeks always shout! Very much. But now Greeks (have) changed. They are very modern. Not like the past. […] We like Greeks very much. You see, when we came to the boat we were all skinny. But now look, all fat!” A Greek Officer commented that “Filipinos, and the rest Asian, but mostly Filipinos, are acceptable as seamen, but very few are good. […]They lack knowledge, experience, confidence […] and what we call ‘filotimo’. The first (knowledge) can be fixed through their training, but they don’t have filotimo. Of course, this does not mean that all Greeks have it!”
5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The analysis of this paper offers a wide field for further discussion on the responsibility of the shipping companies and the industrial actors, towards the seagoing personnel. This study pointed only a few basic matters that are believed to reveal the responsibility that lies to when human resources are involved. Since the late 1980s, ship owners and operators are taking steps to improve their performance through the implementation of formal safety and quality management systems (such as ISO standards), and this is a turn to a more socially responsible behaviour. Nevertheless, ‘the quality of the industry ultimately depends on the quality of the people in it’ (ICONS 2000). Horck (2004) argues that the industry should focus on the human element, rather than spend increasing amounts of money on bridge layout and increased automation. The lower wages and reduced quality of certain working conditions may reflect the lower expectations of seafarers due to their origin or place of residence. Seafarers from developing countries are more likely to accept relatively basic living and working conditions compared with seafarers from developed countries. Assuming that there are minimum internationally accepted conditions, these seafarers who are working under the regulation of countries of which they are not nationals need more protection, because some countries may accept only limited responsibility for issues relating to their status as seafarers (ILO 2001).

It is important to know that a skilled, satisfied and loyal crew helps a company to provide safe and efficient services as well as protecting the marine environment. A responsible company creates a culture of responsibility to its personnel. Horck (2004) claims that the gap separating cultures as well as religions must be bridged through education and awareness, otherwise globalisation may be hard to achieve. Seafarers’ training and education, comes along with certification, which are factors that affect the supply of seafarers, as they reflect the levels of crew competence. Moreover, training should not focus only to hard skills, but also to the soft skills of the seafarers, since they are vital for the individuals’ and the team’s performance, safety and cohesion on board. The need for cultural awareness training became apparent in the frames of this analysis, while it is one of the basic proposals for CSR in shipping companies (DNV 2004). As Knudsen (2004) comments, ‘you cannot decide in advance if relations between people from different cultures will be conflict-ridden or harmonious. That does not depend on certain cultural differences between those involved; it depends on a far more complex interaction between cultural differences, the context of the situation and the way those involved interact’. A competent, rested and well-motivated crew is an essential factor in reducing operational costs by increasing efficiency, safe operations and protecting the owner’s investment in expensive vessels and equipment. Industry leaders are well aware of the importance of having available people who are committed to the industry and have the required skill levels. (ICONS 2000)

Finally, one should mention the limitations of this survey. As Giddens (2002) mentions, results from a single case study refer to only the sample that has taken part in the survey. It is not possible to generalise the results of a single qualitative survey, and that is the reason that an extended literature review was the basic part of the analysis here. Further on board case studies or interviews at shore with seamen of various nationalities could enrich this analysis and enlighten more aspects of the theme. Furthermore, the use of quantitative research tools, such as a questionnaire applied to Greek-owned and other shipping companies, testing their strategic profile and operational management regarding CSR,
according to the standards of SA 8000 and AA 1000 (DNV 2004), is another suggestion for further research.

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