

Cultural and gender diversities affecting the ship/port interface

Maritime education and training efforts to bridge diversity gaps

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Author's brief biography

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ABSTRACT

Shipowners are aware that a multicultural crew complement can have a costly ending. Port and terminal operators find the ship interface communication cumbersome because of reciprocal mediocre English and lack of cultural awareness. To teach and study in a multicultural context easily can lead to misunderstandings and have a negative impact on assessment.

This paper intends to be a wakeup on above challenges found to be one direct and indirect reason to maritime accidents and incidents. Emotional responses to dilemmas regarding mixed cultures are meant to be reduced with education in cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training. The paper reviews challenges for maritime education and training institutions to be proactive and meet an industry need for better crew communication. Shipowners cannot take the risk having a ship detained because of substandard crew.

A crew member not being able to communicate easily becomes alienated and thereby a safety risk.

Often, research studies on the human element rather confuse the industry instead of giving useful guidance; research results contradict.

Most likely, the mustering of multicultural ships crew is an irreversible trend. If courses in cultural awareness do not become mandatory and if ships' crews English is not improved the International Ship Management Code will be a farce.

Key words: culture, women, cultural awareness, education, SPI, MET

1 INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century the shipping industry was challenged with multicultural ships' crews. In fact, it is not a new phenomenon in shipping; an industry that in many hundred years has been operating in a global setting. Most probably the roots of this new challenge can be found in the fact that many shipowners (in the following: owners) take full advantage of a minimum crew complement. The reason for this, of course, is economic.

The port industry is also affected by multicultural ships crews. Ports are directly concerned with ships calling and in some countries from guest workers with a different ethnic and cultural background than the indigenous workers. An additional problematic issue to differences in culture is operational managers and stevedores possible weak English. Therefore, in the ship port interface (SPI) there are several opportunities for lack of communication and misunderstandings.

A third possible challenge is the gender interface between the ship and the port.

A typical example of misunderstandings is the *Trade Daring* loading iron ore in Ponta da Madeira Brazil in 1994. The ship broke in two pieces. Because of the actual construction of the ship and the handling of the ship in heavy weather it becomes subject to structural failures and steel stresses; cracks. Generally, this is not the only reason for ships' cracks. Improper loading/unloading including the miscommunication between the port terminal manager and the chief officer, both not understanding each other when planning the cargo operation, the ship also becomes subject to cracks. Many bulk carriers have this later phenomenon as a major reason for total loss. Coordination dilemmas are often due to lack of communication. When procedures and checklists are not followed severe damages can follow.

Another example of miscommunication is the loss of the *Eurobulker X* that also broke in two, in 2000, while loading cement at the port of Lefkandi Greece. The ship had a mixed crew. The report states that the management and operation of *Eurobulker X* was most careless. The casualty report does not directly say but the reason for the negligence could very well be a combination of ship's and port's staff lack of cultural awareness and weak English.

A deeper inter-personal reason for maritime accidents is seldom reported. Even if it is mentioned as an investigation issue in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Resolution A884(21) as amended in Resolution A849(20); Code of Marine Casualties and Incidents. It appears that the casualty investigators rarely ask about the social relation between the persons involved in an accident either at or before the accident. But I understand it is becoming a practise. Casualty reports, where the reason for an accident is the human element (HE), summarise with a short remark: lack of communication (Horck, 2006).

With the absence of public *in depth* analyses of accidents it follows that there are no identifiable concrete examples on how the challenges of lack of cultural awareness and crew weak English are really met. INTERTANKO and INTERCARGO has working groups that discusses the HE including other elements considered substandard in the SPI. INTERTANKO has a members' *Terminal vetting database* and INTERCARGO has a *Bulk Carrier Terminal Reporting Form*. Both these resources are for members' use. Several studies show that crews' not mastering the English language and crews' lack of cultural awareness have been the direct or indirect reason for maritime accidents and incidents (Improving the awareness ..., 2007). But no academic study has discussed the problematic on the same issues in the communication between the ship and the terminal/port. Can one then assume that this is not a problem? When talking to seafarers, to the contrary, they tell that the English is also weak in ports and terminals

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author only and do not represent in anyway that of the World Maritime University (WMU).

and by pure luck often this has not caused an accident. For this reason, perhaps, "... ports and terminals ought to be allocated a *vulnerability index number* according to how easily they may be shut down by some unforeseen calamity" (Making ports ..., 2008). This could be interesting especially in dry bulk terminals and sometimes also in crude and product terminals. Though, terminals that are dedicated to a specific oil-major appear to have less communication problems. Assume that communication problems exist in ports and terminals. Then, it is high time for an English language upgrading and that port managers are given courses in cultural awareness.

Österman (2008) reports that the measuring of hazardous gases, not only lack of oxygen, is vital before entering cargo-holds containing seemingly less hazardous cargoes. Normally, the dissemination of vital information is done verbally and in writing. Therefore, in order to correctly perform an operation of control it implies good verbal and reading skills. With a multicultural crew "This might be especially important where the manpower is mobile and sometimes poorly educated, implying problems reading and understanding instructions in a second language" (ibid., p.14). Hence, the industry has an important issue to tackle.

Recently, a number of academic studies have reported an apparent problematic issue with culturally mixed ships' crews and crews' with English that often is not more than bare basic. Table 1 lists six reports touching these issues.

Table 1. Researches on ships' crew

Isolde av Singapore	du Rietz, Peter	The Swedish National Maritime Museum, Stockholm	2001
Transnational seafarers communities	Kahveci, Erol et al	SIRC, Cardiff	2001
The experiences of Filipino seafarers in a mix nationality crew	Espiritu, Nissa et al	National Maritime Polytechnic	2002
If you are a good leader I am a good follower	Knudsen, Fabienne	Forskningsenheten for Maritim Medecin, Esbjerg	2003
Comunicación y seguridad en el ámbito marítimo	de la Campa Portela, Rosa Mary	Universidad da Coruña	2004
A mixed crew complement	Horck, Jan	World Maritime University (WMU) ¹ , Malmö	2006

Above and other scholarly reports often have a contradictory conclusion. To identify benefits, other than economic, with a culturally mixed crew seem to be complicated (Horck, 2004, 2005, 2006). The industry gets confused of reports that disagree and also from reports that does not have a proper casualty analysis and that not draw consequential conclusions from casualty reports. Very few countries analyze maritime accidents. A little Maritime Administrations (MA) survey reveals that only an average of 15% of all maritime accidents in a country is analyzed. Only very serious accidents are selected for an analysis. An accident also has to be seen in relation to other accidents and their causes compared. As well, small accidents should be analysed to minimize the risk of them being repeated and become serious. Analyzing has become a cost priority issue instead of a safety issue.

In order to keep these challenges (culture, language, gender) under control it is obvious that the solution to this problematic is to give shipping people a course in cultural awareness and more and better education in English. This is the truth until somebody can proof the opposite.

Therefore, the following will address communication and diversity challenges as sore points in improving safety at sea.

2 COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

After the ship *Bright Field* crashed into the River Walk Marketplace at the port of New Orleans the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) cited several maintenance and *crew communication errors* as contributory to the accident (Malone, 2000).

“Communication breakdown ...”, (2007) is the headline of an article in *Solutions* referring to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) stating that the underlying factors to a severely burned seaman on a ship were: complacency, *inadequate communication*, poor hazard awareness and lack of common sense (good seamanship).

These two reports, among a bundle of other recent accidents and incidents, will serve as examples of a fairly new challenge that shipping needs to contest.

Intercultural communication (in USA: cross-cultural communication) is a competence needed for working in a multicultural mixture. With the competence includes the ability to separate similarities and differences between the different interpretations, on same document or same deed, which people do when coming from different cultures. In USA this subject was “big business” in the 1960’s. Today, it is becoming an obvious part in all academic and business education.

The Convention on Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW 95) in Regulation I/4a stresses that effective communication must prevail onboard at all times.

The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 74) in Chapter V, regulation 14, §3 and §4 requires companies to be responsible for ensuring that there are, at all times, onboard all ships adequate means in place for effective oral communication and communication between ship and shore based authorities.

Intercultural communication has to be learned it is not something that humans are born with. Independent a person’s background, mutual respect and tolerance are behaviours that everybody can participate in and take responsibility for.

The above underlines that the regulators are concerned that correct and timely reception and understanding of messages and instructions is a must onboard; and this not without good reasons. Because of rules not being followed, there are other stakeholders than the lawyers that are becoming more and more concerned. This is noted in the following.

2.1 Communication Challenges On Ships

Often, too often, the messages sent are not the same as the message received. People working in shipping certainly cannot afford to make mistakes and take wrong decisions because of miss-communication, neither onboard or in company board rooms. If the crew cannot communicate it can become fatal. Miscommunication is costly and it can destroy ones reputation as a quality operator. If people do not understand the *meaning* of what is said due to weak English and cultural differences prejudice, power distance and stereotyping, the entire industry will continue to have a bad reputation.

To ensure that the crew are effective communicators is an important duty for the company’s designated person (DP). According to the International Safety Management Code (ISM Code 02) in chapters 1.3.3 and 6.7 crew communicative skills are regulated. In order to effectively perform duties the competent DP has to take a proper course in different subjects including communication/cultural awareness. A DP-course has recently been developed by the WMU.

The ISM audits require compliance to a system; hence it becomes natural that crew communication capability should be extended to more than the bare safety of the ship and its crew. The control and verification of crews’ language skill by the flag-state or the port-state is not enough, bearing in mind that communication in a crisis situation, an action of the unknown, is very unpredictable. All onboard should be competent in the

ship's working language, not only to manage work and safety issues, but also to be able to socialise. If not, the crewmember will be alienated and this may indirectly create a safety risk. This is illustrated with figure 1.

A simple solution is chatting. It is a good set off to avoid alienation. Loneliness is an obvious risk factor, particularly when the individual cannot handle it. Ircha (2005) has noted that anxiety is more difficult to deal with than fear. Extreme forms of anxiety are unhealthy and can lead to somatic ailments. Small interactive activities can create a great positive impact on cooperation. IMO has several times emphasized cooperation in its annual theme of the year. This is certainly relevant both in big scale and in small size relations (interpersonal relations).

Figure 1. A crewmember reluctant to talk easily becomes alienated



Caroline Ann Martin 3/02

Source: Caroline Ann Martin 3/02²

2.2 Communication Challenges In Ports

This chapter is here in order to tell that the industry has no reports on the condition or compatibility of terminal operators' skill in English and knowledge in cultural differences.

Many pointless maritime accidents happen in port areas like at the anchorage, in fairways, along the quays etc. The reason for such accidents cannot only be the ships officers but possibly also the pilots, the vessel traffic services (VTS) operators, the terminal operators etc.

According to a number of observations the communication link between the ship and the terminal has become a serious disturbance to operators. This is partly the reason why IMO has established a working group on the HE. As has been noted earlier, part of the mandate is to provide for specific minimum competency requirements for a person nominated as the company's DP; see IMO meeting document MEPC 56/17/1. Included in this mandate is the formulation of a competency course and it contains a chapter "communication" that encompass cultural awareness. Dr Phil's Report on ISM, issue 10 February 2008, indicates that the course which has been developed by the WMU is very well suited also for Port Captains and Terminal Operation Managers beside functions like managers ashore, internal auditors, ships' officers, MET teachers, flag state auditors, Port State Control (PSC) inspectors and others. The opportunity is there for port workers to update. Progress is therefore dependent on a Port Manager's initiative to consign white and blue collar workers to a course.

2.3 Communication Challenges In The Ship Port Interface

Sparse public information exists on lack of communication between ship and shore.

Figures 2 and 3 serves as examples clearly indicating that the agreement between ship and shore did not work out well and this despite checklists and recommendations in ISGOTT and by interest organizations like: INTERTANKO, BIMCO, OCIMF, IACS, SIGTTO, NI and INTERCARGO etc.³

The number of cracks identified at inspections and reasons for ships seeking a port of refuge demonstrates that ships are subject to a lot of stress. The reason for this is not only because of the movements in the sea, naval architects and material scientists⁴ not up to date views on material strength's for ships sailing in wave-highs that appear to be higher today than 50 years ago, the Captains drive to keep a timetable but also because of improper planned and executed cargohandling as a result of inadequate communication between the ship and the terminal. In addition one can claim substandard maintenance being the most striking reason for a good number of accidents. Perhaps, the people onboard have difficulties to read and understand the manufacturers' often convoluted maintenance instructions?

Figure 2. *Prestige*, broken in two



Source retrieved on 27/2 2008 from⁵:

Figure 3. *Selendang Ayu*, broken in two



Source retrieved on 27/2 2008 from⁶:

3 DIVERSITY CHALLENGES

Judging from owners that decide to withdraw from having a mixed crew complement the shipping industry as a whole seems afraid of diversity (Horck, 2006).

There are tendencies that vetting inspectors start to pay special attention to ships with mixed crews. It should not be so. It is not right and not in line with industry efforts to be working in a global community. But when a mixed crew comes to impede ships safety and efficient ship operations it is understandable that the oil-majors take a proactive approach. The phenomenon of diversity-fear is not unusual or something that deviates from the behaviour of a normal human being, individual or group. Still the action is not coherent and healthy. There are other preventive measures that can be introduced; viz. education.

Diversities recognized in shipping are: culture, ethnic belonging, religion, certain behaviour, language and gender. These labels on people working in the shipping industry, perhaps excluding gender, are traditionally represented in several maritime activities. When discussing gender it seems to contain a value of guilt that makes theoretical analysis complicated.

This paper focuses on communication, culture and to a modest extent gender.

3.1 Multicultural Challenges In General

When we judge others, who we do not know, we interpret the meaning of the reason for the behaviour of someone from another culture usually with emotion. The problem appears when we do not know the values, perspectives and approaches used by the other culture.

People in groups, more than four persons, tend to take their culture with them to their new environment. If there is any individual problem this often is solved within their community. If the nationality and culture is linked to religion then religious activities are performed in togetherness. The old saying that birds of a feather flock together is certainly also the truth for human beings.

Contrary, an individual in Diaspora easily can become lonely and uncertain on what is right and what is wrong in the new environment. If this person is alone onboard a ship or in a foreign classroom decency demands that colleagues pay attention to the person and his/her behaviour.

People can easily become upset and uncomfortable when their experiences in another culture do not match with what they have anticipated; their stereotyping becomes disturbed. Therefore, it is not surprising and unnatural that every culture tends to divide people into in-groups and out-groups. This tendency is a quality and safety killer.

3.2 Gender Challenges In General

To combat today's shortage of crew the owners seriously have to consider mustering women, as both ratings and officers.

Stories from the sea often tell about men who faced great dangers but the fact is that also women shared many of these dangers. Women have been invisible and uncelebrated in maritime history. History can tell about women as pirate queens, disguised women on merchant ships, stewardesses and wireless operators etc. If and when women were discovered they were often abused, put down and told that they are useless. With time eventually women were hired as Masters and today they are told to run their ships as if it was their home. Their ships are neat and tidy and usually handled all according to the book and a bit more.

In the Swedish merchant marine there have been women on duty since after WW2. A study reveals that women at sea is certainly not problem free (Kaijser, 2005). By tradition male seafarers have considered women contribute to bad luck onboard. But, in spite of this, when women in any case are onboard it can be assured that "... men and women have the same work conditions ..., they have for instance equal salaries for equal work" (*ibid.*, p.13, author's translation). In Sweden the equality in salaries has become possible because of a tariff based salary system. In shore jobs like metal workers, gantry-crane drivers or chimney sweepers etc. there are women in the workforce and the salaries are equal. It is indeed strange that white collar job-positions can not be offered with a gender-level salary. From a worldwide perspective it looks like the more education people have the more salary-segregation is practised between men and women. A striking example is academic professors and medicine doctors. But it should be noted that this is a phenomenon typical for the Western world. In many non-OECD countries the white collar staff salaries are equal.

On ships, "... women strive for a collegial belonging on equal terms" (*ibid.*, p.163). But there are a number of female and male characteristics that makes the onboard job-roles different in relation to gender characteristics, physical strengths, technical competence, social competence etc. In order to survive in life, with evident differences and prerequisites, a first solution by the woman coming onboard is to strive for alikeness with the majority i.e. to live up to a gender neutral identification of reality onboard. Kaijser (2005, p.149, author's translation) expresses this with "... women are not seen as individuals but are forced into determined roles". Many seafaring women have reported that they after a number of services onboard have become male-alike. Some women even found themselves totally incompatible with other women. Sadly, the study shows that many women's experiences at sea have given them a negative male image.

Onboard ships it is generally accepted for people to be different as long as one has the ability to be able to agree with others. The difference does *not* include gender. Probably, this is why, after some time onboard, a woman for survival reasons has to settle in to male norms.

Usually and as officers, the women do not wish to show their full capacity and competence (again for not being harassed by the male colleagues) and often they are

not even allowed to show their capacity; you are a woman and I am a man so let me do it instead.

In an ongoing study on worldwide maritime education and training (MET) one can note that there is a tendency to employ more women teaching to becoming Masters and Mates. This is an indication that there are capable women in the industry and they wish and demand to be given the opportunity to show their knowledge and skills.

Today, many owners find crew retention a problem. To become a teacher is a good prospect for the person who decides to drop the anchor ashore and dedicate time to family or other work. Seafaring has always been a through job.

One can note that today it is politically correct/appropriate to employ females. For some women it is also a fashion to be in shipping. The sea side of the shipping industry can be proud that women, in most countries, work on same conditions as men. Shore jobs in shipping seem not as unequal as in many other high qualified shore employments but to some extent it is still unequal.

The STCW 95, in Resolution 14, promotes women to work in the shipping industry. *Affirmative action* is another solution to redress wrongful discrimination and make it possible for women to work in traditional male jobs. This is commonly achieved through target recruitment programs by preferential treatment; in some cases with the use of quotas. But shipping employment is guided by pure qualification.

This is a statement different from the opinion of many women who believe that quota is the most important factor to increase woman power in industry and politics. If women are not given work priorities then equality will be impossible. This is the opinion by e.g. *Unifem*, the UN development Fund for Women, and by organisations like the *Hand in Hand International*.

Some people believe that the more diversity discussions focus on one category, e.g. women, the more the efforts will be to maintain status quo i.e. to maintain the differences. If men and women instead could realize that the best solution, *to the benefits of the whole*, are competition on equal terms and the best qualified gets the job. Only quality and capability for the job should be criteria governing work opportunity. Human inequalities or discriminations should be talked about in public.

Still, organizations like the *Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA)*⁷ has its full right because like the former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said at a speech in Stockholm in 2004: There's a special place in hell for women who don't help each other. Women have since long time rendered rights through some kind of protesting and group lobbying.

When women are not treated as equals to men in job-opportunities then the women should follow the legend: Right is there to be taken.

In order for women to be promoted to leaders they have to be received with support, met with suggestions and paid attention to at their very first job (Marklund & Snickare, 2005). As long as men have *aliveness* as a key parameter to be appointed or to get a leading position in the company women will have a tough hurdle to pass.

When a woman has become a leader she becomes more visual than a man. The reason being that if she does something wrong it is more noticed. A consequence of this is that women strictly follow the book, the rules, to be assured not to do wrong.

Women are known to be able to handle more than one thing at the time. Therefore, they have a good presumption to be successful leaders: they can handle many decisions at the same time and be able to make quick decisions. The last criterion is not considered to be very feminine. This causes a conflict of opinion. A common male stereotyped opinion is that women should be able to discuss, only men are allowed to make quick subjective decisions. There are several such issues where people in general expect something from a woman and then she does the opposite in order to be alike. The men get confused.

A female leader often speaks fast in order to be able to say what she wishes to pass on. A study in a class environment shows that compared to the men the women are given one third of the time to speak in class i.e. from early school time women are trained to speak fast.

To reduce the value of a woman's words the men have a tendency to use a very negative and noticeable body language. This is not a collegial attitude and the men should stop this *to the benefit of the whole*. A decent exchange of words makes the working climate healthier. Another by men demoralizing strategy is not to allow a woman to finish her sentences. When this tendency is practiced also among men it only shows how puffed up/inflated the interrupter is; not a constructive behaviour for good business relations and safety concerns.

In the whole debate on equalities at work one should remember that the issue also should be discussed from a perspective of man; equality is not a woman issue.

Shore staff and sea staff should be educated to cope with diversities in order to manage working with and cooperate with women and with people with different ethnic and religious belongings.

3.3 Multicultural And Gender Challenges On Ships

Most probably, the reason for this new challenge can be found in the minimum manning levels that are determined by the national MA. The manning levels are not worldwide harmonized. Perhaps, it would be a good mission by IMO to formulate mandatory, realistic and harmonized manning-levels beside the recommendations on competences for various onboard functions. Manning should not be a tool for competition. The level is fundamental in the sense that it is everybody's matter, a common interest to safety, security and environment protection.

Since the beginning of the 20th century merchant ships have carried a multicultural crew and with fewer problems compared to the situation today. Before, there were enough people onboard to check each other both professionally and mentally. Accidents and incidents were fewer due to the impact of the HE.

During the last century, onboard camaraderie and genuine mutual concern between each crew member assembled crew cohesiveness. With a marginal sized crew it becomes difficult to be a deviator which is contrary to ashore, where a deviator easily assimilates in the crowd. Still though, there is an old saying that those who seek their living at sea are a bit odd and if they are not they soon will become. Anyway, the risks that they all were exposed to made them help each other.

Seafarers often have problems handling conflicts. From my study, it can be noted that in a conflict, people (WMU students) prefer to withdraw than to argue. In important human issues (especially concerning safety and security) silence is considered dangerous. To debate is usually better than to shrug one's shoulders. To lose an interest and drop empathy is even more devastating.

To speak fast onboard a ship is not advisable, it gives room for misunderstandings. If this is a general tendency for women they must learn to slow down their speed of speaking.

An owner with many ships might have problems to know each individual crewmember. It is indirectly advised in the STCW 95 that the link between crew and owner must be more personal i.e. a company with too many ships easily can become a quality killer. An owner's good care for the crew will smoothen out eventual diversity fears. Both recruitment efforts and retention rates will be recovered.

3.4 Multicultural And Gender Challenges In Ports

In the ports, perhaps, there are more opportunities for women to find a challenging work than at sea. In several European and American ports women are employed as truck drivers and crane drivers. At terminals handling vehicles it is even mentioned in

some advertisements of employment that women are preferred. The reason here is that women are considered to be more careful and they obey the rules and drive and park the cars with utmost accuracy which is very important when handling vehicles onboard and in terminals.

Multicultural challenges in ports are furthermore due to eventual national immigrants and guest workers. These have a different assimilation structure and are differently taken care of compared to employees at sea often being recruited through local manning agencies in some countries.

A unique constellation is the Copenhagen Malmö Port (CMP) where the workforce is a mixture of Danes and Swedes. Time will tell if these two cultures can cooperate under one management. So far it look very promising.

3.5 Diversity Challenges In Maritime Education

Education of seafarers and port workers are usually done in the following environments and contexts:

- 1) National MET institutions
- 2) National ports
- 3) National MET institutions and ports with native (indigenous) teachers or with visiting teachers from other cultures and with English as the teaching language
- 4) Field studies to port and shipping identities beyond national boundaries
- 5) World Maritime University

Within the European Union (EU) it could be an anticipated future solution, to costly MET institutions, to share and cooperate with the establishment of a few highly sophisticated MET universities with the most modern technologies e.g. simulators etc. With such a scenario would follow teaching and learning environments encompassing a cultural mix both from a learner's and a teacher's point of view. In order to be successful in such a scenario teachers and students should take courses in cultural awareness.

In the future, the courses for port blue and white colour employees should focus on subjects like those listed in table 2.

Table 2. Course-subjects for port-workers

Cargo handling thinking because it is the core activity for earnings	Reuse of waste material - recycling
Marine awareness	Communication
Safety	International world of work
Security	Culture (and ethnic) differences
Use of human resources	Schedule keeping
Stevedoring as a branch of supply chain management	Connection to the public
Application of port performance indicators – productivity awareness and the importance of planning and control	Benchmarking- sharing experience on fundamental issues on safety and environment etc.
Quality Assurance (QA) concept	

One crucial reason for introducing these subjects is the ethnic mixture in the workforce and the globalization of shipping as such. The subjects also leads to a stronger company belonging that indirectly is a step stone to awareness, motivation and genuine views on safety and concern of oneself and others. Safety is an individual's concern *for the benefits of the whole*.

The subjects in table 2 should align with the statement of Grey (2007) writing that educational subjects in any course should have as a fundamental issue to *open minds* of the course participants.

To increase staff/crew awareness on crucial issues the employers need to assign efforts to motivate and explain the advantages of participation in the courses.

With an increased number of women in MET it is important that the institutions take this in consideration when formulating its quality policy. A good start would be to include a staff female welfare officer to whom the female students could address themselves in personal matters.

With a crew educated and trained to work in diversity, in particular to work in effective teams with women, safety and work performance innovations will follow. If the maritime woman, later in life, drops the anchor ashore and finds work in a port, of course, it would be good if the stevedores and the office staff take courses in cultural awareness and get a gender perspective on work.

Due to the existence of multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural crews, communication and leadership skills are essential for efficient operations. Apparently there is a need to train seafarers to improve their competence in non-technical resource management skills to ensure effective error prevention. Today, when teamwork is practiced this is generally accepted to be a necessary core competency by all onboard and ashore.

Such non-technical resource management skills, or social skills, in contrary to cognitive skills, could be described with the following qualities to be achieved:

Communication skills:

- 1) Team building
- 2) Cooperation attitude
- 3) Consideration and support of others; empathy (if it can be taught)

It is puzzling that the communication competency least taught in schools is listening (at least in the Western world). Worldwide, very few people know how to actively listen.

In modern education students should communicate in class. Reiz (2008, p.34) writes that "... satisfaction surveys indicate that students want communication ... in groups of up to 10 or 12 students"; if so, also in MET. Perhaps, the industry will experience fewer accidents having its reason because of people not learned to discuss and understand.

Managerial skills:

- 1) Coordination of onboard activities
- 2) Management of workloads (to prevent fatigue)
- 3) Methods to assure that required standards and company policy is maintained
- 4) Teamwork

The subjects above were covered with what was (past tense: sorry to say) signified *good seamanship*. If the managerial skills above are carried out with common sense the crew retention rate will be higher and crew will be less stressed; a happy ship. Leave the blame culture behind and focus on what is correct!

A prerequisite of above is that the crew is receptive to these issues. To get an assurance of this it is recommended that people who aim at service on ships before entering any education undergo a personality disorder test. In many countries the armed forces successfully use tests to discover a person's assumptions/conditions to carry out a specific work. The MET institutions should introduce similar tests. Onboard teambuilding efforts will become understandable.

Because MET programs do not always meet industry needs the industry finds it necessary to introduce special standards. Below follows two examples of the owners'

organisations recommendations to assure that ships are not detained by PSC inspectors because of substandard crew.

1) The Oil Companies International Maritime Forum's (OCIMF's) *Tanker management and self-assessment, a best-practice guide for ship operators*, (TMSA) is strictly used by the oil-majors. TMSA has twelve elements for the owners to follow; three of them are directed at: language skill, personal interaction and cultural awareness.

Element 2, Recruitment and management of shore-based personnel, stage 1: The company has a written plan Induction (of new recruits) covers all policies including safety, health, environment, quality, business ethics and cultural awareness (OCIMF, 2004, p.10, my parenthesis and underlining).

Element 2, Recruitment and management of shore-based personnel, stage 4: The company promotes appropriate interpersonal skills training. (ibid, p.10, my underlining).

Element 3, Recruitment and management of ship's personnel, stage 2: Procedures cover a range of factors including previous experience, age limits, ability to communicate in a common language and (ibid, p.12, my underlining).

These elements are not only a guide for tanker operators but could well be used for any ship operation. However, emphasising the above elements also indicates that the reason for this paper is something owners should pay special attention to; it may be crucial in the reduction of accidents.

2) The International Association of Independent Tanker Owners' (INTERTANKO's) Tanker Officer Training Standards (TOTS) (that to some extent meets the elements of the Tanker Management and Self Assessment (TMSA) guidelines) aims to help the owners to meet the oil-majors requirements. The reason for TOTS being that officer competence right across the tanker industry does not universally meet with some charterers' expectations. The standards hopefully will be accepted as the norm of a competent tanker crew.

On 22 February 2008 *Det Norske Veritas* reported a double increase of accidents during the last five years and this mainly due to officers' inexperience and lack of competence. Most probably, in 2008, the insurance premiums will increase 30% because of such accidents. No wonder that the industry starts privately conducted courses to make sure the ships can arrive intact and on time. Include also courses in cultural awareness and both written and spoken English and the industry will manage to sell successful transportation.

To be an airplane pilot the individual has to take mandatory courses on own initiative. Such courses are usually privately conducted and cost the individual a substantial amount of money. An option to taking these courses is to be enrolled and educated at the Air Force. Recently the Swedish government announced that they will take over the education of airplane pilots. Optimistically, the education will please the airlines' customers, the passengers, having a wish to arrive intact and on time. The merchant marine education has since very long time been a government's concern. As highlighted above, an education perhaps not always to the customers' satisfaction (shippers that are concerned about their cargo). Perhaps, a change in MET will follow?

In 2005, Thoresen shipping company made big investments establishing *Thoresen Training Center* in Bangkok. The training centre is staffed by nine people and is equipped with two training rooms (50 and 100 seats), two computer training rooms (12 and 30 seats) and one dining room with a 50 seat capacity. MET is lacking behind!

The teaching in MET should not follow a pedagogy that comprises a teacher centred education similar to addressing children. In MET the students are more or less grownups and therefore *andragogy* (a student centred education for grownups) should be practised. Teachers become facilitators passing on life experience. MET is vocational and the industry are in need of people who knows how to do. To learn the long way from service onboard is a costly arrangement – the Protection and Indemnity

(P&I) Clubs can verify this, they know how much they have to pay for human errors onboard, e.g. mistakes in handling the ship and handling the cargo. Perhaps, MET should return to a structuralistic⁸ view on its activities and be more proactive.

5 CONCLUSION

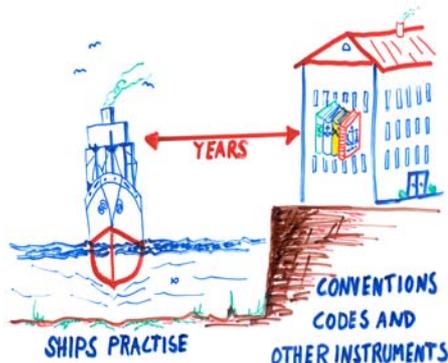
Normally, a person with different views and ideas is an asset. Different thinking comes with cultures, beliefs, languages and gender. New ideas should be welcome in a competitive environment. It is better to have different ideas than no ideas at all. Therefore, particularly people from other cultures and women should be more than welcome in the industry.

A solution to the ships manning dilemma could be to make it more attractive and reasonable for women to work onboard. Another possibility is to establish manning agencies in Africa and South America. In the middle of the 20th century Ghana was ranked high in supporting seafarers to mainly the British Red Ensign. Today, there are owners getting interested in mustering Angolans.

If women use a language that is connected to leaders, i.e. by males a male recognised language, the possibilities would be more favourable to take leadership roles. Sadly to say, a male problem will come because by men the woman no longer will be seen as a woman anymore and that of course is a pity. The language disturbs the common male stereotyping of a woman. Women: be who you are and behave and dress accordingly. Apparently, equality rights are not easy to comply with.

A more holistic view of the situation of today's inadequacies in shipping could be to put more efforts to disseminate information to more stakeholders in the industry. This would cause a wider awareness of actual constraints. The key organization to shoulder awareness would be the national MA. To bridge the gap, figure 4, would be a first step and with that will follow better communication and empathy between stakeholders.

Figure 4. Bridge the gaps between stakeholders in shipping (Arvedson, 1980)⁹



The below four issues are basic prerequisite for successful shipping¹⁰

- 1) Routines - practically settled since many years
- 2) Information - dissemination and reporting
- 3) Know how - shipping is genuinely practical
- 4) Ethics - codes on how to go about things are gentleman agreements

These four issues are relevant for all stakeholders in the industry and if everybody pays attention to this the work will flow nicely. Normally, this is the case in shipping and that makes shipping an interesting workplace. Though, some non scrupulous players are deviating from this norm (being driven by profit hunger and being cheap) and problems

within the industry occur and are followed by bad reputation. Most agreements in shipping are very clear because they are based on practicalities and non-sophisticated communication. It must be MET's role to pass on these unwritten rules in order to avoid expensive mistakes based on the fact that people has to learn the hard way.

In one early 2008 *MRM News* (Maritime Resource Management) The Swedish Club perceives that cruise ships in general are not better than other ships when studying claims due to "navigational" errors. Though, markedly one major cruise operator differs from this trend and the apparent reason is that the crew has been send to MRM courses. These courses include human performance, culture awareness and communication skills. Accidents do not happen because of bad luck. A commitment to safety produce good results and the stronger the commitments the better the results.

The industry is repairing/improving systems instead of changing peoples' attitudes. Courses are needed in cultural awareness and good communication. It is possibly more cost effective than many technical gadgets.

It must primary be the MET institutions mission to consider seafarers communicative competence. A further analysis of competence should also include the skills of being able to adapt to different social situations. Then, certainly owners and others in the shipping industry will find advantages from human differences and not be afraid of diversities.

Regarding misunderstandings in the SPI, due to bad communication and lack of cultural awareness, there is a need for research. The reason why still no reliable date is available could be that the issue is rather sensitive to many ports and terminals. A negative enlightening of the truth could commercially be detrimental to many ports.

To fully welcome diversity first one has to
develop a good understanding of self.

ENDNOTES

1 The IMO apex educational establishment in Malmö, Sweden; giving courses to managers in various shipping identities issuing an MSc in *Maritime Affairs* to successful students

2 Retrieved from: <http://www.mildstonescreations.com>

3 FAL.6/Circ.14 SHIP/PORT INTRERFACE contains a "Revised list of existing publications relevant to areas and topics relating to the ship/port interface"

4 Being aware that IACS from 1 April 2006 introduced new structural rules for bulk carriers and tankers. The criterion today is 24 hours in the North Atlantic during 25 years before fatigue breakdown; a function based criteria

5 Retrieved from: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/11/20/world/main530083.shtml>

6 Retrieved from: http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/218081_freighter30.html

7 WISTA is an international organization for women in management positions involved in maritime transportation business and related trades worldwide. It aims to be a major player in attracting more women to the industry and in supporting women in management positions. With networking, education and mentoring in focus we can enhance members' competence and empower career success

8 A theoretical science paradigm that dominated in the middle of the 1960's

9 It was during this STCW meeting that the Secretary General of IMO Mr C.P. Srivastava asked the delegates if they wished to have an institution where the IMO instruments better could be promulgated for safer shipping and cleaner oceans. A voting resulted in an omnibus support which later became WMU. Sölve Arvedson was the WMUs first Rector; he passed away late December 2006; remembered in a world forgetting.

10 From notes taken during lectures by Arne Sandevärn; a WMU Visiting Professor

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