Raising the standard of MET with Innovation in training methods

[April 20 April]

GlobalMET members organised a meet which focused on raising the standard of maritime education and training, marked with innovation in teaching. This full-day meeting at the Mirage Hotel in Mumbai on April 21 had a full house of trainers and teachers, besides participation from Industry and Administration.

Capt KN Debao, Director & Principal, Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre (AEMTC), launched the seminar proceedings with a brief introduction and welcome address. Being a well-recognised teacher himself, Capt. Debao stressed, "We have gathered to find out how we can innovate and raise the standard of maritime education and training. I firmly believe that up-to-date learning methods are important.”

The AEMTC Director & Principal introduced the speakers and Chief Guest, also providing a brief about them. He informed the delegates that GlobalMET has already received the NGO status by the IMO, which received a good round of applause.

The opening address was provided by Rod Short, Executive Secretary, GlobalMET. Considering it a privilege to speak to so many teachers, the maritime veteran said, "The key word today is innovation.”

Short showed a wonderful picture of the Queen Mary 2 and H.S. Endeavour sailing together and also took pride in informing the gathering that the Captain of the Queen Mary 2 was his student!

Executive Secretary presented striking photos of ships in bad weather, and how tough a seafarer's life is. Among several interesting seafaring tips, especially related to training, he also spoke about the navigation control centre. In closing, Rod made a very powerful statement, "Really good teaching is not an easy job." -

A view from the Indian administration: expectations from maritime training institutes

Capt MM Saggi, Nautical Adviser, Government of India, the Chief Guest of the forum, took charge of this topic. He started with an illustration of a (possible) interaction between a cadet of TS Chanakya and himself, as the examiner. Supporting changes, the Nautical Adviser stated, "Change is the only constant and we must adapt and keep up with the pace." He also took everyone down memory lane by providing snippets about Indian shipping, talking about S.S. Rahaman, S.S. Dufferin, S.S. Rajendra, S.S. Chanakya, DMET, MERI, LBS, and MMET.

Upset about India losing out on the ratings front Capt. Saggi said, "We made a historical mistake of not moving with the change years back and by having only old cadets age-wise and not the young - which were employed by other nations and it was received well...India lost out on that." The Chief Guest also threw light on training institutes, their rise & rise, and how a collegium had to be appointed to keep a check on them.

Additionally, he also spoke of impending problems including shipboard training slots, poaching, quality maintenance, IML and DO Shipping.

Talking about the way forward, the Adviser added, "What's expected on the ship and what's taught in the training centre is not the same...thus let's go back to the end-that is, what is done onboard. Furthermore, we are also in the process of implementing self-assessment and certification for the training institutes.”

Improving maritime training by meeting the challenges of new technology

The Guest of Honour, Capt. Kuba Szymanski, Secretary General, InterManager, was awed by the commitment of all the teacher-participants present, as the forum day was a Saturday, and he is not used to seeing such a turnout on a weekend! The InterManager Secretary General showed the way and set minds thinking as to how they can improve maritime training by meeting challenges of new technology. Desiring everyone to turn their attention to reality checks, he said, "When the writing on the screen screams at us and we ignore that, then we have a problem." He also brought out some interesting points through an exercise which involved the participants. The master mariner highlighted a point. "We are training students for the last so many years. However we ourselves have not gone through the exams that we prepare them for. nor do we put in practice..."
Further, more than the majority of the participants here must not have learnt GMDSS, ECDIS, OPA-90, and the like in college, but you'll teach it to your students!” He also pinpointed the extinction of the sextant, its importance, and that he still favours its usage. Capt Szymanski also made everyone think and set the ball rolling when he made a mention of an apt poem, related to the Guest of Honour ideas and message.

Later, Rod Short spoke about GlobalMET books and publications. Toon van de Sande, Ass't Programme Manager, Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP), also made his presence felt at the training forum. Supporting anti-piracy and associated measures, he spoke briefly about the stupid things the pirates make seafarers do, and how piracy is a specific type of stress. In fact, he rightly pointed out that a seafarer prepared and trained for piracy will turn out to be a better seafarer.

Then it was Chris Houghton's time. Involving everyone in an exercise that needed groups, the efficient trainer and Managing Director of Houghton Maritime Limited, showed how to attract and retain motivated teachers. Chris brought out the point that passion for the teaching job is extremely vital. Haughton made clear the fact “As a teacher you may not be rich and splurging money but you can still be relatively comfortable. Ultimately, at the end of the day teachers must ask themselves a question- Why do I want to teach.”

Soon after, Capt Deboo narrated an

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about the advancement of technology in modern medicine - the way cameras and microphones are used by doctors in a surgery, although similar technology is not used solely to navigate a ship! In conclusion, he stated, “Eye contact with your student is vital. Moreover, it’s imperative that your student has learnt and understood what has been taught.”

Later, Pooran Chugani, Chief Coordinator of the Board of Examinations for Seafarers Trust, coordinated the next session.

Dr BK Saxena, Principal, Tolani Maritime Institute, spoke about and presented new methodologies in maritime education and training (MET). He covered the following topics: process in MET Institution, traits of a young trainee, transfer of knowledge and development of skills, and knowledge of skills. Dr Saxena also made it clear that the faculty's potential is significant and that any institute is as good as its teachers. Further, he also spoke about teachers’ potential, presented a questionnaire for faculty members, range of faculty questionnaire analysis, assessment, control chart, and skills development.

Towards the end, there was a discussion forum which involved all the speakers and the participants. This debate was moderated by JK Dhar, Director, IMU, Mumbai Campus. Finally the seminar came to an end after the presentation of mementoes and the vote of thanks by Dinesh Kalhans of Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement.

Shorty, everyone mingled and networked over an elaborate buffet lunch.