Tradeoff of Healthy Volleys at GlobalMET Conference

"Can a conference like this work out at how we need to change our whole approach and look fresh at what is happening so that we do not get bogged down by technical, mandatory courses for which a large number of institutes are keen to provide their services? We need to see if we could provide anything more while addressing various challenges faced."

Mr. M.F. Pinto, IAS (Retd)

"When the GlobalMET decides to refashion themselves, to reengineer themselves to the challenges of tomorrow perhaps you might like to look at the Business Excellence Model. After business excellence one has to achieve organizational excellence."

Mr. N. Srinivasan Former DG ,CII

Our challenge as training providers is to advocate for improved competence standards in the industry. We need to do this more loudly and more effectively than we have ever done before. We need to do this alongside other like-minded groups and we need to effectively engage with key delegations at IMO.

Capt. Tim Wilson, Vice Chairman, GlobalMET

"We in India have been the pioneers in developing the competency tables, function based in 16 competencies. Here every competency is addressed and we have onboard assessment record books where the seafarer is supposed to go through a structured training scheme. How far it is implemented to the book depends on the ship owner. There must be a lot of inputs from the ship owners’ side to see that the spirit of training assessment and continuous training is really implemented on board the ship."

Ajoy Chatterjee, Chief Surveyor, Government of India

The Global Met conference was held on 9th June, 2007 at Mumbai. An array of distinguished speakers from the industry participated and presented their papers on a wide variety of MET topics such as: ‘The competency crisis,’ ‘Maritime Education and Self Assessment,’ ‘Maritime Trainers in India,’ ‘The future of Maritime Training in India,’ ‘Improving Maritime Training in India,’ ‘The Seafarers,’ etc.

Mr. M. Pinto, IAS (Retd) set the tone of the conference with his highly optimistic tone, "Can a conference like this work out at how we need to change our whole approach and look fresh at what is happening so that we do not get bogged down by technical, mandatory courses for which a large number of institutes are keen to provide their services. We need to see if we could provide anything more while addressing various challenges faced."

The Global Maritime Education and Training Association (GlobalMET) is a growing network of some 100 MET providers in 28 countries. Shipmasters and other senior personnel are expressing deep concern about declining levels of competence. Standards vary in the delivery of MET. Amongst the concerns identified by GlobalMET are that the industry does not have a strong commitment to training, which is seriously under resourced and with insufficient recognition given to the investment aspect of training. GlobalMET is also concerned that insufficient attention is given to recruitment and retention of seagoing staff and to ensuring appropriate educational background, attitude and aptitude.
The availability and rapid development of technology and associated delivery methodologies provide significant opportunities for the shipping industry to initiate a major advance in the global delivery of MET of a high standard. Such an initiative in the education and training sector has the potential to generate major benefits.

It has been said with grudge in some quarters that the examination system in India is very tough and there is an urgent need for ‘global equalization’ in this respect. It has been noted often that people who fall here and do not achieve the standards go abroad, and return after obtaining the necessary certificates. Once here, the Certificate of Competency allows them to do exactly what a person who has successfully completed the stringent testing standards is doing. While touching upon this issue, Capt. Navin Passey in his address in the capacity of Ship Manager said there was an imbalance here and it needs to be rectified. He said, “bodies such as GlobalMET have to get involved and present this at the IMO with the objective of achieving an ‘equal platform.’”

Maritime Education and Training is entering a critical period in its development. The industry is changing rapidly. The safe efficient operation of modern ships with reduced manning is placing unprecedented demands on all crew, especially on those with management level responsibilities. There are major human resource issues that must be addressed. Recent developments in educational methodologies and delivery technologies provide many opportunities to make changes in MET beneficial to the shipping industry, particularly to seafarers. In recognition of the need for change, a review of STCW 95 has been initiated through IMO. With much to offer, it is important that the providers of MET contribute to the review. This will be most effective if resources are pooled.

“The current desing of the system, and increasing workload on the ships constitute the main drawbacks to operability and dictate the requirement for improved knowledge. Importing required management skills is also essential for promoting ship board harmony, leadership & integrated team working skills.”

Mr. David Birwadkar, Vice President, The Great Eastern Shipping Co. Ltd.

“I think we have always looked up to the administration for having stood their ground. There have been so many calls which said, let’s fast track the system, let’s reduce the levels, let’s make things simpler. I don’t think that’s the solution. I think they’ve stood their ground; they have stood it very well and for very good reason. But we need to look at and see how do we bring about as somebody mentioned ‘global equalization.’”

Capt. Navin Passey, Chairman, FOSMA, MD, Wallem India

“The refresher course in its present format is not serving the purpose for which it is intended. In its present format it is totally irrelevant and useless. It must either be immediately cancelled or drastically modified to make it relevant with a built in system to make sure that the course material is standardized and relevant to the need of today’s seamen.”

Capt. Rajendra Pradhan, Sailing Master, Wallem Ship Management

“For everything that is taught and everything that is asked to the candidate, the practical relevance on board must be considered. This will automatically rule out obsolete things.”

Capt. S.S. Chaudhari, Faculty Lbs College, Paper from A Premier Maritime Training Institution
"You may have wonderful processes, but are there enough evidence that they are really deployed? If they are, is there a consistency, is it a one off type of process? And are the processes covering the total operations of the institute? The operation of an institute can be very complex right from the raw material that comes in to the end result to the customer; different processes are required. Are they all covered?"

Mr. B.K. Saxena, Principal, Tolani Maritime Institute, Induri, Pune

"If we really want to improve the quality of output from the training institutes, we need to be sensitive to the prevailing situation and take steps to change it. The output from training institutes becomes input to the industry. It eventually leads to evening out of costs through efficient operation of ships and decreased accidents."

Mr. Pooran P. Chugani, IRS and Management Consultant

"The oral test should not exceed 20 minutes. It should test the student for confidence, clarity of thought, ability to apply lessons learnt, rather than having a "by rote" approach where his knowledge is being tested; he has already been tested and cleared on these aspects in the written examination."

Capt. K. J. Miranda, Dean (Nautical Studies), The Shipping Corporation of India

"All written examinations for Certificates of Competency must be delegated to major Maritime Institutes, (not necessarily only the government institutes) as are being done in most parts of the world. Examiners and evaluators can be designated by the administration, and examinations can be conducted under controlled conditions. This will take the load off the MMD's in the country, and remove the backlog of candidates awaiting examinations."

Capt. K. Vivekanand, Director, VELS Group of Maritime Colleges

"In my opinion we have to provide our young officers with portable skills such as critical thinking, or thinking through abstract problems. We must also help them be more creative and be able to connect ideas with all their fund of knowledge."

R. Sundar, Serving Chief Engineer, Stolt Nielsen Transportation Group (SNTG)

Capt. Tim Wilson, Vice Chairman of GlobalMET summarized his paper as: "Our challenge as training providers is to advocate for improved competence standards in the industry. We need to do this more loudly and more effectively than we have ever done before. We need to do this alongside other like-minded groups and we need to effectively engage with key delegations at IMO. GlobalMET is key to this happening. After all, no one has the knowledge we do of how varied the training and assessment standards really are internationally. No one has the reach we do into Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. Finally, no one has the knowledge we do of how to actually fix the problem. GlobalMET is well on the way become much more effective. Perhaps our biggest challenge now is to find a way of developing the capacity to interact at all senior industry discussions and debates on crewing and competence.

For our own part, however, we must do everything within our own power to deliver more effective training and to ensure that our graduates are actually competent. We cannot abrogate our responsibilities by hiding behind the standards imposed by our administrations. GlobalMET has a role to play here too. We need to more effectively communicate to our members what the best practices in training and assessment are today and provide the support that enables trainers to move towards these standards."

The conference witnessed a healthy exchange of views between the participating organizations and the officers in the administration.
Recognition for MET veterans

GlobalMET brought out a pleasant surprise by recognizing the long and dedicated service with awards to the following knowledge Veterans.

Capt. Inderjit Singh

"It reminds me when I joined this profession in 1938, I used to wonder why they used to say this is the only training institution to the east of the Suez. Gradually I found cadets were coming not only from our country but also from different countries around us, and the boys who came were full of vigour, full of enthusiasm, full of courage, and we believed that these are the qualities that are required to be a skilful sailor. Over the years a technology and knowledge revolution have taken place, and now we must go back stage and appreciate what the wonderful young people have done today. Today Indian shipping is prominent on the world map and it is entirely due to our seafarers and whatever endeavours they have undertaken. The ship owners, ship operators, ship masters, chief engineers, the crew, they have all done the country proud. And I thank the organizers for this honour."

Capt. Harry Subramaniam

"I thank GlobalMET to think of this honour this year. If it were last year, AMETIP would have given it, but it had a little bit of restriction. Now this honour comes from the whole world. Thank you. I am especially delighted to receive it from the hands of Mr. Pinto and I am deeply sentimental about it."

Awards also to following (picture not available):

Mr. D.K. Sanyal received by Mr. Sarkar
Capt. T.K. Joseph award received by Capt. Chattopadhyay
Global Platform for Better Voice

By Chanderjit Yadav

TMW: Why GlobalMET?

Capt. Rod Short: These are times when the maritime education needs to have a stronger voice globally to meet its various challenges that includes decline in standards in the face of furious pace the industry is growing. GlobalMET can actually consolidate as a strong voice for its constituents.

TMW: What are your views with regard to shortage of seafarers?

Capt. Rod Short: What we need is a system that gives those who are going to the sea the sort of education the industry really needs. While doing so we must also ensure that their education and certification is recognized in other parts of the industry. When this is achieved, it would mean that seafarers have a job when they go out to sea and later also they have a good career when they decide to quit. We can see that a lot of people want to leave the seas these days when they are in their thirties.

The other thing to be done is to attract more people with the right educational background. To do that a lot of issues have to be attended to, to make it more attractive. For one, the industry has got to raise its profile. For most people, shipping is something over the horizon. One of the problems is that work is done outside the sight of people. To raise the profile, a lot of work has to be put into developing a very positive image of the industry.

TMW: What are your views as regards the proposed Indian Maritime University?

Capt. Rod Short: I understand that it is going to be a collection of academies to be based at Chennai. When we talk about shipping, we tend to concentrate on seafarers, but there is a whole maritime sector that is going to be important in the future such as food, energy, coastal engineering, coastal management, minerals, tourism, etc. This university I believe would encompass the education of all these under the gamut of maritime sector.

TMW: How do you visualize this university enhancing quality in education?

Capt. Rod Short: Each faculty of learning would bring forth its own strength and through collaboration and interaction each one will benefit by the flow of information. I think that would be a great way to go.