Management education: giving developing countries a voice

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THIS year the first students graduate from the World Maritime University. This ambitious new venture has made a promising start in developing better training for top-level maritime personnel from the developing countries. Under the auspices of the UN and IMO, it offers them training on a level which would not be available in their own countries. It is hoped that the University will eventually become the focus of a world-wide scheme of training organised between various regional centres, but whether this will ever be fully realised remains to be seen.

FOR many developing countries, particularly those with a growing overseas trade, the creation of a national fleet is a priority. Many of them have turned to help the IMO. With strong financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the IMO has built up an extensive technical assistance programme which now provides aid to many such states, and is particularly concerned with training. Experience has shown that most accidents at sea are caused by human error, which can often be attributed to poor training.

Viewing maritime training as the single most important aspect of its effort to improve safety at sea, the IMO has long recognised that the shortage of suitably trained personnel at senior levels in the maritime field has been a major problem for the developing countries. Although many of the countries have training facilities for more junior staff, the IMO found that there was no institution in the world dedicated exclusively to the further training of personnel in senior management positions.

The idea of establishing a university to meet this need was first debated in 1980, at a seminar on training organised by the IMO and attended by delegates from 45 developing countries. In November of the following year, the IMO unanimously adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary General to take all action necessary for the establishment of such a University.

A questionnaire designed to assist the establishment of an International University of Maritime Science and Technology was sent to all IMO member states. This asked countries to specify the areas in which training was most needed and how many participants would require such training. The list of proposed courses included training for nautical surveyors, engineering and ship surveyors and radio surveyors; for examiners responsible for testing masters, mates and engineers; and for lecturers in various subjects. There were also proposed courses for maritime administrators, shore-based technical personnel and maritime accident investigators.

Preparatory financial assistance was promised by the UNDP. The Swedish Government responded by agreeing to pay $1m annually, and the UNDP then agreed to provide a further $800,000 per year for the duration of the then current UNDP cycle.

It was decided that the World Maritime University (WMU) should be based at Sweden's former Merchant Marine Academy, at Malmö. The City of Malmö undertook to provide facilities for the University, and Professor Solve Arvedsen, the former head of the Academy, was sworn in as its first rector. The WMU's legal status was defined in an agreement made in 1983, which gave it the status of an international institution under the IMO, possessing the necessary attributes to function with the requisite degree of independence.

Top-level training

On 4 July 1984 the WMU was officially inaugurated. It is viewed by the IMO as one of the most important and imaginative developments in international shipping in recent years. Its aspirations are high. The IMO claims that the WMU will help to make shipping safer, combat marine pollution, improve the efficiency of ports and administration — in short, it will help achieve many of the things that the international maritime community has been demanding for years.

The University's raison d'être is to provide top-level training for senior administrators and other officials from the developing countries, when such training is not available locally. In order to achieve these objectives, the University's Charter states that it shall, "provide interested countries, and in particular developing countries, with the most modern and up-to-date facilities for the training of their high-level maritime personnel in all areas of shipping and related maritime activity, including:

- teachers and instructors for maritime training institutions;
- examiners for maritime training courses, certificates and qualifications;
- senior maritime administrators;
- technical administrators and senior management personnel;
- marine accident investigators;
- maritime surveyors;
- specialists in naval architecture, marine science and technology and related disciplines;
- technical port managers and related personnel."

The University will also: "help to establish an internationally recognised cadre of experts in the major aspects of shipping, including visiting professors, lecturers, consultants and other experts to provide suitable knowledge and assistance to developing countries and other governments as appropriate, on problems relating to maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and the prevention and control of marine pollution."

Finally, according to the Charter, the WMU will: "help in developing a uniform international system for the training of experts in the marine field as a means of facilitating and promoting international co-operation in shipping and related maritime activities."

The WMU's current Rector is Admiral Sheldon Kinney (US), and the vice-rector is Professor Gunther Zade (FRG).
other full-time academic staff each specialise in a different field, and come from all over the world. 60 short-term visiting lecturers cover various specialised subjects. Many of these specialists are top people in their field, and some provide their services free of charge.

The University concentrates primarily on two-year courses leading to a Master of Science degree. They run from February to December, with a mid-year break, and are offered in General Maritime Administration, Maritime Safety Administration, Maritime Education, and Technical Management of Shipping Companies.

All instruction is in English, with preliminary courses being held for students who need to upgrade their proficiency in that language. The courses include compulsory and optional units, ensuring that key subjects are covered, but at the same time allowing sufficient flexibility to cater for the needs of students from different countries and organisations.

Practical learning
An important feature of the WMU syllabus is the use made of field trips and placements. Visits normally begin during the students’ second term at the University and generally consist of relatively short visits to ports, industries, and other organisations involved in shipping.

The third semester is mainly taken up with field training. Students studying general maritime administration, for example, are attached to administrations in various IMO member states. These include France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United States. Students studying the technical management of shipping companies spend the term with a shipping company. Countries which have assisted in this way include Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

The organisation of the visits depends on the subject studied. Students on the maritime safety administration course spend up to six months of their two-year course away from Malmö, those doing general maritime administration about 10 weeks and those studying maritime education about eight weeks.

The Marine Safety Administration students will, for example, see how small boat inspection is carried out, and will watch passenger ships being inspected in Finland, spending up to three weeks attached to safety administrations in different countries. Those students studying the technical management of shipping companies will be attached to shipping companies to see how they operate.

The fourth and final term of the two-year course is devoted to the completion of theses, preparation of reports, and final examinations. Preliminary examinations take place every semester.

The final thesis is an important part of the WMU course. Professor Zade says: “Although we still have examinations here we don’t really need them. We are so close to the students that we can probably forecast what they are going to put in their papers. But the thesis is very important. The students all have to write one. It should cover something that will help them in their future work and also benefit their country. One of my students, for example, will take the radar simulator at a maritime training academy in his own country. His thesis is naturally on that subject, and to prepare it he has talked to visiting professors and other experts and looked at simulators in various countries. He has gathered a wealth of material which will be invaluable.”

World-wide network
It was originally intended to offer one-year courses leading to a Certificate in Maritime Safety Administration and Technical Management of Shipping Companies, as well as shorter courses on specialist subjects. However, in the light of experience the WMU decided to drop the short courses and one-year courses from the curriculum. Experience showed that the one and two year courses were not really long enough, and it was too expensive to send students to Malmö for a short time period.

As a result of this, the WMU has now set aside a small part of its budget to help regional academies develop short courses. These will be held in various countries where student access is easier and courses will be cheaper to run. Eventually, selected academies in other parts of the world could become branches of the WMU. The first is likely to be at Dalian in China. The courses offered there under WMU auspices will be more technical than those offered in Malmö, taking advantage of the additional facilities available there.

It is hoped that the University could evolve as the apex of a worldwide system of marine training, providing a service for other institutions and working in cooperation with them. At first some nautical academies saw the WMU as a rival, an impression which was unwittingly reinforced by its offering short courses which appeared to be very similar to those being run by other academies. Some people saw the WMU as just another navigation school, but by offering only the two year MSc programme, its role should become more clearly identifiable.

High qualifications
The majority of students attending the WMU are in their 30’s or 40’s and already have academic or professional qualifications. Most have had several years’ experience at work and have risen to positions of authority. WMU graduates will be going home to take up senior positions — supervising the technicians rather than doing the job themselves. Their contribution ultimately and in some cases immediately will be on a very senior level.

Mr Bernard Zagorin, senior advisor to the Secretary-General on the University says, “The most important thing will be the input the students make at international meetings, such as those run by the IMO. They already have a much better understanding of the international process than most people. They can emphasise the importance of international action and we can expect the ratification of conventions to be quicker. There will
be more technical input from developing countries at international meetings. They have a much greater idea of how things work and that can only expedite the process of implementation.

Members of the inaugural class of the WMU — 69 students from 39 different countries — came to the end of their two-year course on 9 July this year. The majority of them will be returning to their home countries to take up posts which have already been arranged. The students believe that the knowledge and experience they have gained at the University will help their careers, but more importantly perhaps, enable them to play a role in shaping the development of national maritime policies.

The inaugural class are themselves conscious of their status as pioneers, and they are determined to retain contact with each other even though they will soon be thousands of miles apart. There are plans for a news bulletin and an alumni association which will, over the years, grow into a world-wide network of people who have shared a common experience and been imbued with the same ideals.

The 1983 class had an intake of 72, with 68 graduating earlier this year; the 1984 class had an intake of 65; and the 1985 class had an intake of 83. The total student intake has come from no fewer than 74 different countries.

Donations

Financed entirely by voluntary donations, the University's budget of roughly $4M per year covers all operations, administrative and staff expenses.

IMO Secretary-General Mr Srivastava

as well as expenditure on travel and on students' board and lodging.

Rather more than half this sum comes from recurring contributions, the largest contributions being from Sweden ($1M), the UNDP ($800,000), Norway ($350,000), and the Commonwealth Secretariat ($110,000). Other IMO member states have provided support by financing fellowships. These include Denmark, France, West Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan and the UK.

The remainder of the money required for the WMU comes from individual fellowships, which are usually provided from the development funds allocated to individual countries by organisations such as the UNDP.

This arrangement is far from ideal, and in its report to the IMO, the Board of Governors has said that it is "seriously concerned about the uncertainty which arises from dependence upon income arising in an ad hoc fashion. This uncertainty can be reduced by direct contributions to the University's budget, as are now provided by Sweden, Norway and the UNDP, as well as by assured financing of fellowships from year to year as is the case with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Assured regular support will contribute to a sounder basis for operations at the University and to greater certainty in planning for the future."

To improve long-term financing, the Board of Governors last year decided to establish a $23M Capital Fund, whose investments would provide earnings to cover at least a portion of the University's costs. This fund was the subject of a widespread appeal made by the Secretary-General on the occasion of World Maritime Day 1984, but as yet, contributions have barely passed the $250,000 mark.

Exceeds expectations

Despite financial uncertainties and the short gestation period, the WMU has made a start which has exceeded the expectations of many. However, a college of this type can expect a period of about 10 years to pass before its position is fully established within both the academic and maritime communities.

Perhaps the ethos of the WMU can be summed up in the words of Mr Srivastava, secretary general of the IMO. In his 1984 World Maritime Day message, he described the WMU as "a unique example of global co-operation between the developed and the developing, between countries of the North and of the South, between East and West."