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The World Maritime University: An attempt to train specialist maritime personnel

P. K. Menon
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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, especially since the Torrey Canyon disaster of 1967 and the increased concern for environmental protection in developed countries, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has become actively involved in the marine pollution area. Yet one of the principal objectives which constitutes the largest portion of its work is the improvement of marine safety and reduction of accidents, so as to enhance the efficiency of international shipping operations. The safe and efficient operation of modern ships designed and developed out of highly complicated and sophisticated technology requires personnel with advanced training, both afloat and ashore.

Since shipping, like aviation, is global in scope, it is essential that it should have codes of practices, rules and regulations, and technical standards for world-wide application. That is why under the auspices of IMO, a number of conventions, protocols and recommendations setting forth these objectives have been formulated. Adoption of these agreements is a significant achievement; nevertheless, their success lies in their effective implementation. To that end, the importance of maritime training to produce a cadre of senior specialist maritime personnel cannot be overemphasized. The specialists are required in many areas, for example, for the running of safe and efficient merchant marines, the operation of efficient ports and sound maritime administration in general.

It has been generally recognized that the developing countries are at present at a great disadvantage because of an acute shortage of adequately trained and qualified senior personnel. The shortage of

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such personnel in the ministries of governments and their maritime administrations has adversely affected the efforts of these countries to build up national merchant marines and to implement effectively recognized global technical standards for maritime safety and for the prevention of marine pollution. Even the national and regional maritime training centres recently established in several of the developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are severely handicapped due to acute shortage of high level trained maritime teaching staffs.

Some developing countries attempted to meet their needs for specialized technical personnel by recruitment of expatriate experts. Their attempt was not very successful. First, there was the inordinate expenditure on salaries and other allowances; second, a drain on the foreign exchange reserves was created; third, foreign experts were unavailable for continued long periods. Furthermore, these expatriate specialists found themselves in a difficult position to train the local people for want of advanced maritime infrastructure such as laboratories, high-level ship-building and repair yards, and competent administrators.

It was against this background that the Assembly of the IMO adopted Resolution A.501 in November 1981 relating to the establishment of the World Maritime University at Malmö, Sweden.

II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

Since its establishment in 1958, IMO has been aware of the shortage of trained personnel to deal with maritime matters in many countries, especially those in the developing world. The shortage is a serious handicap to economic development; apart from this, it can produce a disastrous impact upon maritime safety and the marine ecology.

In order to overcome the problem, as an immediate step the IMO initiated a technical assistance programme to help countries wishing to improve their maritime activities. The programme had several advantages over bilateral aid obtained from individual countries. First, the Organization did not attach political strings as a condition to granting assistance. Second, the recipient countries have had to assume responsibility for covering the local costs and providing counterpart contributions. Third, the experts and advisers provided by IMO are international civil servants with the characteristics of independence, impartiality and objectivity in action. Fourth, it is
entirely left to the countries concerned to accept or reject a particular expert or adviser. Fifth, the Organization will ask for assurance that each project is efficiently executed or operated. Sixth, IMO is in a much better position to suggest appropriate reorganizations of the existing institutional framework or the establishment of new ones in the recipient countries.

In spite of all the above-mentioned advantages, the technical assistance programme did not prove to be a great success. On the one hand, IMO was severely limited by the meagre resources at its disposal. The developing countries, on the other hand, struggling in the backwater of their marginal subsistence economies, could not conceivably contribute anything so substantial from their indigenous resources. They could not even hope to produce all the raw materials and equipment needed for their development; these had to be imported. These problems became all the more complex and compounded by recurring deficits in foreign exchange reserves.

By the mid-seventies, it became clear that IMO had to pursue a new course of action as an alternative to its technical assistance programme if progress was to be made. In the late seventies IMO therefore organized a series of seminars on various technical subjects for representatives of developing countries, conducted with the objective of improving training capabilities. They were so successful that IMO was prompted to give serious consideration to instituting a permanent centre in an established maritime country where students could receive advanced training.

The November 1980 seminar was a historic one. The theme was "The Implementation of Global Maritime Training Standards for the Enhancement of Maritime Safety and Prevention of Marine Pollution". It was held in Malmö, Sweden and was cosponsored by IMO and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). The seminar was attended by delegates from 45 developing countries and by selected invitees from seven developed countries. At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants adopted a resolution supporting the establishment of an international university of maritime sciences and technology in Malmö. In its operative part Resolution IV stated:

NOTING the proposal mentioned and supported during the seminar by H.E. The Minister of Transport and Communication of Sweden for the creation, in co-operation with UNDP, and IMCO*, of an International

*The Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), now the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
University of Maritime Sciences and Technology in Sweden for the benefit of the developing world,

EXPRESS their unanimous and strongest support for this proposal which will be of the greatest benefit to the developing countries,

FURTHER EXPRESS their appreciation and gratitude to the City of Malmö for the offer to provide facilities for the project,

RESPECTFULLY REQUEST the administrator of the UNDP to give the highest priority to this project and to provide the necessary financial resources in due consideration of the importance of the role of safer international shipping to the social and economic development of the world,

RESPECTFULLY URGE the Secretary-General of IMCO to support the proposal of the Swedish Government and to provide the necessary technical input for the execution of the project, goals of which are fully in line with the policy and the objectives of the Organization,

RESPECTFULLY INVITE all concerned to coordinate their respective actions with a view to achieve positive and concrete results in the near future.

By referring to the spirit and objectives of the New International Economic Development Strategy of the United Nations System, the resolution drew attention to the enormous need of the developing world for a corps of surveyors, inspectors, examiners and other senior maritime personnel and stated "that a minimum period of one or two years in an academy for higher maritime studies is necessary to achieve the level of expertise appropriate to senior specialist in maritime fields...". 

In November of the following year, at its twelfth session the Assembly of the International Maritime Organization unanimously adopted a resolution authorizing the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for the establishment of the university. The resolution (A.50I(XII)) also authorized the Secretary-General to take all appropriate steps to secure the necessary financial support, including consultations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The UNDP Governing Council considered the matter in June 1982, when it received widespread support from many countries, both developing and developed. The UNDP agreed to provide preparatory financial assistance and a further $800,000 annually for the duration of the current cycle. It subsequently approved a project executed by IMO to cover the cost of the many different aspects of organizational,
financial and academic planning which had to precede the opening of the University.

The Swedish Government, the prime mover, agreed to make a generous financial contribution amounting to $1 million a year to the university. In addition to this, the City of Malmö itself provided the university with facilities—a former Merchant Marine Academy—as well as a hostel (Henrik Smith House) to accommodate students. Further, arrangements were made to enable students to have access to the superb sports and social facilities at a recreation centre located near the university site.

In November 1982, at the IMO Council meeting, many countries and representatives of various maritime organizations reaffirmed their enthusiastic support for the establishment of the university.

Events moved with an accelerated speed. On 14 October 1982 an agreement between the Secretary-General of IMO and the Municipality of Malmö was signed concerning the rental of flats and related facilities for students and personnel of the University. On 9 February 1983 an agreement between IMO and the Government of Sweden was signed in London with respect to implementation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. This Agreement, which entered into force on 1 May 1983, grants such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the efficient performance of the functions of the University—privileges and immunities that are considered necessary for the realization of the purposes of the University, for the free functioning of its organs, and for the independent exercise of the functions and duties of its officials. The charter of the University was also promulgated with effect from 1 May 1983. Six weeks later, on 4 July 1983, the World Maritime University (WMU) was officially inaugurated at Malmö.

III.
INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM

The World Maritime University has an international status. Though it is established under the auspices of IMO, it is a separate entity with its own institutional personality and functions as an independent body. It is responsible only to an international Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors consists of highly qualified and widely respected persons concerned with maritime matters. They serve as Governors in their individual capacities. Members of the Board are selected by the Secretary-General of IMO, who is also the Chairman of the Board. In the matter of selection of members, the Secretary-
General is to consider the qualifications and professional specializations of the individuals and also the need that the Board have a balanced composition, representing a wide range of countries and shipping activities, with representatives of both developed and developing maritime nations.

The Board of Governors is responsible to guide and supervise the activities of the University. It will normally meet once a year, either at the site of the University or at the headquarters of IMO. If the number of Governors grows to large proportions, it may appoint an Executive Board of smaller size so as to give closer and more direct guidance to the University.

The Rector is the chief academic and administrative officer of the University. He has overall responsibility for the direction, organization, administration and programmes of the University. As such, he will be a qualified professional with long experience in maritime training. He will be assisted by eight full-time professors and an adequate number of short-term visiting professors and lecturers to cover the specialized subjects. The combination of full-time staff and visiting lecturers will allow the University to provide a wide and extensive coverage of each subject, as well as to give the students access to the leading experts in their respective positions. The faculty will consist of four main departments: (1) Nautical Sciences; (2) Maritime Safety and Administration; (3) Maritime Technology; and (4) Marine Environment Protection.

In addition to the academic staff, the Rector is assisted by an administrative staff who will organize the field trips and the practical aspects of the on-the-job training programmes, and aid the teaching staff as well as the students in the conduct of the University’s course work.

Students are accepted after careful review by a Selection Board. Entrance requirements are maintained in order to ensure high standards, so as to optimize the gain for the students and for the countries they serve from the advance training received at the University. In general, an applicant should have attained a university degree or equivalent professional qualification in a technical field, combined with work experience as appropriate.

As an international centre for advanced training for specialized maritime personnel from developing countries, the University will maintain close links and contacts with other maritime training institutions. It will also establish continuing working relationships with several United Nations and other agencies, including in particular the UNDP, the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks.
IV.
FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The University is funded by voluntary contributions, both in cash and in kind. This provides for viability, objectivity and quality of its scientific and scholarly work. The voluntary contributions are received from various sources, for example, governments, non-governmental agencies including shipping concerns, foundations and individuals, and international organizations. Apart from cash contributions, leading marine manufacturers have donated equipment to the University and the visiting professors have provided their services free of charge.

During the early stages of the establishment of the University, the United Nations Development Programme provided preparatory assistance in the sum of $215,750. This was supplemented by a contribution from Sweden of $100,000. The city of Malmö gave enthusiastic backing by generously providing a building, equipment and other facilities free of cost.

The annual budget of the University, including all operational, administrative and staff expenses as well as expenditure on travel and board and lodging of students, is estimated to be $4 million.

More than half of the annual budget comes from recurring contributions of $1 million from Sweden, $800,000 from the UNDP, $350,000 from Norway, and $120,000 from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The balance of about $1.7 million per annum needs to be secured on a recurring basis to enable the University to function efficiently. For the present, it is met by ad hoc donations and fellowship costs contributed by governments, shipping enterprises and private individuals. For instance, several IMO member States, including Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Greece, Italy, and Republic of Korea, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia have provided ad hoc donations or fellowships. The countries which send students to the University have also contributed towards the costs. A group called the Friends of the WMU in the United States has made several donations.

An institution cannot simply rely on ad hoc voluntary contributions. To make it strong and viable, financing is needed on a permanent basis. Thus, in order to establish a permanent and secure financial base so that recurring financial expenses will be assured, the Board of Governors has resolved that the University should establish a Capital Fund with a target of $25 million. The income from this
Fund would provide sufficient earnings so that the University's activities could be planned appropriately and function efficiently.

Thus, in 1984 as part of his annual World Maritime Day message, Mr. C.P. Srivastava, the Secretary-General of IMO, launched a $25 million appeal for funds. He said:

The Capital Fund needs to be built up by voluntary donations. In the circumstances of today it would not be practical to expect very large donations from individual Governments, organizations or individuals and yet the achievements of the target would not be impossible if every member of the world maritime community were to make a small donation.

V.
PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Aims and Objectives

Before examining the ongoing activities, it may be useful to briefly review the aim and objectives of the University. In accordance with its Charter,

The World Maritime University shall be the international maritime training institution for the training of senior specialist maritime personnel in various aspects of shipping and related fields concerning the improvement of maritime safety, the protection of the marine environment and the efficiency of international shipping, in furtherance of the purposes and objectives of the International Maritime Organization as a specialised agency of the United Nations.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the University 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
(i) teachers and instructors for maritime training institutions;
(ii) examiners for maritime training courses, certificates and qualifications;
(iii) senior maritime administrators;
(iv) technical administrators and senior managerial personnel;
(v) marine accident investigators;
(vi) maritime surveyors;
(vii) specialists in naval architecture, marine science and technology and related disciplines;
(viii) technical port managers and related personnel.
The University will also:

help to establish an internationally recognized 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.

Further, the University will:

help in developing a uniform international system for the training of experts in the maritime field as a means of facilitating and promoting international cooperation in shipping and related maritime activities.

Teaching Arrangements

The University offers two-year and one-year courses. In addition, it also provides short-term courses of four to six weeks duration dealing with particular subjects. The two-year courses run from February to December, with a December–February break.

Two-year courses leading to a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree are offered in the following four specialised areas: (1) General Maritime Administration—this course will provide the required knowledge for the development of maritime infrastructure, maritime transportation, international maritime law and national maritime legislation, safety administration, etc.; (2) Maritime Safety Administration—this course will qualify examiners to conduct surveys and inspection of ships, maritime accident investigations, and examination of maritime personnel; (3) Maritime Education—this course is designed to train personnel in maritime education, who in turn will be able to teach the entire range of maritime education courses, including specialised advanced courses; and (4) Technical Management of Shipping Companies—this course is conducted for developing technical managerial skills required of officials of shipping companies, e.g. marine superintendents, engineering superintendents, managers of operations, etc. by providing them with a thorough insight into such subjects as ship design and construction, survey inspection requirements, maintenance and repair of ships, ship’s machinery and equipment, cargo handling, dangerous goods, etc.

One-year courses (two semesters) leading to the granting of a certificate are offered for (1) Technical Officials engaged in Maritime Safety Administration, and (2) Technical Staffs of Shipping Companies. The aims of this course are similar to the corresponding
two-year Master of Science degree course mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but this has been specially designed for such personnel who are not eligible to pursue the Master’s programme.

The short-term specialised courses are given in five different subject areas. They have been specially designed to meet the requirements of modern shipboard technology. The five subjects are: (1) Oil Tankers, including Crude Oil Washing; (2) Chemical Tankers; (3) Liquified Gas Tankers; (4) Carriage of Packaged Dangerous Cargoes; and (5) Implementation of the COW requirements of MARPOL 1973/78.

The main courses of study include a number of compulsory units, together with a certain number of optional subjects which can be selected by the student. This approach ensures that principal subjects are covered by all the students but at the same time allows flexibility to cater to the particular needs of students from different countries and organizations.

The teaching method includes lectures, tutorials, laboratory work, demonstrations, case studies, projects and industrial experience. Though students will spend most of their time at the University premises, arrangements are made for them to extend their experience by field trips to other cities and institutions within Sweden and abroad to visit ports, industries and other organizations involved in shipping. They will also have opportunities for “on-the-job” training.

While the courses include a considerable amount of traditional classroom work such as examinations, preparation of project reports and theses, the practical content is much greater and more varied than in normal post-graduate studies.

As far as student population is concerned, 72 students from 40 different developing countries were enrolled in the initial class at the University in July 1983; 65 students from 41 developing countries were admitted to the second class in February 1984. The class of 1985 consisted of 80 students from 43 countries.

VI
CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of the World Maritime University provides a most vivid illustration of the brilliant imagination of the International Maritime Organization and the Government of Sweden. The functioning of the University within such a short time of its conception also illustrates the impact of personalities on the outcome of negotiations, especially in the matter of financing. Although several such
personalities could be singled out as playing an important role in the case of WMU, there is one whose role loomed especially large—Mr. C.P. Srivastava, Secretary-General of the IMO, whose administrative capability brought wide public attention to this unique institution of advanced training and attracted assistance from UNDP and a number of countries, including Sweden, the prime mover and chief donor of funds and facilities.

The World Maritime University is a new concept. Abstract academic exercise of the intellect without further search for results is not its function; on the contrary, the programme of studies is oriented toward achieving practical professional experience with a view to problem-solving—a substantial amount of time is devoted to practical on-the-job training of senior specialist maritime personnel, particularly of developing countries. The courses of study are attuned to train maritime teachers, surveyors, examiners, technical advisors to Government Ministries, general maritime administrators and technical managers of shipping companies. The training is intended to supplement, and in no way to duplicate the training which is already being provided at the national and regional levels for navigating and engineering shipboard personnel. The training is expected to enhance the efficiency of shipping and port operations throughout the world and to promote effective and peaceful global cooperation, to the benefit of the entire world maritime community. It is a development of great interest to all maritime States, shipowners, shipbuilders, ship repairers and equipment suppliers, and to all others who are involved in the world’s maritime activities.

The compelling reason for its creation, as stated by the Secretary-General of IMO, is the urgent requirement for many more well trained and highly qualified people in the field of maritime transport in the developing countries. The shortage of expertise in the developing countries has been causing "weakening the links of those countries with the world system of commerce and transport and in their excessive dependence on imported experts and at very high cost".

The University is unique in several respects. It is an example of global cooperation between the countries of the North and of the South, a genuine international effort in which the traditional maritime nations are giving their experience and in many cases their financial support as well to help the developing world make shipping safer and the oceans cleaner, and at the same time raise the level of management, efficiency and general maritime expertise. It is the only institution of its kind in the world, providing advanced maritime education and training to senior personnel from many developing
countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other areas. The student body is *sui generis*. They are not young people embarking on their careers; a typical student has already achieved academic success and has had considerable professional experience.

The fact that the University has been in existence for only a short period of time—just three years—does not permit a full assessment of the success of its three main programmes of teaching—the degree, the certificate and the short-term course. Each of the programmes is at a different stage of development, and has devised different methods of operation to suit particular needs.

Nevertheless, the University has made an impressive beginning. It offers the developing countries their best opportunity to close the technological gap between themselves and the traditional maritime countries. By putting their newly acquired knowledge into practice, shipping will not only be more efficient but safer as well. From an academic point of view, it may be said that the University has already proved to be popular and successful, as a result of which the Board of Governors decided that starting in 1985 ten percent of the places at the University would be open to students from established maritime countries.