

# Maritime Training: A Challenging Course

By Joseph Fonseca,  
Mumbai

Meeting increasing quality standards and nurturing competent seafarers has never been as much a challenge for maritime training institutes as it is today. Every cadet who chooses a sea career himself poses a challenge to trainers: In the past those entering the seafaring profession were mostly from metropolitan areas, bringing with them a

more accomplished skill and knowledge set. Today, there being a paradigm shift in India, and it is rare that anyone with an urban background considers a life at sea. Manning and shipmanagement companies and training institutes often have to scour towns and villages of India to attract candidates. Not being fluent in English (since the medium of instructions in most cases being in any of the 19 offi-

cially recognized languages) these cadets have to be specifically groomed to meet the challenges of present day seafaring.

The critical focus is both onshore and on-board training, considers Capt K.N. Deboo, Director and Principal of Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Center, whose institute provides both pre-sea and post sea training. "There is no substitute for on-board or on-shore training. It is the

best. Standard Training and Certificate Watch keeping (STCW has been revised thrice. If that aspect of knowledge and experience which one gets on-board has to be reduced, then it has to be supplemented with shore-based training. In this regard there have been views about offering fast track training so that what a cadet learns on-board in one year can be taught onshore in one month. These are

all reasons being given. But we fail to take one aspect into consideration: What they learn on-board including tackling real life situations and problems, changes of situation that take place can help the cadet to improvise and innovate and continue in that direction."

STCW is revised once in 15 years but technological advances in construction of ships are much faster which reflect on board operations. Also, there are regulatory advances taking place. Hence, the need for regular refresher courses has become the norm. Another idea is to have smaller modules of required inputs made available to seafarers so that they can take them as and when the opportunity arises. Training therefore is becoming a continuous process which is not limited to the basic requirements of STCW.

Dr. Brijendra K Saxena, Principal, Tolani Maritime Institute concurs, that STCW does not necessarily address all requirements regarding training of seafarers concerning both for pre-sea and post-sea. "STCW provides a very generic

requirement especially for pre-sea level. It is therefore necessary that a detailed syllabus is created covering all the competencies. There remains an area where the level of standards could be different between different institutes and also be

tween different countries. As far as post-sea is concerned the scope of requirements is clearer and more specific. However, here also the depth of understanding by the training institutes could be different at different places."

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# INDIA

## Training methods

Training-at-sea time being short, there are calls for changes in teaching methodologies. The use of computer and web-based learning can be very effective along with some contact classes.

eLearning can be supplemented with a

short duration work shop which could provide practical training and/or simulator training. This would help supplement the time period and scope of training which is reduced on board. **Anglo Eastern Training Center was the first to introduce the "Virtual classroom"**

among maritime training institutes in India. This permits people sitting at their computers with a webcam facility at home or anywhere in the world and logging in to the trainer for their on-line learning session. This learning process is being introduced increasingly in other in-

stitutes as it facilitates teacher and student interaction and saves on travel, the time for commuting, hotel accommodation, etc.

Typical training needs include a mix of technical and soft skills, including motivation, attitude building, team-work ap-

proach, communication, delegation, managerial and leadership, all of which are important for a seafarer to develop, because today multi-tasking is mandatory as crew's grow smaller. A ship's turnaround is very fast and the time available to the seafarers is very limited to effec-

tively manage and complete the tasks. The contact time being limited, the choice of training methodology is important. Once a year it is important to provide training on-shore with workshops, practical training, etc. But at other times there is eLearning, where the seafarer's

leave does not get disturbed as it can be taken anywhere and at any time.

Every ship is different, and the various types of specialization being restricted to the type of cargo it carries make type specification training a priority need. And this becomes all the more challeng-

ing for training since it is not broad-based.

"The ship-owners need to be partners in training / updating their seafarers," says Dr Brijendra K Saxena. "They have to provide small training modules for their seafarers. These



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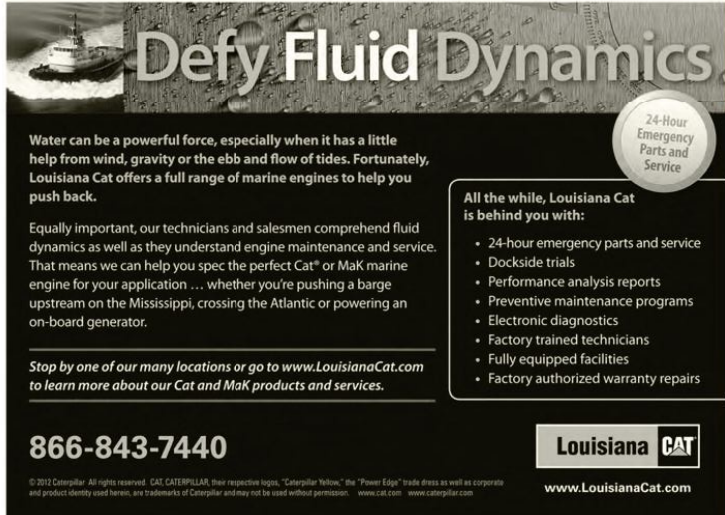
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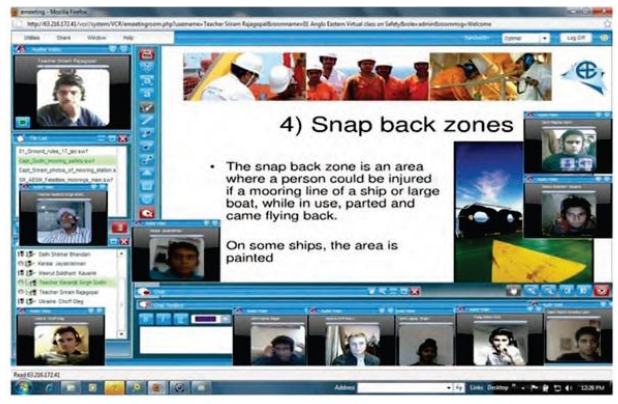
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Training at sea-time being short, there are calls for changes in teaching methodologies. The use of computer & web-based learning can be very effective along with some contact classes. eLearning can be supplemented with a short duration work shop which could provide practical training and/or simulator training.



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should be used prior to going on board. Attending ship superintendents should verify compliance. The technique of mentoring needs to be brought back and the senior ship board staff has to be taken on board for this initiative. They must re-

alize that it is their duty to mentor and train their juniors."

**Qualification for Trainers**

Tolani Maritime Institute has its yardstick in the selection process of trainers.

"The minimum acceptable qualification for marine faculty is Chief Engineer/Master Certificate of Competency and Post-Graduation in concerned field for non-marine faculty members," said Dr. Saxena. "Besides the qualifica-

tion, industry experience and of course teaching experience are important. In my opinion though, a very long sailing career is not necessarily a very good qualification. The trainers must have good communication skills and an interest in upgrading their knowledge by undertaking courses / presenting papers. Besides these issues we also require an applicant to teach the related subject in a mock class for at least half an hour."

Capt Deboo said, "It is also important for us to know the companies he has sailed with. Because it is important for a person to have known the best management practices and if he has sailed with good companies he will bring in his experience of good practices into the class. The third part is to find out his interest toward teaching; his motivation to become a teacher vis-à-vis to becoming an auditor, a superintendent etc. These being basic, one has to gauge other aspects:

whether he is computer savvy and able to develop training material. Not forgetting the power of communication: language skills, articulation, body language to help him better communicate with the students."

**Finding & Retaining Good Trainers**

Retaining experienced and expert trainers is critical for training institutes struggling to achieve a brand image. An Institute is only as good as its teachers. The salaries offered are indeed incomparable with the salaries offered in other industry specific shore jobs. For effective motivation this difference needs to be evened out with better working conditions, opportunities for professional development etc.

At the recent Global Maritime Education & Training (GlobalMET) conference many participants candidly spoke about the problem faced by them in selecting

good teachers. It is a fact that a good master on board need not be a good teacher. In general it was felt that a good teacher should have a predisposition to teach. Since it took many years to be a good master it will also take time to be a good

teacher. "It is a challenge is to have good faculty," contends Capt Y Sharma, Head of the Training center of International Maritime Training Center. "It is important when selecting these trainers to identify people who have a passion to teach,

and see the opportunity and time to grow in the teaching field. Of course we need to put them in the class and for a good teacher it would take about a year to achieve a level of quality in a particular subject."

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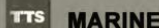
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