

Soft Skills give an edge to marine engineering cadets

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Cadets of marine engineering institutes are being provided training which is beyond their syllabus so that they are better equipped to face the present day challenges

Training has become an indispensable tool and in the maritime sector its importance cannot be more emphasized over any other accepted technique especially for ensuring better, positive and long lasting results. When it comes to raising the bar on quality or expertise, or even integrating safety, security or environment protection, the power of training as a tool has become the first option. So too, DMET-MERI Ex-Cadets Association (DMECA) has taken upon itself the onus to provide additional training to help equip engineering cadets in advance with various soft skills so that they are better placed to meet the global challenges of a seafaring career. They have started conducting these special classes at such foremost training institutes of the country including Marine Engineering and Research Institute (MERI).

MERI introduced Communication Skills as a subject in its curriculum to improve the quality of communication of the cadets coming in to the maritime field from the hinterland of the country. This followed after DMECA joined hands with MERI in order to conduct programs to develop soft skills for the MERI Non-Sponsored Cadets of PGDME course and also for Third Year B.Sc. (Maritime Science) Cadets. Last week saw the valedictory function of the *Soft Skills Development Program (SSDP) where a batch of 80 cadets received their diploma certificates.

Indian shipping companies have welcomed the move considering it a move in the right direction. Said a ship owner, "Instead of complaining and later embarking on a blame game it is better to train cadets who so far have been learning through their mistakes which can be costly for ship owners too." No doubt on-board training for seafarers is a vital component of competency development necessary for superior performance. Real life experience in the work environment is a very effective learning methodology. But developing the right attitude besides building knowledge and skill is equally important.

"In an era of advancing technology, marine engineering training has to remain dynamic to imbibe latest technology as well as to meet the demands of the shipping industry," stated an analyst. "New subjects of studies have to be included in the curriculum in a timely manner taking into consideration the industry requirements and best practices in shipping. Technical competence of marine engineers also has to be subjected to changes depending upon the needs of the ever growing and over regulated shipping industry. Besides, certain soft skills are to be developed and improved amongst the marine engineers in order to alter or amend the personality traits leading to their career success. If timely corrective action is taken, Indian marine engineers can still be in greater demand for employment in global maritime field. In order to enhance the employability of our Indian marine engineers by improving their quality, a study of marine engineers in general and class IV marine engineers in particular was conducted

based on three distinct surveys, viz., survey among senior marine engineers, survey among employers of marine engineers and survey of class IV marine engineers themselves. The outcome is that it could well serve to provide an estimation of the personality, strengths and weaknesses of a marine engineer and decide on a future course of action."

In conclusion it can be stated as pointed out by one of the top ranking cadets: "Teamwork, communication and ability to think out of the box are some of the attributes that separates the best from the rest."

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