

SPECIALIST TRAINING WITHIN MARINE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION STRUCTURE OF THE SAKHALIN REGION

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The author conducts the analysis of marine profession specialist training in Sakhalin region and highlights crucial issues in this sphere, which are inherent in Russia and almost all maritime nations, as well as proposes acceptable solutions for maritime educational institutions, employers and society how to develop suitable manpower.

Keywords: professional training, water transport specialists and skilled personnel, demographic situation, seaman prestige or reputation, safety of navigation, marine manpower, seafarers training, Sakhalin region.

Maritime activities development is an important strategic course of Russian policy at present. The maritime heritage of Russia is the major factor in maritime activities development in our country which has solid educational potential. Russian Federation has access to 12 seas and three oceans and is one of the leading maritime powers, in terms of its spatial and geographic features, its place and role in global and regional relations.

“National Maritime Policy Implementation” section of the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation until 2020, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on July 27, 2001 says that the human resourcing of all types of maritime activities must have the paramount importance.

The urgency of the issue is that the current educational material and technical basis for maritime occupations specialists training in the region keeps running at 20% capacity only with simultaneous shortage of highly qualified personnel in this sphere. The main task for the teachers is not to create the ‘visual attractiveness’ of the professions, i.e. pilot, navigator, seaman, although it also plays a role. The actual problem is to form the interest in the business that our graduates will have to do in the future. This issue is not easy and it literally has the global importance today.

As of June 1, 2011 there are 39 professional education institutions providing educational services in the Sakhalin region. Ten of them including 3 private ones propose higher professional education programs; 18 institutions including 2 private ones give secondary vocational education programs and 11 institutions offer basic professional education programs.

Among those educational institutions the following ones carry out training of highly skilled specialists for maritime transport:

Higher professional education institutions:

1. “T.B. Guzhenko Sakhalin High Maritime School” in Kholmsk city, the branch of the Admiral G.I. Nevelskoy Maritime State University, provides educational programs in such specializations as navigation and ship power plants exploitation with full time attendance and extramural studies. The standard admission is 25 students on each specialty annually.

2. The Sakhalin State University provides bachelor educational program in management of handling and transshipment equipment of ports and transport terminals.

Secondary vocational education institutions:

1. Secondary vocational education faculty of “T.B. Guzhenko Sakhalin High Maritime School” (mentioned above) in Kholmsk city. The specialties are “Navigation”, “Ship power plants exploitation”, “Organization of transportation and transport management” by types of transport.

2. Federal State Educational Institution “Sakhalin Maritime College” in Nevelsk city trains navigators, ship engineers, electricians, refrigeration plant engineers.

Refresher courses and adjustment training are conducted in:

1. State Educational Institution “Sakhalin Technical Secondary School of industrial technologies” in Kholmsk city.
2. Primary Educational Institution “Kholmsk sports and technical club ROSTO (DOSAAF)”.
3. OJSC “Commercial Sea port of Korsakov”.

Among these 28 institutions of higher and secondary education three i.e. T.B. Guzhenko Sakhalin High Maritime School in Kholmsk, Sakhalin Maritime College in Nevelsk, Sakhalin State University in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk train specialists for sea and port facilities that represents 10.7% of the total number of higher and secondary educational institutions.

By the beginning of 2011 there were 423 vessels with a total gross tonnage of 412053 tons registered in the Sakhalin branch of the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping. Assuming an average vessel crew of 10 people there are 4230 men working on these ships. If the command personnel of these vessels should be rotated at least on one person annually, the Sakhalin fleet will require 423 officers.

From the table below it is evident that over the past 3 years the average annual graduation of “seafaring” occupations in our school varies from 43 specialists in 2009 to 25 ones in 2011.

Table 1. Quantity of graduates from T.B.Guzhenko Sakhalin High Maritime School, branch of Adm. G.I.Nevelskoy Maritime State University

Specialization/ occupation	2009	2010	2011
Navigation	12	10	10
Ship power plants exploitation	31	20	15
Organization of transportation and transport management	17	12	15

Sakhalin Maritime College in Nevelsk also gives 30-40 graduate specialists annually. If our calculations are correct, then the necessary demand in qualified professionals for merchant fleet is covered by the Sakhalin educational institutions only by 20%. And this percentage

is even less as we consider the manpower correcting factor for the graduates conscription to the Armed Forces and their hiring to the shipping companies in Vanino and Nakhodka.

As we know, the main reason for the lack of specialists is a small admission rate of students due to pure demographic situation. In addition, the seafaring industry experiences manpower shortage because of decline in marine professions prestige. This tendency is not conducive to attract young people to the merchant fleet. We constantly work on their career-guidance, but the ship-owners must do the same even more. Initially prevailing motives for maritime career considerations as ‘romantic voyages’ and ‘a chance to see the world’ do quickly pass away but the hard and courageous work remains.

In the research by the Lloyd’s Ship Manager Journal (done five years ago) 83 percent of seamen responded negatively when asked if they wish a seafaring career to their kids. They called “negative climate in the seafaring occupations” and “decline of the prestige of maritime professions in the society” as the reasons for such attitude. The latter is also formed and influenced by the media.

Even the titles of media publications commonly have negative meaning e.g. ‘stranded crews’, ‘pirate attacks’, ‘accidents’, ‘distresses’, etc. People do not remember the high percentage of safely delivered freight, or relatively low environmental impact, or stringent laws and thousands of people who work at sea honestly. If this information is published, it is mostly done in non-public agencies reports and reviews.

A lot of efforts are made in the Russian seafaring industry to raise the prestige of maritime service including the increased level of social protection, introducing of new training courses. To increase the prestige of the maritime professions Ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention will also support our occupation. Professional training in general must become the main topic on the agenda of many conferences and forums of various formats.

The task of four professors and scholars is utmost career-guidance activity and quality specialists training via general movement to innovations predetermining the required level of specialist i.e. computer technologies, advanced simulators, point-rating system of proficiency evaluation, etc.

There is no need to prove what is obvious. A good product can be obtained from a good source material. Unfortunately, the level of preparedness of our entrants from secondary schools is sometimes not appropriate enough and we even have to pull them to the level of perception of the higher and secondary vocational education programs.

Once again about the maritime professions prestige. “It is possible to find ourselves in a situation when the vessels built in accordance with high standards required by the International Marine Organization will be idle alongside port quay because there will be no sufficient number of qualified officers,” - said the former IMO Secretary-General Mr. E. Mitropoulos. And that is mostly the issue of shipping companies, which is supposed to be solved by provision of required labor rights and social safeguards packages.

No doubts the quality of professional education is directly influencing the safety of navigation. Ships become more up-to-date, automation and reliability level grows drastically, but human factor impact on safety of navigation decreases slowly but evidently. A few years ago at a maritime seminar they concluded that the substandard shipping means not only bad vessels but crews as well.

Today, it is possible to re-phrase this statement as “quality shipping is quality crews”. However, the quality of the professionals here has a deeper meaning than just training in one of the maritime professional institutions. Seamen should use their professional skills wholeheartedly, i.e. respect and even love for their work are some of the components of the qualitative evaluation of a specialist.

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