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DEVELOPMENT OF MEASURES TO ENSURE QUALITY OF ONBOARD TRAINING AS PART OF THE MANDATORY SEAGOING SERVICE REQUIRED BY THE STCW CONVENTION

Ensuring quality of Onboard Training (OBT) for prospective officers through the streamlining and balancing of OBT and Training Ashore (TAS)

Submitted by Georgia, the Philippines and the International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU)

SUMMARY

Executive summary:	The document discusses the challenges faced by Administrations, MET institutions, shipping companies and ship personnel in the organization of mandatory OBT for prospective officers as laid down by STCW regulations and proposes to develop amendments to these regulations for ensuring the quality of OBT by optimal allocation of training responsibilities and resources among training providers
Strategic direction, if applicable:	6
Output:	6.16
Action to be taken:	Paragraph 19
Related documents:	STW 39/INF.2; STW 40/13/1; STW 41/7/11, STW 41/7/11; HTW 2/INF.2; HTW 4/INF.4 HTW 5/INF.5; HTW 5/5/1; HTW 6/12/5; MSC 85/23/6; MSC 100/10/4, MSC 100/10/4; MSC 101/21/1; C/ES.30/3(a)/1 and STCW.2/Circ.7

Introduction

1 The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (1978 STCW Convention, as amended) sets the qualification standards for seafarers, including standards for issuing the First Certificate of Competency (FCoC) for deck officers, engineer officers and electro-technical officers. A significant part of these standards can be achieved through the combination of seagoing service which includes OBT and TAS. Both types of training are mandatory in accordance with the Convention.

2 Concerning the situation in the shipping industry with regards to OBT for FCoC, the most recent studies conducted by stakeholders reveal a rather sensitive situation related to both accessibility and quality of mandatory OBT in accordance with STCW regulations II/1, II/3, III/1 and III/6.

3 The aforementioned STCW regulations are mandatory for the issuing of FCoC to prospective officers by Administrations. However, the quality of OBT is not the direct subject of these regulations and appropriate sections of part A of the STCW Code. Here, the term "quality" means a level of achievement of competencies by prospective officers on board the ships during sea time, as per STCW standards.

Background

4 Conceptually, the pre-sea theoretical and practical training of prospective officers provided by Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions and OBT provided mainly by shipping companies are two critical components that together constitute a coherent and comprehensive training system. Proper theoretical and practical training ashore is a keystone to success in OBT of prospective officers and vice versa. This system is only effective when it is duly observable and controllable. To achieve this, appropriate efforts and resources are to be allocated among training providers to optimize and strengthen the system.

5 The supervision of OBT for FCoC to ensure its quality also represents some challenges to companies and ships' personnel. These challenges are primarily related to additional workload not directly related to their operational activities.

6 On the other hand, it is obvious that the implementation of regulations II/1, II/3, III/1 and III/6 can be effective on board, if the prospective officer is theoretically and practically prepared and motivated to perform training tasks on board the ship. It should be taken into account that in some cases ships' personnel resources are limited in order to supervise the OBT process to teach and train prospective officers due to operational workload, especially if the prospective officer is not ready to accept training, for example, when the prospective officers' native language is not used on board the ship.

7 These challenges serve as a driving force for the development of flexible approaches for ensuring the quality of OBT for FCoC through the optimum redistribution of training responsibilities, opportunities and resources among all OBT providers, while also taking into account the novel opportunities based on modern training technologies and innovative educational methodologies effectively applied by MET institutions ashore.

IAMU study on OBT by feedback questionnaires

8 IAMU has conducted a study on OBT for FCoC by developing feedback questionnaires and collecting data and views from MET institutions, shipping companies and seafarers (HTW 7/INF.6). Further data received from about 700 prospective officers were partially presented in document HTW 4/INF.4.

9 A total of 27 companies, based in Cyprus, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Japan, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, Sweden, United Arab Emirates and 44 MET Institutions from Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Myanmar, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States responded to questionnaires. The IAMU team has also received 415 responses to questionnaires from seafarers during 2019.

10 About 55% (228 out of 415) of masters and ship officers agreed that an approved seagoing service could be shortened if the prospective officer has been theoretically and practically educated and trained to achieve certain competencies ashore prior to OBT and 10% of them took a neutral position. About 42% of seafarers agreed that there was difficulty in ensuring the appropriate efficiency that the OBT time the prospective officers spend on board was as useful as possible in terms of training and experience, while about 19% of them took a neutral position.

11 Half of MET institutions (22 out of 44) agreed that the 12 months of required seagoing service could be reduced through specified competency trainings ashore and 6 of them (14%) took a neutral position. By the data received, 31 MET institutions (70%) expressed a positive view on the quality of OBT and competencies achieved by prospective officers upon the completion of their OBT but 11 of them (25%) took a neutral position. According to the collected data, 10 out of 27 companies agreed that the 12 months of required seagoing service could be reduced through specified competency trainings ashore and 13 companies confirmed that by using modern approaches the prospective officers could be trained more efficiently in certain competencies while ashore and not necessarily while on board.

Discussion

12 Analysing the above-cited sections A-II/1, A-II/3, A-III/1 and A-III/6 of the STCW Code, the co-sponsors came to the conclusion that not all of the competencies could be achieved by prospective officers and assessed effectively on board the ship during OBT. Moreover, the OBT time in a lot of cases was wasted on the so-called "chipping and painting" and that was why it could be quite reasonable to streamline OBT time for prospective officers, substituting part of it with more professionally effective and better controlled TAS that, in turn, could assist in ensuring OBT quality itself, while also reducing the workload of ships' personnel. This approach can reasonably reduce OBT time that in turn facilitates the total organization and management of prospective officer training as per STCW standards.

13 TAS, if conducted before OBT time, gives prospective officers a more confident position on board the ship, which in turn helps to increase his/her motivation for better training and results in higher performance among ships' personnel.

14 The IAMU preliminary study has revealed that about 60% of OBT requirements as per section A-II/1 of the STCW Code could be carried out using approved simulator training, where appropriate, and this case gives the opportunity for cadets to demonstrate their competency in the most effective way. This might also be an important reason to consider that OBT for FCoC could be complemented by simulator-based training and allow for further consideration to reduce the required sea time.

15 The research carried out by the Netherlands (STCW.2/Circ.7) not only showed that part of the required seagoing service could, to a certain extent, be replaced by simulator training, but also that the level of competence achieved by students following simulator training was higher than the level of competence achieved by students not having followed simulator training.

16 Today, rapid advances in information technology are transforming the organization of MET processes, making it more efficient and providing new grounds for improving its quality. The 2010 Manila Amendments to the STCW Code have promoted and expanded the use of simulators for training of prospective officers, as laid down by sections A-II/1, A-II/3, A-III/1 and A-III/6.

17 The co-sponsors understand the challenges faced by Administrations, MET institutions, shipping companies and ships; personnel in the organization of mandatory OBT for prospective officers, as outlined in regulations II/1, III/1 and III/6. On the other hand, it is obvious that pre-OBT TAS of prospective officers will assist in the facilitation of total OBT organization by ships' personnel and as a result will improve the quality of OBT in general.

Proposal

18 Taking into account the aforementioned, the co-sponsors propose to develop amendments to related regulations of the 1978 STCW Convention, as amended, to expand the opportunities of Administrations to use their national legislation, where applicable, for harmonized redistribution of training resources among training providers by setting the optimal proportions between OBT/TAS time and curricula for prospective officers, keeping the overall training time within the framework of these regulations.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

19 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposals as set out in paragraph 16 and take action, as appropriate.