

ENHANCING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION: PROJECT MENTORESS

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¹ **MENTORESS** (Maritime Education Network to Orient and Retain (Women) for Efficient Seagoing Services) – (Erasmus + KA2 – 203 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education)

ABSTRACT

Education and training are vital to the development and success of today's knowledge society and economy. The EU's strategy emphasizes countries working together and learning from each other and supports programs to realize this. To this end, Erasmus Programme, which is part of the European Commission's Education Programme, funds a wide range of actions to improve the quality of education and training systems. PRU (Piri Reis University) has been developing innovative MET (Maritime Education and Training) solutions since its foundation in 2008 under the EU Educational Programmes to create a culture of quality and value people. This paper intends to introduce a new EU Project planned to equip the women with complementary qualifications to cope with the hardships they face in maritime, which is a male-dominated multi cultural environment. The main objective of the project is to determine what can be done and how these can be integrated into leadership and management programmes at the universities.

Keywords: Higher education, Innovation, Research projects, Leadership and management, Women leaders

INTRODUCTION

Research is an effective means of underpinning further and higher education programmes, developing and motivating staff, establishing working relationship with industry and commerce and developing independent and self-learning while preparing students for the future (Albayrak and Ziarati, 2010).

Universities are the places where people are trained not only for their future professions but also for life. During their university education, people learn a lot of things related or not related with their chosen field of study. This process prepares them for their future and the more they are equipped with education and training necessary for the life the more successful they are likely to be. In this paper, we will introduce a study planned to equip the women with complementary qualifications to cope with the hardships they face in maritime, which is a male-dominated environment. Our main objective is what can be done and how these can be done to realize this aim at the universities.

Although it is a universally accepted fact that women and men can work at every job together, some jobs are male-dominated while some others are female-dominated. Each part has its own features to be preferred or not by a certain gender. In gender-dominated jobs, it is hard for the opposite gender to be accepted, succeed or excel. In comparison, the situation of women working in male-dominated jobs is harder than that of man doing vice versa. Sometimes, due to historically ingrained attitudes toward women and established gender biases, some jobs are held by an overwhelmingly high percentage of men, making it difficult for women to advance, let alone break in. To a guy looking for a job, this isn't necessarily a bad thing (Gold, 2011).

Maritime shipping is an overwhelming means of allowing economic resources to be transported and hence a major facilitator for economic development worldwide. The global economy is built on integrated supply chains that feed components and other materials to users just before they are required and just in the right amounts. If the supply chains are disrupted, it will have repercussions around the world, profoundly affecting business confidence (Albayrak, 2007).

Safety of life at sea, the marine environment and over 90% of the world's trade depends on the professionalism and competence of seafarers. It has been reported that over 80% of accident and incidents are due to human error. A close investigation of casualty analyses particularly focusing on the causes of accidents clearly indicates that

standards are not applied correctly and when human factor issues are studied carefully there are omissions in the leadership and management education and training programmes received by the seafarers involved in accidents (Albayrak, 2011).

Today development of Maritime Education and Training (MET) system is a dynamic process under the pressure of rapidly improving maritime technology. Technological developments will almost certainly continue to create the potential for innovation in international shipping, but creating the conditions required to capitalize on the human resources is likely to demand new ways of thinking, new ways of working, and a new framework for understanding reality (Albayrak, 2011). Therefore integration of increasing number of women in the seagoing services has great importance for effective human resources management in the shipping sector.

While many businesses operated by women entrepreneurs are in traditionally female dominated occupations, women are also broadening their participation in non-traditional fields such as maritime businesses. Although there are only few women holding top management positions in the different sectors of the maritime industry, the world of maritime has significantly changed in the recent years and it is no longer all male (Albayrak et.al,2009).

However, shipping sector of the Maritime Business is still one of the jobs, which is male-dominated. Women make up only an estimated 2% of the world's seafaring workforce. Their low number, which is about 23,000 worldwide, means that women can be subject to discrimination and harassment (Women Seafarers, 2013).

Women can face discrimination even getting into seafaring work. In some countries, for example, maritime education and training institutions are not allowed to recruit women to nautical courses. Even once trained, they may have to face prejudice from ship owners who won't employ women. Once employed, women seafarers may also face lower pay even though they are doing work equivalent to that of male colleagues. Women may also be denied the facilities or equipment available to male workers, which is a form of discrimination. Although these are issues for many workers, they can be a particular problem if you are employed at sea, where you are isolated from family and friends and other sources of support (Women Seafarers, 2013).

On the other hand, the promotion of gender equality has been a goal of the United Nations (UN) and its specialized agencies, so policies to foster the advancement and empowerment of women have been on the agenda of several international organisations, governmental agencies and nongovernmental organisations in the last decades. As a result, the number of female alumni graduating from WMU (World Maritime University) and IMLI (International Maritime Law Institute) began to increase, and consequently these women began to take up positions as managers, administrators, policy advisers and educators in the maritime field worldwide (Frohold, Williams and Kitada, 2015).

Despite this, the fact that maritime is a male-dominated job is reflected in the student body of the maritime faculties at universities like all the faculties educating students for male-dominated jobs. The number of female students in maritime related departments is very low. There are 13 programs leading to bachelor degree and 27 programs leading to associate degree in maritime in 37 universities in Turkey as of 2015 figures (Oruç, 2015). To prove the small number of female cadets preferring these schools, a comparison between the number and percentage of female cadets and male cadets at maritime related departments in all the universities in 2016 is made. It is shown in Table 1 (YOK Lisans Atlası, 2016).

Table 1. Comparison of Male and Female Cadets in Maritime Related Departments (2016)

Department	Female		Male		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Maritime Trans. Eng.	56	9	575	91	631	100
Marine Engineering	11	4	303	96	314	100
Maritime Business Management	134	29	329	71	463	100
Total	201	14	1207	86	1408	100

As seen in the table, the number of female cadets in maritime related departments of the universities is quite low. That means female cadets go from male-dominated classrooms to male-dominated work places. In other words, they start to experience the challenges of male-dominated settings as early as they start the university. The only difference is that they are worse in work life. In some cases, the hardships may be so unnerving and backbreaking

that female personnel change their mind about working onboard ships or if they start working they want to go to ashore units to work as soon as possible.

Some of these challenges female maritime personnel face are listed below:

1. Not being able to rise to the top positions;
2. Not getting the same salary as the men in the same positions;
3. Having to work more than the men to be promoted;
4. Being employed in restricted areas or in the areas they are not educated for;
5. Being given less on-the-job training opportunities;
6. Not having a strong network, as the men have;
7. Not having the solidarity and network due to the insufficient number of women in the sector, so not getting the benefits of them, as the men do;
8. Insufficient mentorship opportunities to integrate women into the field;
9. Not being able to perform organizational citizenship behaviours as much as men can, due to the fact that they are primary caregivers in the family; and
10. Suffering from work overloads and time management problems (Ozdemir and Albayrak, 2015).

As these challenges suggest female cadets should be ready to thrive in the men's world and it is clear that some measures should be taken to equip them with necessary qualifications to bear the demanding conditions of not only the life onboard a ship but also the hardships caused by working in a male-dominated job.

Purpose and Specific Aims

To this end a special project is designed with the contributions of four different countries, which are Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. The purpose of the project is to design a syllabus and to import it to the Leadership and Management curriculum of maritime faculties to help prospective female staff cope with the hardships they are likely to encounter in sea going services and maritime jobs and to make them realize themselves to the full extent. The MENTORESS Project, approved by the Turkish National Agency as Project No: 2017-1-TR01-KA203-045739 under Erasmus + KA2 – 203 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education 2017 – 2019, is accepted by the Turkish National Agency under the scope of Erasmus+ Key Action2 Strategic Partnerships.

The novelty of the project is determined by the innovative multi-dimensional approach of MENTORESS in terms of both strategic objectives and operational methods and procedures of implementation. The project encompasses a coherent array of activities that will converge to one activity, which is EMP homogenous as structure and implemented by the means of similar state-of-the-art pedagogical techniques and educational infrastructure.

First of all, the main objective of the 4 European maritime higher education institutions is to develop, test and implement an identical 1- semester extracurricular programme to give necessary leadership and intercultural communication skills to female cadets. This general objective is one of a kind at European level and will be a premiere for academies/universities that develop similar competencies through slightly different national (non-joint) study programmes. Female cadets are not given such an integrated education and training in any of the maritime higher institutions in European Union countries.

All partners are already employing high-level technologies of teaching and learning. Modern ICT equipment is proved by their laboratories, simulators, distance-learning networks, study facilities and the hardware on board the training ships, which are responding to the latest needs of the maritime industry. All these ICT means, which can be used by EMPs, allow also a smooth communication between the partners' team members and will make very feasible even virtual mobilities of teachers and students involved in the common training.

Another new feature of the MENTORESS project is to increase the number of women in maritime jobs and, by this way, to raise awareness for the presence of women on-board the ships, to create a women friendly atmosphere which requires to elaborate behaviours and language, to encourage appropriate behaviour amongst personnel and to foster good camaraderie. It will also provide the participants with awareness and cultural considerations with regard to gender.

On the other hand, more women aboard means more and different viewpoints about everything going on a ship, and the chance to respond more effectively to the ever changing maritime industry's requirements will increase. Sharing the same philosophy of designing the orientation programme, the same type of infrastructure for women concerning taking necessary precautions to make life easier for them on-board and similarly trained female personnel will generate a hard core of 4 European maritime institutions that can expand in the future its expertise to a larger EU area and beyond.

This is also the way the project will be sustainable and able to be developed even more in the future by approaching a more extended period for the training and education of both male and female cadets. Moreover, the proposed project can lay as the foundation for future programmes, bilaterally or in a larger consortium.

What's more, the project will act as a higher level synergy emerging from the bilateral educational and research joint activities developed so far by the partners, like various conferences, workshops, seminars and research cooperation. MENTORESS will take the current joint cooperation actions, which are performed, in pairs of partners to a higher, strategic level. For instance, all 4 partners have already performed projects, which consist of mutual exchanges of students and staff. All lessons learned from the previous cooperation among the 4 partners generated the necessity of this application and will serve as a solid background for the development and implementation of the project.

The activities intended to play a role in the creation of the curriculum are as follows:

1. A study on coping with the problems arising from diversity in maritime. The aim of this activity is to prepare women in maritime to tolerate hardships and problems arising from existence of people from different cultures onboard the ship. At the end of the study, it is aimed that the female cadets will be furnished with the skills to cope with the cultural differences in the international setting of a ship. The skills in question will be the basic ones that can be improved further. The cadets who get this training are expected to set role models to the other women in sector so that more women can be affected by the training given indirectly. On the other hand, the causes and the aspects of the diversity in maritime and gender gap caused by it in the maritime industry will be studied and conclusions about the methods aimed to increase the awareness and the integration of female maritime officers and managers will be drawn.
2. Workshops to make female cadets overcome gender equity problems for employment and problems encountered during duties: Participants will be furnished with some skills which may help the overcome the problems arising from gender difference. They will learn how to excel their rivals in a male dominated environment. They will prove they are as good as, may be better than, the men in the sector and be role models for the other women not only in maritime but also in other male-dominated sectors.
3. Creation of a Charter for Gender Equity for Maritime Professionals. The charter will consist of the collection studies and research papers that have analyzed the multi-dimensional aspects of women integration in the maritime professions. The charter will reveal measures for both maritime employees and employers, needed to bridge this gender gap in order to ease the access of female officers and managers onto the maritime labour market and naval defence occupations.
4. Creation of a "Gender Identity Management and Leadership in Maritime Professions" common syllabus. Based on the educational requirements, the partners will develop the "Gender Identity Management and Leadership in Maritime Professions" common syllabus.
5. Realization of MENTORESS Virtual Network. The dedicated portal will establish an efficient media for communication within the partners and most important, for dissemination of the Action's results. It will also include the educational references for the syllabus designed. Moreover, the virtual network will allow on-line courses and real-time meetings (conferences). It will also have a social media section.

METHOD

Various methods are intended to be used to achieve above mentioned-goals. For example the first aim will be realized through a workshop on adoption of creative strategies to effectively handle workplace diversity. Theoretical information on workplace along with diversity management implementation principles will be given. After good practice case studies from experts are studied, the students will be given case studies on diversity management in maritime. They will study in teams to see what succeeds and what fails in various situations. At the end of the workshop, the students will be given problem situations from the ships. They are required to solve out problems arising from different cultures' being together on a ship.

Another workshop will be held on gender equity problems for employment and problems encountered during duties. At the beginning of the workshop, theoretical information on gender equity and a summary of problems likely to arise from gender bias onboard ships will be given. Then interactive sessions on how to react to incidents encountered on ships concerning the issue will be carried out. After some experienced women in the field talk about the real life situations, case studies will be conducted and tips to cope with gender bias will be given.

Next step is the creation of a workshop on leadership and coping with social, cultural and practical obstacles including second generation gender bias. Like the previous ones, this workshop will start by giving theoretical information on the subject. Then, lectures on understanding value systems of all parties and lectures on real life experiences from seafarers will be given. At the end of the workshop, the participants will be given problem

situations from the ships. They are required to solve out problems arising from social, cultural and practical obstacles including second generation gender bias on a ship, using the knowledge they gained from the workshop.

The accumulated results of all these activities will be presented publicly within a maritime stakeholders environment (academia, shipping industry, maritime regulating authorities, national naval security and defence). Discussions about the results of the research papers and other related issues will bring added value to the conclusions regarding the integration of women in the maritime professions.

The last activity will be a workshop on integration of women in the maritime professions. At the beginning of this workshop, success stories of women seafarers from past till today will be given and the features necessary to be successful are studied. Then, obstacles in achieving success and how to cope with them are discussed. Role models from merchant marine and navy are invited to talk about their experiences and give advices; then the cadets ask questions, if they have any. At the end of the workshop, case studies including multiple problems are given and studied. The final results of the workshop will be presented publicly within a maritime stakeholders environment (academia, shipping industry, maritime regulating authorities, national naval security and defence). Discussions about the results of the research papers and other related issues will bring added value to the conclusions regarding the integration of women in the maritime professions.

PROPOSED ACHIEVEMENTS

It shouldn't be forgotten that empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurs productivity and growth, and benefits every stakeholder in the global maritime community (Women in the maritime industry). That's why a great emphasis should be placed on gender balance at maritime jobs as well as all the other jobs.

Our first aim is to design a syllabus to enable the women in maritime to cope with the problems arising from diversity and help them overcome gender equity problems they are likely to encounter during their duty. We also aim to furnish them with leadership skills and skills to deal with social, cultural and practical obstacles including second generation gender bias.

Another objective we try to realize is to create a network among seafarers by mentoring or e-mentoring programs and providing role models for the cadets. In our project, we aim to train not only female cadets but male cadets, as well, to work hand in hand in a cooperative and productive setting.

In addition, we are going to create a charter for "Gender Equity for Maritime Professionals" and a syllabus for "Gender Identity Management and Leadership in Maritime Professions". Finally, we aim to realize MENTORESS virtual network.

After the end of the EU (European Union) funding and completion of the project's objectives, the syllabus and the Charter will be formally introduced within the new curricula they were designed for and presented for the upcoming accreditation of modernised study programmes by the national quality assurance agencies. Thus they will enter in force as formal planning document for conducting maritime education, so they will be self-sustainable, without any extra funding needs. By the contrary, taking the new and more effective syllabus and general gender equality policies in the maritime related occupations into account, the partnership foresees an increase of the interest from the maritime industry's side to assist financially the development of new maritime education and training facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The number of women in the workforce is increasing day by day. The women are getting more and more interested in all kinds of jobs and male-dominated ones are no exception. There are a number of difficulties waiting for them in these occupations. The first of them derives from the fact that they have a lot of responsibilities at home; second, they have to eliminate the gender bias, whether seen or unseen, and third, they have to cope with the hardships of working in-male dominated areas and unwillingness to accommodate them in those occupations.

This project is designed to help them overcome the difficulties of working in a male-dominated workplace. What we aim to achieve with the project is treefold.

Furnishing female cadets with necessary qualifications to cope with the hardships they face because of gender in maritime.

To enable women in maritime work more effectively so that they can make positive contributions to the work force in maritime.

The last but not the least, it is hoped that the syllabus to be developed will be commonplace in the schools where women are prepared to work in male-dominated work places and this will give way to the women to realize their potential to the full extent and to contribute to the workforce in general, and to the welfare of the country and the world respectively.

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