Performance and Problems Encountered by Maritime Institutions in Eastern Visayas

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Abstract
The study aimed to look into the problems encountered and the performance of the maritime institutions in Region 8, namely: Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), Naval State University (NSU), and Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT). The respondents were the college deans, faculty, and students of the maritime education program. Data were gathered through the questionnaire-checklist, interview, and college records were analyzed and interpreted. In terms of enrollment and graduates over the last five school years (from SY 2007–2008 to 2011–2012), NSU obtained the highest total enrollment of 6,243 but turned out 867 graduates only, while PIT got a total enrollment of 4,179 but was able to produce 974 graduates. PIT is doing better in its shipboard training program. The requirements on the administrators' and faculty members' profile, educational qualification, experience, and relevant trainings were complied, except for research which needs to be institutionalized in the College of Maritime Education. As to the problems met, the area on laboratory revealed that it was more felt in EVSU, but was never felt in PIT, indicating the latter to have adequate laboratory facilities. PIT was able to set a high record of shipboard training considering its small enrollment. PIT’s maritime upgrading program in partnership with the KVNR or the Shipowners Association of the Netherlands was also seen to be an important factor. Improvement and enhancement activities of schools offering maritime education in Region 8 are imperative.

Keywords: shipboard training, on the job training performance, maritime education

Introduction
The maritime service sector is probably among the oldest industries in the country. Its roots are traceable to the Galleon Trade during the Spanish colonial era. Today, it continues to play a very vital role in the economic development of the country. Although the maritime industry has a long history, it was only in 1974 that development efforts were initiated with the creation of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) through Presidential Decree No. 474. The decree provides for the strengthening of maritime functions and laid down state policies to accelerate the integrated development of the industry (Camarao, 1996).

In support of the maritime industry, formal maritime education was introduced in the Philippines in 1820 with the establishment of the Philippine Nautical School, the forerunner of the Philippine Merchant Maritime Academy (PMMA). Since then, numerous maritime institutions have been established to provide education and training to prospective seafarers both domestic and foreign vessels. To date, there is a total of 118 maritime schools in the Philippines. These institutions have produced thousands of seafarers over the years.

In 1995, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reported that the employed Filipino seafarers have reached 153,815 (Ramirez, 2001). With this figure that continues to escalate, the Philippines has earned a reputation as the manning capital of the world (Valisno, 2001). However, this claim is misleading because Prime Vertical (2009) says that while we have earned the reputation as the world’s major...
provider of experienced and competent seafarers, the international shipping community continues to ridicule us for having one of the lowest qualities of maritime education in the world. It is ironic that in spite of the hundreds of thousands of graduates emanating from the more than a hundred maritime institutions scattered all over the country, we could not fill up the worldwide shortage of marine deck and engine officers. The demand has far exceeded the supply, not that we are running short of seafarers but because there are not enough qualified seamen capable of moving up the rank to officers or engineers.

The above-mentioned scenario is an indication of the kind of maritime education the students are getting. It only proves that many of the maritime institutions in the country have failed to provide students with a decent maritime education.

The sad state of the Philippine maritime education as reported by Prime Vertical (2009) can be attributed to a host of problems such as: (a) low level of enrollees, usually graduates of secondary education, coupled by lack of entry standard among maritime schools; (b) maritime institutions operating under substandard conditions, i.e. inadequate equipment, outdated instruments, dilapidated lecture rooms, facilities not conducive for learning, etc.; (c) incompetent maritime professors/instructors; (d) lack of compendium, course outline, instructor’s guide, nautical/engineering books, teaching aids; (e) schools operating without a system, despite ISO-certified; (f) circumvention of CHED rules and regulations by school owners. Presumably, these problems may have been felt or encountered, by and large, by the state institutions offering maritime education programs, which in turn, have affected the process of programs implementation.

A number of studies have been done about school’s problems; nevertheless, little help has been obtained from them because, of these studies, state institutions offering maritime education were not made subject of the same. Such prompted this researcher to work on this study because of the belief that in improving the maritime program performance, it is essential to identify and offer solutions to problems that hinder the attainment of the same. Unless problems are identified, maritime institutions cannot offer intelligent, valuable and workable help in eliminating, or if not, reducing waste of time, money, effort, and even frustrations.

This study was limited only to the state universities and colleges (SUCs) offering maritime education in Eastern Visayas (Region 8). The performance of the school is focused only on the area of shipboard training.

**Methodology**

There were three groups of respondents involved in this study – the students, faculty members, and administrators (deans) in the three SUCs in Region 8, namely: Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), Naval State University (NSU), and Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT). The students were asked to expose their problems relative to their studies while both the instructors and administrators were requested to give their professional circumstances. In addition, the instructors were requested to ventilate their problems relative to their work.

Using the descriptive method of research, the data or information from the respondents were gathered using information data sheet and questionnaire. The information data sheet was used to gather information about the enrollment and number of graduates for the last five-year period (2007 through 2012). The questionnaire, on the other hand, was used to gather information about the professional circumstances of instructors and administrators and problems of students and instructors.

The profile of the students in terms of enrollment and the number of graduates in the BS Marine Transportation (BSMT) and BS Marine Engineering (BSMarE) programs
and the professional background of the faculty and administrators were described with the use of frequency counts, percentages and means. The problems of students and instructors and the extent to which these problems were perceived by them were determined with the use of frequency counts and weighted mean.

Results

There were a total of 2,595 students enrolled in the BSMT program at NSU compared to 2,166 students enrolled in the same program at PIT. In the BSMarE program, EVSU had the highest with 3,700 students enrolled while NSU and PIT had 3,648 and 2,013 students, respectively.

The number of students who graduated from the BSMT program within the five-school-year period was 609 for PIT and 440 for NSU. In the BSMarE program, NSU had the highest turn out with 427 graduates compared to EVSU with 373 and PIT with 365 graduates.

Pertaining to the performance of the maritime institutions, the same was based on the institutional passing percentage in licensure examinations and the number of students sent on shipboard training. The highest rating obtained by NSU in licensure examinations was in 2010-2011 with an institutional passing percentage of 72.50; that of PIT was in 2007-2008 with 72.80, and that of EVSU was in 2010-2011 with 74.64.

In matters of apprenticeship, within the five-school year period, PIT had the highest number of students sent for such purpose. The turnout of graduates sent on shipboard training was 974, 867, and 373 for PIT, NSU, and EVSU, respectively.

As to the educational qualification of the faculty, most of them finished the bachelor’s degree, with EVSU having the most number. Among the three institutions, NSU and PIT had instructors who were holders of master’s and doctoral degrees, who, more than 21 percent of them, passed the Master Mariner and OIC-NW examinations. PIT had more passers in the latter examination. A predominant number passed the “others” examination where instructors from NSU constituting the most number.

A predominant number of instructors in the three institutions have been in the service for about five years. While in the teaching job, they had attended relevant trainings to upgrade their knowledge, where most of those who attended came from PIT. Among the training courses, they had attended: (a) Model course, 6.09; (b) IMO model course, 3.12; and (c) Basic Safety Training, with sufficient time spent for these trainings.

In general, only few of the faculty conducted research and those who did, finished an average of one research. For those who did not, “too much load/other designations” was the most common reason that hindered them for conducting research.

With regard to the profile of the administrators (deans), among the institutions, the administrator from NSU held Master’s degree, while those from PIT and EVSU have been, and are still pursuing their master’s degree program. They all passed the licensure examinations. NSU’s dean passed the Master Mariner examination. PIT’s dean, Chief Mate and EVSU’s dean, Chief Engineer examinations. Like the faculty, they had attended numerous training courses of which most of these trainings had a duration of 80 hours.

EVSU’s and PIT’s deans have been serving in such capacity for about five years; that of NSU’s, for more than five years. Because of the nature of their work, only PIT’s dean conducted research, but NSU’s and EVSU’s deans did not.

Regarding the problems of students, results showed that students from the three institutions had a “slightly serious” problem on the management competence of administrator, library facilities, and medical-dental facilities. A “slightly serious” problems in terms of teaching competence of
faculty and classrooms was reported by students of NSU and EVSU. PIT’s students reported these problem categories as “not a problem” at all. Varied perceptions concerning library facilities were noted among students from the three institutions. While PIT’s students reported this problem category as “not a problem” at all, NSU’s and EVSU’s students perceived this as “slightly serious” and “rather a serious” problem, respectively.

The instructors encountered problems, too. These problems were: (a) development and training programs, (b) classroom facilities and laboratories, (c) instructional leadership and supervision, and (d) professional guidance given to students. All of these problems were generally considered a “slightly serious” problems by all instructors of NSU and EVSU, but were “not a problem” at all by instructors of PIT.

Discussions

The school administration’s effort of obtaining a big number of enrollment cannot attribute to an attractive program offering if it does not correspond to the number of graduates. In gleaned from the results of this study, PIT was able to produce the highest number of graduates which an indicator of a successful shipboard training program in the maritime education.

Quality instruction can be obtained if the dean and faculty have satisfied the requirements in terms of satisfying the master’s degree minimum qualification, attendance in relevant trainings, adequate laboratories, and good service record. Likewise, the conduct of useful research needs to be institutionalized in order to have a culture in research. Further, the problems and concerns of the students must be well-addressed.

The performance in the PRC licensure examinations of the maritime programs of EVSU, NSU, and PIT proved to be remarkably notable based on their institutional passing percentage. This will help address the global demand for maritime officers.

The shipboard training record indicates the school’s performance in terms of graduates turnout. PIT obtained a high record against its small number of enrollment; and thus, proved to be successful and doing better.

Continuous improvement and enhancement activities of the SUCs offering maritime education is imperative. The following initiatives may be explored and implemented:

1. For the students. In the first year level, students may be sent to educational tours and field trips by way of ship visitation to places where ships are built so that they will acquire direct or first-hand information on how ships are constructed, and for them to be acquainted with the “anatomy and physiology” of the ship. In the second year level, the students may be required to go on ship familiarization on the basic operation and other similar activities done in the ships. During the third year level, activities of the students should be limited to the most pressing and urgent ones to allow or give them time to accumulate or save funds for future actual shipboard training. In their fourth year level, the students should be exposed to apprenticeship. The shipboard training enables them to gain solid learning experiences on the actual maneuver of ship at sea navigation.

2. For the instructors and administrators. Instructors should be obliged to pursue advanced studies complementary to their academic preparation, attend training courses relevant to their job, attend management level courses in preparation for their future administrative work, and upgrade their seafaring profession especially those licensed OIC-NW and OIC-EW instructors. Meanwhile, the administrators should be holders of advanced degrees with relevance in
maritime education, well-versed in the management of maritime institution, have strong and operational linkages with shipping companies that provide actual exposure and learning experiences of students, acquire facilities necessary for carrying out quality maritime education.

3. The school may develop appropriate policies or strategies that will help the financially hard-up students pay for their shipboard training expenses. The “apprentice now, pay later” program may be provided to help lighten the financial burden of the students.

4. The school may establish an admission and retention policy that would allow a number of enrollment that would balance to the number of shipboard trainees and graduates required. The organigraph of an academic institution must clearly show the regular flow of enrollment, graduates, and employment.

5. Above all, if the school can afford, provide a training ship for the students to translate theory into action.

6. A similar investigation of wider scope may be conducted in other regions of the country to establish the veracity of the generalizations.

References

