On Shaping the Professional Psychology of Maritime Majors

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Abstract. The rapid development of the shipping industry and the safe operation require that the oceangoing seafarers have the corresponding professional psychology. But until present, there are no feasible criteria in this respect. This paper conducts analysis on the professional psychology of the seafarers required by the shipping industry and put forth that the seafarers’ professional psychology is composed of four aspects of professional inclination, individuality, general ability and special ability of the profession. The paper also makes suggestions that efforts should be made in three aspects to enforce the education and management towards maritime majors, shape their professional psychology and lay a solid foundation for the seafarers qualified in satisfactory professional psychology.

Introduction

The professional psychological qualifications refer to the sum total of those corresponding to the profession a person is engaged in, including the sense, interest, quality, character and ability of the profession. The requirements for the psychological qualifications differ in different professions, especially the industry of shipping. In comparison with the land careers, the oceangoing profession is characterized in greater floating, risk, hardship, loneliness and variety, which requires seafarers to have greater than others psychological endurance, will power and prompt decision-making in times of risks. But up to now, although the whole world is having strict health standards for seafarers’ physical qualifications, there are no feasible criteria widely accepted for seafarers’ psychological qualifications. This results in the fact that, although some seafarers have strong bodies, yet are less qualified in mental health, which in turn leads to repeated sea accidents. The safety accidents caused by the psychological problems of seafarers keep taking place and reports show that, since 2000, there has been missing of seafarers in voyage almost every year and the sea damage caused by human factors took up 80% of all the accidents. All these show that human errors are the root cause for sea accidents. The maritime college undergraduates are the reserve for seafarers and it is these students not yet undergone selection of psychological qualifications will grow into the backbones of the shipping industry. Therefore, it has become a problem calling for serious consideration for maritime higher institutions as to how to shape this motley crowd into seaworthy seafarers with sound professional psychological qualifications.

The Essentiality and Urgency for Seafarers to have Sound Professional Psychological Qualifications

The Rapid Development of the Shipping Industry Requires the Seafarers to Have Sound Professional Psychological Qualifications

With the development of modern science and technology, advanced production power keeps applying into the shipping industry and the modernization level of ships becomes higher, marching towards large size and high speed. The application of the advanced instruments requires the manning of crews to rise from labor type to that of technical management, with fewer manning onboard, from 30 to 50 per ship in the past to 16 to 28 at present. The modernized ships are sailing at a faster speed but manned with fewer crew members, which puts forth higher requirements of reaction to emergencies, team work abilities and mental adjustment of the seafarers. Whether they can effectively fall in compliance with the new changes of the industry and that of the development
is closely tied to the stableness of the reaction to changes and emergencies and relates to the sustainable development of the whole shipping industry.

The Safe Operation of Ships Depends on the Sound Professional Psychological Qualifications of the Seafarers

Ship accidents will either detain the voyage and damage the cargo, bringing economic losses to the company, or, destruct the ship and cause casualties, not only resulting in pain of life loss for many families, but also leading to incalculable harm to the stable operation of the company. In accordance with the sea loss analysis, 80% of the sea accidents are related to human factors, which has been the common idea in accident analysis of the international ship industry. Among the many human factors, the unhealthy psychological qualifications are a main cause in producing accidents. According to relevant data, 45% seafarers are at a loss of actions in face of emergency situations, which will miss the opportunity in saving the ship and life, giving major damages to the shipping company and life of seafarers. Meanwhile, it is not uncommon to see reports of suicidal and missing accidents, which is a potential danger to the safety and stability of the ship. To ensure the safe operation of ships, the seafarers need to own adequate mental pressure in extremely sophisticated situations for keeping calm in face of dangers and coolheaded in face of changes.

Present Requirements of the Shipping Industry for the Professional Psychological Qualifications of Seafarers

Based on his personal experience in the management and cultivation of seafarers in a period of 34 years engaged in ocean shipping, Captain Guo Jian-qiang pointed out that, the essential constituents for modern seafarers include the profound psychological qualifications, emergency responses and abilities in mutual toleration, harmonious getting along and sharing weal and woe. Zhu Guo-feng believes that, the projects for the professional appropriate psychological testing for seafarers should include the aspects of attention, judging and decision-making and non-intellectual qualifications. On basis of the analysis on the present status quo of seafarers’ psychology, Huang Zhi et al hold the opinion that, the concrete requirements for seafarers’ psychological qualifications include those of cognition, willpower, emotion and individuality. Hu Da-li et al conducted analysis on ship accidents and observe that the requirements of the shipping industry for the psychological qualifications of seafarers include intelligence, emotion and willpower. Wang Ji-mei believes that the psychological qualifications of seafarers are composed of deep interest in the profession and sense of responsibility, sharp observation, correct judging and reasoning, excellent attention, satisfactory communication, independent and firm willpower, stable moods, optimistic and cheerful personality and correct disposal of problems. In conclusion, the authors believe, the psychological qualifications of seafarers include professional inclination, career personality and abilities in general and special professions, with professional inclination including interest and incentive, personality including willpower, stable moods and sense of responsibility, and, in general professional ability, attention, judging and decision-making abilities of greater importance and special professional ability referring to interpersonal facilitation.

Probe into the Channels for Cultivating the Professional Psychological Qualifications Starting from Maritime Majors

In order to achieve the goal of improving the general psychological qualifications of the seafarers, it is necessary to make a start from the essentials and from the maritime majors to cultivate them into graduates with a high level of professional psychological qualifications, with adequate mental endurance to cope with winds and waves and strive at the re-optimization of the professional psychological qualifications in the practice of navigation.
Enforce the Creation of Maritime Culture to Improve the Professional Inclination in Imperceptible Influence

As to how to enforce the creation of the atmosphere of maritime culture and improve the professional interest and intention of the students, the authors believe that efforts can be made in two aspects of software and hardware. In hardware construction, the authors suggest to set up the facilities of maritime culture corridors, sculptures of college mottos and scenarios, physical training bases and professional skill development zones, making full use of the media as cultural corner of maritime publications and campus broadcasting, etc to propagandize the maritime culture so that the students on campus feel the sense of belonging as being “a seafarer”. In software, first, humanistic qualification education ought to be conducted in classroom teaching. Maritime higher institutions ought to offer humanistic courses to cultivate the professional humanistic qualifications of the students and prop up their expectations for maritime career, offer psychological health education courses for the would-be seafarers to help them understand themselves and perfect themselves, refine the active meaning of profession, guide the students to see their future career from the correct corner and improve their pride in profession. In the teaching of the maritime courses, teachers ought to, in combination with their personal experience onboard, stress on the extraordinary interest and understanding and activate the sense of pride in the “man’s” navigation career to trigger their aspiration for knowledge and skill and erect correct motivation in profession taking. It is also necessary to invite outstanding captains and chief engineers to deliver lectures to the maritime undergraduates, telling them their success from a student to a captain or chief engineer so as to strengthen their confidence and determination in plunging themselves in maritime career. The second suggestion is to set up internet service platforms with smooth information communication to provide channels for students to learn about the shipping industry and companies and transmit positive energy for students’ career choice. The third is to make use of good examples to ignite the passion and dream of the students. Those cherishing ideals, striving for success and having made great achievements in shipping industry and those outstanding in learning, optimistic in behavior and successful in seafarer skill contests are all examples for students to follow. Therefore, it is our mission to find the examples of the industry and around us and make the best use of the examples to excite the students in their pursuit of the dream of navigation and improve their sense of professional pride.

Formulate Complete Plans and Overall Improve Professional Psychological Qualifications of the Students

To achieve substantive improvement of the professional psychological qualifications of the oceangoing seafarers, only external influence is inadequate and it is necessary to formulate targeted training plans in accordance with the requirements of the shipping industry. General sketches of the plan: in the improving the psychological qualifications, it is necessary for firstly train the maritime undergraduates into qualified students before turning them into professional seafarers. Therefore, the cultivation of the professional psychological qualifications of maritime students can be categorized into three stages, college undergraduates, would-be seafarers and full sense of seafarers. Model and contents: For maritime undergraduates, the models for specialized professional psychological qualification include group psychological coaching, navigation simulator training and survival development training, with the first model suitable for first year students, the second model for second and third year students and the third model for students in practice. Model 1, The model of group psychological coaching aims at group activities to cultivate the qualifications of self management, sound characters, willpower and abilities in getting along with peers and group facilitations, etc. Model 2, In the meantime of theoretical teaching of maritime skills and psychology, etc, the practical operation is conducted in navigation simulator. In the process of training, attention ought to be paid to the overall cooperation, requiring the students adaptation of the students’ psycho activities and facilitation with the emergency situation to form the mental orientation of habitual actions. Model 3, For emergency disposal, it is necessary to set up simulator
training center and provide complete sets of simulation materials, sites and other conditions to create a situation close to the maritime practice and emergency environments, including fire, explosion, collision and ship abandoning, etc. The simulation training will improve the mental endurance of the students, train the correct judging and disposal of sophisticated situations and improve the abilities in coping with the adverse factors and suiting the special situations. Model 4.

The purpose for survival development training is to open up the potentials of the students. On account of the special environments at sea, the seafarers will unavoidably encounter the influences of low temperature, solarization, wind and wave, shortage of food and water, attach of sea animals and various natural factors, which threaten the life of seafarers. Therefore, the enforcement of the training in survival at sea, including survival in isolated islands and sailing, etc, will improve the abilities in reacting to the harmful factors in nature so that they will have the unyielding willpower of life no matter what hardships they come across.

Achievements Made in QMC

Qingdao Ocean Shipping Mariners College began the probe into the cultivation of the professional psychological qualifications in 2008, selected the experimental classes and classes for comparison and designed 14 periods and 9 topics of psychological qualification training, including self acceptance, charm of characters, self reliance, optimistic life, potential exploration, group cooperation, peer loving, the way to captains and expectation for sailing. We adopted the methods of situational exercise, role play, experience sharing and group discussion, etc, together with the combinations of group coaching and individual consultancy, group discussion and experience communication, teachers’ guiding and students’ autonomous learning, idea exchange with teachers and outstanding captains and on-site simulations, so that the students integrate themselves into the classroom teaching, with active participation and sharing of experience. After a year’s training, the students in the experimental classes apparently improved their group harmony and self disciplines and reduced their anxiety and tension, with clear low scores in somatization symptoms, OCD’s, depression, anxiety, fear, intolerance and mental disorder, etc. Therefore, it is our belief that the training has achieved the active effect in improving the psychological qualifications and the optimization in the psychological qualifications is effective. On basis of this, we combined the practice of students’ education and management to further enrich the training plans and tried to simulate the realistic situations at sea to improve the abilities in the management of the actual problems of the students and achieve the improvement of the professional psychological qualifications.

Adhere to the Semi-military Management of the Students and Consolidate the Achievement in the Improvement of the Professional Psychological Qualifications

We believe that only when we bring the cultivation of the professional qualifications into the routine education and management and provide guarantee for the special training for mutual dependence and promotion, can we consolidate the training achievements and put them in the practice of the learning and life of the students. Against the situation of the weakened position of the privilege in maritime education, some students are influenced by the impact of land majors and begin to have opposition against the semi-military management, with complaints and questioning. Recalling the achievements that we had made in the semi-military management of the students in the past 20 years and the positive feedback from the shipping industries, we believe that, we ought to adhere to the principles of detail management in semi-military management of the students. The sense of semi-military management is discipline management, but the disciplines are rigid and are put forcibly on the managed by the managing. Under this management of “external disciplining,” the students learn to obey the orders and reduce other qualifications. As to how to give full play to the initiative of the managed to make our would-be seafarers capable of not only obeying the orders but also of self management, self education, disciplined and achieving the sense of responsibility and strong willpower is worth full consideration for all the managing in the bottleneck of semi-military management of the students. On basis of summarizing the experience of the past and long-term development, Qingdao Ocean Shipping Mariners College has made the important
decision of “earnestly the promoting the transforming of semi-military management from discipline to culture” [7]. In the process of transforming, the management of details is an important measure taken in promoting the cultural management. First, we should enforce the construction of disciplines. The more rigorous the disciplines, the more operable they are, the wider the scale of practice in actual management and the more feasible and regular the self management of the students. Secondly, we should enlighten and guide the self management of the students, conduct effective education, arouse the thinking of the students, reflect the predominant status of the students on basis of guaranteeing the implementation of the rules and regulations and give full play to the coordination between senior and junior students and achieving the self management and education of the students. Thirdly, we should enforce the working styles and construction of the students’ management staff. Students resemble their teachers; the education of disciplined and responsible students requires that we pay adequate attention to our self behavior and self discipline, which determines what kind of students we are teaching.

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References


