

YOUNGSTERS' MOTIVATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES FOR CHOOSING SEAFARER CAREER. THE CASE OF LATVIA.

**Manuel Joaquín Fernández González, Dmitrijs Semjonovs, Aleksejs Bogdanecs,
Sandra Ozola**

Novikontas Maritime College – Novikontas Research

17a Dunties Str., LV-1005, Riga, Latvia

nr@novikontas.lv

www.college.novikontas.lv

Abstract

The contribution of maritime academies is of first importance to the shipping industry. In order to respond to the growing demand for qualified seafarers in the European maritime community, the quality of recruitment campaigns should be enhanced, taking in consideration prospective students' beliefs and fears about the profession. Based on career motivation theory and on the concept of "generation", the aim of this study was to investigate youngsters' reasons for choosing or rejecting seafarer profession, and to investigate regional and gender differences.

In order to answer the research question, a sequential mixed-method study, using open-questions and a questionnaire, was conducted at the Novikontas Maritime College, in Riga, among participants of the concourse "Enkurs" (youngsters from 16 to 19 y/o interested in maritime profession) from February to May 2014. 219 answers to the questionnaires and 144 to the open questions were recorded. After the analysis of scientific literature, a questionnaire and open questions were elaborated and piloted; then data collection and preparatory data cleaning was done; after that, data were processed and analysed; the data analysis methods were Cronbach's alpha, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Mean of ranks (MR) and Median, Chi², Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, Cross tabulation and t-test. Finally, the interpretation of the results and elaboration of conclusions and recommendation was done.

The main youngsters' "reasons for choosing seafarer profession" were "stable employment" (MR=4.42 in a 5 point Likert scale) and "travelling and seeing new places" (MR=4.42), followed by "good salary" (MR=4.38). The main "dissuading factors" were "difficulties for family life" (MR=3.94) and "studies are too expensive" (MR=3.17). Statistically significant differences between regions and between genders were found: respondents from Latvian regions *Latgale* and *Vidzeme* were more attracted by seafarers' team spirit than respondents from other regions. For respondents from Riga, the lack of family life is not such a severe obstacle compared with other regions. Females seem to be more attracted by travelling and more concerned about negative influence of seafarer work on health than males, while males are more attracted by the salary and prestige of the profession than females.

In the last section, these respondents' perceptions were compared with recent research and contrasted with the opinion of professional seafarers and real data about these issues, especially about family life, cost of the studies and health problem. Some recommendations for adapting career promotion campaigns to the needs of potential students are put forward. The results of this study will help Maritime Education and Training (MET) teachers to adapt their discourse to the needs of students. Also prospective maritime education students will find useful to reflect on the positive aspects and dissuading factors of this profession and to have a real picture of work at sea, in order to make a well informed choice of profession.

Keywords: seafarer; career choice; career barriers; career motivations; Latvia

If you are interested, you can consult the full paper that will be published in September 2014 in the international journal *European Integration Studies*. 2014. No. 8 (<http://www.eis.ktu.lt/index.php/EIS>).