

Maritime Education and the Training Challenges under Applicable Nigeria Laws: Need to Harmonise with Global Best Practices

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Abstract— Maritime education and seafarers' training are crucial to achieving cabotage and maritime law policies. Cabotage law, by its nature as a local content law, presupposes that local nationals are well trained in line with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) to match the standards of expatriates or foreign counterparts. The need for citizens to be equally qualified in professional terms to man vessels and drive the cabotage industry of their respective countries cannot be overemphasised. Recognising this, Nigeria institutionalised technical training through various regulatory bodies, such as the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTÉ), to ensure adequate manpower supply in the industry. The study adopted the doctrinal approach to legal research and made use of both primary and secondary sources of law. However, the paper found that Nigeria is confronted with foreign dominance, lack of adequate resources, and financial misappropriation, among other issues. Consequently, as a way forward to achieving the enormous benefits in the industry, access to funding and resources, alongside the fight against corruption, are ways to overhaul the system. Others include staff development, international collaboration, and investment in modern infrastructure and technology. The recommendations are geared towards safeguarding the training and regulatory institutions from collapse and upholding institutional integrity. Nigeria can also adopt the aggressive models of the Philippine system to improve the Nigerian cabotage industry. The findings may also benefit other countries facing similar challenges.

Keywords: STCW; training; local content; cabotage; maritime education.

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INTRODUCTION

Many writers have consistently focused on the regulatory architecture governing maritime commerce within Nigerian waters. While considerable work has examined shipping regulation in general, comparatively less emphasis has been placed on analysing local content maritime labour in Nigeria. Cabotage law, also known as maritime local content law, requires that all goods and services carried on or transported via territorial waters between two points be transported on Nigerian built, owned, flagged, and crewed ships. Therefore, crewmen training for manning capability and competency becomes paramount to achieving the envisaged policy statement. The manning of ships by crewmen can only result from well developed maritime education. Maritime education, training of crewmen, and certification of seafarers are important aspects of global maritime regulation. According to Oyetola (2023), Nigeria is committed to repositioning the maritime sector through the development of a long term and sustainable plan. The question is whether that includes maritime education and training of seafarers.

The Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, commonly referred to as STCW, is the principal legal instrument regulating training exercises globally. Generally, these international training standards are an offshoot of a convention that established basic requirements for training, certification, and watchkeeping for seafarers at the international level. The 1978 convention stipulates qualification benchmarks for various cadres, such as ship masters, officer cadres, and watchkeeping personnel on board merchant ships, which countries are under an international obligation to meet. However, the international convention, through both the 1995 and 2010 amendments, introduced practical skills as against theoretical knowledge, as well as quality standard systems, assessment, and certification procedures (Ebiala, 2021; Ebiala, 2023a). It also regulated safe shipping environments and demanded high professionalism and competence. The Maritime Academy of Nigeria was established as the equivalent of the National Maritime Centre established by the International Maritime Organisation in the United States of America to ensure that US merchant mariners are trained with the skills and abilities to serve on board.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to provide a legal and policy analysis of maritime education and training in Nigeria, to evaluate the extent of alignment between national practices and global standards, and to offer actionable recommendations for legal and institutional reforms that will enable Nigeria to build a competent and sustainable maritime labour force. This study focuses on curricular design and delivery processes to ascertain whether they align with international standards of seamen training in Nigeria. The study will examine the primary Nigerian maritime agency, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, the National Board for Technical Education, and the National Universities Commission (NUC), among others, which are

the official bodies responsible for accreditation exercises for school resources and curriculum approvals in Nigeria. Moreover, all Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs) are expected to undergo periodic review and approval by statutory agencies such as the NUC, NBTE, and NIMASA.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Background of the Study

The thrust of cabotage law is not just harnessing the ability of local maritime business owners to build or purchase ships but to effectively run the maritime business. The entire maritime labour, that is, the manning of ships, requires that crewmen satisfy the local content requirement of being Nigerian citizens. Section 3 of the Cabotage Act effectively prohibits ships from operating cabotage business in Nigerian waters without Nigerian officers and crewmen.

On the other hand, section 23(1)(e) of the Cabotage law simply provides as follows: subject to sections 9 to 12, a vessel shall not be registered for use in domestic trade unless the Minister is satisfied that the vessel is exclusively manned by officers and crewmen of Nigerian citizenship, except where section 10 applies. Apparently, section 10 authorises the Minister to grant waivers on application that a duly registered vessel meet the requirement for a vessel to be wholly manned by Nigerian citizens, where the Minister is satisfied that there are no qualified Nigerian officers or crew for the position specified in the application. However, Nigeria should not lose sight of the literal interpretation of the Cabotage Act, which means no more than a total domestication of cabotage trade in the hands of Nigerian citizens in aspects of full beneficial ownership of not just vessels but also manning responsibilities.

Every ship in Nigeria, except for pleasure boats, fishing vessels, and other ships not propelled by mechanical means, has stringent manning requirements under the Merchant Shipping Act 2007 and under the Manning Regulations made thereto. However, the cabotage industry, despite clear policy direction, is still dominated by expatriates, especially at the officer cadre, and they are paid higher simply because shipping companies feel that foreigners have more experience, even where there are seemingly more qualified Nigerian officers. The above provides the backdrop for the compelling need to emphasise the training of Nigerians as able crewmen and competent seafarers. Nigeria is saturated with cadet ratings, able seamen, and competent captains and pilots trained both in Nigeria and outside Nigeria, sufficient to obviate the need for the continued application of section 10 of the Cabotage Act.

THE CONCEPT OF CURRICULUM AND CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT

The term curriculum is derived from a Latin word “currus,” which simply means “to run a race,” that is, to run a course. The concept was designed to have a set of

processes to enable career preparation and development. As individuals collect information, emotions, and behaviours throughout their lives, this concept is applied to experience in terms of cognitive and psychomotor processes (Ebiala, 2023b; Ofem, et al., 2026). Generally, a curriculum is made up of three basic ingredients: program of studies, activities, and guidelines. The program of studies focuses on knowledge acquisition. The program of activities enhances understanding through diverse activities, and the guidelines provide direction and support for trainees. For instance, academic programs at the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, such as Nautical Science, Maritime Transport and Business Studies, focus on knowledge acquisition. The 2010 STCW approved professional courses, such as Bridge Teamwork, Ship Manoeuvring Simulator and Bridge Teamwork, Global Maritime Distress and Safety System, General Operators Certificate, and Electronic Chart Display and Information System, focus on practical training coupled with activities.

Curriculum development involves planning educational activities within a specific timeframe and at certain levels of study. It is the process of designing, planning, and implementing educational programs and courses for maritime professionals, including seafarers, crewmen, and shore based personnel. To achieve local content capability in manning and crewmen training, the maritime curriculum must adhere to international conventions, regulations, and standards, including those of the IMO, ILO, and the STCW.

Maritime education and training of officers focuses on programs developed to specifically improve safety and achieve efficient maritime operations. This objective will lead to a reduction in the risk of marine accidents and environmental pollution or damage. Professionalism is achieved through a well thought out curriculum that focuses on producing competent, knowledgeable, and skilled maritime workers. Maritime education also inculcates in trainees environmentally sustainable practices that protect and conserve coastal communities and aquatic ecosystems and supports the health and welfare of seafarers.

The maritime education curriculum combines both theoretical knowledge and practical hands on experience through sea time exposure to equip trainees with useful industry knowledge to meet the demands of the profession. In Nigeria, industry partnerships and stakeholder engagements have come to fill this important aspect of the maritime curriculum. The Maritime Academy of Nigeria provides practical training through Survival Training Pools, Full Mission Engine Room Simulators (ERS), laboratories, engineering workshops, computer based training, Full Mission Bridge Simulators (FMBS), and Multi Functional Classrooms (MFC). The institutions are integrating and leveraging technology rather than abandoning traditional teaching and training methods. However, there is also a need to update the maritime curriculum regularly as recommended by the IMO Manila Convention of 2012 every five years to

include industry specific projects, internships, and practices. Nigeria's thirty year old maritime education curriculum is due for a review.

The training and assessment of seafarers are regulated under the STCW and the Merchant Shipping (Training and Certification) Regulations. Regulations 1/6 and 1/8 are very instructive in providing guidelines towards achieving the industry training requirements and manning goals. Additionally, these guidelines further provide guidance to audit and accreditation teams. In 2025, digitalisation of certificates was at the top of the maritime education reform agenda. E certification comes with the security challenge of fraudulent issuance of certificates. To ensure authenticity, QR codes are adopted to connect certificates to lawful maritime authorities. Effective from January 1, 2026, a new mandatory competence now requires all seafarers to be trained to prevent and respond to violence, harassment, bullying, and assault. This expands the Personal Safety and Social Responsibility module. It will help seamen to understand the cause and effect of harassment and abuse on board, such as stress, fatigue, discrimination, and isolation. Therefore, seamen are expected to intervene, report, and support any such victims through trauma informed approaches. Furthermore, to ensure safe operations, the human elements of teamwork, inclusion, and psychological safety are now considered vital components. In summary, the new requirement brings digital transparency and efficiency, as well as human responsibility and wellbeing.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The beginning of maritime education and training in Nigeria may be traced to two important events: the discovery of crude oil in the country in 1958 and the attainment of independence from Great Britain in 1960 (Okore, 1999). The aggregate result of these events, among other things, was: (i) a rise in literacy level resulting from free education in certain parts of the country and the establishment of more institutions of higher learning; (ii) economic growth with the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria, bringing many foreign investors, oil companies, offshore supply and service ship operators, and others in the oil business; and (iii) increased import and export trade in and out of the country, both in volume and revenue.

In 1959, the Nigerian government, realising the important role of shipping in the development of a nation's economy, established a shipping company with six old ships. These were shortly increased in number and tonnage to enable Nigeria to carry a fair share of the total sea borne trade generated along the West and Central African sub region at that time, of which over 70% originated from Nigeria (Chilaka, 2024). However, there was maritime manpower shortage at this time: the newly established shipping company and other maritime institutions such as ship and cargo surveying, clearing, and forwarding agencies were all virtually run by expatriates. In view of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria decided to establish a Nautical School to train all

levels of manpower for the Nigerian maritime industry. Accordingly, in 1968 it commissioned an IMO body of experts to conduct a feasibility study for this purpose. In 1972, an internal body was appointed to follow up the first study. Finally, in 1976, the third and final IMO sponsored body of experts was engaged to conduct the same feasibility study before the government gave the green light for the Nautical College of Nigeria to be established in 1977. However, the school was declared open for classes for the first time on 6th October 1979 (Okore, 1999). Following Nigeria's ratification of the STCW 1978 convention in 1986, the status of the college was raised in 1988, its training responsibilities enlarged, and the name changed to the Maritime Academy of Nigeria. While the various committees for the establishment of the nautical school were still working, in 1969 the Federal School of Fisheries (now Federal College of Fisheries and Marine Technology) was established by the Department of Fisheries of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to cater for the manpower needs in the fisheries sector (Okore, 1999).

With the name change of the Maritime Academy of Nigeria came also the expansion of its mandate from educating and training shipboard officers and shore based management officers to the training of all levels and categories of personnel in the entire industry. The academy now boasts of 8,300 trained merchant navy personnel and more than 68,000 other personnel in the industry, such as those in port operation, ship building, marine insurance, security, engineering, and business studies. Before 1969, there was no state owned training school in the field of maritime education and training in the country. Whatever training people had at this time was on a private company and individual basis. Intending navigators and marine engineers did their training outside the country.

In recent times, Maritime Training Institutions (MTIs) have increased in Nigeria. The majority of these institutions are located in the southern part of Nigeria, understandably as a result of proximity to the sea. Nigeria has over 50 institutions offering maritime courses. However, only 24 are categorised as MTIs in Nigeria. The others are either not certified by the key industry regulator or obtain accreditation from the general accreditation bodies such as the NUC and NBTE. This perception has led to MTIs being dominated in Nigeria by the private sector. The few public institutions mostly run maritime courses on provisional accreditation. In fact, the Nigerian Port Authority Training Institute, currently operating on provisional approval, offers only one simulator based approved training course, namely, the pilot refresher course.

Therefore, this study adds a distinctive contribution to seafarers training in Nigeria by disclosing inherent challenges in maritime education and training and providing a forward looking, policy based approach to tackling those challenges.

THE ROLE OF STATUTORY BODIES REGULATING MARITIME EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Statutory bodies are entities established by the government for the public control and regulation of maritime education in Nigeria. They are regulatory agencies created, financed, and controlled by the government. They are as follows.

National Universities Commission

The NUC is a federal government agency responsible for the maintenance, promotion, and review of quality higher education in Nigeria. The NUC was initially established as an advisory agency under the Cabinet Office in 1962. However, in 1974 it metamorphosed into a statutory body with the passing of Decree No. 1 of 1974 (Peretomode, 1992; Ebiala, 2024). The Commission is charged with the responsibility of delivering qualitative university based education in Nigeria. Therefore, the NUC advises the President and state governors on the creation of new universities and other degree awarding institutions in Nigeria, prepares a periodic master plan for the balanced development of all universities in Nigeria, recommends the establishment of academic units in universities, makes investigations relating to higher education, advises the government on the financial needs of university education in Nigeria, receives grants, publishes information relating to university education in Nigeria, undertakes periodic review of terms and conditions of service of personnel in universities, recommends visitations, and undertakes all other activities necessary to discharge its responsibilities.

The Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy

The Ministry aims to create a world class marine transportation system in Nigeria and provide projects, programs, and initiatives for the development of efficiency of the marine and blue economy in Nigeria. It also seeks to transform and diversify the marine and ocean economy through research and to develop local capacity in the blue economy in Nigeria. The Minister oversees the effective administration of the Ministry, including agencies and parastatals under the Ministry. The Minister has the power to make regulations prescribed in enabling laws. For instance, under the Merchant Shipping Act and the Cabotage Act, the Minister has made several regulations, such as the Certificate Holders Inquiries Regulations 2010 and the Merchant Shipping (Disqualification of Holder of Seafarer's Certificate) Regulations 2010. The legal implication of an allegation against a seafarer's certificate of competence is that such a person will be liable to face an inquiry. Where such a person makes a case for it, otherwise the Minister in Nigeria has the power to cancel, suspend, or disqualify a holder of a seafarer's certificate.

Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA)

NIMASA was established by section 3 of the NIMASA Act 2007 to carry out, among other things, the development and implementation of policies and programs that will facilitate the growth of local capacity in ownership, manning, and construction of ships and other maritime infrastructure; enforce and administer the Cabotage Act; and carry out inspections. Section 30 of the Cabotage Act provides for an Enforcement Unit with the power to conduct searches on board a ship, carry out arrests of ships and officers, obtain information, and so forth. Failure to comply with directives of enforcement officers attracts fines ranging from N100,000.00 and above (see Part VII). However, enforcement officers must be guided by the cabotage enforcement form to avoid arbitrariness.

NIMASA is in charge of pursuing the development of the shipping industry, including matters relating to merchant shipping and seafarers training. Specifically, it administers seafarer certification in Nigeria. It establishes maritime training and safety standards, that is, issuing approval for Maritime Training Institutes in Nigeria. The general direction on qualification, certification, employment, and welfare of maritime labour inheres in NIMASA. It also establishes procedures for the implementation of international conventions of the International Maritime Organisation and the International Maritime Labour Organisation. Also, other international maritime safety and security codes and agreements to which Nigeria is a party come within its auspices and superintendence.

The crucial role of NIMASA is also seen from its power to register and maintain a register of every dock worker, seafarer, including stevedoring companies and seafarer employers, and jetty, terminal, and offshore terminal operators. The Agency provides training, carries out examinations, regulates maritime labour and employment, and can enter upon ports, terminals, and vessels to investigate matters connected to maritime labour, ship safety, and security. By section 27(2) of the NIMASA Act, the Agency is imbued with disciplinary authority over cadets, personnel, and the conduct of maritime labour in Nigeria. Where it is considered that industry players, both employers and employees, are in contravention of the Act, such an individual's certification status may be affected, and this may include revocation of license or permit.

However, NIMASA had been overburdened with political appointments, leading to inefficiency and shoddy implementation of maritime laws in Nigeria (Ologe, 2024). The appointments of directors, executive directors, and the management cadre should be merit based, drawn from industry experts or maritime academic faculties.

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND)

This Fund was established by the TETFUND Act of 2011 with the responsibilities of managing, disbursing, and monitoring the education tax for public tertiary institutions

in Nigeria (Nzotta, 2018). The Act effectively repealed the Education Act LFN 2004 and the Education Tax Fund Act of 2003. The law imposes a 2% education tax on the assessable profits of all registered companies in Nigeria. The assessment and collection of the said tax is carried out by the FIRS, and the Fund administers and disburses the amount to tertiary educational institutions at both federal and state levels. The Fund also carries out monitoring activities on project execution. The Fund has been described as the most popular and major effective intervention agency by the federal government to help bring about quality and achieve excellence by helping to provide modern day infrastructure and equipment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It has enabled Nigerian universities to compete with high ranking world universities.

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)

This is a creation of law by virtue of Act No. 9 of 1977. However, the functions were extended and expanded by the Education (National Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institutions) Act 1985 and the Education (National Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institutions) Amendment Act 1993. The Board runs accreditation of academic programs in all technical and vocational education institutions in Nigeria. The Board has the power to recommend the establishment of private polytechnics and monotechnics. It is also within the mandate of the Board to maintain a certain level of standard quality throughout the federation. To achieve its goals, it harmonises entry qualification requirements, technical staff standards, staff structure, and conditions of service.

The Federal and State Ministries of Education

There is one Federal Ministry of Education at the federal level in Nigeria. Some states have two ministries: one for higher or tertiary education and the other for basic or primary education. The state ministry is headed by a commissioner appointed by the governor and confirmed by the House of Assembly. The commissioner is a member of the State Executive Council, while the Minister of Education is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Government owned maritime institutions are set up by law with a board of governing council to assist in the discharge of their responsibilities. The Ministry is the central coordinating body for the running, planning, evaluation, and improvement of education at all levels. The Minister or Commissioner formulates educational policies for the development of the educational sector.

MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING (MET): LESSONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is globally known as the world's epicentre for maritime labour, and as such, MET in the Philippines has become a model for the world. In the

Philippines, despite its international rating as the largest market for crewing, the Philippines Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, an economic and social transformation strategy, was developed to eliminate poverty and create jobs for its teeming youths by training them to become competent, internationally acclaimed seafarers. The Philippines is taking advantage of the BIMCO Reports of 2005, 2010, and most recently 2021, which revealed a recurrent shortage of officer cadres on tanker ships and offshore support ships. The recent report disclosed a current shortfall of about 26,000 STCW certified officers and projected the need for an additional 89,000 officers by 2026.

The Philippines can be compared to Nigeria in many ways: it has a high population growth rate, absence of more attractive employment opportunities, high unemployment rate, and the country's position as a maritime nation. In addition, like Nigeria where MET is dominated by privately owned institutions, in the Philippines the private sector is encouraged to run maritime training facilities, with the country having the most institutions numbering 159, while India is second with 130 (Nsikan et al., 2024). Recent data from Bangko Central Ng Philipinas shows that overseas Filipino worker (OFW) remittances for the first four months of 2025 exceeded \$2.66 billion. In Nigeria, diaspora remittance is about \$25 billion annually. However, it is not clear what percentage is attributed to seafarers.

One of the challenges the Philippine government is poised to tackle is the issue of shortage of manpower and competency generally in the maritime industry. The Philippines is looking beyond its territorial waters, and its focus is to supply manpower to the world. Part of the strategy adopted to redress these challenges is the MET program of the Asia Pacific Manning and Training Conference undertaken by the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines in collaboration with shipping companies and government agencies. These include the Academic Ramp Program, Dual Course BSMTE Program, Bridging Program for Marine Engineers, Voluntary Accreditation of Programs, Cadetship Training Program, Leadership Development Program, other enhancement and value added programs for faculty and staff, establishment of a Professional Career Development Centre (PCDC), and a graduate program at the Centre for Advance Maritime Studies. Furthermore, to achieve desired goals, the various programs are made available without onerous additional entry requirements for those who intend to pursue marine related qualifications.

Although one may argue that the Philippines' favourable world rating can be traced to the regular assistance and support from the IMO Technical Assistance on MET, according to Angelica (cited in Nsikan et al., 2024), this has greatly impacted the country's improvement in the administration of MET and certification. The Philippines holds a strategic place in the world of MET. In 2010, Manila hosted the amendment of the STCW Convention and Code. Moreover, following the diplomatic adoption on June

25, 2010, that date has since been designated as World Seafarers Day to celebrate and mark the unique role played by seafarers all over the world.

The Philippines established a National Quality Standard System to implement the STCW for MET through various government parastatals, such as the Philippine Regulation Commission, the proactive Technical Education Skills Development Authority, and the Commission for Higher Education. Significant investment has also been channelled into the upgrading of MET in the Philippines. This has brought about the construction of facilities through partnerships with private organisations. Also, in the Philippines, part of its strategy is to recognise certificates from training institutes and universities as equivalent to a bachelor's degree. It is also creating vigorous awareness campaigns for its young population to develop their interest in maritime education. Another means of making maritime education and training attractive is reducing personal taxation on seafarers' income.

SHORTFALLS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES IN MARITIME EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Marine education and seafarers training by their nature must reflect global benchmarks and regulations. The implementation of the STCW code has brought far reaching implications for not just Nigeria. It is also the desire of industry stakeholders to have international sea time exposure. Therefore, while training is carried out locally, the student products of these institutions should have global certifications or training preparing them to be fit and relevant for the global maritime business. Needless to say, under manning is an offence in Nigeria punishable by detention of the vessel where NIMASA is satisfied that the ship was unseaworthy by reason of under manning. Therefore, the training for manning capabilities cannot be overemphasised. According to Sota (1991), ship owners and vessel operators generally prefer to engage highly trained professionals as seafarers serving on board ships. However, the current reality and state of resources available to cater for the professional development of cadets and officers leaves much to be desired.

In Nigeria, the NIMASA Nigerian Seafarers Development Programme (NSDP) has trained several Nigerians in internationally recognised maritime institutions. However, the International Transport Workers Federation queried the whopping N16 billion spent so far on foreign maritime education. Nigerian student cadets under the NSDP auspices have demonstrated against NIMASA in the past for being abandoned in Manila, Philippines (Taiwo, 2018). Other challenges are as follows.

LACK OF ADEQUATE RESOURCES

One of the major challenges hindering the effective management of maritime education in Nigeria is the issue of access to adequate resources. According to Adegbite

(2021), insufficient financial support remains a major obstacle to educational management across the country. Adeniran (2017) further emphasised that without adequate funding, the educational system is built on a fragile foundation, leading to intellectually underprepared graduates, which in turn affects national development. James (2020) highlighted that maritime education is not yet a government priority, as reflected in the persistent shortage of funds available to maritime institutions. Lack of funding affects power supply in maritime institutions, as most of the instructional gadgets are electrically powered (Egunsola et al., 2018). This funding gap has also led to deteriorating library facilities, poorly equipped laboratories, and a lack of instructional materials in recent years. NIMASA is mandated to allocate at least 5% of its revenue annually to support maritime education and training, yet this target remains largely unmet. There are also allegations of misappropriation affecting schools such as Delta State School of Marine Polytechnic, Burutu, which is a source of concern to the public.

Challenges of Staff Qualification and Experience

There exists a gap of up to 40% of required PhD holders, which shows that there are not enough qualified academic staff. This lacuna is seriously affecting the quality of education. The shortage of senior lecturers with PhD qualifications has significantly impacted the quality of MET in Nigeria. Alabe (2018) emphasised that for any educational program to thrive and assume its proper role in national development, there must be a consistent effort by elected leaders to carry out massive investment in the training and retraining of teaching personnel. The government must adopt a train the trainer approach in dealing with technical education like maritime training. Furthermore, effective collaboration between academia, industry stakeholders, and policymakers is essential to ensure that the maritime curriculum is updated to meet industry demands (Ojo & Ajagbe, 2020). This alignment is in accordance with STCW as outlined in the Manila Convention of 2012. Policymakers have pointed out a number of issues facing maritime professionals, and all centred on inadequate training facilities, resources, and low quality professional education.

THE PROSPECT OF MARITIME EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria cannot allow the maritime education sector to suffer the fate of abandonment, mediocrity, and failure. Nigeria is richly blessed with energy resources like other littoral states; however, there are notable indices showcasing poor human conditions such as pervasive poverty, high mortality rate, illiteracy, and high unemployment in Nigeria. Casualisation of labour affects Nigerians in the maritime industry. Foreigners enjoy favourable pay while Nigerian seafarers live from hand to mouth. Foreign ship owners seldom smuggle in foreign nationals for the most menial jobs, contrary to cabotage law. This is caused by the failure of Nigerian authorities to

properly enforce cabotage laws. These underlying socio economic issues no doubt fuel piracy and other forms of criminality.

Maritime education in Nigeria appears promising for economic growth and national development, given the country's strategic position in maritime investment in Africa and its vast maritime resources. As global trade continues to rely heavily on sea transport with growing ports in Nigeria, there is an increasing need for skilled maritime professionals, including ship captains, engineers, port managers, and maritime lawyers. Nigeria's maritime education system can be transformed into a world class system, producing professionals who can fill the skills gap in both local and international maritime industries.

The country's rich natural resources, coupled with its geographical location, present vast opportunities for growth, from enhancing port operations to expanding shipping and logistics networks, which is prevalent today. Furthermore, aligning Nigeria's maritime education system with global standards as outlined by the IMO will not only increase Nigeria's competitiveness in the global market but also attract foreign investment in the country's maritime infrastructure. Therefore, the future of maritime education in Nigeria is closely linked to the country's ability to capitalise on its maritime potential and create a skilled workforce capable of meeting the demands of an ever evolving global economy. The above can be further highlighted below.

a. Curriculum Development and Industry Alignment

One of the most crucial areas for development is the alignment of maritime education curricula with international standards. This includes ensuring that training programs are up to date with technological advancements, maritime safety protocols, and environmental sustainability practices. Collaboration between academia, industry leaders, and policymakers is essential to update the curriculum regularly to meet the evolving needs of the global maritime sector (Erimma et al., 2024).

b. Resource Management and Investment Practices

For Nigeria's maritime education to appear on the global scale, there must be substantial investment in modern infrastructure and state of the art training facilities. Much has to do with management accountability; however, digitalisation and transparency can transform school resources. This includes upgrading simulation labs, port operation centres, and maritime engineering workshops. Equipping maritime institutions with the latest technologies will ensure that students are well prepared for real world challenges, making them more competitive in the global market (Abdullah et al., 2023).

c. Partnerships

Given the complexity and cost of developing a robust maritime education system, partnerships play a pivotal role in bridging the funding gap. Collaborations with private shipping companies (as in the Philippines), global maritime organisations, and international educational institutions could provide the financial backing and technical expertise needed to enhance Nigeria's maritime education sector. These partnerships could also open up opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and direct industry involvement, which are essential for hands on learning.

It is our belief that with the incorporation of the above into Nigeria's maritime education sector, the country can create a workforce that is both locally skilled and internationally competitive, ensuring that its maritime sector continues to grow in an increasingly interconnected world, giving Nigeria the opportunity to establish itself as a key player in the global maritime industry.

CONCLUSION

Local content and capability in the maritime industry in Nigeria are facing a crippling condition due to the neglected state of the maritime educational sector. The Nigerian approach is basically technical education and combines this with academic courses. The primary regulatory institutions, especially NIMASA, must be applauded for enforcing international standards in Nigeria. However, the following recommendations can be put in place to improve maritime education and training of seafarers in Nigeria.

1. To enhance the quality of maritime education, it is crucial to foster stronger public private partnerships. Collaborations between government bodies, leaders in the maritime industry, and educational institutions will ensure that the curriculum aligns with industry needs and global standards. These partnerships can also facilitate funding for infrastructure development, such as training vessels, simulation labs, and modern classrooms. Private companies can provide internships, apprenticeships, and job placements, giving students real world experience and improving their employability.
2. The Nigerian government and educational institutions must invest in modern maritime training facilities. This includes state of the art simulators, laboratories, and advanced maritime technology. These modern investments will enable students to learn through hands on experiences, making them better prepared for the challenges they will face in the maritime industry. Additionally, adopting simulation based learning, which is widely used in countries like Norway and the United States, can provide students and professionals with practical skills.
3. Nigeria's maritime education system should be aligned with international standards, such as the IMO's STCW conventions. This ensures that Nigerian

maritime graduates meet the expectations of global employers. Regular updates to the curriculum will ensure it remains relevant to the dynamic nature of the maritime industry. Collaboration with international maritime organisations can help ensure that the curriculum reflects global best practices in maritime safety, environmental sustainability, and technological advancements.

4. Maritime Training Institutes in Nigeria should fight against incessant extortion, exploitation, and harassment of students in maritime institutions. Lecturers and other members of the school authority often perpetuate corrupt dealings with students, certificate racketeering, and mismanagement of institutional assets and properties. Allegations affecting the Delta State School of Marine Polytechnic, Burutu, over misappropriation of funds, extortion of students and lecturers, and illegal sale of school properties are a source of concern to the general public.
5. Finally, there should be a concerted effort to raise awareness of the opportunities within the maritime industry, particularly for young people in Nigeria. Career guidance programs, in collaboration with the maritime industry, can help students understand the potential career paths available and the skills required. This could reduce reluctance to engage with maritime education and improve student retention and motivation.

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