

# **GETTING THE WORK DONE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON MOTIVATION NEEDS AND PROCESSES FOR SEAFARERS AND DOCK WORKERS**

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## ABSTRACT

The study on motivation at work has attracted psychologists, economists and sociologists (Vroom, 1964). However, most of current literature is acontextual neglecting the role of contextual layers found in distinct industries / professional environments. The aim of the present paper is to extend traditional notions of work motivation by considering more explicitly the importance and impact of professional / industry contexts and extant processes in them on work motivation. The focus of the paper is on two maritime-related professional environments: seafarers working on board of merchant vessels and dock workers performing cargo handling operations in seaports. The paper critically reviews the context and constituents of the two professions in view of adding a dimension/layer of industry context and environment to mainstream literature on motivation.

**Key Words:** motivation, seafarers, dock labour, employment, human resources

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shipping firms and ports, as all – particularly service – organizations, rely heavily on the performance of their employees. Effective human resource management has been positively associated with higher employee productivity and better financial results (Delaney and Huselid, 1996; Huselid, Jackson and Schuler, 1997), as well as with sustaining competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1995). Motivation of employees is central to effective human resource management. This paper explores motivation for seafarers and dock workers as constructed by the impact of contextual layers specific to their profession and the shipping industry.

The aim of the present paper is to extend traditional notions of work motivation by considering more explicitly the importance and impact of professional / industry contexts and extant processes in them on work motivation. The focus of the paper is on the shipping industry, an under-examined industry per se in respect of motivation issues (see, for example, Mitroussi and Chang, 2008; Thomas, Sampson and Zhao, 2003; V.Group, 2006). Two maritime-related professional environments are chosen: seafarers working on board of

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merchant vessels and dock workers performing cargo handling operations in seaports. Each workforce group has its distinct characteristics along a number of employment dimensions but they both encapsulate the unique idiosyncrasies of the industry in respect of human resource management and in particular in respect of job motivation. The paper critically reviews the context and constituents of the two professions in view of adding a dimension of industry context and environment to mainstream literature on motivation and performance.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next part provides a literature review on motivation. We then perform an in-depth analysis of the job characteristics along a number of internal and external forces to the professions which encapsulate the distinctive nature of the working environment on ships and at cargo handling facilities in seaports. In the fourth section we engage in a critical discussion of the range of tools available to motivate existing seafarers and dock workers and to motivate others to join these professions, i.e. make the latter (more) attractive, based on the identified special features of the two sectors. We conclude by considering the extent to which the specific industry contexts in seafaring and dock labor instigate a mix of motivation processes tools that is distinct from other industries. The paper proposes the addition of a contextual layer to the study of motivation at work and explores avenues for further research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON MOTIVATION**

Motivation at work has attracted psychologists, economists and sociologists (Vroom, 1964), as they have sought to explain and / or direct behaviour and actions for improved performance in organizations. Given that the ability and the opportunity exist, people will normally carry out the work assigned to them. However, the level of effort they put in or their work rate can vary significantly depending on their level of motivation and this will have an effect in many ways on the company's operation.

Simpson (1983, pp.1-2) points to a number of signs of motivation or lack of it. He argues that motivated personnel consistently achieve high performance and results, show energy and enthusiasm in their work and determination to succeed; they are willing to cooperate with others to overcome problems and to accept change and additional responsibility. Conversely, unmotivated personnel can even engage in counter-productive behaviour, by exhibiting an apathetic attitude to work and to overcoming problems, poor time-keeping and high absenteeism, poor industrial relations, and obstinacy to change. Clearly, motivated employees should be expected to be more productive, more concentrated on achieving high-quality products or services, more affiliated to teamwork and to the company and generally more committed to the attainment of the organizational goals. Studies, for example, reveal that reward systems consistent with motivational concepts have a positive impact on recruitment and retention, corporate culture and even labour costs (Lawler, 2000), while they have also been connected with higher levels of perceived organizational performance (Allen and Helms, 2002).

Researchers have focused on a variety of factors to explain variations to the degree of employees' motivation, ranging from innate needs and cognitive processes to external / environmental influences (Hume, 1995). People can be motivated to act in a specific manner in an attempt to meet unfulfilled, innate needs, prioritised on an ascending scale – i.e. physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1954;

Alderfer's, 1972). In a business environment lower order needs are usually fulfilled by pay (physiological needs), safe working conditions, medical insurance, job security, pension programmes (safety needs). Higher-order needs correspond to the more psychological human aspects and are, therefore, usually satisfied within the person but can be aided by company's actions, too, for example, by encouraging development of formal and informal group structures (social needs), using social recognition, feedback from the job, promotions, titles and other symbolic gestures to enhance self-esteem needs and caring for and providing opportunities for employees' growth and creativity – with challenging jobs, for example – and for realisation of their full potential (self-actualisation needs).

Behaviour is dictated by conscious expectations that particular actions will lead to particular, desirable results (Vroom, 1964). When the relationships 'effort-performance' and 'performance-rewards' are strong and when the financial and non-financial rewards satisfy employees, then personnel will be motivated. The key to motivation is the understanding of individuals' desires and needs, and the linkage between effort and performance, performance and rewards, and finally, between the rewards and individual satisfaction.

Managers can also try to instill the need of achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation in their employees as these trigger human behaviour (McClelland, 1962). Achievement training programmes for employees have been successful in stimulating employees' achievement need and increasing their achievement motivation (McClelland, 1965; Miron and McClelland, 1979) by helping them to think and act in a high achievement way. The need for achievement has been linked with successful entrepreneurial activity (McClelland and Winter, 1969; Miner et al, 1994). People's objectives and personal targets (Locke, 1968), as well as the feeling of fair or equitable return for efforts (Adams, 1963; 1965) have also been thought to play important role in determining behaviour with regard to motivation.

Managers must ensure the existence of an adequate job context of working conditions – i.e. salary, company policies, interpersonal relations and supervision – to avoid employee dissatisfaction but employee motivation is effected with challenging jobs and opportunities for advancement and recognition (Herzberg et al, 1959), participative management, responsibility and good interpersonal relations (McGregor, 1960). Five job elements, namely, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback, have particularly been found that, when combined, create internal rewards to individuals and create motivation. This is because they contribute to making employees experience the meaningfulness and responsibility of their job and becoming aware of the progress they make in them (Hackman and Oldham's, 1976; 1980). More recently, Warr (2002) produced an expanded list of job characteristics which are associated with employees' critical psychological states and which can act as predictor variables for job satisfaction. The ten most important such features are as follows:

- Autonomy: relating to discretion and absence of close supervision
- Opportunity to utilize skills
- Externally generated goals: job and task demands, workload, role demands and conflicts
- Variety of tasks and skills
- Environmental clarity: relating to role clarity, job security, feedback
- Availability of money: relating both to income level and financial resources
- Physical security: good working conditions, work safety

- Supportive supervision / Effective leadership
- Opportunity for interpersonal contact
- Wider social position: of the job status, for example

A variety of work-related variables have been examined in the motivation literature underlining the interplay between *extrinsic motivators* – e.g. remuneration which allows the individual to obtain outcomes of value – and *intrinsic motivators* – e.g. satisfaction which comes from the experience of successful activity performance (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Thakor and Joshi (2005) have found that the two motivators, the extrinsic motivator (namely, pay satisfaction) and the intrinsic motivator (namely, experienced meaningfulness) are complementary to each other. They have further suggested that organizational identification has a positive motivating impact, too. Nordenmark (1999) has also examined non-financial employment motivation and mental well-being. Aroused perceptions of employees about their jobs, for example, can increase in the short term job satisfaction (Wong et al, 1998). Other employment factors which have been found to be important in employee motivation include: the effect of performance control systems on motivation techniques (Miao, Evans and Zou, 2007); the role of quality relationships at work and of equitable contract conditions (Rose and Manley, 2010); the commitment of the organization to the employee and the commitment of the employee to the organization as well as the impact of other relationships – e.g. with the supervisor – and of employee work attitudes – e.g. degree of competitiveness (Grugulis and Bevitt, 2002; Murphy, 2004).

Although motivation has been examined in various business settings (Zinkhan, Hong and Lawson, 1990; Grugulis and Bevitt, 2002; Horwitz, Heng and Quazi, 2003; Miao, Evans and Zou, 2007; Murphy, 2004; Rose and Manley, 2010), research agendas have failed to include investigation of sector-specific components which may shape – individually or collectively – employees’ motivation and may affect the relativity and suitability of tools for instigation of work motivation. As such, most of current literature is acontextual neglecting the role of contextual dimensions found in distinct industries or professions. Limited research in employee motivation in the context of specific industry and / or professional constituents leaves the field under-theorized and raises questions of insightfulness regarding the successful applicability of different motivation techniques in different working environments.

### **3. CONTEXT AND CONSTITUENTS OF THE PROFESSIONS OF SEAFARER AND DOCK WORKER**

In this section we analyze the distinctive nature of the working environment on ships and at cargo handling facilities in seaports in view of identifying job characteristics along a number of internal and external forces to the professions. The main job characteristics are summarized in Table 1 and grouped according to three dimensions: market conditions and required skills, social conditions and structures and working conditions.

Table 1. Job characteristics along a number of dimensions

Characteristics	Seafarers	Dock workers
<b>Market conditions and required skills</b>		
Fluctuation level in labor demand	High labour demand at international level – high fluctuation in labour demand at national and company level	High due to peaks in ship arrival patterns, seasonality, economic cycles.
Easiness to fill job vacancies / Inter-company competition for attracting skilled personnel	Dependent on job specification and on ship type (i.e. difficult for specialized carriers, e.g. LNG) Inter-company competition is high, especially for certain specializations and / or for shore ex-seafarers' placements	Dependent on job qualifications needed and on terminal type (e.g. difficult for container terminals). Inter-company competition is moderate in case of dock labour 'pools' (casual work). High in case of fixed/permanent personnel.
Change of the nature of work	Increasingly high skilled and technical in need for continuous training	Increasingly high skilled and technical in need for continuous training
Basic technical skills needed	Related to job post onboard and ship type	Related to specificity of handling equipment.
International standards guiding the profession	Specific international regulatory framework (e.g. by ILO, IMO) – varying national implementation	Some role for International Labour Organization (ILO), but standards mostly set at local/port level.
<b>Social conditions and structures</b>		
Gender mix	Low. Only very small participation of women as deck officers.	Very low. Women only found as logistics workers in some ports (i.e. light work such as fruit sorting, quality control, etc.)
Role of labor unions	Variable (e.g. depending on whether seafarers come from a traditional or not shipping nation) but generally increasingly lower - ITF	Strong to very strong. Union membership is often an informal prerequisite to job access.
Group structure at the level of the profession	High agency employment - a 'project type' of work by a small group of people	Dock worker 'pools' are quite common given typical casual nature of dock work.
Group structure/formation on the work floor	Distinction between officers and lower crew. Distinction between deck and engine.	Gangs led by 'foremen'. Deployment of multiple gangs for handling of one ship.
Multicultural nature of the workforce	High with impact on communication, working and living conditions on board.	Low, particularly in cases of closed-shop or highly-unionized labor pools.
Employee turnover	High turnover onboard (with impact on social life, training, employment succession and retention, job performance).	Low for permanent employment dock work structure. 'Gangs' tend to be rather constant in composition. Casual workers in pool systems might change terminal regularly but stay in the same port environment.
<b>Working conditions</b>		
Time spent away from family	Long periods of time away from family	Limited to duration of shift. Night and weekend work are common.
Safety record/perception on safety	Considered as a dangerous profession – Psychological stresses – Security / Piracy	Considered as a dangerous profession.
Exposure to harsh working conditions	Perils of the sea, weather, temperature differences, use of heavy equipment, culture of long hours of work, fatigue	Weather, temperature differences, use of heavy equipment.

Source: own elaboration

The seafarer and dock labor employment environments share a lot of common features distinctive from other industries, such as the masculinity of the professions, social

structures/control based on gangs or crews, change of the nature of work to increasingly high skilled and technical in need for continuous training and exposure to harsh and or dangerous working circumstances. Still, the seafarer and dock worker environments are not entirely the same given noticeable differences in terms of the multicultural nature of the workforce, the social aspects related to the time spent away from family, the role of labor unions, employee turnover and the existence of international standards guiding the profession. The following sections provide a more in-depth discussion.

### **3.1 Market conditions and required skills**

As the market environment of the shipping industry and seaports change, so do the requirements imposed on dock labor and work on board of vessels. Recent trends to which shipping labour has been exposed to include: globalization, intensified competition, an increasingly diverse and ageing workforce, skill shortages, technological innovation, need for responsiveness and quality of service.

Up to the late 1950s, technological progress in ports and vessels was rather stable and unsophisticated, requiring simple technical skills on the part of both dock workers and seafarers. The existence of basic ship types, mainly bulk carriers and general cargo vessels with fairly plain onboard nautical and mechanical equipment necessitated a set of practical qualifications for seafarers of varying degrees, depending on their job post, but still of a rudimentary level. Dock work basically involved unskilled work requiring no or little previous training, except for the operation of the mechanical devices which at that time accounted for something like 10% of the work (Jensen, 1964). The multi-skilled nature of dock workers was limited to the handling of a broad variety of man loads: bags, bales, crates, drums etc. The unitization of cargoes since the 1950s went hand in hand with the development of specialized terminal equipment (e.g. specialized quay and gantry cranes, forklifts, terminal tractors, straddle carriers, reach stackers, etc.) and specialized ships (e.g. container ships and ships). The changing technology brought new requirements in terms of the skills of the workforce and increased the need for skilled dock workers and seafarers who have the qualifications and experience to operate more specialized ships and handling superstructure. The need for skilled dock workers was further reinforced by the increased focus of port customers on precision, damage prevention and overall quality of service. The need for seafarers with enhanced qualifications, training and advanced skills was further reinforced by the development of a stricter and more demanding regulatory environment and the introduction of information technology and sophisticated telecommunications between the office and the ship.

The demand for high skilled dock workers has made it more difficult to fill job vacancies and has reinforced inter-company competition for attracting the best dock workers, particularly in ports not guided by dock labor pools but permanent employment arrangements. The explosive growth in containerized trade triggered a trend toward more permanent employment at container terminals, while the shrinking conventional cargo market still relies much more on casual work. The most talented and skilled port workers typically aim for a high-paying job at a container terminal, thereby putting pressure on conventional general cargo terminals to keep their best dock workers.

In shipping a boosted world trade and demand for sea transport has brought increases in the size of the world merchant fleet and subsequent increased human resource

requirements. At the same time, the contemporary unattractiveness of the seafaring occupation – primarily due to the availability of shore alternatives (Wu and Sampson, 2005), a high demand of specialized skills and qualifications, a declining number of graduates from marine academies (McConville and Glen, 1997; Guo et al, 2006), and an ageing workforce, particularly officers (Wu and Morris, 2006), has created a demand/supply gap in seafarers with an expected 83,900 global shortfall of officers (IMO, 2009). Officer shortfall may be even more severe due to obstacles preventing surpluses of some nationalities from compensating shortages elsewhere, due, for instance to cultural and language differences, lack of international experience, or seafarer nationality restrictions imposed by some flags. Extensive flagging-out has made the supply market for seafarers a single global labour market and brings increased fluctuations in seafarer labour demand at national level. At a company level, cyclicity and severe freight market swings and companies' own strategic orientations in response to them also affect labour demand. Fleet expansion plans, fleet replacement policies, entry into new shipping markets, diversification in other non-shipping related sectors, potential mergers or acquisitions or the use of third party ship managers for a ship owner's vessels, they all have an impact on both the number of employees needed in the future and their qualifications, either directly, e.g. with an increase of service levels, upgrade of quality of service provision or involvement in operation of diverse ship types, or indirectly, with adoption of new technology and increased employee productivity.

In a context of tight supply and strong demand for seafarers, and in particular officers of specific specialization, shipping companies may compete with each other for quality and competitive workforce. There is a high cost for hiring the wrong employee, around \$5000 in lost productivity and training, with higher costs incurred for managing positions (Fernandez-Araoz, 1999). The figures and repercussions can be much higher in the case of wrong recruitment decisions in the shipping industry of great externalities where assets of millions of dollars are placed in the hands of a limited number of people away from the management decision centre. As shipping offices, and generally many land-based maritime-related industries, have relied traditionally on ex-seafarers as a source of skilled labour (Pettit et al, 2005), inter-company competition for attracting skilled personnel is also acute for the filling-in of key positions ashore. Shipping companies may have to adjust their human resource management strategies, resort to the use of marketing tools and portray themselves as employers of choice, if they are to successfully compete and attract the much sought-after, scarce qualified shipping expertise (Kokoszko and Cahoon, 2007).

The seafaring profession is governed by an international regulatory regime. Labor standards are extensively regulated mainly by two UN agencies: the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) – dealing with seafarers' competences, training and minimum crewing levels – and the International Labour Organization (ILO) – which sets standards of living and working conditions aboard. Uniformity of application of regulations is, however, far from achieved, due to both varying interpretation of their guidelines (see e.g. Winchester et al, 2006) and a varying degree of effective implementation (Donaldson, 1996; Mitroussi, 2004; Bloor and Sampson, 2009). Performance of governments with respect to regulation enforcement varies enormously from flag to flag, especially as some flags exhibit a lack of knowledge, resources, administrative capability or simply the will to apply international laws on their vessels. Special problems are observed with regard to training and qualifications requirements of seafarers. Concerns have been expressed not just about the quantity of seafarers but about their quality, as well (Leggate, 2004), especially with the increased occurrence of fraudulent practices in respect of certificates issued in accordance

with STCW-95 convention and seagoing service testimonials (Obando-Rojas et al, 2001).

### **3.2. Social conditions and structures**

The internal organization of dock labour is taking place within a wider setting of social structures and conditions. As early as the 1960s scholars argued that the longshore industry, because of its peculiar nature, should be considered as a separate labour market (see e.g. Weinstein, 1963). The dock labour workforce is characterized by a very low participation of women and a low multicultural mix. A large variety in dock labour schemes can be observed among European ports. Ports can depend on a dock labour scheme based on a centrally managed pool of registered dock workers. The use of registered dockers through a pool can be mandatory or not. This obligation can be de facto or imposed by law.

The dock worker pool schemes generally involve three elements: (a) the designation of an "in-group" of officially registered (in effect, licensed) dock workers, (b) registered workers are not permanently employed at particular stevedoring enterprises but hired through a central pool or hiring hall, which stevedores are obligated to use for their primary source of casual labour and (c) a system of minimum pay guarantees or unemployment benefits for registered dockworkers who are left idle by a shortage of ships to be worked during a particular day, week or month. A typical example of a labour pool system can be found in the Belgian ports Antwerp, Zeebrugge, Ghent and Ostend. These ports are subject to the Act of June 8, 1972, better known as the Major Act ('Wet Major'), which stipulates that only recognized dockers are allowed to perform dock work in the port areas. Employers in a Belgian port have to employ the locally registered dock workers. Casual workers from outside the pool system can only be deployed in case of shortages of registered dockers (strict conditions apply). Employer associations per port (e.g. CEPA for the port of Antwerp) have the exclusive mandate to act for the employers who engage the services of dock workers in the port areas. CEPA pays all dockers' wages and other benefits in the port of Antwerp, even for regular workers. These associations also take responsibility for port-wide training, ensuring high levels of competency across the entire labour force. Registered dock workers are categorized into two separate groups, namely the General Contingent and the Logistics Contingent. The categorization allowed for separate remuneration conditions, recognition procedures and working conditions for each of the two categories of dock workers.

There is a general trend in Europe towards open and autonomous pool systems with back-up of temporary employment agencies. In some cases, recent reforms have privatized the status and operation of these labour pools (e.g. in the Netherlands in 1995). In an increasing number of ports, dock workers are directly employed by terminal operators, instead of contracted via 'pools'. In some cases (such as Germany and the Netherlands) employers are able to hire permanent company employees directly from the external labour market, but any additional (casual) labour must be hired from a regulated labour pool.

Labour unions are typically very visible at the dock labour front, although major differences in union power can be observed across seaports and countries (Turnbull and Wass, 2006). Trade Unions are well organized in the Hanseatic ports in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. These ports are among the most efficient ports in the world and their labour force is highly skilled, productive, well remunerated and union membership is high. While differences exist among these ports with respect to how and at what

institutional level collective bargaining agreements are negotiated, the trade unions in these ports generally form a united front at the national level, the regional level, in the ports and at a port-company level. Social dialogue through effective bodies of joint consultation is considered as the key to a sustainable relation between employers and trade unions. A climate of constructive dialogue thus enhances social peace in ports. In 2005, the International Labour Organization published a practical guide to social dialogue in the process of structural adjustment and private sector participation in ports (see Turnbull, 2006).

The gang system is an important cornerstone in the organization and group structure of dock work. New technologies made it increasingly difficult to maintain a system of gangs of a dozen or so. As a result, gangs now typically count 5 to 8 dock workers.

The shipping industry has traditionally and contemporarily been a masculine industry both in terms of its employee demography and in terms of its values, assumptions and everyday practices. The masculinity of the industry is very much a matter of image as it is a reality. Tough and demanding living and working conditions of seafarers' onboard ships, practical work issues and the technical nature of work aboard, as well as institutional issues have sustained the perception of shipping as a masculine business, unsuitable for women. Prejudices, rigid attitudes, military-like structures in academies and aboard and discrimination have traditionally kept women largely outside the shipping industry. Institutional barriers have also existed. Even in traditional maritime countries women have been denied access to maritime academies until recently. In Greece, for instance, women have been accepted as master trainees since 1978 but in limited numbers and only since 2007 without any limitations, while they could not attend engineering in marine academies until 2003 (Giziakis et al., 2009). All of the above have resulted in the underrepresentation of women in the seafaring profession – only about one or two percent of the 1.25 million seafarers in the world are women (Belcher et al., 2003). Thomas (2004a) suggests that there is strong evidence that gender stereotypes continue to exist in this male-dominated workplace, with women being denied promotion on the basis of their gender alone.

Recruitment of seafarers is predominantly taking place through manning agencies. Although in traditional maritime centers links with maritime academies, cadet training, informal contacts, and walk-ins – direct applications made at the shipping office have provided some source of seafarers, today the seafarers' supply market is largely an agency controlled labour market, excluding only coastal shipping (ILO, 2001). Ship operators will at large contract the supply of onboard staff out to crew agencies or third party ship managers who, in turn, recruit appropriate labour through their local agents in developing countries and transitional states. Alternatively, shipping companies may wish to set up wholly or partly owned subsidiaries of crewing services in their preferred supply areas. This is an alternative gaining some ground more recently with shipping companies of some critical size and resources. As most of the new seafarers' supply areas are not traditional maritime nations, there is an absence of strong labour unions in them. As a result, wages and terms and conditions of employment contracts are variably negotiated around the world. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is mostly concerned with making sure that seafarers are not placed on substandard vessels and are paid a minimum amount of wages. It can put pressure by threatening or actually boycotting ship operations of vessels which do not comply with the minimum standards, with the help of local affiliated transport federations. ITF has also been instrumental in the creation of the new ILO's Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 – not yet into force – which provides

comprehensive rights and protection at work for the world's seafarers. Labour unions in strong maritime nations still have a solid saying in employment negotiations and conditions, however, their significance in a highly competitive global seafarers' supply market is a diminishing one.

The work of ship operation for seafarers, much like that of the dock workers, is a 'project type' of work by a small group of people, e.g. 15-25 people, being brought together and working closely together for a specific and limited time period. A very high rate of labour turnover contributes negatively to the aspect of socialization and work efficiency aboard vessels. Especially in some sectors such rate is estimated to be 75%-100% every 18 months, a figure which is not to be found in any other industry (Robert and Moulin, 2000) and is very different from dock labour where 'gangs' tend to be rather constant in composition over time, except in case of casual workers operating in a pool system. Ship managers can choose to man their vessels using a single national crew, a complement of two different nationalities or, more frequently nowadays, multi-national crews. The manning of vessels increasingly from diverse countries requires careful consideration of issues of cultural convergence and conflict for effective and trouble-free ship operation. Social contact and most importantly effective communication aboard can be undermined by reduced manning, foreign language incompetency and potential incompatibility of cultures in multi-cultural crew complements. Shrinkage of crew sizes and tensions within the onboard community may result in reduced interaction in an already demanding physical and social environment.

### **3.3. Working conditions**

Dock work is generally considered as dangerous and tough, particularly when it involves the physical handling of goods on board of ships or between quay and yard or warehouse. While night work and weekend work are quite widespread, dock workers only stay away from home for the duration of a shift. Double shifts are highly uncommon and are mostly not allowed due to the dangers linked to fatigue. Dockers working in the open air are exposed to a harsh environment linked to weather conditions, temperature differences between ship, quay and warehouse and the use of heavy equipment and cargoes.

The seafaring profession has gone through various challenges at different periods but its innate features of separation from shore, families and friends and the fact that the place of work is also the place of living and socializing for extensive periods of time have always been present. The job is of a highly technical nature and has been characterized by risk – due to the perils of the sea –, and toughness – both in terms of the actual tasks involved and the environment of the job. Li and Wonham (2001) found that fatalities due to personal accidents on board ship constitute 90% of all mortality cases. Seafarers often suffer from fatigue, for example, due to lack of sleep or rest, irregular meals and psychological stress. Distinctive elements of shipboard life include isolation from friends and family, intermittent danger, boredom, forced contact with others and inescapability of the environment (Helmreich et al., 1981). Such features can be found in work environments which are quite extreme and unique, like in Arctic and Antarctic stations (Gundersen, 1966) and spacecraft (Helmreich et al., 1980). Social patterns have changed in terms of participation in everyday family life and nowadays men, who have traditionally comprised the overwhelming majority of seafarers, are under a much higher pressure than before to be around more and to take part in children's education and the management of daily life.

Modern challenges are added to the inherent difficulties of the profession. The modern environment of shipping has brought better, safer and more comfortable working conditions aboard, but it has also produced time and space compression for workers employed on ships. This is due to the speeding up of cargo operations and changes in the spatial layout of modern port cities and the utilization of and access to new port facilities which nowadays tend to be located in remote districts and at a great distance from population centers. Seafarers' lives at sea are characterized by isolation, tedium and confinement – although to a different extent for officers and ratings –, and perhaps even to a greater degree than what seafarers in the 1950s and 1960s experienced (Sampson and Wu, 2003), when longer stays in port and shorter distances from the cities enabled more knowledge of the world. Concerns about being exposed to personal criminal liability in the case of sea pollution (e.g. with the European Union legislation, Directive 2005/35 and the accompanying Framework Decision 2005/667), as well as increased piracy attacks add to the severity of the profession and the stresses seafarers suffer. At an operational level Cahoon and Haugstetter (2009) suggest further that the seafarer's job has become less challenging due to the impact of new technology and that this creates a feeling of job dissatisfaction on their part which eventually leads to resignation, increased costs for recruitment and loss of skills to other industries. Especially for some posts onboard, like that of the Master, dealing with increased paperwork and bureaucratic administration can be quite tedious and distracting from the main operational functions of the job. Increased job possibilities ashore for ex-mariners also make job placements onboard less attractive. Greater job possibilities ashore, especially, for example, for deck officers, are further enhanced by an education system which is expanding on maritime and logistics master's programmes for officers who want to work ashore,

#### **4. MOTIVATION OF SEAFARERS AND DOCK WORKERS**

Of paramount importance is that dock labour and seafarer arrangements seek motivation and work spirit. The literature review highlighted that motivation is linked to job satisfaction and has an impact on performance and labour productivity. In this section we engage in a critical discussion of the range of tools available to motivate existing seafarers and dock workers and to motivate others to join these professions, i.e. make the latter (more) attractive, based on the identified special features of the two sectors. Table 2 summarizes the main findings. The table is structured following a distinction between *extrinsic motivators* (e.g. remuneration which allows the individual to obtain outcomes of value) and *intrinsic motivators* (e.g. satisfaction which comes from the experience of successful activity performance) and combining the latter category with the job satisfaction features as identified by Warr (2002) and others (see literature review earlier).

Table 2. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators

Characteristics	Seafarers	Dock workers
<b>Extrinsic motivators</b>		
Level of base wage	Variable, depending on national regulations – ITF basic wage levels	Generally in line with other industries.
Culture of formal bonuses and additional pay	Not really a formal culture - More recently developed on a company-basis	Very common due to union power (where applicable), specific working conditions (weekend work or night) and or competition between terminal operators to attract best dock workers.
Culture of informal/non-registered payments/bonuses	Not really a formal culture - More recently developed on a company-basis	In case of structural shortages of dockers, terminal operators might be inclined to make informal payments.
Mechanisms for obtaining wage increases	Number of years worked, job qualifications or level of job category. Labour unions often play a key role in conditions of collective agreements.	Number of years worked, job qualifications or level of job category. Labour unions often play a key role in conditions of collective agreements.
Career advancement opportunities	Sea-going experience essential for further career advancement – Also, shore opportunities	Training programs, often organized by employers' organizations, allow to move up the ladder in terms of 'job categories' or to obtain additional 'job qualifications'.
<b>Intrinsic motivators</b>		
Relation between employee and employer	Variable depending on contract (e.g. the seafarer as employee of the manning agent/third party ship manager, or of the ship operator)	Indirect in case of pool system.
Autonomy	A great deal of every-day autonomy but also strict regulatory and management constraints.	Gang is relevant unit. Relative autonomy of gang to get the job done.
Opportunity to utilize skills	Dependent on job qualifications and or job category of seafarer. Lower level crew members typically have less such opportunities.	Dependent on job qualifications and or job category of the dock worker. Lower class dock workers are typically less motivated.
Externally generated goals	Job and task demands typically are well formulated. Existence of strict regulatory requirements about processes in ship operation.	Job and task demands typically are well formulated. Active vs. passive flexibility in working hours and workload. Older dockers often excluded from 'heavy' dock work.
Variety of tasks and skills	Depending on job category – Impact of high automation and technology	Relative 'freedom' for casual workers vs. more repetitive work for permanent workers.
Environmental clarity	Job roles are typically well formulated. Feedback is not always adequate. High turnover.	Clarity of role, job security and feedback are strongly related to the dock labour system in place.
Physical security	Harsh working conditions and high accident rate can lead to lower attractiveness and poor image of profession.	Harsh working conditions and high accident rate can lead to lower attractiveness and poor image of profession.
Supportive supervision/effective leadership	Depending on the skills of the Master onboard.	Supervision mainly through gang system. Also social control is exerted by the gang structure.
Opportunity for interpersonal contact	Closed social system onboard but difficulties in communication and interpersonal contact due to long hours of work, reduced manning levels and multi-culturalism.	High in 'pool' system (through labour union membership and social role of hiring halls). Lower in case of direct and permanent employment with a specific terminal operator.
Societal status of the profession	An established societal status in places with long shipping tradition but generally regarded as low-status and unappealing by the wider public perception.	Varies a lot from port to port: ranges from 'overpaid and over-unionized' to 'low level job' vs. 'job proudness'. Seaports suffer from a lack of public image or a poor public image.

Source: own elaboration

#### 4.1. Extrinsic motivators

Dock labour is characterized by specific remuneration systems which are often the result of a long history of social dialogue and conflicts. With increased containerisation, traditional wage systems of the pre-container era were adjusted to face the new realities by combining basic wages and bonuses instead of only opting for time-rates or piece-rates. Dock labour costs (blue collar) typically represent between 40 and 75% of total terminal operating costs of general cargo terminals. Even in the capital-intensive container handling industry, the share of port labour in total operating costs can be as high as 50%. Bonuses and wage supplements are widespread in the port industry. In quite a number of cases, the base or guaranteed wage of a dock worker is only a fraction of the monthly income he can generate by collecting a wide range of bonuses and miscellaneous compensations linked to the nature, complexity and timeframe of his task. Wage levels and bonuses are also linked to the job category and or the job qualifications of the docker. Local employers' organizations are often involved in specific training centres and associated examination procedures which allow dock workers to move up the ladder in terms of job categories or to obtain additional job qualifications.

The relatively high willingness of terminal operators to pay for dock work (sometimes even via non-registered bonuses) is explained by two key targets of terminal operators: (1) to meet market requirements by offering a high labour productivity and a high flexibility (which often comes at a high price) and (2) to minimize the risk of 'hidden costs' which affect the competitiveness of the terminal or port. These 'hidden costs' can outweigh the out-of-the-pocket costs for dock work:

- A port or terminal can be confronted with a shortage of gangs or dock workers leading to substantial delays in vessel loading and discharging operations. Shortages can be caused by sudden non-anticipated peaks in demand or a (short-term) significant drop in the availability of dock workers (due to holiday period, weekends).
- Cargo damage incidents can generate high hidden costs and negatively affect the reputation of a terminal or port. A high incidence of damage cases might point to a lack of training or a low commitment of the dock worker (absence of a 'we care' attitude).
- Short isolated strikes and long port-wide strikes by dock workers generate high hidden costs to ports and can even disrupt an entire economic system. Strikes cause port deviation costs for ship-owners, time costs for ships in port, lost revenues for inland transport operators and other port-related companies, time costs and broader logistics costs for cargo owners and potentially high costs to factories linked to major disruptions in the production line (stock-out). Strikes potentially have detrimental long-term effects on the port's reputation.
- A terminal or port can also be confronted with hidden costs caused by accidents or with absenteeism or the failure of workers to report when they are scheduled to work.
- Hidden costs can also be the result of operational inefficiencies due to a lack of communication between the vessel and the stevedores, possible breakdowns of equipment or the late reception of the load plans.

In much the same way, the 'hidden costs' of unmotivated crew can be high for a number of entities, including:

- the seafarers themselves (e.g. facing potential criminal charges, suffering injuries or even loss of life)
- the ship owner (e.g. facing potentially law suits, clean-up costs, higher insurance premiums, targeted inspections and port delays, etc)

- cargo interests (e.g. delayed / damaged cargo delivery)
- wider communities (e.g. whose livelihood and economic situation can be seriously affected in the case of environmental disasters caused by major shipping accidents).

The significance of keeping a pool of satisfied crew onboard lies in their own power; this is so, because the real asset of a shipping company, in which huge capital investments have been made and from which the profits of the company are expected to derive, – the vessel – is in the hands of a very limited number of people, trading in various geographical areas, far away from the management office, in adverse weather conditions and under continuously changing formal jurisdictions. And this is a power that surely nobody wants to hand over to dissatisfied employees.

Traditionally companies have relied on base pay schemes to remunerate their employees for their work input consistent with market conditions and in relation mostly to their credentials and length of service. Although for shore staff in shipping companies – and generally in shore industries – personnel cost in terms of salary is more or less a standardized expense established by national labour regulations and industrial custom, the case can be much different for seafarers. Non-national seafarers can be regarded as labour migrants but with their place of residence remaining in their home country and governed by terms and conditions of employment different from national seafarers. Great differences exist in pay rates among different nationality seafarers. For example, the salary of a British master onboard a tanker can be 2.2 times higher than the salary of Russian master and 3 times higher than the salary of a master from Philippines or China. For an Able-Bodied Seaman (AB) position onboard a tanker, a British employee will receive 3 times higher salary than a Romanian employee and 4.5 times than a Ukrainian or Chinese employee (ITF, 2005, p.28).

Performance related pay schemes have more recently been adopted by shipping companies. Rewarding performance with some form of contingent reimbursement means that employees will be motivated to strive towards high level of performance in anticipation for an enhanced level of remuneration. Managers in shipping companies, therefore, need to establish a correlation between the work performance of employees and their subsequent level of return. Both the forms of organizational performance to be assessed as well as the types of performance related remuneration should be clear and unambiguous. In terms of types of performance which will serve as the means of evaluation, ship managers can choose between a number, some of which are more suitable than others for seafarers:

- financial performance – like company's profits, voyage results, freight earnings, capital growth or return on investment, loan attainment;
- customer service – such as, success in charterers' vetting procedures, charterers' satisfaction, clientele base;
- quality of service – for instance, number of cargo claims, demurrage/dispatch, insurance premiums/costs, P+I claims;
- efficiency and productivity – for example, number of days off-hire, operational costs, port turnaround times, PSC inspections, maintenance levels/repairs, accidents, crew injuries.

In the choice of the above the ship manager's decision will of course be conditioned by whether the performance related remuneration scheme will apply to individual, group, department or company performance and of course by the actual task characteristics of employees or departments involved.

With regard to actual pay-for-performance schemes, the ship manager can consider a variety of options and decide which can fit best the characteristics of the company, of its people and of the existing market conditions. The idea is that employees are rewarded for above-average performance and most commonly managers can make use of some base plus merit incentive system whereby a portion of an employee's pay is determined by some measurable level of output over which the employee has control. One other such pay scheme is the well-known bonus scheme. Cash bonuses can be paid to individuals or group of employees in addition to base salary, usually lump sum, for achievements of high level of performance. Such level is ascertained by the attainment of predetermined targets which can relate to both quantitative and qualitative aspects of employees' performance. Masters and Chief Engineers are usually the ones who recommend bonuses for staff onboard who have exhibited a remarkable level of performance in the exercise of their duties. Profit sharing is a system whereby a predetermined proportion of company's profits, or one determined by some established formula, is distributed organization-wide to employees, in addition to their normal remuneration. Employee stock ownership plan is a method by which employees can gain a significant stake in the ownership of the firm and can be used as a separate form of individual incentive pay. Employees acquire shares in the company, sometimes in preference over others, or at a discounted rate, as a form of benefit, through usually a stock ownership trust established and supported financially or with stock by the company. Such incentives schemes may, however, be more suitable for shore-based staff, such as V.Ships' Employee Benefit Trust, an innovative incentive programme for shore-based personnel which allows the latter to share in the company's financial success (V.Group, 2006).

Succession schemes for onboard posts, relating to officers advancing from lower ranks to becoming masters or chief engineers and staff moving from a sea-going career to a career ashore, have traditionally been key issues in shipping companies. For seafarers, opportunities for promotion could essentially mean gaining a post in the company offices. This is perhaps one of the strongest incentives for seafarers, as such a development does not just have the symbolic value of a better status – it might not even have the monetary value of a better salary – but it is tied with a more practical and life changing aspect, that of leading a professional life ashore rather at sea. Contemporary developments in crew sourcing with extensive globalization and use of foreign flags put some limitations and complications on the application of such succession schemes and position replacements ashore from ex-seafarers due to the high turnover and the practicalities of employing staff of different nationalities.

## **4.2 Intrinsic motivators**

Non-financial employment motivation and mental well-being can increase job satisfaction. In table 2 we listed 10 features which are at the heart of job satisfaction. Some of these features are self-evident and do not need further explanation. Other features are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The internationalization in the cargo handling industry and the emergence of global terminal operators (see e.g. Notteboom, 2002; Bichou and Bell, 2007; Olivier et al., 2007) facilitated the transfer of new technologies over a wide range of ports. The increasing standardization of terminal equipment around the world puts more emphasis on labour productivity and flexibility as a way to gain a competitive advantage. This is where

motivation comes in the picture since highly motivated and efficient dock worker gangs can attain cargo handling rates per container crane per shift which are higher than less motivated dock workers who are using similar cranes. The internationalization of cargo handling activities and the emergence of (semi-)dedicated terminals also affected the traditional patronage structures in ports. Decades-old relationships between incumbent terminal operators and dock worker groups can be scrutinized by newcomers who want to implement their best practices regarding port labour. The decline of traditional patronage structures might lead to a certain level of alienation of dockers and reduced motivation. In some cases, traditional patronage structures conflict with the needs of a modern terminal management, making changes in employee-employer relations and the port labour system unavoidable.

Dock workers have a strong preference for employment systems that combine job freedom with labour conditions that are found in permanent contracts (such as job security and guaranteed wages). Dock labour pools typically combine these elements and at the same time create an indirect relation between employee and employer. Freedom and team spirit are generally highly valued by dockers. This might explain why many dockers, in contrast to employees in many other industries, feel comfortable in a situation where a direct relation between employer and employee is rather loose and in case of 'pools' virtually absent.

For seafarers, the relation with their employers can be a varied one depending on the employment contract, that is, whether the seafarer is an employee of the manning agent/third party ship manager, or of the ship operator. Loyalty and identification with the employer, for example, the manning agent, can be achieved through long-standing employment relations, but it will still not always mean identification with the ship seafarers are called to serve. The concept of instigating to their employees feelings of commitment to and loyalty in the company has been widespread in traditional ship owning firms. Many ship owners in Greece, for instance, have actively pursued employing people, for both the vessels and the office, from their own home towns or close and distant relatives in order to enhance this feeling of ownership in their employees. Many such efforts could have been unconscious in the sense that ship owners may themselves have felt more at ease with working with people they knew, trusted and had a common ground, a common culture. But in the end, it turned out to be a very successful strategy which helped the feeling of identification with the company and brought positive results in a number of areas, not least in work motivation. This is today much more difficult given the globalised sourcing of seafarers. A company may often build a dedicated pool of seafarers who regularly go on their ships. Companies may keep seafarers on their payroll, even for periods of time when the latter are not serving onboard the company's vessels, in order for them to retain the acquired expertise and be able to install more easily commitment, motivation and corporate culture.

To some extent, dock workers can rely on a certain level of autonomy in performing their tasks. This relative autonomy is to be situated at the level of the gang to which the individual dock worker belongs. The gang system in the port is often key to the motivation and productivity of the dock workers. Each gang is managed by a foreman and another person oversees several gangs working on the same ship. A competitive spirit between dock worker gangs and a strong social control within a gang enhance labour productivity per shift. A well-functioning gang system promotes a strong team player mentality and shows no mercy for dock workers who are not performing up to standard or highly value

personal gains above the gang's achievements. Strong and highly motivated foremen typically create an atmosphere of coherence and a focus on strong team work. A motivated foreman with good coaching skills is crucial for achieving a high motivation level in the entire gang. A high flexibility in the deployment of gangs (e.g. movement of a gang between vessels during a shift) not only contributes to an optimal use of available dock workers, but also adds to the variety of tasks of individual dock workers.

The opportunity to utilize skills is strongly dependent on the job qualifications and on the job category of the dock worker. Lower class dock workers are typically less motivated. When dock workers are assigned to specific job categories then flexibility to utilize all skills is only guaranteed when a system of qualifications (based on certification or training) allows dock workers' mobility between categories. When dock workers strictly adhere to their specific professional category then the multi-skilled nature over the categories is typically low. A multi-skilling orientation of dock workers classifications add to job variety: for example, dock workers who normally are deployed on a fruit terminal (e.g. citrus fruits) can shift during the low season to other terminals.

Training is an essential element in achieving job satisfaction and a high productivity. This necessitates a customized training plan in which the longshoreman have a view on a future career path based on experience and proven competence. To this end, many ports have a number of occupational categories of dock workers combined with clear rules regarding the flow from one category to another higher category.

Dock workers typically value flexibility in working hours. A distinction should be made between passive and active flexibility. Passive flexibility implies that the employer establishes schedules taking into account legal provisions and breaks, holidays, etc. Active flexibility gives a lot of initiative to the employee. A port labour system with a large number of casual workers normally generates a high degree of active flexibility. The port workers have, within certain limits, a freedom of choice for certain tasks. When the port labour system does not impose a work obligation at specific moments in time (for example for weekend work or work on holidays) finding enough volunteers is often a matter of providing generous extrinsic motivators (e.g. bonuses) for performing such tasks.

Like other industries, also dock labour is confronted with absenteeism. The reasons for absenteeism can be company-related (e.g. ineffective selection and placement procedures, excessive fatigue, ineffective use of skills, poor supervision, inadequate training or promotion programs, etc.) or personal causes (e.g. dual occupation, alcoholism or drugs). The power of absenteeism has been exercised many times by dock workers and associated labour unions. Thus, this problem can relate to job satisfaction, but it can also be an indicator of worker's responsibility in fulfilling contractual obligations.

Seafarers' job skills variety is dependent on job qualifications and/or job category of seafarer. For senior officers, typically a wide range of technical knowledge is required, such as cargo handling and loading/discharging operations, nautical and geographical understanding, but also good judgement, good communications skills with other crew but also external entities, good negotiation skills, e.g. when problems arise, such as events leading to potential claims. Lower level crew members typically have less such opportunities to utilize skills, as their tasks tend to be generally more of a routine type. Job and task demands typically are well formulated. This can be attributed foremost to the existence of strict regulatory requirements about processes in ship operation as well as the

close intervention of the office with continuous monitoring of the ship's operation through advanced telecommunications.

As for autonomy, work related to ship operation has exhibited various degrees of autonomy through time – from when masters had the sole responsibility of the shipping business to when advanced technology and telecommunications brought the dominance of the office over the command and control of ship operation. Today much more discussion has been going on about the value of empowerment of shipping personnel. In the era of prescribed operational procedures in shipping, as required by relevant legislation, work has become quite standardized with not much room for individual inventiveness. This formalization brings of course many and important benefits but giving people the opportunity to carry out their jobs, where possible, in a less restrictive manner is also beneficial. Empowerment seems to fit also quite well the model of service provision in shipping, where the main 'production' / economic unit is far away from the management centre, the shipping office. Not only that, but the master of the ship is also assigned by law – the stipulation refers to the ISM Code requirements – the 'overriding authority' onboard the vessel. As a result, principles of participative management should practically exist – not just in theory – between management at the office and the master of the ship. It is a logical conclusion to reach considering that despite advanced and real-time telecommunications, the master of the vessel is the one of the two with an absolutely direct involvement in and exposure to the facts of a given situation concerning the vessel's operation and he/she is also the one entrusted by law with the authority and responsibility of the ultimate decision. Much as straightforward this idea may seem, it is not always easily applicable or applied in shipping. This is due to a usually high turnover onboard vessels, which does not allow the building of strong, long-standing trust relationships, the capital intensity of the asset and of course availability of sophisticated information technology. A certain degree of autonomy can be encouraged in this case by encouraging seafarers not just to adopt and implement company's policies but also to actively participate in their formulation, revision and improvement.

Feedback has constituted a regular practice of the ship operation business since advancements in telecommunications allowed the close watch of the ship by the office. Many items in respect of ship operation have regularly been reported from the ship to the office in order both to assess performance and to detect any potential problems. More recently and with the introduction of the ISM Code, feedback, primarily in the form of spotting and recording non-conformities with established safety standards, has become mandatory by law. Apart from the obvious benefits of negative feedback, however, such as ability to apply corrective action, task feedback as a motivating factor should have an affirmative dimension, too. It can come both from the task itself, as well as from others. A master should provide timely and objective advice to the chief mate about his/her performance, for example. Implementation of appropriate information systems can help the process and practice of feedback, as it facilitates the collection, recording and dissemination of data as well as the allocation of responsibility and accountability but also the recognition of deeds.

The degree of investment in training and development for their seafarers varies among companies. Extensive outsourcing of HR functions for seafarers and the use of crew agencies to take advantage of low-cost distant supply areas means that a systematic approach to the management of training may not be a choice or an easy target for companies. A ship operating company which mans its vessels on an ad hoc, 'as needed'

basis from crewing agencies around the world and with a high turnover will find it quite difficult, for example, to engage in any objective assessment of training needs. This requires analysis at three distinct levels, the organisation, the task and the person, and at high turnovers and with minimum knowledge of the employees the chain of the assessment is broken at the third tier of the analysis. In the same way, the review and evaluation of training programmes can hardly be effectively carried out when seafarers do not stay with the same company for more than 6-8 months.

The societal status of the profession and professional pride of the dock worker differs a lot from port to port. For example, the Belgian port of Antwerp has always had a strong record in attracting labourers from the city itself and the immediate surroundings to work in the port. Dock workers generally start to work as dock worker at a young age until they retire. Job loyalty and pride are high. In some other European ports dock work is being regarded as a very low-status job and perceived of a temporary nature. The public perception on dock workers can range from 'overpaid and over-unionized' to 'low level job'. Despite these differences, the dock worker profession seems to suffer from a lack of public image or a poor public image of seaports. Dock workers are not very visible to the general public except in cases of accidents or strikes, which add to the possible negative connotation of the profession.

In the same way, the seafaring profession suffers from a similar poor image. Task significance is an important motivating factor and this dimension should therefore not be taken lightly. The acknowledgment of the significance of the job for crew member begins at the industry level. This is easier to understand once it is realized how people tend to automatically think high or low of certain occupations, and the people having them, based on the prevalent social conception. The shipping industry has long lost its appeal to the wider public as an attractive career field for a number of reasons. As one's own perception of their job, however, is largely formed by how others seem to perceive it, seafarers, need firstly an 'industry image injection' to enhance their task significance perception. At a different level, each individual should be made to feel important for the organization with regard to the work he or she offers to it. Such recognition of the significance of the work undertaken should be effectively communicated to each person in question and to others within the organization. Formal acknowledgement on the part of employees of their job description, as required by the ISM Code, is one such instance. But other practices, like participation in safety assessments as well as verbal encouragement from line managers should also be implemented.

An especially significant aspect of work for seafarers is the closed social system onboard and the difficulties in communication and interpersonal contact due to long hours of work, reduced manning levels and multi-culturalism onboard vessels. The concept of work/life balance is by definition almost non-existent during the time of onboard employment but there are ways to improve it. For example, the proper application of international safety standards and standards relating to rest hours and other – namely the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping 1995 (STCW 1995) – should be ensured. The ship's personnel quarters and common rooms should provide a comfortable and pleasant environment, while further amenities for recreation and socialization should also be supplied. The crew's food preferences and dietary requirements should be catered for. Very importantly, the crew's communication with family and friends should be facilitated by provision of the necessary telecommunication services. The opportunity of family members to occasionally join onboard their loved ones could be another option to try to

improve to an extent the work/life balance onboard commercial ships. Also, too long periods of time onboard should be avoided and ideally, especially seafarers with a long standing relationship with the shipping firm should be able to stay ashore on leave and return back to work in due time.

Strategies which can be adopted to establish a balance in seafarers' work and life include (Thomas et al., 2003, p.74):

- Shorter trips (preferably no longer than four months)
- Paid leave of a comparable duration to sea-time
- Continuous employment rather than employment by voyage
- Training time to be added on to leave period
- Opportunities for partners (and where possible for children) to sail
- Improved access to cheaper communication, for example, helping with the purchase of household communication equipment (faxes, computers, etc) or providing subsidized phone cards and access to email facilities for those onboard
- Increased contact between seafarers' partners and seafarers' employers
- Opportunities for seafarers' families to make contact with each other

Thomas (2004b) also identifies the need on the part of the companies to develop welfare support structures, such as access to free confidential counselling services to help seafarers deal with traumatic experiences – violent or fatal injuries, colleague's suicides, potentially life threatening events related to their safety or security – the latter are exposed to more often than perhaps assumed. The same type of welfare support structures are important in a dock labour context.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The contexts and constituents of the professions of dock worker and seafarer in many aspects differ from more traditional professions in economic life. We argue that the distinctive nature of the working environment on ships and at cargo handling facilities in seaports not only leads to specific job characteristics, but also requires a tailor-made approach to the motivation of seafarers and dock workers and to motivate others to join these professions. This need for a customization of motivation tools is particularly felt at the level of:

- *The relationship between employee and employer*: dock workers highly value freedom in choosing a task or even a terminal. This desire for 'freedom of choice' is at the core of the typical casual labour arrangements found in dock labour pools. Instead of establishing a direct relation between employee and employer, these pools avoid a long-term and unilateral dependency of a dock worker on a specific terminal operator. In combination with union membership and the social dimension of hiring halls, pools thus strengthen a feeling of autonomy and freedom among dock workers. A lack of long-term dependency of seafarers on specific ship operators is also true nowadays. But for seafarers, the development of primarily indirect relations between employer and employees and of mostly short-term and ad-hoc employment contracts is attributed to the fragmentation of the shipping industry and a globalised crew sourcing in search of the most cost-effective employment, rather than a desire of 'freedom of choice' on the seafarers' part;
- *Remuneration*: dock workers are generally paid well not only to motivate to be highly productive or flexible, but also to make sure that they show a high level of responsibility to avoid 'hidden costs'. Remuneration for seafarers tends to generally reflect the high-risk nature and inherent difficulties of the job. However, pay

- discrepancies between nationalities onboard vessels, competitive compensation schemes in jobs ashore and the practically non-existent work / life balance for seafarers during the time of service onboard create additional complications for their motivation;
- *Societal status of the profession*: As the maritime industry suffers from a lack of a public image or a poor public image, motivation tools should not only be directed to existing seafarers and dock workers, but also to possible future candidates for such a profession. In line with the ‘soft values’ approach introduced by Van Hooydonk (2007), the port and maritime industry is challenged to improve its public image by combining several approaches: (a) external communications policies and public events and festivities in and around port areas – such as Port Days; (b) convince the general public of the importance of shipping and ports by presenting figures on employment effects and added value; (c) adopt a green shipping and port management strategy; (d) stakeholder relations management, i.e. the development of good relations with all parties concerned when it comes to developments in ports or the shipping industry.
  - *Working conditions*: The seafaring profession is a high-risk profession due to perils of the sea, piracy, adverse weather conditions, use of heavy equipment, long hours of work, fatigue, irregular meals, psychological stress, intermittent danger, boredom, forced contact with others and inescapability of the environment. Added to the above, the shrinkage of manning levels, the multicultural composition of crew and the high turnover of seafarers onboard pose special complications for motivation, for effective cooperation, task coordination and job performance. Dock workers are also subject to harsh working conditions, but in general the social conditions are far less extreme and strongly defined by the characteristics of the local dock labour system. The job motivation level of a dock worker is influenced by the ‘fit’ between personal character and the specific configuration of the local dock labour environment, e.g. in terms of social control by the ‘gang’ or labour union;
  - *Work / life balance*: Seafarers suffer from isolation from friends and family for long periods of time as their place of work is also their place of living. Traditional motivation schemes to enhance the work / life balance, such as flexible working time, telecommuting or job sharing are inappropriate for shipboard life. Such idiosyncrasies of ship-based jobs make it imperative for ship managers to embrace a more open and at the same time more case-specific approach to crew motivation especially when it comes to home-work interface.

The specific industry contexts in seafaring and dock labour instigate a mix of motivation processes tools that is distinct from other industries. We therefore propose the addition of a contextual layer to the study of motivation at work. Although key motivation principles, such as pay rewards can be used as universally applicable, several strands of the industry and job layers necessitate consideration of context-specific parameters which affect the ways people can be motivated. This is very much evident from the differences as much as the similarities of the job characteristics of our two chosen shipping professions, dock workers and seafarers.

The contribution of this paper to theory and practice is diverse. First, it adds to the conceptualization of motivation by contextualizing it in the specific setting of male dominated professions and of work environments characterized by the formation of highly interdependent, mostly disjointed and primarily contractually fragmented teams. Extant work on motivation has been done in a limited range of industrial and occupational sectors and so this paper contributes to its critical evaluation in a new context.

Second, the above-mentioned parameters point to a unique business environment for the application of motivation principles, as they may act as motivation moderators for employees in the seafaring and dock work, as well as for any other personnel in industries with corresponding characteristics. Such business environment varies to that dealt with by the extensive literature on work motivation and so the present study adds to the latter a new important dimension.

Third, the paper also makes a distinct contribution to shipping-specific literature, which essentially lacks any discussion on motivation, especially of dock workers, or any critical comparison of employment constituents of its two main working centres, the ship and the port.

Fourth, consideration of the seafaring and dock labour employment components within the realms of motivation can provide a useful tool for practitioners wishing to instigate effective and sector-specific motivation policies and processes.

The paper may suggest several avenues for future research. This examination is purely theoretical and explorative and future research could benefit from engaging in an empirical examination through collection of relevant data from either or both dock workers and seafarers. We believe this paper offers a very sound foundation for further empirical research. Such investigations can take a cross-sectional view or longitudinal investigations could be undertaken to look at how dock workers and seafarers' motivation change over time in response to changes in their life and careers. Also, cross-industrial research projects may also be conducted to underline particularly the impact of context in motivation.

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