Tough conditions ahead for shipping minister

Sailing in a deep talent pool

Tertiary maritime education in Singapore keeps pace with the city’s ambitions, reports JESSICA YEO

WITH a range of shipping-related training available locally, the maritime industry is well-fuelled with new talent to support Singapore’s status as a maritime hub.

Institutions providing such education include Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National University of Singapore, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and the Singapore Maritime Academy in Singapore Polytechnic.

NTU, the first institute of higher education to receive the Excellence in Training Development Award for the Singapore International Maritime Awards, provides both education and research in the maritime sector.

The university has offered a bachelor’s and master’s programme in Maritime Studies for the past five years, with the programme focusing mainly on shipping, business, management, and maritime science and technology.

Besides offering Singapore’s first non-engineering degree for the maritime industry, NTU also offers marine and offshore engineering in the School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. By providing a degree not based on engineering, NTU differentiates itself from other local programmes. Members of the School of Marine and Offshore Engineering who attain their engineering degree in Singapore are likely to stay in the country, not just the region, rather than on the ships.

NTU provost Dr Bertil Andersson said that it is a benefit for local graduates, as Singapore has one of the busiest ports in the world. "We are going straight into a niche area for Singapore," said Dr Andersson, pointing out that ships are not a Singapore thing: the harbour is a Singapore thing.

With their latest addition of an executive master of business administration in shipping, offshore and finance, NTU provides a well-rounded maritime education.

The school’s tight focus on the business side of the maritime sector can also be seen with their recent offering of a double master in business for Maritime Industries under graduates.

Students will also spend a semester at the Norwegian School of Management in Norway, which will provide exposure to diverse maritime course, besides the experience of being in a shipping nation. Going beyond curricula, NTU also runs a Maritime Series and public seminars with live admission.

With the increased emphasis on B2O to enhance Singapore’s position as a maritime hub, Dr Andersson aims to recruit 10 more experts, particularly in the coming years, as Singapore seems to be keeping pace with the city’s ambitions to grow its hub status.

NTU has already recruited a leading expert on the maritime industry from Europe. Dr Mark Connolly, executive scientific advisor of the European Science Foundation’s maritime board.

Besides NTU, other schools here also offer niche courses, Ngee Ann Polytechnic runs the only naval architecture diploma in Singapore focusing on ship design and production, ship conversion and offshore engineering.

For diploma holders who choose to follow up on their education, the polytechnic has links with Newcastle University for a bachelor’s degree in naval architecture conducted locally.

There is also the Singapore Maritime Academy (SMA), a school that has been offering maritime education and training for more than five decades. The SMA focuses on marine engineering, nautical studies and shipping management.

It has diploma courses, links with foreign universities for degrees as well as competency courses for deck officers and marine engineers. The school is now gearing up for a master’s programme in maritime operations that starts this September. As such, tertiary maritime education in Singapore seems to be keeping pace with the city’s ambitions to grow its hub status.