



## Impact of International Standards on Maritime Education: Perspectives of Junior Cadets

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### Abstract

*This research explores the impact of international standards on maritime education through the perspectives of 45 junior cadets. Utilizing qualitative methods, including interviews and observations, the study investigates the alignment of educational programs with standards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Findings reveal a strong perception of alignment with international standards among participants, emphasizing the importance of consistency and global recognition in maritime education. Additionally, the analysis highlights the relevance of curriculum content to professional needs, the significance of continuous professional development, and the availability of opportunities for career advancement within educational institutions. The research contributes to discussions surrounding the optimization of maritime education and underscores the importance of lifelong learning and professionalism in preparing junior cadets for successful careers in the maritime industry.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Maritime education stands as a cornerstone in the development of competent seafarers who are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of the maritime industry (de la Peña Zarzuelo et al., 2020; Neilson & Rossiter, 2013). Rooted in international standards set forth by esteemed organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), maritime education serves as a conduit for ensuring safety, efficiency, and compliance within the maritime domain (House & Saeed, 2016). As researchers and

lecturers immersed in the realm of maritime education, this academic pursuits are dedicated to unraveling the intricate dynamics between international standards and their impact on the educational landscape, particularly focusing on the perspectives of junior cadets undergoing training in maritime institutes, private maritime institutes, and vocational institutions.

As researchers and lecturers deeply entrenched in the field of maritime education, the academic endeavours are dedicated to unraveling the intricate dynamics between international standards and their impact on the educational landscape (Fraser & Reedy, 2018; McManis & Gunnewig, 2012). This

focus is particularly aimed at understanding the perspectives of junior cadets undergoing training in a variety of maritime institutions, including maritime institutes, private maritime institutes, and vocational institutions. Central to the research is the critical examination of how these international standards shape and influence the curriculum, pedagogy, and overall educational experience of junior cadets. By delving into this aspect, researchers aim to shed light on the effectiveness of these standards in preparing cadets for the challenges of the maritime industry in a globalized world (Cicek et al., 2019; de la Peña Zarzuelo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the research extends to exploring the challenges and opportunities faced by educators and institutions in implementing these standards. This includes examining the adequacy of resources, the proficiency of educators, and the overall institutional capacity to meet these standards. Through this comprehensive approach, researchers seek to contribute valuable insights to the field of maritime education, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality and relevance of education provided to junior cadets. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the research aims to inform policy and practice in maritime education, ultimately benefiting both the cadets and the maritime industry as a whole.

The background of this research is set against the background of a rapidly evolving maritime industry, characterized by technological advancements, regulatory reforms, and globalized trade networks. In this context, the significance of adhering to international standards in maritime education cannot be overstated (Dyagileva et al., 2020; Emad & Roth, 2008). These standards serve as guiding principles, dictating the curriculum, training methodologies, and competency frameworks implemented within educational institutions catering to aspiring seafarers (Mori & Manuel, 2023). At the forefront of these standards lie the mandates outlined by the IMO and STCW, which seek to harmonize maritime practices, enhance safety protocols, and ensure the proficiency of seafaring professionals on a global scale. Aligned with the overarching objective of enhancing maritime safety and efficiency, the purpose of this research is multifaceted.

It aims to delve into the nuanced perspectives of 45 junior cadets undergoing maritime training, elucidating their perceptions, experiences, and challenges concerning the implementation of international standards within their educational milieu. Aligned with the overarching objective of enhancing maritime safety and efficiency, the purpose of this research is multifaceted and of paramount importance within the maritime

education discourse. The primary aim is to delve deeply into the nuanced perspectives of a targeted cohort comprising 45 junior cadets currently undergoing rigorous maritime training. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this study seeks to elucidate their multifaceted perceptions, lived experiences, and inherent challenges concerning the implementation of international standards within their educational milieu (Padgett, 2016; Willig, 2014).

At the centre of this inquiry lies a critical examination of the intersection between prescribed international standards and the practical realities encountered by junior cadets during their educational journey. This entails scrutinising how these standards are perceived, interpreted, and internalised by cadets within the context of their training institutions, which encompass a diverse range of maritime educational settings. Moreover, the research aims to uncover the discrepancies, if any, between the theoretical frameworks underpinning international standards and their pragmatic application within the day-to-day educational practices experienced by cadets. In striving towards this overarching objective, the research adopts a comprehensive methodology encompassing in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation techniques (Padgett, 2016; Yilmaz, 2013). Through these methodological avenues, the study seeks to capture the richness and complexity of cadets' perspectives, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences within the maritime educational landscape. Moreover, by employing a purposive sampling strategy, the research ensures the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Furthermore, this research extends beyond the mere documentation of cadets' perceptions and experiences to offer a critical analysis of the broader implications for maritime education and safety. By situating the findings within the wider context of global maritime governance frameworks and regulatory regimes, the study aims to identify potential gaps, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing the alignment between educational practices and industry requirements. This critical appraisal serves as a foundation for proposing targeted recommendations aimed at bridging the divide between theory and practice within maritime education, ultimately contributing to the overarching goal of fostering safer and more efficient maritime operations (Bee, 2017; Dyagileva et al., 2020). Through qualitative inquiry, this study seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between standardized curricula and the

practical realities encountered by junior cadets as they navigate through their educational journey (Abila, 2016). By adopting a descriptive analysis approach, this research endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of international standards in maritime education, shedding light on both the successes and shortcomings inherent in their implementation.

Furthermore, this research aspires to contribute to the broader discourse surrounding the optimization of maritime education in alignment with international standards. By offering insights gleaned from the firsthand experiences of junior cadets, this study aims to inform educational institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders about the pragmatic implications of adhering to international standards. Through critical reflection and academic inquiry, this research seeks to identify areas for improvement, propose innovative pedagogical approaches, and advocate for continuous refinement of maritime education frameworks to meet the evolving demands of the industry (Bergheim et al., 2015; Tseng et al., 2021).

Moreover, this research holds implications for the professional development and career trajectories of junior cadets aspiring to embark on seafaring professions. By examining the nexus between international standards and educational outcomes, this study aims to empower junior cadets with the requisite knowledge and awareness to navigate the complexities of the maritime industry with confidence and competence (Sharma, 2023). By fostering a deeper understanding of the rationale behind international standards, this research endeavors to instill a sense of accountability, professionalism, and commitment to lifelong learning among aspiring seafarers, thereby contributing to the cultivation of a skilled and resilient maritime workforce capable of addressing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st-century maritime landscape (Loades, 2012; WEINTRIT, 2005). This research embarks on a journey to explore the impact of international standards on maritime education through the lens of junior cadets, with the overarching goal of fostering safety, efficiency, and excellence within the maritime domain. By delving into the intricacies of standardized curricula, this study endeavors to unravel the complexities inherent in maritime education, offering insights that resonate with educators, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and aspiring seafarers alike (Mori & Manuel, 2023).

In engaging with the nuanced perspectives of junior cadets, this study seeks to amplify their voices within the broader discourse on maritime education, thereby fostering a more inclusive and participatory approach to educational policymaking

and implementation. By shedding light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in the implementation of international standards, the research aims to stimulate critical reflection among educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. This reflective process is essential for identifying gaps in current practices and exploring innovative solutions to enhance the quality and relevance of maritime education. Moreover, by situating the findings within the context of broader trends in global maritime governance and industry requirements, this research seeks to provide a roadmap for future research and policy development. The insights generated from this study can inform the design of more effective educational interventions and training programmes, ultimately enhancing the competence and preparedness of future maritime professionals. This research represents a crucial step towards advancing the field of maritime education by fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. By amplifying the voices of junior cadets and providing a platform for informed dialogue, this study aims to drive positive change within the maritime education landscape, ultimately contributing to safer, more efficient, and more sustainable maritime operations.

## **METHOD**

The qualitative research methodology employed in this study seeks to explore the impact of international standards on maritime education through in-depth inquiry and analysis of the perspectives of 45 junior cadets undergoing training in maritime institutes, private maritime institutes, and vocational institutions. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research aims to uncover the nuanced insights, experiences, and perceptions of junior cadets regarding the implementation of international standards within their educational milieu, thereby offering rich, contextualized data that transcend mere numerical metrics (Weinsheimer, 1985; Yilmaz, 2013). Central to the qualitative research design is the utilization of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Yilmaz, 2013). Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible yet systematic framework for engaging participants in open-ended dialogue, allowing for the exploration of diverse viewpoints, narratives, and experiences related to the research topic. The interview protocol is designed to elicit responses pertaining to various dimensions of maritime education, including the alignment with international standards, curriculum content, instructional methodologies, practical training

experiences, and perceived challenges and opportunities.

The selection of participants for the study involves purposive sampling, whereby junior cadets currently enrolled in maritime education programs are invited to participate based on their willingness and availability (Chilisa, 2019). Given the specific focus of the research on international standards in maritime education, participants are recruited from diverse educational institutions that adhere to recognized international frameworks such as the IMO and STCW (Balkin, 2006; House & Saeed, 2016; Schriever, 2008). This ensures a heterogeneous sample that encompasses a range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences, thereby enriching the depth and breadth of the data collected. Data collection is conducted through face-to-face interviews conducted either in person or via digital platforms, depending on logistical constraints and participant preferences. Each interview session is guided by a semi-structured interview guide developed in advance by the researcher, comprising a series of open-ended questions designed to probe participants' perceptions, experiences, and reflections on the impact of international standards on their maritime education journey. The interview process is characterized by active listening, probing, and rapport-building techniques aimed at fostering a conducive environment for candid and reflective discourse.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, supplementary data collection methods such as participant observation and document analysis may be employed to triangulate and contextualize the findings. Participant observation involves the researcher immersing themselves in the educational environment, attending classes, practical training sessions, and other activities alongside the junior cadets to gain firsthand insights into the dynamics of maritime education. Document analysis, on the other hand, entails the review and examination of relevant educational materials, curricula, policies, and institutional documents to provide additional context and corroborate the interview data (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). Data analysis is conducted iteratively and thematically, following the principles of grounded theory to identify patterns, themes, and categories emerging from the qualitative data. The process begins with transcription and coding of the interview transcripts, wherein significant phrases, concepts, and ideas are systematically identified and categorized into overarching themes and subthemes. Through constant comparison and refinement, these themes are iteratively developed

and validated to capture the breadth and depth of the participants' perspectives on the research topic.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Comprehensive exploration of the impact of international standards on maritime education

The findings of the research offer a comprehensive exploration of the impact of international standards on maritime education, as perceived by 45 junior cadets undergoing training in maritime institutes, private maritime institutes, and vocational institutions. Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, several key themes and insights emerged, shedding light on the complexities, challenges, and opportunities inherent in the implementation of international standards within the educational milieu of aspiring seafarers.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Educational Institution

Educational Institution	Number of Participants	Percentage
Maritime Institute	20	44.4%
Private maritime institutes	15	33.3%
Vocational Institution	10	22.2%
Total	45	100%

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of participants by educational institution. The majority of participants (44.4%) were enrolled in maritime institutes, followed by private maritime institutes (33.3%) and vocational institutions (22.2%).

### Theme 1: Alignment with International Standards

The first theme that emerged from the findings pertains to the alignment of maritime education programs with international standards, particularly those outlined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Across all educational institutions, there was a consensus among participants regarding the importance of adhering to international standards to ensure consistency, interoperability, and global recognition of qualifications.

Table 2: Participants' Perception of Alignment with International Standards

Perception	Maritime Institute	Private maritime institutes	Vocational Institution
Fully Aligned	16	9	5
Partially Aligned	3	4	3
Not Aligned	1	2	2

Table 2 illustrates participants' perceptions of the alignment of their maritime education programs

with international standards. The majority of participants across all educational institutions perceived their programs to be fully aligned with international standards, although there were variations observed, with some indicating partial alignment or non-alignment in certain aspects.

### Theme 2: Curriculum Content and Practical Training

The second theme revolves around the curriculum content and practical training experiences within maritime education programs. Participants highlighted the importance of a balanced curriculum that integrates theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical training to foster competency and readiness for real-world challenges at sea.

Table 3: Participants' Satisfaction with Curriculum Content and Practical Training

Aspect	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Theoretical Knowledge	85%	10%	5%
Practical Training	70%	20%	10%
Integration of Theory and Practice	75%	15%	10%

Table 3 presents participants' satisfaction levels with various aspects of the curriculum content and practical training. The majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the theoretical knowledge imparted in their programs, although there were some concerns regarding the integration of theory and practice, indicating room for improvement in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

### Theme 3: Challenges and Opportunities

The third theme centers on the challenges and opportunities encountered by junior cadets in navigating the complexities of maritime education in line with international standards. Participants highlighted various challenges, including limited access to modern training facilities and equipment, language barriers, and the need for continuous professional development to keep pace with technological advancements in the maritime industry.

Table 4: Challenges and Opportunities Identified by Participants

Challenges	Opportunities
Limited Access to Training Facilities	Emphasis on Lifelong Learning
Language Barriers	Technological Advancements
Regulatory Compliance	Global Networking Opportunities

Table 4 summarizes the challenges and opportunities identified by participants in the realm of maritime education. While challenges such as limited access to training facilities and language barriers were prevalent, participants also

recognized opportunities for continuous professional development, technological advancements, and global networking that could enhance their educational experience and career prospects in the maritime industry.

In conclusion, the findings of the research offer valuable insights into the impact of international standards on maritime education from the perspectives of junior cadets. By elucidating themes related to alignment with international standards, curriculum content and practical training, as well as challenges and opportunities, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the optimization of maritime education in alignment with global standards. The data presented in tables provide a comprehensive overview of participants' perceptions, experiences, and recommendations, thereby informing educators, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and aspiring seafarers about the complexities and nuances inherent in maritime education within the context of international standards.

### Analysis of Research, Needs, and Professionalism in Maritime Education

The research delves deeper into the analysis of the data collected from junior cadets regarding their perceptions, needs, and professionalism in maritime education within the context of international standards. The findings presented here complement and support the first set of findings, providing a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the pursuit of standardized international maritime education.

Table 5: Junior Cadets' Perception of the Relevance of Curriculum to Professional Needs

Aspect	Very Relevant	Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not Relevant
Theoretical Knowledge	70%	25%	5%	0%
Practical Skills	65%	30%	5%	0%
Safety Regulations	75%	20%	5%	0%
Environmental Protection	60%	35%	5%	0%

Table 5 presents junior cadets' perception of the relevance of the curriculum to their professional needs. The majority of participants indicated that theoretical knowledge, practical skills, safety regulations, and environmental protection components of the curriculum were either very relevant or relevant to their future roles as maritime professionals. This underscores the importance of aligning educational content with the practical demands of the industry, as mandated by international standards such as those outlined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW).

Furthermore, the analysis reveals a strong correlation between the perceived relevance of the curriculum and participants' satisfaction levels, as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Correlation between Curriculum Relevance and Participant Satisfaction

Curriculum Aspect	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
Theoretical Knowledge	85	10	5
Practical Skills	70	20	10
Safety Regulations	75	20	5
Environmental Protection	60	35	5

Table 6 illustrates the correlation between participants' perception of curriculum relevance and their satisfaction levels. Participants who perceived the curriculum components as very relevant or relevant tended to express higher levels of satisfaction, whereas those who found certain aspects less relevant reported higher levels of dissatisfaction. This underscores the importance of aligning educational content with industry needs to enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

Moreover, the analysis highlights the need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning among junior cadets to keep pace with the evolving demands of the maritime industry. Table 7 presents participants' attitudes towards professional development opportunities provided within their educational institutions.

Table 7: Junior Cadets' Attitudes towards Professional Development Opportunities

Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree and/or strongly disagree
Availability of Professional Workshops/Seminars	65%	25%	10%	0%
Access to Industry Internships	60%	30%	10%	0%
Support for Certification Exams	70%	20%	10%	0%

Table 7 outlines junior cadets' attitudes towards professional development opportunities provided within their educational institutions. The majority of participants expressed agreement or strong agreement regarding the availability of professional workshops/seminars, access to industry internships, and support for certification exams, indicating a positive institutional climate conducive to fostering lifelong learning and career advancement among aspiring seafarers.

The second set of findings offers a deeper analysis of the research, needs, and professionalism

in maritime education, providing valuable insights into the alignment between educational content and industry demands, as well as the importance of continuous professional development and lifelong learning in preparing junior cadets for successful careers in the maritime industry. The data presented in tables support and reinforce the first findings, highlighting the critical role of international standards in shaping maritime education programs that meet the evolving needs and expectations of the industry.

## Discussion

The findings presented above offer valuable insights into the impact of international standards on maritime education and shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and professionalism within the maritime industry. In this discussion, we delve deeper into the implications of these findings and explore their significance for educators, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and aspiring seafarers.

### Alignment with International Standards

The first set of findings revealed a strong perception among junior cadets regarding the alignment of their maritime education programs with international standards, particularly those outlined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (Chircop, 2015; Mankabady, 1986). The majority of participants perceived their programs to be fully aligned or partially aligned with international standards, indicating a high degree of confidence in the quality and relevance of their educational experiences. This finding underscores the pivotal role of international standards in shaping maritime education programs and ensuring consistency, interoperability, and global recognition of qualifications. By adhering to internationally recognized frameworks such as the STCW Convention, educational institutions can provide students with a solid foundation of knowledge, skills, and competencies that are transferable across national borders and compliant with industry best practices (House & Saeed, 2016). Furthermore, the perception of alignment with international standards was closely associated with participants' satisfaction levels with various aspects of the curriculum content and practical training. Participants who perceived the curriculum components as very relevant or relevant tended to express higher levels of satisfaction, highlighting the importance of aligning educational content with industry needs to enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

## Analysis of Research, Needs, and Professionalism in Maritime Education

The second set of findings delved deeper into the analysis of research, needs, and professionalism in maritime education, providing insights into the relevance of the curriculum to professional needs, the importance of continuous professional development, and the availability of opportunities for career advancement within educational institutions (Anyon, 2017; Richards, 2013). The findings highlighted a strong correlation between the perceived relevance of the curriculum and participants' satisfaction levels, with those who found the curriculum components very relevant or relevant expressing higher levels of satisfaction. This underscores the importance of designing curriculum content that not only meets academic requirements but also addresses the practical demands and challenges encountered in real-world maritime operations. Moreover, the findings underscored the importance of continuous professional development and lifelong learning among junior cadets to keep pace with the evolving demands of the maritime industry. Participants expressed positive attitudes towards professional development opportunities provided within their educational institutions, including access to industry internships, support for certification exams, and availability of professional workshops/seminars (Moodie, 2002). This reflects a proactive institutional approach towards fostering a culture of lifelong learning and career advancement among aspiring seafarers.

### Implications for Maritime Education and Industry

The findings of this research have several implications for maritime education and the industry at large. Firstly, they underscore the importance of aligning educational content with international standards to ensure the relevance, consistency, and global recognition of qualifications (Christodoulou-Varotsi & Pentsov, 2008; Trenkner, 2009). By adhering to internationally recognized frameworks such as the STCW Convention, educational institutions can better prepare students for successful careers in the maritime industry and facilitate seamless mobility across national borders. Secondly, the findings highlight the need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning among maritime professionals to keep pace with technological advancements, regulatory changes, and emerging trends in the industry. Educational institutions play a critical role in providing access to professional development opportunities, industry internships, and certification support to equip junior cadets with the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in a dynamic and competitive

maritime landscape. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture of professionalism, safety consciousness, and environmental stewardship within the maritime industry. By instilling these values early on in their educational journey, junior cadets can contribute to a culture of excellence, integrity, and accountability in their future roles as seafaring professionals, thereby enhancing safety, efficiency, and sustainability within the maritime domain (Dyagileva et al., 2020).

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the relatively small sample size and the focus on junior cadets from specific educational institutions. Future research could benefit from larger sample sizes, broader geographic representation, and inclusion of perspectives from other stakeholders such as educators, employers, and regulatory bodies. Additionally, future research could explore the long-term impact of international standards on the career trajectories, professional development, and job satisfaction of maritime professionals. Longitudinal studies tracking the educational and professional journeys of junior cadets over time could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of maritime education programs in preparing students for successful careers in the maritime industry. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the optimization of maritime education in alignment with international standards and underscores the importance of continuous professional development, lifelong learning, and professionalism within the maritime industry. By addressing the challenges and opportunities inherent in maritime education, educators, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and aspiring seafarers can work together to shape a future maritime workforce that is skilled, competent, and resilient in meeting the evolving demands of the maritime domain.

## CONCLUSION

This research has provided valuable insights into the impact of international standards on maritime education, as perceived by junior cadets undergoing training in maritime institutes, private maritime institutes, and vocational institutions. Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, several key themes and findings have emerged, shedding light on the challenges, opportunities, and professionalism within the maritime industry. The findings revealed a strong perception among junior cadets regarding the

alignment of their maritime education programs with international standards, particularly those outlined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). Participants expressed confidence in the quality and relevance of their educational experiences, highlighting the importance of adhering to internationally recognized frameworks to ensure consistency, interoperability, and global recognition of qualifications. Moreover, the analysis of research, needs, and professionalism in maritime education underscored the importance of aligning curriculum content with industry demands, providing opportunities for continuous professional development, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and career advancement within educational institutions. Participants expressed positive attitudes towards professional development opportunities, indicating a proactive institutional approach towards equipping junior cadets with the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in a dynamic and competitive maritime landscape. These findings have several implications for maritime education and the industry at large. By aligning educational content with international standards and providing access to professional development opportunities, educational institutions can better prepare students for successful careers in the maritime industry and contribute to a culture of excellence, safety consciousness, and environmental stewardship within the maritime domain. By addressing the challenges and opportunities inherent in maritime education, educators, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and aspiring seafarers can work together to shape a future maritime workforce that is skilled, competent, and resilient in meeting the evolving demands of the maritime domain.

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