Making a Wider Contribution

Naval hydrographic schools are fine examples of educational institutions holding old traditions of academic excellence and being in the vanguard of new technological developments. They have to supply officers for their respective navies, properly instructed and trained in hydrography, oceanography, geodesy, cartography and many other aspects of the symbiosis of geodetic and â€˜informaticsâ€™ sciences. Most naval hydrographic schools undertake the formation of their students under international Standards of Competence for Hydrographers, contributing to their approaching the best profile expected from these professionals in any of the specialities included in the standards.

On top of this, and in order to meet the needs of their respective navies, naval hydrographic schools deliver a number of additional subjects and particular contents to meet the roles of national authority held by Hydrographic and Oceanographic Services. Educational programmes are thus uniquely tailored to the engineers graduating from these academies. In many countries hydrography is not a subject easily found in universities, making the naval hydrographic schools the sole institutions graduating specialists to the highest level. This is the case in Chile, where the Hydrography and Oceanography Instruction Center, a School within the Naval Polytechnic Academy (APN) of the Chilean Navy Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service (SHOA) is the only superior-level institution in the country delivering Cat A Hydrographic Engineering courses.

The course lasts for two years and corresponds to the fifth and sixth years of the six-year graduate programme for Naval Engineer from the Polytechnic Academy. The course includes high-level aspects of Oceanography, permitting a navy officer to graduate with an in-depth engineering background in both aspects. The prestige of the course with navies has resulted in nearly twenty students from the USA, Germany, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru graduating from it in the last twelve years, taking back to their countries high-level knowledge to be put to service in their respective navies.

This contribution on the part of the Chilean Navy's Hydrography and Oceanography Cat A course to other navies has been extended lately to the national community, with the acceptance of civilian students to the regular course. The coexistence of military and civilian students in the same programme has created interest among national and international armed-forces educational institutions. The main purpose of the incorporation is to graduate and return to civil practice engineers formed under Cat A international Standards as well as under the national particularities the course was designed to meet, such as those hydrographic, oceanographic cartographic and environmental aspects stipulated and laid down by regulatory bodies. The Chilean case is an interesting one, illustrating the role navies and armed-forces bodies have to play in contributing to the growth of their countries, beyond defence and strictly military aspects.