

Mapping the future through education



Dr Başak Akdemir, Chief Executive of MLA College, discusses her experience of working at the intersection of the maritime industry and education, focusing on how advancements in artificial intelligence are affecting both sectors.



I consider myself very fortunate as I work in two sectors that have a profound effect on people's lives: the maritime industry and education. The maritime industry is the backbone of global trade – 50% of the world population would die from hunger and the other 50% from cold without the essential role played by maritime transport in sustaining the global economy. Education, on the other hand, maps the future of nations. Achieving this through a global education institute enables us to reach thousands of students.

BAU Global is an education institution which comprises more than 200,000 students, with 300 K-12 schools, language schools, a boarding school and online high school, a private career college in Canada and six universities on four continents.

Located in Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, MLA College is the newest member of the BAU Global family. The College offers higher education with our degree awarding partners University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjon University, concentrating on maritime education both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Our online education platform enables our students to continue their education wherever they reside around the world, even when offshore onboard vessels, or on offshore platforms.

Today, one of the biggest challenges in education is university industry collaboration. At MLA College, we are very proud and fortunate to be a part of the

Institute of Marine Engineering Science & Technology (ImarEST), which enables us to be at the centre of the industry given ImarEST is the international professional body and learned society for all maritime professionals. Working closely with the industry allows us to follow the current changes, challenges and trends and adapt our courses to suit the requirements of a dynamic and rapidly evolving sector. MLA College is expanding rapidly, developing new programmes with all our academic partners as we apply for our own degree awarding powers with the independent regulator of higher education in England.

One characteristic of the maritime and education industries is that they are both very traditional, yet both are also in a state of flux as they respond to the rapid advancement of technology and artificial intelligence (AI). Advancements in AI are transforming the logistics industry, allowing faster delivery at lower costs. Machine learning and neural networks help us to better forecast the fluctuating shipping markets. Sensors, speech recognition and cloud-based routing systems are becoming industry norms. Automation is rapidly increasing. Unmanned ships are on the horizon and have the potential to revolutionise the sector by reducing the level of human error associated

with navigation and by moderating the environmental impact connected with shipping generally.

The advancement of AI also allows more personalised education, not only with online education but also in the classroom, by supporting personalised, self-directed learning. AI in education improves the quality of learning by providing students with additional learning materials and tailor-made content attending their weaknesses. AI can help to reduce the administrative workload placed upon hard-working teachers, allowing more quality time to be spent guiding and supporting future generations. Gamification and VR-based learning is also advancing rapidly and MLA College is well-placed to continue to provide cutting-edge educational solutions by making use of these exciting new tools.

We are on the cusp of a technological revolution. What may be seen by some as being lifted from the pages of science fiction is increasingly becoming commercial reality. The maritime and education sectors need to adapt and respond to this quickly by providing solutions tailored to the requirements of the global economy. The implementation of unmanned and autonomous shipping should not be seen as a threat but an

opportunity to evolve and grow. It is worth considering that whilst unmanned tugboats are increasingly being operated today, there is still the requirement for logistical support and personnel onshore to ensure operational success. From the perspective of education, we need to adapt curriculums so that we have more creative and lifelong learners better prepared to meet the needs of a society that becomes increasingly reliant on AI.

Technologically enhanced learning is already a common feature found throughout the global education community and will only become more prevalent in the future. Online distance learning, such as that provided by MLA College, has already embraced technology to help reduce barriers to entry into higher education and will continue to take advantage of all that it provides. In utilising the experience and support offered by being a part of the BAU Global family, MLA College is perfectly placed to maintain delivery of its award-winning higher education to all those wishing to embrace the challenge brought by the unstoppable march of technological improvement. **R**

“Located in Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, MLA College is the newest member of the BAU Global family.”

