Interview with Professor Dr. Thomas Pawlik

Trends in Container Shipping

Only five per cent of ports are equipped for the new Panmax ships

Prof. Dr. Thomas Pawlik, Professor at the FH Kiel

The author of the new book "Maritime Container Shipping" is the Kiel professor, Dr. Thomas Pawlik. Pawlik (born in 1960) has been concerned with shipping for almost 30 years. In 1980 he started training as a shipping businessman at Hapag-Lloyd. He was also employed by this shipping company in various functions during his business management studies at Hamburg University as well as after passing his examination. He has been at the Fachhochschule Kiel since 1996.

Professor Pawlik, you introduced maritime business management as a major focus of studies at the FH Kiel. What is the objective?
In our economics department, students aiming at a bachelor's degree in business administration acquire knowledge regarding the different market segments in maritime business. The key focus area covers at least four relevant in-depth modules. In this context, the subjects Transport Economics, Maritime Business Management as well as Port Economics are compulsory. As a rule, the short-term practical training course and the final project are set in a maritime business environment.

Do the students have sufficiently close contacts with real practice?
At present, in the shipping business heavy demand exists not only for nautical and technical specialists but also for business management graduates with maritime know-how. This is also reflected in the numbers of students. "My" former students work for example in interesting functions among other things at shipping companies, terminal operators, classification societies, shipyards, airfreight firms, management consultants, ship financing companies, in public maritime institutions as well as in logistics enterprises and at major shippers.

In the new book you also address the development of the megacarriers. The "Emma Maersk" with a container carrying capacity of up to 14,300 TEU was put into in service in September 2006. How many ships of this size exist now, a good year later?
According to AXS-Alphaliner, 182 ships in the class of the "Very Large Container Ships", which starts at 7,500 TEU, were in service at the beginning of October. 309 are on the order books, of which 165 are over 10,000 TEU. But in the size-class of the Emma Maersk, it is barely a dozen.

What developments do you expect for the existing size-classes?
The megaships will naturally be limited to deployment on the main routes of container liner shipping. However, the cost advantages of such ships can only be fully exploited if only a small number of ports are called at. For direct calls at other ports as well as for the steadily growing deployment of containerships away from the traditional main routes it will also be necessary to have flexibly deployable ships with smaller capacities. In addition, there is still a need for feeder ships to serve the numerous "spokes" within hub-and-spoke systems.

Can the megaships pass through the new Panama Canal?
The planned expansion of the Panama Canal is dimensioned for a 366 m long and 49 m wide 12,000 TEU-ship with a draught of 15.00 m. With a beam of 56.40 m, the "Emma Maersk" and her sister ships will also in future not be able to use the Panama Canal.

Is the E-class therefore the end of the line?
For some time now a study has existed for a "Malaccamax" ship with a draught of 21.00 m and approx. 18,000 TEU, if it is ever built. But until only recently, everything that exists today was still only pipedreams. So I will never again say: 'No, that is not possible'.

The final sentence of the chapter about the megaships ends with the words "but their economic viability will depend on logistics in the port and further inland."What does that look like in the meantime?
I recently conducted an investigation of the possible draughts in 1,373 container ports. This revealed that, because of their draught, ships of the E-class ("Emma Maersk" and her sisters) of the Maersk shipping company can call at only 44 ports of the investigated ports worldwide – that is only three per cent of those looked at. For ships with draughts of the future Panmax class there are 71 ports (five per cent) and for ships of the same size as the dimensioning ship for the expansion of the navigable channel in the River Elbe, it was possible to identify 100 ports (seven per cent). However such statements are only ever valid for a short time, because draught adjustments of port access routes have been an ongoing topic for centuries and because new ports with generously dimensioned draughts will still be built in the future.

For Germany, the ports on the North Sea are of importance. Which are going to be equipped for the new ships in the near future?
All container ports on the German North Sea coast are currently benefiting from the boom in container traffic and are also preparing to meet the predicted sustained growth through a number of capacity adjustment measures.

Will there be offshore terminals for the containers, transshipment stations with no shore connections?
In principle such terminals already exist, after all so-called transshipment ports such as Marsaxlokk on Malta or also the planned port in Scapa Flow in the Scottish Orkney Islands serve exclusively to transfer cargo from ship to ship. Nevertheless, at present I see no chances for artificial offshore terminals, which have also been under discussion for a long time.

Thank you very much for the information and for giving us your time!

Info

TEU ahoy!
Ships, ports and the complete environment of the container are illuminated in the book "Maritime Container Shipping" published by the Hanseatic Lloyd Reederei. On 144 pages, author Prof. Dr. Thomas Pawlik – who as an expert for maritime business management at the Fachhochschule Kiel knows exactly what he is talking about – guides the reader through a containership, explains the tasks of the crew, safety aspects and the infrastructure of the whole transport chain from the shipper via container terminals through to the consignee. Many photos and charts, some on fold-out pages, supplement the information in the stylishly designed picture book.

obtainable from:
see **www.hanseatic-lloyd.de**

Info

Networked university training: Northern Maritime University
Prof. Dr. Thomas Pawlik recently launched an initiative to achieve a stronger networking of university training in maritime business management in the whole North Sea and Baltic Sea area. Under the umbrella of the "Northern Maritime University (NMU)" a number of European universities – including ones in Edinburgh, Bremen, Gothenburg, Gdynia or Saint Petersburg – wish to give their students access to maritime transport teaching modules, not only "live" but also through e-learning. In this way, the teaching on offer in the field of "Maritime Business Management" will be greatly expanded in terms of content and will be internationalised to a far greater extent than hitherto. "The Northern Maritime University is one stepping stone on the way to a European university area", states Pawlik.

Background

All containers on board!
The international shipowners association ICS is going to develop a "Code of Best Practice" for containers. This has been sparked off by investigations of accidents and losses of cargo on container ships. After a meeting of experts at the beginning of September, in which representatives of the shipping companies APL and Maersk as well as of the Association of German Shipowners took part, agreement was reached to look at the whole transport chain from booking, packing and marking, inland transport, ship planner/terminal through to the ship's management. Spheres of responsibility such as interfaces and problems are to be illuminated.