

## **The Itinerant University of the Sea, a Platform for the Knowledge Geographic of the World Today**

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The UIM (Itinerant University of the Sea) is an Iberian cooperative programme that provides practical training concerning the sea and the coasts that embrace it, while also teaching the logistics of the project itself. The programme was created in 2006 by the University of Oviedo, the University of Porto and the Naval School of Lisbon, in order to offer a horizon broadening training experience and arouse the interest of young people. Using the sea as an instructional medium and a vessel as a teaching tool, the participants increase their personal abilities through direct application of skill, through a synergy of "Knowledge and adventure".

Thus far the programme has organized 11 annual campaigns, in which 21 training trips were carried out 18 of these training trips were courses at sea and the rest were UIM-junior courses. To date there have been 1,004 students, teachers and professors of 16 different nationalities, from three different continents who have all together travelled a total of 17,265 nautical miles, during 3,332 sailing hours, within the actual 4,912 hours of course.

What makes the UIM unique is the coexistence of two communities of citizens from two European states within a common instructional programme. Military seafarers form the crew of the vessel, while others are teachers and students. The civilians and military who form the team come from the three organizing universities as well as invites from other universities.

The UIM began to take shape within the geographical environment of the University of Oviedo, with an action research group, studying geography applied to the control of territorial change and also applied to the intervention "to the side and a step behind the true territorial capacity" "A school ship is an excellent environment for open minds to



discover their full potential; in this setting, we are able to train through practical application of skill.

The Creoula is a four-club lugged on schooner, with velacho in the ratchet, a length of 62.5 m, 9.9 m of sleeve, 5.5 m of draft and 1,246 tons of displacement. It is an Auxiliary Unit of the Portuguese Navy. Between 1937 and 1973, it was engaged in cod fishing at the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. It was recovered in 1987 as a school ship, in which the UIM has embarked on annual campaigns since 2006. The vessel is administratively supported by an agreement signed between the three universities which also allows other universities to join the campaigns every year.

The purpose of the UIM is to create a cooperative Iberian school for the complementary training of students, following the geographic method, focused on action based learning. The primary aims of the UIM are to broaden maritime awareness among the young as well as the general population; to offer logistical project training to university students as well as to civilians and the military; to foster a mutual Iberian knowledge and to extend the motto "Knowledge and adventure" to the universities of world.

The programme takes as a reference the sea and tries to recognise the traditions of cosmographers and navigators by giving them real world value today. The sea and its coasts have crystallized many great questions for humanity. The UIM comes closer to these considerations through the experience of using travel as a pedagogical tool. The motto "Knowledge and adventure" is a basic description of the learning system, which is oriented to the expansion of the participants' capabilities, as understood by Amartya Sen, by encouraging the use of creative logic in their innovative project, in the hope of serving as a school for modern day explorers. The UIM encourages personal development by generating an atmosphere of excellence through action, to train people capable of maintaining control in highly interactive and uncertain situations.

Its didactic scheme is structured in response to the following question:

"This action research project must realize the contents of the course with an international, interdisciplinary and multicultural team, whose members have not yet met before and do not all speak the same language. The programme is endowed with special conditions which are adapted to its function, all while moving in an environment that can become hostile in unforeseen situations. While the participants of the project are made to sail the vessel using the whole arts, it is necessary to both maintain secure and harmonious conditions and also achieve the best possible learning outcome. How can the programme best meet all of its objectives simultaneously?"



Aboard the ship, the UIM complements the training of competent professionals that are able to work effectively both in teams and as team leaders and increases their ability to protect themselves against foreseeable risks.

Both teachers and students travel as active passengers. During the journey the participant acts in two ways: as an “instruendo” learn to be on the sea and, as a student, a participant in the action research project. As “instruendos” it is necessary to know and obey a series of basic precepts of the art of sailing. As trainee apprentices or planners, they need to be methodical in their actions, with creativity and flexibility. The process is scheduled in three cycles, Preparation, Implementation and Conclusion. The first cycle, Preparation, is to explain the purpose of the course and the specifics of life on board, teamwork and leadership exercises are carried out with the teachers. The second cycle, Implementation, realizes sessions on dry land in order to facilitate the safety of the participants and as well as sessions at sea. The sessions at sea are administered in four phases: Adaptation, Understanding, Organization and Leadership. Finally the third cycle, Conclusion, in which the projects are presented.

During the “instruendo” mode, which is during active navigation, each and every moment is a part of the training experience. The students are placed in groups dedicated to different activities, attending to all general chores and duties aboard the ship. In the student mode they work in groups on action research projects. There are four project groups, each of which has two tutor-teachers. The students individually prepare an On Board Journal, in which they consolidate their personal experiences and the conditions of navigation. The On Board Journal also contains the Activities Booklet.

The program is structured by subjects, transversal or specific. They are Marine and Safety; Navigation and Nautical Meteorology; Geodesy, Cartography and Positioning; Oceanography; Geography; Naval History; Geopolitics; Economy of the Sea; Biology; Projects and On Board Journal. Each class is under the charge of a sea tutor-teacher and is developed through lectures and workshops. The lectures are given by invited professors in the cities of landing. These 40 minute lectures are taught aboard the ship, performed on the deck as an exercise in rhetoric. The Workshops are practical with contents such as journalism, bridge, kitchen, knots, paths, meteorology, and land surveys: guided tours in the cities of landfall. Exercises in security are also carried out on board the ship.

The UIM is a Rubik's cube, to concretize its facets it relies on several networks of participants. It has a junior section which is a multigenerational training experience that



brings together (*velhos*) the elderly, with people up to 79 years of age, with (*novos*) the newcomers, from 15 years old. To promote maritime awareness among the population, it organizes marine festivals in Avilés in Asturias, Spain and Ilhavo in Portugal. During the year, it holds seminars and public functions on matters concerning the sea, of both academic and informative natures. The principal activity of the UIM remains the courses at sea. The courses at sea vary in duration, ranging between 12 and 30 days, but the format of the educational programme does not vary. The roaming nature of these training courses aboard floating schools has been demonstrated to be especially effective in the training of young people.

Four precedents of the UIM are outlined: an essential one that we call the constant fluctuating Portuguese; another one, the circumnavigation of the Spanish corvette Nautilus at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the third one that is not made sailing but on the coast and in a local dimension, and whose organizing principles are similar, the School Colleges of the University of Oviedo that start at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally the fourth precedent, the university cruises organized by the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Madrid, in 1933 across the Mediterranean, and a cruise across the Atlantic Ocean organized by the University of Barcelona, in the ship *Marqués de Comillas* the following year.

The UIM is inserted in a classic pedagogical tradition, which appears in Spain and Portugal in few occasions for the civil students, and is based on the itinerant experience at sea as a formative part of the educational process. The UIM formula has given a great performance in the form of activities of formation and diffusion of the geographical culture produced over time by different institutions related to the sea. The UIM is a school of modern day explorers, which is oriented to expand students' personal capabilities, allowing them to protect against foreseeable risk, bypass it, and be better able to evaluate the world in which we live. The UIM is a programme of intensive instruction which mixes disciplinary knowledge and values, and puts to action personal abilities not frequently utilized in a classroom. This experience all takes place within a community where everyone is actively learning, which manages great educational achievements in a few days, but with many hours of training.

The UIM offers supplementary training to students that is oriented to expanding their understanding of territorial culture with a practical intention, to work in interdisciplinary teams and with. The UIM is a time machine, because it continues a long institutional tradition of education and uses the NTM Creoula that, in addition to sailing in physical space, it also does so through temporal space. The UIM is a mooring link because it ties together the peninsular towns, helping them to know each other better and to recognize the Iberian civilization they share, of which the sea is an important component. The



Itinerant University of the Sea offers to young people from any university in the world "knowledge and adventure" and concretizes this motto through participation in action, turning them into "instruendos" through what is now called empowerment.

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