Human Capacity Building - UNESCO's Inspiration, Geosciences' Global Footprint

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C.M. Keane
S. Gaines

One of the cornerstones of UNESCO's mission is capacity building, and in the context of science, both the development of the human resources to promote sustainable science as well as to be a catalyst for economic and social development. This is a role that the geosciences have played, and will increasingly play into the future. Looking across the global landscape and trends of geoscience employment through to today has seen a fundamental shift from expat geoscientists from North America or Europe working across the world to industry focusing on developing local geoscience talent and utilizing that talent for both their technical and cultural acuity.

Today we see an even more mobile workforce, with a global talent pool shifting globally, often with young geoscientists from developing nations working overseas either in developed or developing nations. We are entering a world of the “journeyman” geoscientist where nationality is increasingly irrelevant, yet the economic bump by this upward mobility impacts their country of origin. This evolution is leading to interesting opportunities like UNESCO’s "Earth Science Education Initiative in Africa” and parallel efforts like the European Commission-funded International Raw Materials Observatory project. Discipline themes on the role of geoscience as a catalyst for sustainable development has prompted initiatives like IUGS's "Resourcing Future Generations.” These projects are focused on promoting new economic development in a responsible, sustainable framework to improve local conditions, through cultivating new geoscience talent and community awareness, all which feeds this emerging greater global community of geoscientists from a diversity of locales, backgrounds, and experiences, but all focused on the same high-level goal of a more sustainable world while building economic opportunity for all.

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