

Interactive comment on “Hydrological education and training needs in Sub-Saharan Africa: requirements, constraints and progress” by D. A. Hughes

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The author draws a distinction between the training requirements of hydrologists and those of water engineers and water resources managers. Whilst this is a valuable perspective, considering the former to be "science-based" and the latter not requires interrogation. Training in water resources management can in fact proceed from a science basis or from other bases, such as business management. The WaterNet regional Master in Integrated Water Resources Management, to which the author makes reference, is a science-based degree programme, with the curriculum in each module

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starting from the basis in physical or social science and progressing to the practical application and management aspects.

The paper seems to portray foreign funding of education as problematic. While it is crucial to secure greater funding for education and training in water from national governments, foreign funding makes a valuable contribution and should not be considered negative, especially in the SADC water sector where foreign funding tends to be allocated to priorities that have been agreed at regional level by the representatives of the national governments.

The author makes a strong case for increased training of hydrologists. Whilst this is not disputed, the paper seems to set up a "contest" between training for hydrological science and training for water resources management. This is unfortunate - not least because it is difficult to prioritise the training of the specialist in a region which is short of generalists. The need for more water resources managers and for greater IWRM capacity in southern Africa is very clear from studies such as the Global Water Partnership's study on the implementation of IWRM in southern and eastern Africa (GWP Eastern Africa and GWP Southern Africa, 2009), and has also been prioritised in the SADC 3rd Regional Strategic Action Plan (programme 4: research and education; SADC, 2011). The need for more high quality academic training and research in water science is clear, but so is the need for more water resources managers and engineers. In the context of a poverty-stricken region that aspires for sustainable development in the water sector, is not surprising that SADC has chosen to prioritise the latter.

The point is made by the author that networks of potential collaborators in research, training or practice are needed to meet the challenges ahead. At least in southern Africa, such networks exist, with the role of bringing together professionals, scientists and institutions being well established in networks such as WaterNet (for water resources management in SADC) and SACCNET (for climate change).

Note: this comment has focussed on southern Africa, rather than sub-Saharan Africa

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as a whole, but this is to a large extent true of the paper itself.

References:

GWP Eastern Africa and GWP Southern Africa (2009). Improving Africa's Water Security: Progress in Integrated Water Resources Management in Eastern and Southern Africa. The Global Water Partnership. http://www.gwptoolbox.org/images/stories/Docs/finrep_09_east_south_africa.pdf

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