OceanTeacher Global Academy: IOC's Capacity Development Tool

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Background and overall purpose

Capacity development is an essential tenet of IOC's mission: it enables all Member States to participate in and benefit from ocean research and services that are vital to sustainable development and human welfare on the planet. The OceanTeacher Global Academy Project (2015-2019) built on the legacy of decades of training delivered by IODE and its predecessor project, the OceanTeacher Academy. A main development of OTGA was the change in approach from a single Training Centre at the IOC Project Office for IODE in Oostende, Belgium, to a network of Regional Training Centres (RTCs) around the world in Colombia, China, India, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mozambique and Senegal. This new approach enabled the use of the technical capacity already existing in the regions (teachers, experts, facilities) as well as a relevant increase in the number of courses organized and people trained in/from the regions. Additionally, it made possible to deliver courses in languages other than English, namely Spanish, Portuguese and French. The use of ICT was promoted by enabling the possibility of invited experts to contribute to courses remotely and linking classrooms following the same course (using videoconference), as well as further use of the OceanTeacher e-Learning Platform. The OTGA project successfully delivered over 220 courses and instructed over 3,300 learners from 134 Member States. The OceanTeacher e-Learning Platform has currently more than to 6,600 registered users globally.

Figure 1 a) and b): a) Trainees at different RTCs during training courses ; b) network of Regional Training Centres (2015 - 2019)

OTGA Methodology and Approach

IOC's OceanTeacher Global Academy (OTGA) is a global network of Regional Training Centres delivering training on ocean sciences, services and marine and information data management (including marine biodiversity data and ocean best practices) using the OceanTeacher e-Learning Platform. The OceanTeacher e-Learning Platform enables the sharing of standardised, quality training contents in a coordinated framework, whilst allowing the use of different languages as well as local/regional case studies. It is a comprehensive web-based training platform that supports classroom training (face-to-face), blended training (combining classroom and distance learning), and online (distance) learning.

Courses cover a range of topics related to the IOC programs, contributing to the IOC Mandate and the implementation of the IOC Capacity Development Strategy, enabling equitable participation of all IOC Member States and IOC Programs. Furthermore, OTGA supports the organisation and hosts training courses for other marine sciences related international organisations and projects.

OceanTeacher Quality Management

In April 2018, the IOC Project Office for IODE, host of the OceanTeacher Global Academy, achieved ISO 29990 certification as a Learning services provider for non-formal education and training, and was accredited by the Belgian Accreditation Body (BELAC) having satisfied the requirements of the International Standard. This certification is a recognition of the quality of learning opportunities offered by OTGA, through the IOC Project Office for IODE, and the high standard of quality learning services delivered that can support all IOC programmes in providing specialized training.

OTGA: the way ahead

A new phase of OTGA was approved for funding late 2019. The new project, due to start mid 2020, will build on the legacy of OTGA and include new initiatives and challenges now in place, for example, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. New, ready to deliver course topics will be made available online. The network of Regional Training Centres will be joined by Specialized Training Centres that can deliver very specific training topics. Training topics will also include tools that can help Member States achieving the SDGs as well as emerging topics such as Ocean Acidification and Blue Carbon, *inter alia*. OTGA-2 will build partnerships with other national and international training organizations with the aim of (i) expanding global awareness of learning opportunities, (ii) increasing learning content, (iii) developing new cross-cutting learning services, and (iv) developing and implementing quality standards for delivery of learning services. OTGA-2 will foster collaborations beyond UNESCO/IOC to position itself as the training platform for ocean-related topics within the UN and beyond.