

## **The next generation's view of the future**

**Aernout Korevaar (Shell)**

The petroleum industry of the North Sea has changed rapidly during the last decade. Exploration in the heartlands is maturing, while exploration of the Atlantic margin has been somewhat disappointing. A further concern is the ageing of the geoscience community. Many renowned geoscientists and esteemed colleagues will be retiring in the coming decade, and this is reflected in the average age of the AAPG organization. The AAPG needs to reach out to today's students and young professionals in the geoscience community and attract them into our organisation, to ensure its future.

This talk summarizes the views and aspirations of a group of current geoscience students when they were asked to consider a future career in our industry. These views have been captured in two ways. Firstly, in the responses to a questionnaire which addressed their aspirations and expectations of a career in our industry. Responses were received from students of six European countries. Secondly, students were invited to enter an essay competition on the subject "What will be the role of young geoscience professionals (you!) in the North Sea Petroleum Industry in the next two decades?" The seven winners of this competition were awarded an expenses paid trip to this AAPG conference and are amongst the audience.

This approach has made students more aware of the AAPG and has also provided the AAPG with an insight into the type of issues that these students will consider before entering the job market of the North Sea Petroleum industry.

The members of this new generation stand at the doorstep of their careers. Their views and wishes show both similarities and clear differences with those of earlier generations. Although overseas postings are still of interest, for example, training opportunities seems to be at the forefront of their minds, and training is ranked higher than remuneration in this survey. Historically larger companies have been mainly responsible for the training of new professionals and these companies also previously offered a 'job for life'. In contrast, smaller companies generally put a larger emphasis on hiring experienced staff, and these companies experienced a faster job rotation. The current trend sees these larger companies being replaced by vigorous smaller companies that are attracted to the new opportunities offered by the region. What are the implications of this trend for the training prospects of new North Sea based professionals? Will these new companies take up the challenge of training this generation of new professionals? . Are students prepared to work abroad at junior levels to gain the training and experience they need at the early stages of their careers?

This analysis has confirmed that current students are very open to overseas job opportunities, either directly after their studies or later on in their career. They want control over the choice of overseas location, however, and will be influenced as much by the views of relatives and global media as the expectations of their employer. The respondees also expect issues such as the career aspirations of partners to be taken into consideration, before an overseas posting is accepted. The next generation is globally oriented, well informed and have a range of transferable skills that do not predicate a career in our industry. These are the people who will inherit the legacy of those currently active in the North Sea petroleum industry. All companies and governments with an interest in the future prosperity of this region need to address the issue of the recruitment, training and retention of the next generation of geoscience and engineering professionals to safeguard the future of this important industry.