

between intake and output, with serious implications for replenishing the professoriate with requisite numbers and appropriate levels of training.

CONCLUSION

Without a vibrant system of postgraduate training and viable strategies to support students for careers in academia, it will be nearly impossible to cultivate the next generation of academics. To regenerate academe, African tertiary institutions will not only have to improve the relative numbers, proportion, distribution, and quality of postgraduate students who enter but also ensure that these same characteristics are reflected in postgraduate output. Low enrollment, graduation, and time-to-completion rates, as well as high dropout rates in some programs, do not augur well for developing an adequate pool of high-quality future academics. Concerted efforts are needed to design and implement creative and complementary funding models, forward-looking curricula, and strategies for growing future academics. Increasing the low proportion of females in academe, for example, has to start with efforts at improving their numbers in postgraduate programs. Institutions' sensitivity and responsiveness to work-life circumstances and career development are particularly helpful in attracting and retaining the next generation of academics for the continent. ■

Burundi: Challenges and Conflicts

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With a population of almost 9 million people, Burundi is an East Central African nation, equivalent in size to Massachusetts. Located below Rwanda and on the shore of Lake Tanganyika in the Great Rift Valley, Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world; the annual per capita income is US\$138. More than half the national budget comes from external grants and loans from developed countries and international funds.

Although Burundi gained independence from Belgium in 1961, ethnic tension—actively promoted during colonization—has retarded the nation's development through the past two decades. Like its neighbor Rwanda, Burundi has just emerged from a 12-year civil war between its two major ethnic groups, the Hutu (85%) and the Tutsi (14%). Historically, the Tutsi have maintained the upper hand in the society, but a new constitution adopted in 2005 has secured more equitable political representation. A cease-fire was signed in 2006 by Hutu

rebels, but tension still rules social relations in this bilingual (Kirundi and French) country.

THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

Burundi's educational system reflects not only its colonial and war-torn past but also its precarious and meager national fiscal situation. About 60 percent of the population is literate. The government provides noncompulsory primary education for children aged 7 to 12 years, but only 36 percent complete primary education. Secondary enrollments hover around 14 percent with most high schools being concentrated in Bujumbura, the capital. Education receives 18 percent of the national budget, half of which is shared by secondary and tertiary education.

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Enrollment in higher education institutions is extremely low; 1 percent of the 18- to 22-year-olds attend one of the four universities. Located in Bujumbura, the state-supported University of Burundi enrolls approximately 4,000 students. Three private universities were established within the last decade and have ties to religious organizations. Two are located in Bujumbura—Université Lumière de Bujumbura and Université d'Espoir—and both enroll about 2,000 students; the third, Université de Ngozi, resides in a rural town about three hours away. Located also in Bujumbura are a technical institute and the Supérieur Normale Institut.

ACADEMIC LIFE

The continuing ethnic volatility and the meager financial status of the nation negatively affect the resources of the public university but also plague the new private institutions. The government allocation primarily supports professorial salaries, which are scaled by rank. Thus, limited resources for capital expenditures result in spartan buildings, inadequate library resources, and almost nonexistent instructional technology. Inadequate Internet access and e-mail system drive faculty and students to employ Yahoo and Gmail accounts. Although professors may retrieve some online resources on campus, students must go to cybercafés to access the Internet.

With no advanced degrees offered in the country, students must earn their doctorates in Europe or the United States. A pipeline for doctoral study runs from Burundi to several Belgian universities. However, Belgian universities have instituted a new strategy to evade immigration problems. Referred to as the "sandwich system," doctoral students study in Belgium for three months, collecting scholarly information, and are compelled to return to Burundi for the rest of the year. With limited library and Internet resources in Burundi, students are disadvantaged in their dissertation research.

The universities follow the traditional Belgian system of professorial rank: *chargé de cours* (instructor), *professeur associé* (associate professor), and *professeur ordinaire* (full professor). Without adequate resources, few instructors engage in research and are thereby trapped in the lower ranks. Insufficient salaries translate into professors cobbling a living wage by lecturing at multiple institutions and consulting when possible. In addition to the brain drain that exists, the limited scholarly resources at the university results in what I would call the “patriot penalty”: after earning their doctorate many who return are unable to sustain their careers at even a modicum of a professional level. A few professors are active scholars and some are addressing national issues, from biochemistry or from law. The *professeur ordinaire* who holds the UNESCO chair at the University of Burundi (and thus has external funding) is launching the *first* national research study. With modernization has come the collapse of traditional values, and sexual violence against women appears to be on the rise; this professor's large-scale project is to document and

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address this escalating problem. Several professors from both the national and the two private universities in Bujumbura feel that professorial currency is degrading as time goes on.

Limited library resources and inadequate Internet connection at the universities preclude students from receiving state-of-the-art education. Professionals believe that students are often pushed only to utilize base cognitive skills even within their advanced (2nd-cycle) study. The curriculum replicates the traditional pre-Bologna Declaration European university degree structure and disciplinary areas, but the content and the cognitive processes emphasized may not do so. Conversations are occurring at the University of Burundi to adopt the BA- and MA-degree structure to replace 1st- and 2nd-cycle programs, but faculties appear to be resisting the effort. Not hampered by colonial tradition, the private universities offer nontraditional and vocational areas of study to students and thus provide an alternative. Unfortunately, the employment outlook for graduates is varied. Students who belong to the wrong ethnic group worry that their education will not lead to appropriate employment at graduation. Regardless of the new constitution, the country still operates via ethnic nepotism.

SIGNS OF HOPE

Several lights appear to be gaining wattage within and as a result of the educational system. First, the universities, particularly the private institutions, are actively pursuing relationships of various types with universities in the United States, Europe, and Canada. The Université Lumière de Bujumbura rector has established agreements with six higher education institutions outside Africa. A relationship with a Canadian university has broadened the curriculum in commerce. Little has come from other cooperative agreements, but the rector continues to pursue myriad avenues to help his institution. The same is true for the University of Ngozi. A technical institute in Spain has sent a team of faculty members and students with the necessary equipment to wire electronically the rural university for the Internet and to train Ngozi students and personnel to maintain and repair the system. Thus, one institution in the country is gaining stable access to the wider world.

A grassroots association has been established by a 1st-cycle student at the Université Lumière de Bujumbura (the equivalent of a first-year student) in a village just outside Bujumbura. This team of energetic young university students, recent graduates, and a professor-adviser are educating villagers on health and nutrition issues, providing counseling about and testing for HIV-AIDs, and are planning a secondary school to provide technical education. Having secured a substantial number of books for a library at their school, they are actively seeking funds to transport the shipment from the United States to Bujumbura.

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The ethnic wars, followed by continuing tension and political power struggles, coupled reportedly with a lack of governmental vision, have inhibited the significant gains realized by Burundi after independence. Regardless of the shortcomings of the resources at the universities, administrators are actively seeking assistance to modernize their infrastructure and curricular offerings. As both ethnic groups increasingly seek advanced education, the potential for new approaches to existing national issues and to social harmony expands. Reconciliation may come from the bottom up rather than from political leadership or the dozens of external nongovernmental organizations that seem primarily focused on relief. ■