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Findings

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Cameroon

Higher Education Technical Training Project

The project development objective was to introduce, develop, and test a new and improved model of public higher technical education in Cameroon in the *Institut Universitaire Technologique* (*IUT*) Douala. If successful, the model could then be used as a basis for reforming other higher education institutions in Cameroon.

The project's rationale was to contribute to the reform of the Cameroon University system, which had been preparing students with full degree courses, but with only limited links to the needs of the labor markets. The IUT Douala was among the most advanced in this process, and IDA believed that it could serve as a reference for other institutions.

The project had three components: (a) strengthen three existing disciplines by introducing new options requested by local industries and developing an additional discipline requested by the private sector ($1.2 m); (b) strengthen existing disciplines and respond to the demands of local enterprises ($2.5 m); and (c) ensure the development and sustainability of institutional development, evaluation and follow up, and the sustainability of policy initiatives ($1.4m).

Impact on the ground

The project had defined eight indicators to evaluate the achievement of the development objective in establishing a new model for technical higher education. The indicators provided a measure of the involvement of the private sector and of the impact on students (participation in the development of new curriculum and selection of equipment, internships and recruitment of students, in-service training). Except for two indicators, which were dependent on the granting of full financial autonomy, all other indicators were fully met.

Impact by component follows:

The "Good Practice Infobrief" series is edited by Lawrence Mastri, AFTRL, World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington D.C., 20433. Tel. (202) 473-3308; e-mail: lmastri@worldbank.org

Component 1: Strengthening of existing disciplines (US$ 1.36 million)

The implementation of this first component provided the basis for the development of procedures for collaboration between the IUT Douala and the private sector to work on the identification of needs, their translation into curriculum, and the choice of equipment. It also gave the participating enterprises a better understanding of the challenges of curriculum design and of the challenge to ensure a continued relevance.

The construction and/or refurbishing of buildings for teaching space and laboratories were completed. The work with private enterprises to modernize the existing curricula (based on the French IUT system curriculum) and introduce new training options was done thoroughly. The four existing programs introduced new streams that accounted for the needs of the private sector. New and complementary equipment was procured according to these new streams.

Component 2: New disciplines and system coherence (US$ 2.75 million)

Most procurement and construction activities were completed before the revised closing date. Three new curricula were selected for development with the approval of enterprises: (a) electrical engineering and industrial computing, (b) thermal engineering and energy, and (c) mechanical engineering and productivity.

Component 3: Institutional development, evaluation and follow up, and sustainability of policy initiatives (US$ 1.62 million)

Activities which had been planned under the component were, for the most part, implemented. Every student benefits from an internship program composed of two on-the-job training periods in a company, for a total of six months during his/her school years. In some cases students contributed to the solving of technical problems faced by enterprises.

Preliminary results of a follow-up survey showed that 211 of 282 graduates were employed (75%). Courses in small-scale enterprise creation were systematically added to the program for students interested in starting their own trade. Within the framework of the course, the candidates prepared business plans which could be used as “pre-investment studies” planned by the project.

Seminars were regularly organized to review and discuss institutional and development issues.

Study tours in India and Tunisia were instrumental in providing useful examples of higher education reforms in other countries and in helping participating key stakeholders to better recognize the complexity of the reform process.

Lessons learned

Project design and management

- Institutional reform can be more efficient when based on (a) a broad institutional reform process that involves key stakeholders and (b) an experimental reform process in one of the system institutions that serves as a pilot.
- The development of a pilot in an institution requires an assessment of the organizational and managerial capacity of the institution to carry out the experiment.
- During project implementation, it is crucial to identify the key success factors needed to achieve the development objective.
- Well defined qualitative indicators are crucial to help pilot the implementation process.

Sector technical lessons

- Reform in francophone tertiary education systems can be more effective if it uses successful reforms already carried out in the French system.
- Development of a cooperative process with the private sector for higher education institutions is more effective when built around a core group of enterprises motivated to work with the institution and understand the objectives.
- Developing a cooperative relationship with the private sector takes time. The private sector needs to be convinced that real and sustainable benefits can be gained from this cooperation.
- Research, especially when done as technical support to enterprises, can (a) provide a better understanding of the technological needs of enterprises, (b) earn self-generated resources for the institution, (c) help improve the productivity of enterprises, and (d) improve the image of the institution with the private sector.
- Study tours by key stakeholders to countries which have undergone a similar process helps gain support for the reform and build momentum.

This *Infobrief* is based on **Implementation Completion Report No. 25659**, from which more detailed information can be obtained.