Mozambique: Improving the Quality of University Graduates

In 1990, Mozambique had fewer than 3,000 university-trained persons. Less than 15 percent of civil service personnel had a university degree, and more than a third of civil servants had less than seven years of primary education. Highly trained and professionally experienced Mozambicans tended to gravitate towards the private sector. Consequently, the planning and management of both public and private sector activities were adversely impacted. This Infobrief focuses on the expansion in the quantity and improvement in the quality of university graduates, a specific objective of the World Bank-assisted Capacity Building: Human Resources Development project which was implemented between 1993 and 2001.

Impact on the ground

- The number of students graduating annually from UEM has increased five times during project implementation (1994-2001), from 148 in 1994 to 695 in 2000.
- The percentage of graduates who complete all degree requirements within the official prescribed time has increased from 5 percent in 1997 to 15 percent in 2000.
- The overall average examination pass rate has improved from 39 percent in 1994 to 53 percent in 2000.
- Under the project, 4,350 book titles were imported and 159 textbook titles were produced locally.
- While the targeted number of books distributed to each student was five, survey questionnaires to a sample of economics and engineering students found that each student had 7–10 books.
- Critical capacity building needs in the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) were addressed through a strategy based on linking with selected universities outside the country.
- Libraries and reading space serving the faculties of agriculture, architecture, economics, veterinary science and medicine were expanded. Overall, about 50 percent of the university infrastructure was rehabilitated as planned.
- Training on information technology was organized for concerned departmental staff; an Internet café was established on a cost-recovery basis for students.
- One hundred and eighty nine new staff apartments were constructed and 108 rehabilitated; this has helped to attract and retain skilled academic and administrative staff.
• A total of 128 fellowships (exceeding the target threefold) for the professional training of academic and administrative staff were granted. Of these, 41 were for Ph.D programs, 51 for a master’s degree, 24 for Licenciatura (honors degree) and 12 Bachelor’s degrees. Of this total, 97 staff members have completed their studies and returned to UEM. As a result, the proportion of UEM’s Mozambican teaching staff with graduate degrees has increased from 17 percent in 1994 to 46 percent (the target was 32 percent).

• Six student residences were rehabilitated resulting in improved accommodation for 717 students. The number of students living on-campus increased by 53 percent from 696 in 1994 to 1,063 in 2001; the number of female students increased 32 percent from 107 to 141. A significant advance was the expansion of space for female students and students coming from the provinces.

• Significant capacity has been built in the area of administration, management and financial management. Over 24 different courses (project management, procurement courses, etc.) were attended by 1,883 participants, including academic and administrative staff.

• A new financial management plan was implemented. With the assistance of an external consulting firm, new financial procedures, training of staff, and decentralized book-keeping were put in place.

• An Internal Audit Office was created, and regular internal audits were instituted for both donor and internally generated funds. Regular external audits were also introduced. As a result, in 2000 UEM was able to increase its financial autonomy with respect to the Ministry of Planning and Finance, thus moving to a quarterly budget allocation.

Lessons learned
• Coordination and authorizations through an Interministerial Committee are difficult to manage and often lead to delays. Such committees should have oversight for overall progress valuation, strategic directions and policy guidance.
• To ensure effective learning outcomes and adequate ownership, project activities should be implemented through ministry structures, not through an external Project Implementation Unit.
• The Bank needs to be flexible to accommodate changes in project design and allocation of funds as the social and economic contexts of a country could change quite rapidly.
• Forward planning, continuous training in Bank procedures, and high-quality procurement processing and cash flow management are critical to effective implementation.
• Trust and insights are facilitated when there is clear ownership by the implementing team and long-term continuity in the Bank team.
• Sufficient detail needs to be put into the design work regarding rehabilitation, through adequate elaboration of the terms of reference of consulting engineers in order to avoid unnecessary addenda during implementation.
• To promote capacity building within institutions, project activities should not limit themselves to staff development, such as training, but look at the broader issues of staff retention and non-salary incentives.

This Infobrief has been largely excerpted from Implementation Completion Report No. 23553. For more information, e-mail Snellemann@worldban.org, who was the Task Team Leader.