

Research Application Summary

**Strategy for alignment to the LMD system in selected francophone universities  
of Africa**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed at i) identifying the challenges faced by selected francophone universities of Africa, under the EU-ACP EDULINK II ADECEA project, in aligning post-graduate programmes to the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) system, and ii) developing a strategy for aligning the systems used by these universities to the LMD system. Consultations and key informant interviews were used to collect the necessary information from key stakeholders (university staff, research renters, local and, international NGOs, governors, ministers, local and national legislators, religious leaders and students) among others in Burundi, D.R Congo and Madagascar. Key challenges to the implementation of the LMD system included limited political commitment to higher education; limited scientific and technological research; limited capacity (human, financial and infrastructural) to train the rapidly growing number of students; low staffing; and insufficient resources allocated to education and their unequal distribution between wages, pedagogy, research and investment. In addition, there are shortcomings in university governance, leadership and communication within the higher educational institutions (HEIs). Successful LMD implementation in the targeted universities should entail: enhanced and strengthened organizational and institutional capacities of the universities, review and update of existing curricula development of course modules and their content, and creation and strengthening partnerships between the targeted universities and those with comparative advantage.

**Key words:** Burundi, DR Congo, higher education, Licence-Master-Doctorate, Madagascar

## Résumé

Cette étude visait à i) identifier les difficultés que rencontrent les universités francophones sélectionnées sous le projet EU-ACPEDULINK II ADECEA à harmoniser leurs programmes de troisième cycle avec le système de Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) et ii) développer une stratégie d'harmonisation des systèmes utilisés par ces universités avec le système LMD. Des consultations et interviews d'informateurs clés ont été conduits pour collecter l'information nécessaire au près des acteurs clés (personnel universitaire, chercheurs, ONGs locale et internationale, gouverneurs, ministres, législateurs local et international, autorités religieuses et étudiants) entre autres au Burundi, en RDC et au Madagascar. Les défis majeurs liés à la mise en œuvre du système LMD sont entre autres, le faible engagement politique dans l'enseignement supérieur, la recherche scientifique et technologique limitée, le manque de capacité (humaine, financière, infrastructurelle) à former le nombre croissant d'étudiants, l'insuffisance de personnel, l'insuffisance des ressources allouées à l'éducation et leur distribution inégale entre salaires, pédagogie, recherche et investissement. Par ailleurs, il y a des lacunes dans la gouvernance universitaire, le leadership et la communication, au sein des institutions d'enseignement supérieur. La réussite de la mise en œuvre du LMD dans les universités ciblées doit passer par l'amélioration et le renforcement organisationnel et institutionnel des capacités des universités, l'examen et l'actualisation des curricula de modules de cours existants et leur contenu, puis la création et le renforcement de partenariats entre les universités ciblées et d'autres ayant un avantage comparatif.

Mots clés : Burundi, RD Congo, Enseignement supérieur, Licence-Master-Doctorat, Madagascar

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## Background

Burundi, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) are three African countries emerging from conflicts and are in dire need of revitalizing their agricultural sector so as to ensure food and nutrition security, improve livelihoods of their people and promote economic growth, as elucidated in the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). In an attempt to address the aforementioned challenges, four African universities in partnership with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) and two European universities received funding from EU-ACP to establish and pilot a Postgraduate training Program in these three Post-conflict countries of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa with the overall aim of strengthening Agricultural training capacity in three post-conflict countries, and assist them develop quality higher education that is relevant to the needs of their markets. Currently, universities in the three countries employ the 5-3-4 Licence (5 years undergraduate training), Master (3 years) Doctorate (4-6 years) training system. This system needs to be adapted and aligned with the new 3-2-3 LMD system of 3 (6 semesters)-2 (4 semesters) -3 years (6 semesters) to meet the international standards and facilitate integration of the trained professionals at regional (Eastern, Western and Southern Africa) and international levels, especially Europe which has adapted the 3-2-3 LMD system. Capacity building for the three countries is envisaged through the development of demand driven and LMD aligned post graduate

programs to address specifically agriculture and food and nutrition security issues. This paper reviews the progress in establishing the LMD system in Burundi, DR Congo and Madagascar.

## **Literature review**

Like elsewhere worldwide, education in Africa is evolving and in order to keep pace with the general evolution of society and changing learning needs, the education system needs to undergo regular adjustment. At university level, this will imply flexibility in the organization of the courses so as to adapt students to the changing requirement within the world of work. The section below briefly describes the reforms in educational systems of the three countries, with special focus on Higher Education Institution (HEI) level.

## **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

**History of reforms in educational system of DRC.** In DRC, higher education training started in 1954 with the creation of University of Kinshasa which was training Christian elites. In 1956, University of Lubumbashi was created as a government university training nationals from the three former Belgian colonies (DRC, Rwanda and Burundi) while in 1963, the first protestant university was created in Kisangani (Kapangala, 2009). The three Universities were taken over by the State in 1969 and then fused with other HEIs into “Université Nationale du Zaïre (National University of Zaire). In the 70s, several other higher education institutions were established in different regions of the country including teacher training colleges and developmental institutions. In 1981, reforms were undertaken and each university became autonomous. Then in 1991, the ‘Conférence Nationale Souveraine’ recommended a review of the educational system in DRC (Sabakinu and Mpeye, 1994). However, this review yielded insignificant changes in the then existing programmes (Matangila, 2003). From 1997 to date, the number of universities, both public and private, has increased tremendously. A committee to review the educational system was formed in 1995. This committee made key recommendations including a reform of training programs which were initiated in 1999, finalized and published in 2004.

**LMD reforms in DRC.** In 2010, the Government of DRC recognized the transition to LMD as a critical step towards standardization of the education system (WTO, 2010). In its DRC strategy 2020, the adoption of the LMD system is based on four pillars: curriculum reform, modernization of equipment, enhanced human capacity and structural and legal reforms. The Strategy 2020 is a joint initiative between the ‘Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et Universitaire (MINESU) and ‘Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement Durable (MEDD) aimed at improving tertiary education and management of renewable natural resources. Under this strategy, eight institutions have been selected and involve three Universities and three higher education institutions to pilot the LMD reforms. Five programmes are currently being experimented upon in the strategy including: “Licence recherche”, ‘Licence Professionnelle et Master recherche en Aménagement des écosystèmes’, and ‘Master recherche en Conservation de la biodiversité et Master Professionnel en Agroforesterie’.

## Burundi

**History of reforms in educational system of Burundi.** University of Burundi was founded in 1960 and until recently, was the only university in the country. Currently, the country has several private and public Universities. The private universities include: Université de Ngozi that started in 1999; Université Martin Luther King established in 2003; the Collège Universitaire de Bujumbura which was created in 1998 ; Université Espoir d’Afrique which was created in Nairobi in 2000 and transferred to Bujumbura in 2004 ; Université Lumière de Bujumbura started in 2000; l’université du Lac Tanganyika started in 2000; l’université des Grands Lacs commenced in 2000 ; and l’université de Mwaro started in 2001. The public Universities include Université du Burundi (UB), Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS), Institut Supérieur des Cadres Militaires (ISCAM), Institut National de Santé Publique (INSP) and Institut Supérieur de Police (ISP). By the end of the year 2015, Burundi had a total of about 35 private universities and five public higher education institutions

**LMD reforms in Burundi.** The LMD system in Burundi is known as BMB (Baccalaureat-Master and Doctorat). The BMD reforms in Burundi started in 2012 (Nijimbere, 2015) and has been implemented for two years at University of Burundi. After several years of preparation, Burundi has now formally started the BMD (equivalent to the LMD: bachelor, master and doctorate) system consisting of three years at the bachelor level, followed by two years at the master level and then three years at the doctorate level. This is a result of the Government of Burundi’s determination to join other sub-Saharan Africa francophone countries in the implementation of the BMD system modeled following the European Union’s LMD (licence, master et doctorat) system.

In January 2008, the Government of Burundi launched the National Commission of Higher Education (Commission Nationale de l’Enseignement Supérieur) to oversee the implementation of all reforms leading to the new BMD system. On December 30, 2011, a law concerning the reorganization of the higher education system in Burundi was signed. Several key stakeholder sensitization workshops were organized in the country. The implementation of the new BMD started during the academic year 2011-2012 in public higher education institutions and is currently adopted by almost all private universities. The first laureates of the BMD system have been awarded their degrees at Ecole Nationale d’Administration and Ecole Normale Supérieure. By the end of the year 2016, the first laureates of the BMD system will finish their programmes and will be awarded their bachelor degrees across eleven faculties and institutes of the University of Burundi.

The Government of Burundi has also made significant progress in putting in place a legal framework for postgraduate training. On January 12, 2015 the Presidential decree No 100/05 on the organization of the first and second cycle of higher education in Burundi was signed into law. This Presidential decree lays the foundation for the legal framework regarding the bachelor and the master level training programmes. Furthermore, the Presidential decree No 100/06 of January 12, 2015 on the organization of the doctoral training in Burundi was also signed into law. A decree on the equivalence of academic degree between the old system (law No 1/014 of July 1999) and BMD/LMD system was signed on 18 March, 2015

(Presidential decree No 100/65). This was instrumental in alleviating the fears of students under the BMD system and it also successfully put an end to repeated student strikes protesting the new education system.

## **Madagascar**

**History of reforms in educational system of Madagascar.** Historically, formal education in Madagascar started in the 1820s with the British missionaries and later by the French colonial administrators who created the first regional vocational schools, the Ecole Le Myre de Villers and the Medical School of Befelatanana in Antananarivo. Higher education started much later around 1950s with independent institutes for higher studies in law, letters, sciences and technology created which were later merged into the Fondation Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieur Charles de Gaulle (National Foundation for Higher Education – FNES). The Institute of Advanced Studies was created in 1955 in Antananarivo which quickly established itself as the main centre for higher education of the giant island of Africa. It was renamed the University of Madagascar in 1961. Other universities within Madagascar include University of Fianarantsoa, University of Mahajanga, University of Toamasina, and University of Toliara.

**LMD reforms in Madagascar.** A major reform of the education system was initiated through the Ministry of Education and the “groupe de réflexion (working group)” appointed to work on an overall strategy for the transformation of post-secondary education in 2007 (Hayward and Rasoanampoizina, 2007). The group observed that the university workforce in several faculties lacked PhD holders or their equivalent (36% of them) with a few staff involved in research or publishing. Academic staff were relatively of advanced age yet recruitment had been frozen for more than a decade. The average age of academic staff was 56 years for several faculties (Hayward and Rasoanampoizina, 2007). Reforms were however effected in 2014. Several departments in the University of Antananarivo have now converted their “Diplôme d’Etudes Approfondies or DEA” into “Master of Science or MSc”. At ESSA, the programmes have been aligned to the LMD system.

## **Methodology**

A multi-stage approach was used to achieve the aforementioned objectives of this study. Stage 1: desk review and scoping studies in the three countries; 2) individual consultations with key stakeholders (University staff, Research Centres, Local and, International NGOs, Governors, Ministers, Local and national legislators, religious leaders and students); 3) national stakeholder consultations; 4) Regional and international consultations; 5) Experience sharing/ learning from francophone countries already using the LMD system; and 6) Expert opinions. Scoping studies were conducted at the University of Burundi, Catholic University of Bukavu and University of Antananarivo in the periods December 2013, January 2014 and May 2014, respectively. During these studies, the status of undergraduate programmes, staff and infrastructural capacity and postgraduate training in the three target universities were validated through a participatory approach. It also provided stakeholders’ perspectives on the areas

for priority program development and identified key stakeholders that could play a vital role in supporting the training of students selected to undertake MSc training.

National stakeholder meetings were organized from April to May 2014 in the three countries. These meetings were attended by lecturers, students, University administrators, central and local government officials. During these meetings, merits and demerits of the LMD and existing higher education systems were articulated and efforts were made to understand the law in line with the implementation of the LMD system. Consensus on adoption of LMD system was generated and recommendations formulated for the smooth implementation of the system. Regional and international stakeholder meetings were organized in Maputo (Mozambique) in July 2014 and Windhoek (Namibia) in August 2015. These meetings were attended by Rectors, Deans, staff and students from the RUFORUM network, EU-ACP EDULINK project coordinators and representatives from regional and sub-regional Organizations (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), and Coordinating Centre for Agricultural Research for Development in Southern Africa (CCARDESA)). Reports and experiences from the different countries were shared. Practical experiences from University of Abomey Calavi, Benin in the implementation of the LMD was also shared. Consensus was built on the best way to align the current higher education systems in the three countries to LMD.

## **Key results**

**Key challenges facing the HEIs.** Policies fostering the adoption of the LMD as a new education system have been put in place in the three countries. The enforcement of the policy and stakeholders perception about the LMD system varies from one country to another. In Burundi, the LMD system triggered student strikes while it was timidly received in DR Congo. However, it was easily embraced in Madagascar. Several challenges have been associated with implementation of the LMD system in the three HEIs namely:

- i. Limited political commitment to higher education, scientific and technological research;
- ii. Limited financial capacity to run the LMD system to meet the rapidly growing number of students. The enrolment is not matched by public funding and other social priorities as well as the limited investment in recurrent and capital budget;
- iii. Insufficient infrastructure, dilapidated buildings and laboratories and limited funds for expansion or even maintenance;
- iv. Very low professor to student ratios. Most of the Professors are old and about to retire. The faculties are ageing with cumbersome recruitment procedures due to poor salaries
- v. Shortcomings in the university governance coupled with a heavy administrative load;
- vi. Shortcomings in leadership and communication within the educational systems;
- vii. Outdated curricula especially since revisions made rarely involve external stakeholders; and
- viii. Poor linkages with the industry and the world of work hindering practical training and / or industrial attachment



**Strategies for successful LMD implementation.** Successful implementation of the LMD system in the three HEIs/countries, and particularly in the three universities include the following:

- (i) Strategic planning involving internal and external stakeholders using a bottom up approach to ensure HEIs produce graduates relevant to national development and private sector needs.
- (ii) Increased and equitable access and visibility of HEIs in line with institutional capacity is vital for success of the LMD system.
- (iii) Strong partnership between and among HEIs running the LMD system and their communities should be created and strengthened. Collaboration and networking would ensure institutional and regional sharing of resources, joint post graduate programs and also enhanced EU-ACP research partnerships.
- (iv) Organizational and institutional capacities of the universities and in particular the targeted faculties should be enhanced and strengthened. Universities should put in place measures to sustainably run the LMD system with limited government support. This will require these institutions to i) generate sufficient resources, ii) improve their visibility, ii) improve their management, (iii) strengthen both internal and external communication, iv) train and/or retool staff and v) equip the laboratories and libraries, and develop a retention strategy for staff.
- (v) Funding opportunities for HEIs should be facilitated through student loans/ scholarships for the needy, cost recovery and or subsidized tuition fees involving all stakeholders.
- (vi) Under teaching and learning, the existing curricula, course modules and their content should be reviewed and updated. In doing so, the reviews should involve all stakeholders, usage of a student centered approach and pedagogical training for staff.
- (vii) Information and communication technologies (ICT) should be promoted in all HEIs and this would require strengthening internet services and good bandwidth on campuses and recourse to support blended learning.
- (viii) Management Information Systems (MIS) set up would ensure proper keeping of institutional data, and linking different departments for better planning with regards to the LMD system.

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