Report No. PID6032

Project Name: Cameroon-Higher Education Technical Training Project (IUT-Douala)--LIL

Region: Africa

Sector: Higher Education

Project ID: CMPE55684

Borrower: Republic of Cameroon

Implementing Agency: Institut Universitaire de Technologie University of Douala

Contact: Dr. Awono Onana, Director

Tel/Fax (237) 40-24-82

Date PID Prepared: February 13, 1998

Project Appraisal: March 2, 1998

Projected Board Date: May 15, 1998

Background

1. Country and Sector Background

In response to the economic crisis that had gripped the country since 1987, in 1993 government embarked on a major program of higher education reform. All scholarships for studies inside the country, student cafeteria and transport services (which had been taking 46% of higher education budgets) were abolished and replaced with an annual fee of 50,000 CFAF. A semester and credit system was introduced, along with a third (summer) semester thus helping reduce dropout rates. These fee and student flow measures resulted in a reduction in student enrollments from 52,000 students before the reforms to 40,000 after. For effective instruction it was still necessary to reduce further the number of students in the university of Yaoundé, and thus the reforms also aimed to decongest enrollments and programs by upgrading five existing higher education institutions to independent universities, and three small Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (IUT) were created in each of three universities including the IUT Douala. Unfortunately these reforms were incidentally accompanied by a collapse in the employment market, and a blanket reduction in civil service (including university) salaries, which meant that they really had no chance to succeed. It has only been a few small parts of the university system that have managed to take full advantage of the reforms and develop really appropriate programs.

Objectives

The LIL project’s overall objective is to take a number of important innovations that are being developed in the IUT Douala to scale, to clearly evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these innovations, and to eventually plan for wider scale implementation.
in other higher education institutions those innovations which have the greatest impact on employment and private sector development. The main sub-objectives that are being tested include the following:

-- to increase the enrollment of students only to a level that can be taught efficiently;
-- to lengthen the academic year from nine to ten months;
-- to involve the private sector in all stages in the design and execution of high quality, diploma-based training programs;
-- to ensure that all students participate in internships in local enterprises each year during each year of their studies;
-- to ensure that the majority of graduating students find employment in the months that follow their graduation;
-- to raise a significant proportion of the operating costs needed to ensure quality instruction;
-- to train students to start their own enterprises;
-- to develop a project disbursement system not involving the Caisse Autonome d’Amortissement (CAA).

Description

The project will be composed of three components: (i) support to existing disciplines; (ii) new disciplines and system coherence; and (iii) institutional development and sustainability of policy initiatives. Under each of the components there will be construction activities, purchase of teaching equipment, training of staff, technical assistance, and other miscellaneous activities.

Financing

The project, which is a 3-year LIL (Leaning Innovative Lending) project for only $5 million, will be fully financed by IDA. The Government will invest about $1 million, and supplemental resources of about $1 million will be generated directly by the IUT itself.

Implementation

During this 3-year project, full responsibility for implementation will rest with the Director of the Institut universitaire de technologie (IUT) in Douala. He will serve as project director, aided by a management expert provided by the French cooperation. The CAA is normally mandated to manage all special accounts and to transmit all withdrawal applications to Washington. However, in this project, a new decentralized system of financial management will be tried as the IUT is more than 300 km from the CAA in Yaounde. The IUT will open a special account in an approved Bank in Douala and will be responsible for submitting its withdrawal requests directly to Washington. All expenses will be made according to a rolling three month plan of operations and the procurement procedures outlined in the credit agreement. The rolling plan of operations will be approved and its implementation monitored by a project implementation commission, chaired by a high level appointee of MINESUP, with representatives from the University of Douala, the Ministry of Public Investment, and some surrounding industries which will meet four times a year in Douala.
Director of the IUT has already had experience in managing significant donor funds and has qualified accounting staff among his administrative personnel. These staff will be trained in the use of a standard project management and accounting computer program. Project accounts will be audited twice a year during the life of the project.

The management of the construction and rehabilitation activities will be given to a local architectural and engineering partnership with experience in the design and implementation of tertiary or higher technical education facilities, selected on the basis of competitive bidding.

Sustainability

The Technical Institute designed by the project will incorporate certain principles which will ensure its viability: providing opportunities for staff to gain tenure; limiting student intake and enrollment; building up long-term contracts with private sector enterprises; and ensuring that the majority of recurrent resources needed for all key programs are raised internally. The three largest risks to potential sustainability are a further economic decline which would weaken the industrial base of the IUT, insufficient funds to replace equipment as it becomes obsolescent, and the replacement of the current director with someone who does not share the same vision and leadership characteristics as he.

Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector

The first three Bank education projects all concentrated on constructing and equipping earmarked institutions. All suffered considerable cost overruns, but disbursed 100% of credit/loan proceeds (the first was even allocated an additional credit), and thus tended to finance under 60% of actual expenditures. All three projects took about 70% longer to implement than the appraisal estimates. Procedures were over complex, and implementation capacity generally weak.

The fourth education project was an unmitigated disaster, with 71% of loan proceeds undisbursed, and none of the objectives achieved. Four major lessons can be drawn from the experience of this project. First, counterpart fund requirements were high, and even when reduced through a credit amendment, were not made available in the amounts and according to the schedule agreed upon. Second, three ministries were involved in project implementation with no common policy framework and no effective coordination mechanisms. Third, there was inefficient management, especially in administration and accounting. Finally, the demand for technical training did not correspond to the demand for trained workers. There was insufficient involvement of employers and economic operators in the preparation and implementation of vocational training activities.

The Higher Education Project would require no specific counterpart fund allocations other than taxes and duties (but would
necessitate the recruitment and payment by government of the required number of staff to operate the programs effectively); would involve only one institution in one ministry; would have a decentralized accounting system in place prior to implementation; and would give top priority to the establishment of close relationships with private sector enterprises in the area surrounding the institution.

Poverty Category

This project is not a poverty targeted project.

Environmental Aspects

This is a category C project. The only new buildings to be constructed will be completed on sites already developed within the boundaries of the City of Douala.

Program Objectives Categories

The project is a LIL designed to test the interface between human resources and private sector development objectives in order to create approaches that can be implemented on a larger scale. More specifically if it designed to prepare youth for the employment possibilities that exist, to create partnerships with the private sector, and to generate the resources necessary for a quality higher education.

Contact Point

The InfoShop
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 458-5454
Fax: (202) 522-1500

Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be included in the final project.

Processed by the InfoShop week ending February 27 1998.