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Graduate training in economics for Africans

A joint report

S. Ibi Ajayi, H. J. Pegatienan
and M. Mukras

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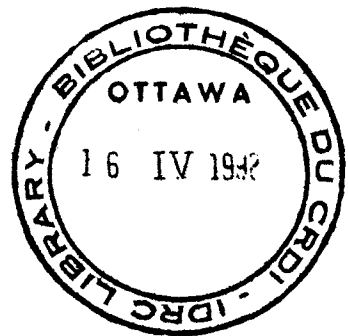
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Foreword

This report is based on a draft version prepared by the consultants to the study and subsequently edited to incorporate agreed modifications as well as comments offered at a meeting of senior academics, government officials and external observers, held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 August 1989.

We express our thanks to the consultants for the erudition, energy and commitment they brought to this task. Together with the consultants, we convey our sincere appreciation to the many people in the region who willingly provided information, comments, and advice.

We commend the AERC's Advisory Committee for the original suggestion for the study and the Board for its support. The exercise has highlighted many issues affecting research and training in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the findings will undoubtedly contribute to future AERC activities. Regarding the latter, we note the recommendations concerning the role of AERC. We hope that the process of consultation among institutions and governments, which was a distinctive feature of the study, will continue.

Jeffrey C. Fine
Executive Director

Benno Ndulu
Research Coordinator

I. Background

Deteriorating economic conditions have led to declining government support, in real terms, for tertiary education in Africa. At the graduate level, this trend is disturbing since it could lead to underinvestment in the region's ability to conduct research and supply the high-level manpower necessary for future development. With respect to economics, the impact of underinvestment is more readily discernible. The region's capacity to recover from the current economic crisis and establish conditions conducive to longer term growth rests to a considerable extent on locally based analyses of economic issues and highly trained personnel to manage economies.

This decline in domestic investment in graduate training and research in economics has been accompanied by significant reduction in external assistance. In the 1960s and 1970s, donors contributed substantially to the overseas and local training of Africans, the financing and conduct of research, and the establishment of teaching departments and research institutions. Much of this support, with some notable exceptions, has disappeared. Although an exhaustive investigation into the reasons for this cutback is beyond the scope of this study, plausible explanations can be offered. First, there has been a stagnation or cutback (in real terms) in overall donor assistance to the region. Secondly, investment in tertiary education has been perceived as risky and prone to political and economic vicissitude. Significant investments in institutions and personnel have been improperly maintained or underutilized. Thirdly, there has been a growing sense that the priority previously given by donors to such investments has not corresponded to that of host governments, as reflected by their own cutbacks in real levels of support. Fourthly, there has been growing disillusionment because of apparent low rates of return caused by institutional mismanagement, and a perceived failure to retain a significant proportion of highly trained personnel. Although a small number of individuals have undoubtedly benefited from such investment, there does not appear to have been a commensurate or greater return to societies within the region.

Such views are not necessarily held by donors alone. African governments continue to receive considerable technical assistance, and in more than a few instances are spending valuable foreign exchange on general and specialized training overseas. The choice between these outlays, and increased investment in the local training of high level analysts and economic managers, should not be oversimplified. Nevertheless, from such behaviour, one could surmise that

local governments consider the return from such investment to be problematical and longer term, in sharp contrast to their more immediate and pressing needs.

There are important exceptions to this generally gloomy picture. A number of institutions continue to function effectively. The University of Dar es Salaam's Economics Department, for example, mounts a vigorous graduate teaching programme in economics and its staff pursue a variety of research interests. Continuity in the face of adverse economic conditions has been sustained through a longer term training arrangement, financed largely from Swedish funds; judicious consulting contracts with domestic and foreign agencies; fruitful exchanges with government officials; and a strong sense of professionalism and collegiality. In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan's Economics Department provides advice to government and runs workshops for senior civil servants. Its Centre for Economic and Allied Research (CEAR) has developed a macroeconomic model for the Ministry of National Planning. Other institutions, operating under less stringent circumstances, are establishing good graduate degree programmes and training local staff committed to excellence in teaching and research. The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), in little more than a year, has initiated over 20 research projects conducted by African economists from academia and government. Many of these projects entail a high level of technical skill, and virtually all have progressed in terms of analytical rigour. Much of this research is led by scholars trained overseas through fellowship programmes once financed by external donors, notably the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Most significantly of all, our own study, which set out to examine current weaknesses in the graduate education of economists in Sub-Saharan Africa, and to identify possible remedies to them, has met with a very positive response from academics and senior officials in the region. Almost without exception, they perceive the need to strengthen local capacity in order to analyse economic issues and manage economies more efficiently. They are prepared to consider a wide range of responses that are sensitive to local conditions and interests.

II. The study

The study was initiated by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) at the behest of its Board, in response to a recommendation of the Consortium's Advisory Committee. The AERC was established in August 1988 to "strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous enquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies in Sub-Saharan Africa". To this end, the AERC has mounted a vigorous research programme, comprising over 20 projects, centering about two networks, namely "Balance of Payments Management" and "Domestic Financial Management". These projects currently involve over 60 highly trained African economists, drawn from academia and government, in 14 countries. Although AERC's programme focuses primarily on research, from the outset it explicitly recognized the importance of strengthening training in local institutions. The AERC currently offers small grants for thesis research, sabbatical leaves and short term attachments; the purchase of equipment; the activities of local economics associations; and locally convened meetings on economic issues. Such activities are seen as contributing to local identification of research priorities, improvement in the quality of analysis, and dissemination of research to different audiences.

The AERC also allotted a small sum toward formal Ph.D. training, the precise nature of this support to be determined following further exposure to the needs of the region. Through continuing interaction with researchers, the need for a broader examination of training needs and priorities quickly become apparent to both the Advisory Committee and Board. In so far as AERC had developed a close rapport with teaching departments, research institutes, and officials in the region, the study could also serve to communicate their problems and priorities to governments and external agencies, as well as the AERC itself.

Following the Board's decision, AERC's Secretariat commissioned three consultants to carry out the study. They are:

- Professor S. Ibi Ajayi, Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Professor H. Jacques Pegatienan, former Director of the Centre Ivoirien de Recherche Economique et Sociale, and Member of the Faculté des Sciences Economiques, Université Nationale de la Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.
- Professor Mohamed Mukras, Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.

The consultants were selected on the basis of their extensive involvement in teaching and research, and familiarity with conditions in their respective sub-regions.

The study was launched at a meeting, held in Nairobi on 25 May 1989, of 20 department heads, senior scholars and officials from Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as three external resource persons concerned with teaching and research. A list of participants is provided in Appendix 1. Aside from oral presentations, written briefs were submitted by the economics departments of Chancellor College, University of Malawi; the University of Addis Ababa; Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, Makerere University, Uganda and the University of Zambia.

In addition to endorsing an inquiry into the need for overseas training, especially at the Ph.D. level, participants at the May meeting highlighted other important issues to be addressed by the consultants in the course of their field work. These issues were:

- Some institutions noted serious weaknesses in their M.A. programmes, as evidenced by declining numbers of students, a high attrition rate, and a serious deterioration in the quality of teaching and thesis supervision.
- The demand for economists, for the purposes of economic management, research and teaching, needed to be estimated with greater precision.
- Strong emphasis was placed on the importance of governments as a major employer of graduate economists, and the principal source of support for graduate education. The consultants were therefore advised to meet senior public officials concerned with policy analysis, economic management, and higher education.
- There was general recognition of the potential benefits of utilizing resources more efficiently, especially during a period of financial stringency. The consultants were therefore asked to explore various ways of fostering regional collaboration in a flexible and responsive fashion.

The terms of reference for the consultants were set after the meeting (see Appendix 2). Because of limited time and funds, 11 countries were selected for the field study from among those represented at the meeting. The intention was to reflect the region's diversity with respect to policy toward higher education; general conditions affecting teaching and research; governments' use of local economists and economic research for formulating policy and managing the economy; different institutional arrangements and curricula for graduate education; and personnel and material support currently available for research and teaching.

Prior to commencing their field work, the consultants, in collaboration with the AERC Secretariat, prepared a questionnaire to provide comprehensive and consistent coverage of major concerns by all three studies. Aside from information obtained from interviews, the consultants drew upon such secondary source

materials as government studies and policy statements, official statistics relating to higher education, university enrolment and staffing figures, department calendars and curricula, unpublished graduate theses, and donor-financed studies of higher education.

The consultants relied heavily on the participants in AERC research networks to provide detailed information on graduate teaching and research in their respective institutions, to arrange interviews with university staff and students and key public officials, and to furnish additional secondary source materials.

Most of the field work was conducted from mid-June to early August 1989. Preliminary findings, in the form of three separate draft reports on east-em/southern Africa (Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia), anglophone west Africa (Nigeria and Ghana) and francophone west Africa (Ivory Coast and Senegal) were discussed at a meeting held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 August. The participants consisted mainly of those who has attended the May meeting, as well as others identified by the consultants in the course of their field work. A list of participants and the agenda of the August meeting are provided in Appendix 3 and 4, respectively.

This report is a synopsis of the consultants' principal findings, and the comments of participants at the August meeting. The separate studies will be issued following completion of fieldwork, and revisions suggested at the August meeting. The report is preliminary, in so far as further field work to be undertaken in Cameroun, Zaire and Tanzania in September 1989 will be taken into account. The results of this field work, however, are unlikely to alter substantially the study's conclusions regarding the principal issues affecting graduate training in economics in Sub-Saharan Africa and feasible responses to them.

Our synopsis is presented in the next three sections entitled "Overview of Findings" (Section III), "Issues" (Section IV) and "Responses" (Section V).

III. Overview of findings

This section summarizes the principal findings contained in our separate draft reports.

- All three reports conclude that the effective demand for professional economists trained at the graduate level, i.e. M.A. and above, exceeds the numbers currently supplied from local and overseas sources. This conclusion is reached through an analysis of data (where they exist), observation of the demand for technical assistance and consultant services, and discussions with senior government officials and academics. The reports proceed to examine the various factors limiting both the number and quality of trained economists.
- The reports subsequently emphasize that the requisite supply can be obtained over the longer term only through the development of local capacity for graduate training in response to changing needs. External support is therefore perceived as complementary to a locally based effort to attain this objective.
- The reports consider the principal function of graduate training in economics to be the provision of appropriate analytical skills, knowledge and intellectual leadership to meet needs for policy analysis, economic management, teaching and research. Aside from basic courses, the acquisition of analytical skills should allow for access to a reasonable range of specialized subjects. In contrast, more functional training to meet the needs of different jobs should be provided through short-term courses that can be offered either within or outside the university. However, the effectiveness of such training depends on the prior acquisition of basic analytical skills obtained through a good graduate programme.
- The reports conclude that there is considerable scope for strengthening current efforts through greater collaboration across the region. This conclusion is based on observation of weaknesses in current programmes and recognition of benefits to be obtained from frequent structured exchanges of information among teachers, students and institutions.
- The reports underscore significant differences in conditions for graduate training within and across countries, with particular reference to current policies and institutional interests. The principal conclusion is that a rationalization of effort across the region can only be undertaken through

collaboration and consultation among institutions concerned with teaching and research in economics.

- The principal issues affecting graduate training in economics are summarized in the next section. The suggested responses, which are presented in Section V, should incorporate the following elements:
 - Better use of local capacity through the selective removal of constraints and rationalization of effort in a collaborative, responsive and flexible fashion.
 - Increased government support to improve financial and professional incentives for teaching and research, and to ensure a sound graduate programme in economics.
 - Measures to induce graduate programmes to become more aware of and responsive to perceived needs for teaching, research, economic analysis and management.
 - External support that complements the above, through the design and application of appropriate modalities.

IV. The issues

The many issues affecting graduate training in economics are grouped under four major headings. We stress that this grouping does not imply homogeneity of conditions. As will be apparent from our separate reports, conditions for teaching and research differ widely across the region and responses, to be successful over the long term, must be sensitive to local conditions. The issues are also interrelated. In some cases, the links are apparent as, for example, with respect to the impact of the economic crisis on staffing and material support. In others, the relationships are implicit as, for example, in the growing tendency to substitute consultancies for research, and the effect of this practice on both research and teaching. Finally, we note that the first two groups of issues are “systemic” in nature, in so far as they relate to graduate education as a whole. The other two are more specific to graduate training in economics.

Public policy toward tertiary education

The current economic crisis has resulted in declining government support for higher education. In some countries, this trend is reflected in a reduced proportion of government expenditure for tertiary education. In most countries, there has been a freeze, or very limited growth in nominal terms, leading to a serious drop in absolute “real” expenditure. An immediate consequence has been to lower the incentive to remain in teaching and research. This complex matter is treated separately as a second category of issues. Other consequences of underinvestment in higher education are poorly maintained facilities; inadequate and outdated teaching materials; freezes on equipment purchases; the lack of such basic services as telephones, water and electricity; and deteriorating living conditions for students. Even in those countries where the supportive environment for higher education has not deteriorated dramatically, there has been a disturbing decline in morale among staff and students alike, and a noticeable drop in the status previously accorded to university teachers and researchers.

In spite of severe financial constraints, enrolments in tertiary education continue to expand, primarily in response to reduced employment prospects for growing numbers of secondary-school leavers. In most instances, existing institutions have experienced a significant increase in the number of undergraduates, which has put severe pressure on the funds and qualified staff available for graduate teaching and research. In some countries, there has been an expansion

in the number of institutions of higher education, thereby increasing competition for stagnant or declining resources.

This situation is unlikely to change, at least in the short term. Even if governments' allocations to higher education were increased substantially, they would not have a significant or immediate impact on graduate training in economics, since these additional funds would probably be used for financing more undergraduates and a larger number of institutions. Hence, a strategy for strengthening graduate education in economics must first of all try to earmark or direct additional local resources, and to do so in a manner consistent with public policy toward tertiary education as a whole. Secondly, it must be recognized that growth in the number of institutions, during a period of financial stringency, often reflects important political considerations such as strong local interests and increased concern about the employment of school leavers. Such factors must also be taken into account in finding solutions to the problems affecting graduate training in economics.

Incentive structure

Personal incentives to teach economics and conduct research can be categorized as pecuniary and professional. Pecuniary incentives comprise salary and various fringe benefits, particularly subsidized housing and health care, educational allowances for children, and pension plans. Professional incentives constitute, in the words of one of our draft reports, "all those other things that enable one to undertake what one has been trained to do". Among these "other things" are access to professional literature, time and funds for research, opportunities to attend professional meetings, adequate physical facilities, and material support.

The erosion in real salary levels of economists in academia has been experienced by other university staff, and in most cases parallels a similar trend in the formal sector. In some countries, nominal parity has been maintained with the public sector. In others, there has also been a *relative* deterioration in nominal university salaries. In many countries, a month's salary is inadequate to cover outlays for clothing, food, rent, and basic services. This problem has been compounded by a significant erosion in fringe benefits. Previously these helped offset low nominal salaries, since they are often not subject to income tax and are less sensitive to general increases in prices. Both in psychological and material terms, they provided an element of security, and hence an important incentive to pursue an academic career. In recent years, such benefits have been cut back drastically. In many countries, a university appointment no longer ensures adequate housing, provision for children's education, or coverage for health care.

Under such circumstances, research becomes a luxury, and a great deal of time and effort must be devoted to providing for basic material needs. Many university staff hold second and third jobs, often unrelated to their professional careers or training. Data on what is euphemistically called "petty trading"—e.g., taxi services, construction, farming, and catering—are difficult to obtain be-

cause of tax, employment and other regulations. Nevertheless, from our own discussions and observations, they are important and may displace time that could be devoted to teaching and research. The growing number of vacant posts in many university departments also attests to the attrition of staff, and the failure to recruit new members from local or outside sources.

In some countries, university economists have supplemented declining incomes through consultancies. Although they draw upon professional expertise and training, consultancies are often at the expense of teaching and research, and maintenance of professional skills. Cohesion of the department will suffer when staff devote minimal effort to teaching, attendance at seminars, administration, consultations with students and thesis supervision. Moreover, since the consultants' reports often remain confidential to the sponsor, they are not subject to peer review, or made available for teaching and research. However, under the right circumstances, consultancies can help strengthen teaching, research and professional collegiality. Our inquiry suggests that consultancies undertaken after consultation with the department head serve to strength analytical skills, strengthened ties with policy makers, and generally raise department cohesion and morale.

The disappearance of professional incentives, along with declining living standards and growing insecurity, further detracts from the attraction of a career in teaching and research. There is little impetus for publishing a paper if basic references, funds for fieldwork, access to computing facilities and photocopying equipment are lacking and if there are no opportunities to present it to local, regional or international meetings. These difficulties particularly affect younger scholars who do not have the professional "track record" or contacts that help secure consultancies and funds for travel. Therefore, where promotion depends to a considerable degree on the output of published work, prospects for career advancement are limited. Considerable effort may also be necessary to secure funds for students' thesis research. Finally, we note that in many countries, most research funds, meagre as they are, come from overseas sources. Local scholars may thus be further constrained in pursuing their own intellectual interests.

Capacity and relevance

The two preceding sets of issues are "systemic" in so far as they refer to problems besetting tertiary education as a whole. We now summarize the principal findings of our separate studies that refer specifically to graduate training in economics.

The impact of increasing undergraduate enrolments, a slow rise in the number of established posts, and a growing number of vacancies can be partly conveyed in terms of student/teacher equivalence ratios, which were estimated in the case of the eastern and southern Africa study. It was found that the actual ratios were 50–300 percent greater than the norm recommended by UNESCO for the social sciences.¹ Such pressures seriously limit the time available for teaching, gradu-

ate seminars and thesis supervision. A few universities have had to suspend their M.A. degree programmes, including those offered by thesis alone, and some institutions with well-established graduate programmes have been forced to reduce the number of full- and part-time graduate students.

Quantitative indicators highlight only some factors affecting the capacity, relevance and quality of graduate education. Other factors are described in terms of staff qualifications, support for graduate students and curriculum.

Our inquiries and the discussion at the August 1989 meeting reveal a consensus about the need for formal coursework as an integral part of the M.A. and Ph.D. degree programmes in economics. In francophone west Africa, many university staff hold a “doctorat de troisième cycle”: they have successfully completed thesis research at an advanced level and would benefit significantly from coursework at the graduate level. Other potential staff members hold a “diplôme des études approfondies”, and require both coursework and thesis research at a level comparable to a Ph.D. at an anglophone university.

In some universities in eastern and southern Africa, much of the undergraduate teaching is undertaken by junior members of staff who hold M.A. degrees obtained by thesis alone from the local university. For a career in teaching and research, they need doctoral qualifications. We also identified many who had obtained their degree by thesis alone or had been trained in the Eastern Bloc. In both cases, the individuals in question would undoubtedly benefit from graduate-level coursework of varying duration. Fieldwork in Nigeria revealed another deficiency in staff training that may also apply to universities in other countries. Although there are some institutions offering a Ph.D. based on coursework and thesis research, there is growing concern over “inbreeding”, since all of an individual’s university education may be acquired in the same institution. Unfortunately, there are no funds available to send these doctoral candidates elsewhere to undertake coursework or pursue their research in a different intellectual setting. Depending on the institution, and the composition of current staff, improvement in qualifications may require graduate-level coursework, which is often obtainable locally or, where it exists, is of an uneven quality and limited scope.

Our fieldwork also revealed that many institutions do not have a comprehensive programme for staff development based on projected numbers and subject specialties, in relation to the existing complement of teaching personnel. This is understandable, in view of systemic problems which lead to a decline in salaries and incentives, and the consequent problems of retaining good local staff who can devote most of their time to teaching and research. A further complication is the lack of ready access to reliable and appropriate resources for overseas training of new staff and for the retraining of older members. University departments often do not have accurate information about possible sources of assistance. Even when available, such assistance may only be offered for subject specialties for which there are no appropriate candidates and/or which do not correspond to the department’s own priorities. In addition, our fieldwork and the August meeting identified cases where candidates were unable to accept training fellow-

ships and sabbatical leaves because of serious shortfalls in the staff required to meet current teaching obligations. Such uncertainty over access to further training deters promising individuals from pursuing a university career.

In many countries, governments do not finance university students or provide subsidized loans beyond the undergraduate level. Even if support exists, it is often inadequate to meet basic living requirements. Opportunities to finance graduate education through teaching and research assistantships are limited or unavailable.

A further disincentive to pursuing graduate studies in economics has been the decline in quality. The number of courses offered may be few and/or taught by part-time or unqualified lecturers. When graduate courses are held at night, a serious problem is posed for students without safe and reliable public transport. Often there is insufficient contact between staff and graduate students, both during "official hours" and through regular seminars. Graduate students also face serious difficulties in financing their thesis research and obtaining reliable supervision. As a result, the time necessary to obtain an M.A. degree has been prolonged and is frequently perceived as indeterminate. In some countries, the desire to enter graduate training is further reduced by diminishing opportunities for doctoral training overseas or, for those seeking a public service career, by the lack of official recognition in terms of entry level or prospects for promotion. All of the above factors, present in varying degrees in institutions across the region, deter promising students from pursuing a graduate education in economics.²

Our reports also point out weaknesses in the curriculum of many institutions in the region, in particular inadequate coursework and few specialized subjects. Staff from different universities do not meet regularly. As a result, the core curriculum and course content differ significantly across the region. We also heard frequent complaints about outdated texts and the absence of suitable materials focusing on issues specific to economies in the region. Even senior, well-established scholars, because of lack of time, access to recent literature, and funds for travel, are unable to keep up to date in their field. A shortage of funds for regular use of external examiners may also lower the quality of teaching and research.

The capacity and relevance of graduate programmes in economics vary widely across the region, since institutions have been affected differently by many of the factors described above. A number of institutions, judging from the quality of their research and graduate students, have functioned amazingly well in spite of adverse conditions. However, even these institutions are far from complacent about their future prospects. During our field visits, we were repeatedly impressed by the frank acknowledgement of weaknesses in graduate education, in particular on such sensitive matters as staff quality and the need for further staff training.

Improvements in graduate education will require a comprehensive and coherent range of measures, including overseas training and retraining, changes in curricula at the M.A. level, assistance for graduate students, and the preparation

and distribution of adequate teaching materials—to name but a few. Some of these measures can be directed toward the region as a whole, but most will need to be specific to the requirements of each institution.

Regional collaboration

In light of the many daunting problems affecting graduate education in economics, the need to explore ways of using resources more efficiently cannot be disputed. However, this issue is both complex and sensitive.

Collaboration can be interpreted as better flows of information; exchanges of staff and students; and joint efforts in research, curriculum development, and textbook writing to fill perceived gaps and improve quality. However, collaboration can also mean the concentration of most resources and qualified staff in a few select “centres of excellence”. Under current circumstances, this approach would necessarily imply substituting a few good institutions for many mediocre ones. Although it would appear consistent with the aim of meeting immediate needs for relatively small numbers of highly qualified analysts, researchers, teachers and managers, the gains from any “economies of scale” would be reduced to the extent that such centres adversely affect the quality of undergraduate education and locally based research in countries throughout the region.

The following section discusses other issues raised by our fieldwork and at the August 1989 meeting.

One important consideration is the uneven distribution of institutions offering graduate education in economics. The range extends from Nigeria, where over one-third of the country’s 29 universities offer some form of graduate education in economics, to at least 11 countries in eastern and southern Africa with only one national university each. In the latter case, the implication of a few centres of excellence needs to be ascertained in terms of local, i.e. national capacity to analyse economic issues and offer undergraduate education of a reasonable quality. In this respect, as one respondent noted, the situation in the social sciences, and economics in particular, differs significantly from that of the natural sciences.

Francophone and anglophone Africa are frequently treated as homogeneous “sub-regions”. Our own fieldwork, however, has identified significant variations in curricula and staff development. At the University of Abidjan, for example, the process of melding staff trained abroad in English/American and French traditions, and of moving away from the more traditional emphasis placed on “institutional” economics has proceeded more rapidly than in other parts of francophone West Africa. Whether the situation is similar in universities in other francophone countries, notably Zaire, Cameroun, Rwanda and Burundi, has yet to be established. In anglophone Africa, institutions differ markedly in terms of the relative emphasis placed on coursework and thesis research at both the M.A. and doctoral levels.

Institutions also vary considerably in their state of development and relative strengths in specific areas. Longevity need not be automatically associated with present capacity or potential excellence. Indeed, at the August 1989 meeting, heads of departments at a number of younger institutions contended that they might be better able to accommodate changes in curricula, staffing and procedures than the more established ones.

In practice, as opposed to concept, collaboration is hardly known to the region. Many departments operate in relative isolation from each other, and are often more familiar with developments overseas than in a neighbouring university or country. Some respondents noted that the two meetings associated with this study provided the first opportunity for exchanges among institutions in the region on problems pertinent to graduate education in economics. In a very real sense, institutions have not yet had an opportunity to identify potential areas for collaboration or consider different modalities suited to their respective needs and strengths.³

Finally, the overall pattern of university development has been one of devolution rather than consolidation. The now separate universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland and of Makerere, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were once constituent colleges of single multinational universities. In francophone west Africa, the original intent of distributing subject specialties among countries was discarded shortly after independence. In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan played an important role in setting up graduate as well as undergraduate teaching departments at newer "sister" institutions in the country. The many factors behind this pattern lie outside the scope of our study. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss them as marginal to the question of the types of collaboration ultimately workable within the region.

V. Responses

According to our terms of reference, we are to recommend measures that can be undertaken by governments, local institutions, AERC and other donors, in response to issues identified by our studies, as well as to suggest topics for further inquiry. The responses presented in this section draw extensively on discussion at the August workshop. They parallel the presentation of issues in the preceding section. We conclude with a brief summary of measures recommended to the AERC.

The responses recommended to the AERC should help stimulate support by other donors, acting in concert or separately. We are also aware that AERC's own activities over the longer term will take other considerations into account, notably its mandate and likely resources, and a possible trade-off between support for training and research. At this juncture, therefore, we recommend that AERC play an important facilitating role that includes the sponsorship of further studies, the convening of meetings to discuss specific issues, in particular those relating to regional collaboration, and—to the extent its funds permit—strengthen training-related activities in its current programme.

Investment in the training of economists

Responses to systemic problems besetting higher education lie primarily with national governments who must ultimately weigh these needs against other equally worthy claims for public support. Ideally, as one respondent remarked, economists (most of all!) should be able to demonstrate that increased investment in higher education, especially in graduate training in economics, can be justified by its high social rate of return. In practice, this exercise would be virtually impossible to execute. Aside from problems of data, including the need to develop reliable “shadow prices” for various “inputs”, the study would entail heroic assumptions that constitute value judgements concerning precisely those issues it is supposed to answer. Specifically, one would have to presume that governments will adopt policy advice and employ managers coming from a strengthened graduate programme, and that such actions in turn will lead to sizeable and measurable economic benefits. Even if a credible study of this sort were mounted for most countries in the region, the results in the end would only comprise one element in the determination of public policy. Indeed, preferential treatment by government of graduate training in economics, at the expense of

other needs in higher education, is probably neither feasible nor, in many cases, desirable.

A more convincing case can be made in terms of responding to specific government requirements. One example is the B.Phil. programme at the University of Nairobi which was designed to upgrade the basic analytical skills of government planners. Kenyan government support for this programme has helped place the University's own M.A. programme on a more solid footing. In meeting its own needs, the government has financed most of the fixed costs and a substantial portion of the variable costs of M.A. training. Assistance along these lines may not be feasible for institutions that have yet to demonstrate the capacity to satisfy a similar demand by their respective governments. It is, however, an attractive medium-term goal, once government is confident that the local economics department has the competence to meet its requirements.

The provision of short-term training courses was also suggested as a means of augmenting support from local sources. This option is only feasible for those few institutions with excess capacity. These short-term courses should be priced according to their value to the sponsor, who will benefit most from training in job-specific skills. In a more general vein, we note that economics departments are better suited for providing those analytical skills that can subsequently form the basis for job-specific training.

Incentives

The decline in pecuniary incentives raises important "systemic" issues that affect higher education as a whole. Upward adjustments will therefore depend primarily on changes in overall government policy. However, some useful measures can be taken by local institutions. For example, the erosion in certain fringe benefits, in particular housing, should be redressed. An increased supply of staff housing is an investment in higher education since it can help retain good staff. Universities should also review, and revise as necessary, existing procedures for appointment and promotion. In many cases, current arrangements dissuade promising scholars from pursuing an academic career.

Consultancies financed from local or external sources can help offset the decline in real salary levels. While admittedly essential to help meet basic living necessities, consultancies can cut into the time available for teaching and research when they are pursued to an excessive degree. Skills stagnate where they are not subject to rigorous peer review and findings are often not available for teaching purposes. Department cohesion and collegiality can also suffer. Many of these problems can be avoided if the contractor is sensitive to the possible impact of a consultancy on teaching and research. An increase in daily rates would also allow university staff to reduce the time devoted to consultancies for the purpose of meeting basic living requirements.

At the August meeting, there was a suggestion of raising the honoraria for bona fide research projects, including those financed by the AERC. A modest

increase may be justified because of the higher “opportunity cost” of research. In general, though, this approach cannot be a major means for redressing the decline in real incomes.

With respect to “professional” incentives, much more can and should be done. Moreover, many of the recommended measures would also strengthen graduate education in economics. These measures are listed in our separate reports, and in many cases are being offered—to a modest extent—by the AERC.

- Funds for sabbatical leaves, professional attachments and guest lectureships;
- Basic material support including textbooks, professional journals, computers, software packages, photocopying machines and (in some cases) paper;
- Assistance to local and regional economics associations;
- Financing of local and regional journals; and
- Funds for research and teaching assistantships and for M.A. thesis research.

We strongly recommend additional support by AERC for these activities.

Strengthening capacity

The above measures would strengthen local capacity for teaching and research and raise morale. In addition, modest capital expenditures, for example to accommodate an expanding department library or computing facilities, should be considered.

More generally, existing capacity must be assessed in terms of the ability to respond to requirements for teaching, research, policy analysis and economic management. Such needs are often difficult to estimate at any given moment, and change over time. In this respect, an over-reliance on manpower planning is not advisable, since an M.A. graduate in economics can be employed in a wide variety of occupations. Indeed, the Nigerian manpower survey does not list “economists” per se, but rather up to 30 other occupations that can be filled by graduate economists. Another consideration is that tertiary education—at least at the undergraduate level—is heavily subsidized and real wages in the formal sector are largely determined by government policy. Institutional factors also can influence demand. In the Ivory Coast, for example, the government does not acknowledge graduate training in terms of a higher entry point to the public service and indeed may discourage it by setting a maximum hiring age of 30. Hence projections of the demand by governments for policy analysts and well-trained managers can be misleading unless they take account of distortions in the labour market.

In our assessment under “Issues” of the capacity and relevance of graduate education, we focused primarily on M.A. programmes. This emphasis, however, should not be construed as downgrading the importance of Ph.D. training. The two are interrelated. A sound M.A. degree is an essential prerequisite for success

at the doctoral level. The deterioration in the quality and relevance of many M.A. programmes therefore holds serious implications for the region's ability to produce suitable candidates for Ph.D. training. M.A. programmes are also the major determinant of the demand for Ph.D. graduates, both in terms of overall numbers and subject specializations. Gradual strengthening of M.A. programmes will depend to a considerable extent on retaining qualified staff trained to the Ph.D. level or its equivalent.

Despite this relationship, the measures suggested for improving M.A. and Ph.D. training are quite different. With respect to M.A. programmes, most of the measures, including those enumerated earlier, should be directed toward the specific needs of institutions in the region. They would need to be accompanied by increased local support for graduate students through stipends or loans. Other measures, focusing on curriculum development and more rigorous coursework, may be more effectively handled in a regional context through collaboration among institutions. Possible modalities for this purpose are outlined in the next section "Regional Collaboration".

For both Ph.D. training and the upgrading of staff, we have identified two modalities that would require external support. The first is the collaborative or so-called "sandwich programme" in which the student registers for a Ph.D. at a local university, and pursues coursework overseas. The thesis prospectus would be approved by the local university, and research would be jointly supervised by the overseas institution and the local university. This modality could also be used for upgrading staff who have already completed a doctoral thesis, but would benefit from further coursework. The collaborative programme's advantages include a higher retention rate, low cost, and adaptability to the staffing needs of different institutions. For those few universities with a strong Ph.D. programme, a modified form of collaboration, providing selectively for coursework and/or research abroad, would help improve quality and prevent "inbreeding".

Operational experience with this modality has been limited to a few universities in the region. Inquiry into the Swedish financed programme at the University of Dar es Salaam suggests possible improvements. Although the Dar programme initially financed "third country" training, funds are now confined to study at Swedish universities. Thus the department's flexibility in catering for different subject specialities and the scope for exposing future staff to different intellectual environments has been reduced considerably. The programme has also provided inadequate support for field research. For these and other reasons, candidates require four to six years to complete their programmes. In assessing the collaborative programme's suitability to the needs of the region, one must also consider the importance of a strong M.A. programme such as Dar es Salaam's, to ensure good preparation for coursework overseas.

Further adaptation of this modality to meet Ph.D. training requirements would probably involve the following elements:

- Prior development by the department in question of a comprehensive staff-development programme based on current and projected needs;
- Greater latitude for local universities to select from among a wide range of overseas institutions willing to participate in the collaborative programme; and
- Adequate provision for thesis fieldwork, including a living allowance that permits research on a full-time basis.

The collaborative programme appears to offer a cost-effective and flexible means of meeting most of the region's needs for staff development, and for this reason, warrants more detailed study.

The second modality is a fully financed overseas fellowship which in the past has been the principal means of providing Ph.D. training. However, this type of training has become very expensive and is unlikely to satisfy more than a small proportion of the region's overall requirements, even if donor assistance were to be resumed. Aside from this consideration, the modality has certain drawbacks. One is the impression that the retention rate is low. Whether this is indeed the case, and if so, whether it can be attributed to the greater mobility of individuals who possess an overseas degree, or to the general deterioration in local living conditions and intellectual environment are matters for further investigation. Another problem is the selection process. Ideally, candidates should be chosen solely on merit. In practice, the selection process must also be sensitive to the staffing needs of individual universities, especially to ensure retention after the completion of the Ph.D. In accommodating these other considerations, however, the selection process can be open to abuse because of political or personal influence.

If handled properly, the two modalities could complement each other in meeting the region's requirements for Ph.D. training. The collaborative programme is cost effective and more adaptable to an institution's overall needs for staff development. If institutional needs can be accommodated through the collaborative programme, selection for overseas fellowships can be based solely on merit. In this way, overseas fellowships can be used to train a relatively small number of outstanding individuals with the potential to provide intellectual leadership to the region as a whole.

We strongly recommend that AERC support further study by local scholars and institutions of Ph.D. training, with particular reference to the collaborative programme and fully financed overseas fellowships.

Approaches to regional collaboration

Possible forms of regional collaboration range from regular exchanges of information to the concentration of available resources and qualified personnel in one or more "centres of excellence" offering region-wide M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. This latter "model" provoked considerable criticism at the August 1989 meeting

for many of the reasons previously cited under “Regional Collaboration”. They are briefly restated below.

- In many countries, especially those with only one university, the centre would undermine attempts to develop a national capacity for policy analysis and research.
- A regional centre, drawing upon better staff and most of the external resources that would be made available for strengthening capacity, would further undermine economics departments, and undergraduate education in particular.
- There is considerable suspicion concerning the criteria for selecting regional centres, in particular a perceived predilection for “established” departments over newer and possibly more innovative ones. Similar anxiety exists with regard to the criteria for selecting staff and students.
- There is a broadly shared feeling that there has been insufficient opportunity for consultation among institutions in the region concerning other possible forms of strengthening capacity on a regional and sub-regional basis.
- There are significant differences within seemingly homogeneous systems, namely “francophone” and “anglophone” Africa. Within each of these “systems”, institutions could be grouped by criteria other than geographical location.

In short, the concept of a “regional centre” is viewed as competitive, rather than complementary, to an effort by local institutions to strengthen their capacity for teaching and research.

Participants at the August meeting readily acknowledged the potential for greater collaboration provided it were developed in an evolutionary and responsive manner. The participants suggested functional and institutional guidelines that in our view merit more detailed study. The more important ones are:

- Regular focused exchanges of information on such matters as curriculum and staff development;
- The retention of local institutional autonomy, as the sole grantors of degrees along with the development of one or more joint teaching facilities at the M.A. level;
- Use of the joint teaching facility to strengthen programmes at the M.A. level and prepare promising students for Ph.D. training. To this end, the facility would offer a mixture of concentrated, high quality core and specialist courses in response to demand from participating universities;
- Use of the joint teaching facility for the development and dissemination of curricula and teaching materials;
- Placement of the joint teaching facility outside the jurisdiction of any university or system of higher education. This measure would avoid institu-

tional rivalry. It could also allow for a higher fee structure that would partly redress the decline in real incomes;

We recognize the need for further refinement of this and other possible modalities to meet the many and diverse requirements of the region. We therefore recommend that AERC, by virtue of its structure and extensive contacts, assist local institutions to study this and related measures for strengthening graduate education on a collaborative basis. This involvement should not imply that AERC be responsible for implementing any specific modalities identified through further in-depth studies.

Role of the AERC

In summary, we recommend that the AERC consider the following measures to strengthen graduate training in economics:

1. Encourage a regular exchange of information and views on training issues at AERC research meetings;
2. Provide additional support, for the various activities and items listed under “Incentives”;
3. Finance an in-depth study of Ph.D. training, with particular reference to the collaborative programme, as the principal modality for staff development, and the role of fully financed fellowships in relation to it;
4. Finance an in-depth study of a joint teaching facility for strengthening M.A. programmes offered by local universities.

Notes

1. Discussion at the August meeting suggested a similar picture obtains for Nigerian and Ghanaian universities.
2. In some instances, an increase in graduate student enrolment appears to contradict this conclusion. However, this may reflect the longer duration of degree programmes, part-time enrolment or, in the case of Nigeria (and possibly other countries), a lengthier period for job research.
3. We welcome a meeting financed by the Ford Foundation on curricula and staff development among francophone departments of economics that was held concurrently with this study. The meeting will undoubtedly provide further insights into the issue of regional collaboration.

Appendix 1

Participants at AERC meeting

AERC meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya on 27 May 1989.

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Mr. Firimooni Banugire	Head, Department of Economics, Makerere University
Mr. Logan Pakkiri	Chairman, Economics Department, University of Zimbabwe
Ms. Dinah Mutungwazi	Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and Development, Zimbabwe
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Dr. Mohamed Mukras	Chairman, Economics Department, University of Nairobi

Dr. Gaetan Rusibane	Doyen, Faculte des Sciences Economiques et Sociales et Gestion, University Nationale de Rwanda
Dr. Asmerom Kidane	Head, Statistics Department, Addis Ababa University
Mr. Tony Killick	Former Director, Overseas Development Institute (U.K.) Member: AERC Advisory Committee
Dr. Andrew Mullei	Director, African Centre for Monetary Studies, Dakar. Formerly Director of Research, Central Bank of Kenya Member: AERC Advisory Committee
Mrs. N. Kariuki	Economist, Ministry of Planning and National Development, Kenya
Dr. Dennis De Tray	IBRD, Washington
Dr. David Court	Rockefeller Foundation, Nairobi
Dr. Benno Ndulu	Research Co-ordinator, AERC
Mr. Jeffrey C. Fine	Executive Director, AERC

Appendix 2

Consultant terms of reference

The overall purpose of this consulting contract is to examine the state of graduate training in economics for Africans, with particular reference to (countries A, B . . .).

In this respect you will undertake the following:

- (a) Examine the conditions affecting the quality and relevance of graduate training, overall numbers (stock) and annual output of M.A. and Ph.D. graduates in the above-mentioned countries.
- (b) Ascertain the revealed and implicit demand for graduates for the purposes of economic research, training, and management, from academia, government and the private sector, and their views as to the responsiveness and relevance of current programmes.
- (c) In connection with (a) and (b), visit the above-mentioned countries, to obtain such reports, studies and other pertinent information as may be available, and to interview knowledgeable persons in academia, government, and the private sector. In this regard, you are strongly advised to arrange your visits and collaborate closely with participants in AERC activities (see attached list of participants at the May workshop).
- (d) To prepare a draft report of your findings that among other matters will:
 - Identify issues and concerns from the perspectives of individual countries, the sub-region, and the region's links to outside institutions and agencies.
 - Recommend measures to address these concerns in terms of:
 - policies and activities to be undertaken by local and regional entities;
 - activities leading to a better rationalization of effort at the sub-regional and regional levels;
 - activities that could be effectively pursued by AERC, consistent with its mandate and resources;
 - significant issues meriting further study.

- (e) To prepare a consolidated draft report with the other two consultants, and present it to a meeting of academics and government officials, currently scheduled to be held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 August 1989.
- (f) Subsequent to this meeting, to prepare a joint final report, to be presented to the AERC Executive Director no later than 15 September 1989, and
- (g) Any other activities as mutually agreed upon between yourself and AERC.

Appendix 3

Programme of the AERC workshop

AERC workshop on Graduate Training in Economics for Africans,
Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya, 26 and 27 August 1989.

Friday, 25 August

7.30 p.m. Reception for Participants (Turkana Room)

Saturday, 26 August

10.30 - 11.00 Tea/Coffee

11.00 - 12.30 Opening Remarks (AERC)

Overview of Issues and Responses
(Prof. S.I. Ajayi; Prof. M. Mukras and
Dr. H. J. Pegatienan)

12.30 - 2.00 Lunch

2.00 - 3.30 Discussion of Issues

3.30 - 4.00 Tea/Coffee

4.00 - 5.00 Discussion of Issues (continued)

Sunday, 27 August

9.00 - 10.30 Discussion of Responses

10.30 - 11.00 Tea/Coffee

11.00 - 12.30 Discussion of Responses (continued)

12.30 - 2.00 Lunch

2.00 - 3.30	Discussion of Responses (continued)
3.30 - 4.00	Tea/Coffee
4.00 - 5.00	Suggestions on Followup to Study and Meeting

Appendix 4

Participants at AERC Workshop

AERC Workshop on Graduate Training in Economics for Africans,
Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya, 26 and 27 August 1989.

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The principal objective of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), established in August 1988, is to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to special needs of the region, AERC has adopted a flexible approach to improve the technical skills of local researchers, allow for regional determination of research priorities, strengthen national institutions concerned with economic policy research, and facilitate closer ties between researchers and policymakers.

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