

POSITION PAPER
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN BASIC EDUCATION

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

BURUNDI

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INTRODUCTION

The sectoral policy of the Ministry of Education in Burundi, as adopted by the Cabinet on 26 March 2002, assigns to formal education the objectives of training a person with the following profile:

- A competent individual equipped with knowledge and ability to act decisively and positively on his/her environment;
- A competitive individual on the job market, both at national and international level;
- A creative and imaginative person capable of innovation who can face the challenges of his/her environment; and
- An individual proud of his/her culture, but open to the world, tolerant and equipped with fundamental human values.

The quality of schools in Burundi, which are entrusted with the mission of training this ‘**quality person**’, ought to be planned, decentralized and equitable, in order to reduce disparities at all levels of the educational system.

The Burundian education system is governed by the *Executive Order No. 1/25 of 13th July 1989* relating to the reorganization of teaching in Burundi, as currently modified and according to which:

- ❑ The basic formal education is the structured training provided at both primary and pre-school levels. Its objective is to **lay the foundation for moral, civic and intellectual education, in order to equip the child** with essential general and elementary knowledge.
- ❑ The objective of secondary school education is to train middle-level executives and qualified workers meeting the requirements of the country. It also ensures adequate preparation for higher and university education.

Therefore, quality assurance in education involves equipping the system with a strategic operational mechanism sustained by a coordinated policy that can ensure, in every aspect, the attainment of educational objectives at different levels.

This report aims, therefore, at presenting quality assurance achievements in basic education in Burundi that can be observed not only through institutions responsible for educational monitoring, but also through components such as teachers’ qualifications and motivation, quality of curricula, availability of textbooks and other educational resources.

If traditional quantitative indicators such as the repetition or promotion rate indicate the level of performance of the education system, it is wise to critically examine the quality

of the “product”, in view of the above mentioned factors, as well as the various kinds of assessment carried out.

INSTITUTIONS OF EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. Legal framework

The law on education in Burundi is largely codified. As far as education quality assurance institutions are concerned, legal texts referred to are the following:

- (i) *Executive Order No 1/025 of 13/07/1989* on the reorganization of teaching in Burundi as modified up to the present moment;
- (ii) *Order No 100/011 of 18/01/2002* on the reorganization of the Ministry of Education;
- (iii) *Order No 100/132 of 30/09/2004* on the reorganization the School inspection.

The need for quality education is a constant concern of the legislator who, in turn, mandates the Inspectorate of Education, Directorate of Educational Offices, School Management, and headteachers in secondary schools.

This mechanism must function with synergy, in order to provide mentoring and monitoring of all the processes involved in meeting the stated objectives.

2. School inspection

Order no. 100/132 of 30/09/2004 assigns school inspection with the following specific objectives:

- To carry out inspection in both public and private schools, especially through monitoring of adequate implementation of programme content and principles guiding teaching methodologies; ensuring the existence as well as the use of available educational materials; and the relevance of formative assessments.
- To carry out administrative and financial inspection in both public and private schools through monitoring specific standards of human and financial resources management, as well as the regular handling administrative records and book-keeping.

- In close collaboration with various educational offices, to participate in the formulation of curricula and the development of textbooks and other educational tools.
- To participate in the development of continuing teacher training programmes, and to conduct any other studies that can contribute to the educational and administrative improvement of the education system.
- To evaluate students and pupils by organizing achievement and proficiency tests and national examinations.
- To oversee the issuing of lists of formal system graduates at all levels.

The role of the Inspector is therefore extremely manifold and multi-directional. He/She is at the same time controller–regulator, evaluator-developer of textbooks, trainer of trainers and researcher. These tasks assigned to the Inspector of education make him/her an essential actor of the educational system. He/she must therefore be equipped with advanced scientific skills, coupled with a sufficient background in the national educational system.

Thus, the following requirements are of necessity, in order to join the inspectorate body:

- Be Burundian by nationality;
- Have sufficient basic training of at least:
 - D7 level (i.e. high school leaving certificate) for communal inspectors of basic teaching and their advisors;
 - B.Ed. level for the other categories of inspectors;
- Have worked in the teaching profession for at least ten years;
- Have been rated –Very good during the last five years;
- Having worked for at least three years as head of school/principal, headteacher in charge of academic affairs in a secondary school or academic advisor, is an added advantage.

The recruitment is thus based on a simple analysis of the individual administrative records of candidates.

Under the authority of a General Inspector, the education inspectorate consists of:

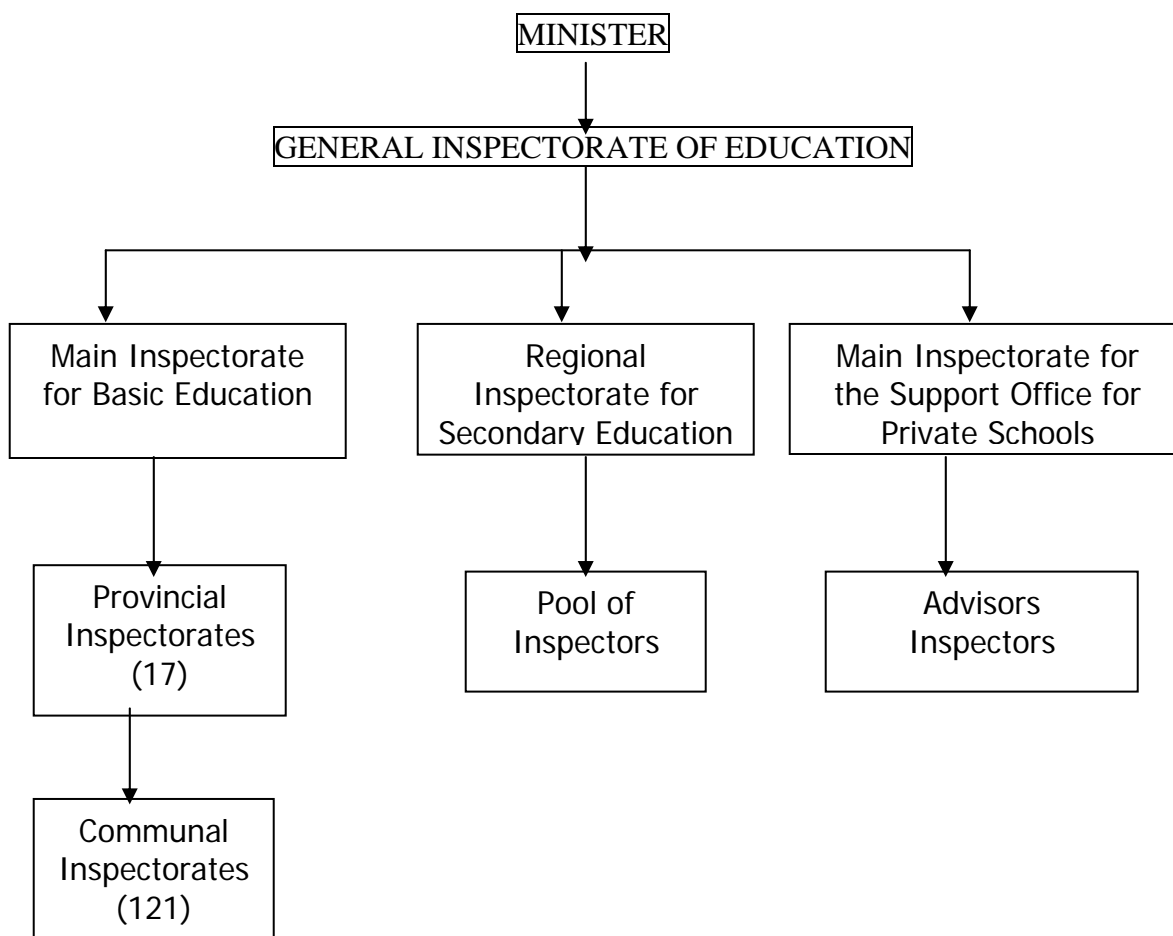
- A main Inspectorate Office for basic education.
- Four regional inspectorates for secondary school education (IRES).
- A support office for private schools (BAEP).

Each regional Inspectorate for secondary schools consists of a pool of inspectors who are experts in various disciplines taught at this level. It also consists of administration

and finance Inspectors. All these inspectors are found in all secondary schools within their area of jurisdiction which covers three to six provinces.

However, the inspectorate for basic education is decentralized up to the sub-division level. Provincial and communal inspectors are required to produce annually **performance sheet** for heads of schools and teachers to be used for their evaluation by the Provincial Directorate of Education.

Organizational chart for the General Inspectorate of Education



It is important to note that while the education system is increasingly growing, the Inspectorate records a shortage of resources needed to ensure mobility. Due to lack of means of transport, school inspection has become less and less available in schools.

3. **The Directorate of Bureaux Pédagogiques**

It consists of the following three ‘Bureaux pédagogiques’:

- The ‘Bureau pédagogique’ in charge of rural education (BER) which is responsible for the development of curricula for basic education;
- The Bureau pédagogique’ for the secondary education curriculum development (BEPES).
- The ‘Bureau pédagogique’ for technical training (BEET) responsible for curricula for secondary and technical and professional training.

Each ‘Bureau pédagogique’ is comprised of education advisors who are experts in various subjects taught in schools.

The main tasks assigned to the different ‘Bureaux pédagogiques’ which constitute the actual structures for supervising teacher training, are to:

- Design and develop all the teaching materials required for the implementation of educational programmes;
- Undertake all kinds of research and initiatives which are likely to constantly improve the standard of education;
- Organize in collaboration with stakeholders further training for the teachers; and
- Participate in assessment at the end of the programme or organize achievement and proficiency tests.

According to the tasks assigned to the educational advisors and their overall skills required, the law ranks and privileges them as Inspectors of education.

Concerning the criteria of eligibility as education advisor, the *Art 10 of OM No. 610/632 of 21/08/2002* on the reorganization of the ‘Bureaux pédagogiques’ states that one should have:

- The required qualifications for the position being applied for.
- Taught the subject for which they are seeking nomination as education advisor for at least seven years.
- Been rated “very good” in the last five years.
- Passed a (possible) test organized to this effect.
- Significantly contributed to the development of education (an added advantage).

Just like the education Inspectorate, the ‘Bureaux pédagogiques’, which also include the Bureau in charge of rural education (BER) for primary education, are based in Bujumbura but do not have adequate logistics and financial resources for planned interventions.

The lack of motivation for the positions of Inspectors and education advisors does not attract an influx of candidates.

4. School management

This constitutes the backbone that sustains the work of the Inspector and education advisor at the local level in the daily management of schools. Within the context of education, the head of school is responsible for:

- Organizing all kinds of educational activities of the institution;
- Carrying out rigorous implementation of curricula and timetables;
- Facilitating and coordinating educational activities of teachers;
- Making projections of means of teaching and managing them appropriately;
- Closely monitoring the work and progress of students;
- Monitoring punctuality, regular attendance of teachers as well as their educational practice, their methods and quality of assessment.

At the primary school level, an average of 50 visits per term by the headteacher is required, in order to monitor the implementation and coverage of the curricula by the teachers.

In addition to the fact that the persistent war in Burundi has created a major leadership crisis, there is inefficiency due to lack of experience in human resource management, which is constantly noted, particularly in situations where in-service teacher training remains a problem.

CURRICULA FOR BASIC EDUCATION

There is no official curriculum to refer to in the case of early childhood education. The one used in urban schools does not integrate issues such as protection, hygiene and health. The experience of community day-care centers and pre-school units that take into account the integrated early childhood development approach is still in its infant state. One constant and noticeable feature is the emphasis placed on awareness activities of a child compared to cognitive development.

With regard to the primary school, the curricula and timetable issued by the 1989 national seminar are set by the *Ministerial Order No. 620/290 of 31/08/1990*. This seminar assigned to it the same missions as those of the 1973 reform: to prepare the young student for secondary education and at the same time his/her integration into the socio-economic (rural) environment.

An analysis of the timetable has revealed two major observations: the timetable gives prominence to the four main subjects, namely: French, mathematics, environmental studies and Kirundi, which account for 86.3% of school time. The corresponding programmes are very broad. The other subjects are considered as optional and are thus skipped. This relates mainly to practical work in home economics, agriculture, drama and music, which normally help students to acquire practical skills.

If one considers the overall average, which is 900 to 1000 hours in a school year, the Burundian school has inadequate school time of only 585 hours. This is due to the establishment in 1982 of a double-shift system in schools for both premises and teachers, and a five-day week (Saturday being designated a day off with pay in 1993).

Until the fourth year (of primary school), the mother tongue, Kirundi, is used as the medium of instruction for all subjects except French. The passage without transition to French as medium of instruction from the fifth year (of primary school) causes problems of assimilation that negatively impact on the fifth and sixth year. In fact, the success rate in communal tests is more than 70% from the first year to the fourth year as opposed to 35% in fifth and sixth years.

The education system in Burundi is very selective and is characterized by a weak internal performance with high levels of repetition and relatively significant drop out rates. The school drop outs, thus, constitute a weakness in the primary education system and are likely to impede the achievement of the Education For All (EFA) objectives if thousands of children are excluded from schooling. The main causes, which must be addressed, are namely:

- Lack of flexibility in courses in terms of defining minimum acquisition threshold and the importance placed on French and mathematics, which are considered difficult subjects;
- The specific needs of weak students that are not taken into account;
- The national examinations which do not constitute an objective external assessment of levels of achievement.

The current primary education curricula, which have been in existence for 12 years, do not sufficiently integrate contemporary societal concerns such as HIV and AIDS, environmental conservation, new information and communication technologies and other life skills.

The national seminar on primary and secondary education curricula (held in December 2003) aimed at reorienting curriculum using a skills based approach. It formulated at different levels, objectives, learning outcomes, integration objectives, skills to be acquired in each subject-area, knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills based on qualifications and competencies. The approach is supported by a learner-centered pedagogy and learning assessment, which leads to correction, and reduction of failure.

Substantial technical and financial support are required to implement the following:

- Production of student textbooks and teacher guides;
- Training of trainers;
- Training of teachers; and
- Scaling up the curricula.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS.

1. Organization of pre-service training

Specialized pre-service training for primary education in Burundi is offered at the following institutions:

- High schools offering D6 assistant-teacher certificates issued after 2 years of educational training undertaken after the lower secondary school or 6 years post-primary school training.
- Teacher training schools offering a D7 certificate for primary education teachers after four years of professional training post lower secondary school (i.e. 8 years of post-primary studies). The candidates are directed by *ad hoc* commissions after the lower secondary school criteria are met. Accordingly, only the most successful candidates from lower secondary schools should be directed towards the teaching profession.
- Accelerated teacher training courses organized in some teacher training schools target secondary school leavers who did not pass the national examinations. These offer a D7 certificate for primary school teachers.
- Also qualified for teaching in primary schools are the holders of D4 certificates, awarded by teacher training schools before 1980, after professional training of one year, received after lower secondary school level, (i.e. 5 years of post-primary studies).

2. Training objectives and contents

The amalgamation of several training structures without clear objective demarcation of training objectives is due to an unclear teacher training policy. Evidence of this can be seen as structures are put in place and then removed as illustrated below:

Historical development of primary school teacher training institutions

| Period | Training Institutions | Remarks |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1940-1962 | School for instructors (E.M.). | Training aiming exclusively at the mastery of primary school content and good expression. |
| 1962-1981 | Middle level educational schools (E.M.P.) D4. | 1 st year after lower secondary education; course centred on primary school curriculum. |
| | Teacher training schools (E.N.) D7. | 4 years post lower secondary education; professional training combined with science courses (B section). |
| 1981-1989 | Training school for primary school teachers (E.F.I.) D6. | E.M.P. and E.N. are abolished. E.F.I. courses focus on the mastery of primary schools courses. |
| 1989 | Teacher training in upper secondary schools in two cycles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LP2: two years after lower secondary school ▪ LP4: four years after lower secondary school | - The E.F.I. abolished. - Teacher training upper secondary school programs are modeled on science courses (B section). |
| 1998 | Restoration of teacher training schools D7. | L.P.4 disappeared. No reform of teacher training schools. |
| 2003 | Accelerated and specialized teacher training for secondary school leavers. | 100% of professional training D7 certificate as per teacher training school. |

The training curriculum intends to equip future teachers with skills in child psychology, teaching methods, management, school legislation, assessment and classroom practice (e.g., practical lessons, intensive teaching practice).

The tendency to combine this training with curricula of science courses (B section) is indicative of the preference for a profile of a well-rounded educator capable of pursuing

higher and university education. The idea of making one’s career in primary school teaching seems to be set apart at least from D7 or D6 certificates.

The primary school is a ‘transit’ period of some years (say one to two) before pursuing higher education in an area of one’s choice. The analysis of timetables also reveals a predominance of general courses as compared to psycho-pedagogical. It is worth mentioning that in 2003, the rate of non-qualified teachers was 16%, and this had a profound influence on results. Similarly, geographical disparities are very noticeable between urban and rural centers with regard to the distribution of qualified teachers.

The socio-political crisis that has prevailed in Burundi for more than a decade is an important factor that has exacerbated disparities noted between urban centers and remote areas with insecurity and inaccessibility of some land-locked areas.

3. **Trainers of trainers**

Two types of teachers are in charge of training future primary school teachers. On the one hand, general courses for scientific training are taught by university graduates who are specialists in their respective fields of study. On the other hand, educational psychologists are in charge of the professional training courses and they must be specialize in methods of teaching different subjects taught in primary schools, and ensure monitoring and evaluation during teaching practice. This is not easy in a school where there is only one educational psychologist.

TEXTBOOKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Textbooks for primary education, pupils’ textbooks and teachers’ guides are designed and developed by the Bureau in charge of Rural Education (B.E.R.) while the production is ensured by the *Régie de Production Pédagogique (RPP)*.

The conflict in the country that resulted in the destruction of school facilities aggravated the shortage of textbooks and other educational materials. To date, it is estimated that teachers’ guides are available for all subjects in every school. Whereas, the estimated ratio for pupils’ textbooks is one textbook for two pupils, yet the situation is such that three to four pupils share one book where it exists!

Given the crisis, the RPP has not been able to sustain the production of textbooks. Nevertheless for the last two years, the situation has improved. A channel of distribution based on the equity and the genuine needs of pupils has been put in place. The coverage rate has clearly improved for the titles that have been produced.

According to the Directorate of ‘Bureaux pédagogiques’, the situation is as follows:

Pupils’ text books: 1 book/3 pupils (about 40% of coverage); teachers’ manuals: the ratio is on average 0.7 manual/teacher (less than a manual), except for French guides for Grades 2 and 4, as well as Kirundi for Grade 3 where there is one manual/teacher. The majority of teachers still lack the necessary resources for the teaching and learning process!

With regard to other print or non-print educational resources, particular effort ought to be made, in order to reduce the shortage experienced in primary schools. Maps and other wall charts, tracing or measuring instruments are aids which one can not do without to develop the necessary skills for the pupils. And yet, the coverage of these remains extremely. For example, the coverage rate for the maps and biology charts tends to be 50% while it is practically 0% for tracing or measuring instruments.

KNOWLEDGE AND APTITUDE EVALUATION SYSTEM

From a systemic point of view, primary education in Burundi has gone through two qualitative assessments of academic achievement. The first was conducted by the French Cooperation in December 1989 and focused on the ability of pupils in mathematics and French at the end of primary school education. The main observations were that:

- a. In mathematics, half of the pupils were found to master well operational techniques but as far as problem-solving was concerned, performance was poor. This was probably due to the fact that questions and problems were not well understood because of difficulties in understanding the French language.
- b. In French about 2/3 of the pupils understood oral instructions that were simple and contained brief messages; only 20% of the pupils appeared to be capable of reading fluently whereas writing was the least mastered with only 15% of pupils able to produce a correct and coherent message on a given topic.
- c. Schools that obtained the best results were those that benefited from good support.

A second study was conducted in December 2001 as part of a joint UNICEF-UNESCO project entitled ‘Continuous monitoring of academic knowledge and assessment of teaching and learning conditions in primary schools in Burundi’. This study made the following observations on pupils at the end of Grade 4:

- The overall performance was good in Kirundi and in life skills, with an average of 75.07%, and 69.6% respectively.
- The mean scores in mathematics were low (52.7%) and poor in French.

In French, performance in reading/writing was the lowest. This underlined the difficulties that are evident in written and oral expression. Given that French is both the medium of instruction and a subject, the impact on the mastery of other subjects will be significant.

As far as mathematics was concerned, the lowest rate of success was in the area of measurements. In the area of life skills, the national average was relatively good, yet the performance was low in science subjects.

The Law recommends continuous assessment under various forms:

- Assignments done in class or homework take the form of exercises that aim to extend the learning process independently or with assistance.
- Assessment tests organized by school heads check on both the level of course coverage and the knowledge acquired by pupils.
- Tests at the communal (or provincial) level are prepared every term by communal (or provincial) inspectors and involve all types of schools in the same constituencies. They play an important role in regulating the implementation process of programmes. They also influence, as external assessment, the performance of teachers who are expected to aim at excellence.

Overcrowded classrooms and the double-shift system in schools make internal assessments carried out by the teachers less and less regular. It is indeed the ease of correction that becomes the most important criterion of the quality of the assessment to the detriment of skills or objectives to be assessed.

The annual rating of members of staff takes into account their performance, and particularly in case of teachers, the regularity of assessments carried out and the results of their pupils in communal tests are important as well.

MAIN CHALLENGES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. Motivation of teachers

In spite of the benefits offered to the teachers (study leave, incentive bonuses) through the *Executive Order No. 01/009* of 06/06/1998 and the 2002 agreements between the government and the unions, several indicators show low motivation of primary and secondary school teachers. According to UNICEF-UNESCO monitoring of learning achievement study, 78% of Grade 4 teachers expressed a readiness to quit the teaching profession altogether if they had an opportunity to do so.

The high number of teachers applying for leave of absence, transfer or resignation including graduates from teacher training schools that are seeking employment in other sectors (NGOs or small business) and the intermittent teachers’ strikes are indications of the malaise among the teaching profession.

At a higher education level, the most qualified teachers are continuously leaving the country for ‘greener pastures’. Improvement of work and living conditions for teachers constitutes a major challenge for quality assurance. Learning assessments have sufficiently indicated a strong correlation between the socio-economic conditions of teachers and their output.

2. Capacity building in the production of textbooks.

The improvement in the coverage rate of textbooks in primary schools will be strengthened as a result of the production capacity building of the RPP. Indeed, the RPP can not maintain its current low production rate of about 200,000 books per year if expected to meet the objectives of EFA. If by 2015, the projected enrolment reaches 2,075,793 pupils, there will be more than 1.2 million additional children requiring educational provision. In maintaining the ratio of one book for 2 pupils, it will be necessary to produce about 6 million books, that is an average of 380,000 books per year, with 5 titles for pupil books and 7 titles for teacher books.

The RPP will be required to at least double its current production rate and this will increase the spending. The estimated cost of production increases to 14,632,780,920 Burundi Francs (FBu). There is therefore need for the RPP to be given special priority, given the importance of books in the learning process. Thanks to the loan for economic recovery, the printing unit will receive a ‘flacheuse’ and ‘stitching’ machine for the improvement of quality of the books.

It is worth mentioning that financial resources of the RPP come mainly from external sources (over 40%), from work carried out by a 3rd party (about 30%), as well as from parents contribution which represents more than 20%.

3. In-service training for teachers

Further training for teachers in the course of their employment is a matter of urgency for the improvement of their pedagogical and didactic skills. In-service training for teachers through refresher courses must be organized in order to keep them abreast with new methods. According to the Law, teachers are entitled to 60 days of refresher training every 5 years. Finding means of implementing this remains a problem.

4. Curriculum reform

The on-going curriculum reform process must succeed in availing a responsive curricula, which emphasizes the mastery of the medium of instruction. After defining the skills to be acquired by pupils, all the necessary and indispensable tools for their achievement ought to be made available.

5. Efficient mentorship institutions

It is imperative to build the capacity of the institutions in charge of monitoring the teaching/learning process. More than 70% of primary school teachers claim that they have never benefited from a visit by an inspector or an education advisor. All necessary means should be mobilized so as to make operational school inspection.

CONCLUSION

There exists in Burundi a sufficiently broad mechanism for quality assurance in basic education. Moreover, international school performance assessment studies have made it possible to provide the country with the necessary tools, reliable databases for guiding monitoring activities of the quality of teaching. The challenges are certainly great, but they are not insurmountable. The skill-oriented approach being adopted by the country can play a major role in generating a profound change to the benefit of the quality of teaching. There is, therefore, need to revise mechanisms of financial resources allocation for the benefit of the quality.

APPENDIX

TRAINING OF TRAINERS AT THE INSTITUTE OF APPLIED PEDAGOGY (I.P.A)

| Subject | Total number of hours for the training | Disciplinary training | | Training in pedagogy + formation | Training in pedagogy + probation |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | ----- Number of hours | ----- Number of hours | ----- % | ----- Number of hours | ----- % |
| English Kirundi | 2250 | 1650 | 78,33% | 600 | 26.67% |
| French | 2185 | 1585 | 72.54% | 600 | 27.46% |
| Biology Chemistry | 2365 | 1795 | 75.9% | 570 | 24.1% |
| Mathematics | 2100 | 1650 | 78.57% | 450 | 21.43% |
| Physics Technology | 2235 | 1695 | 75.84% | 540 | 24.16% |

TRAINING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AT TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES

| Subject | Total number of hours for training ----- Number of hours | Disciplinary training ----- Number of hours | Disciplinary training ----- % | Training in pedagogy + probation ----- Number of hours | Training in pedagogy + probation ----- % |
|------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| French Kirundi | 1830 | 960 | 52.40% | 660 | 36.1% |
| English Kirundi | 1830 | 1020 | 55.7% | 630 | 34.5% |
| Biology Physics | 1935 | 1150 | 59.7% | 600 | 31% |
| Mathematics Physics | 2100 | 1410 | 67.1% | 510 | 42.3% |
| Civil engineering | 2720 | 1650 | 60.7% | 770 | 28.3% |
| Electrical engineering | 2700 | 1630 | 60.4% | 770 | 28.5% |
| General mechanics | 2745 | 1675 | 61.4% | 770 | 28.5% |

Source: Directorate of the Bureaux pédagogiques.

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