



School of Conflict Management,
Peacebuilding and Development

Rebuilding Tertiary Education in Guinea-Bissau: Can it be done?

Brandon D. Lundy

Kennesaw State University



Developing a framework for ecological studies in Guinea-Bissau



The Problem

- Tertiary education in Guinea-Bissau suffers from
 - **Underdevelopment,**
 - **neocolonialism,** and
 - **structural violence.**
- These persistent trends hinder the building (or rebuilding) of tertiary education in the country.



The Questions

- What can best practices from locations sharing similar challenges in growing their tertiary education teach us?
- How can a path forward be forged that encourages the tertiary educational capacities of Guinea-Bissau?



The Context

- Recognizing the problems ahead, agronomist and independence leader Amilcar Cabral said,
 - *The difficulties of our struggle were mainly those inherent in our situation as an underdeveloped ... people ... A people that started with nothing, a people with 99 percent illiteracy rate—you have already seen the effort that we have to make now to teach our people to read and write, to create schools—a people that had only 14 university-trained men ... It is a struggle for schools, for hospitals, so that children won't suffer. That is our struggle.* (Cabral 1969, 143, 145-146)



The Context

	Year 2006	Year 2020
Technical and Vocational Training		
Number of students on short-term vocational training courses (graduating from PE or SE) in the public system	423	6,849
% graduating from 6th year and 9th year	5%	15%
Number of students on technical and vocational courses in the public system	251	800
Number of students on technical and vocational courses in the private system	0	1,000
Higher Education and Scientific Research		
<i>Higher Education</i>		
Students/100 000 inhabitants	224	250
Numbers enrolled in public system	3,000	1,500
Numbers enrolled in private system	689	3,785
Numbers on distant learning schemes	0	1,000
Expenditure per student in GDP unit/inhabitant (both public and private funding), other than social expenditure	1,6	3
Expenditure on study abroad, as % of total local expenditure	237.50%	20.00%
<i>Research</i>		
As % of all higher education expenditure (public + private)	16%	20%
Share of public funding	41%	40%

Table 1. Enrollment Goals in Tertiary Education for Guinea-Bissau, 2006, 2020

Source: Government of Guinea-Bissau (2010, 16)



Lessons Learned

1. “Reciprocity ... to develop **mutual understanding around common interests and problems** in order to foster **greater collaboration**” (Paracka Jr. 2013, 207-208).
2. Educational encounters should encourage **collaborative peer-to-peer learning**, connecting student experiences to ground level realities (Ellison 2013).
3. **Equity, trust, and collaboration** were accomplished through dialogue and openness, creating more “humanizing understandings of one another” (Finnegan, Atim, and Westerhaus 2013, 234).
4. By relying on transnational collaboratively staffed programs developed locally, a critical mass of indigenous talent able to take over educating the population is possible, what Negash and Bass call the “**educating-the-educators**” model (2013).
5. Acknowledging **socio-cultural capital**, it is possible to establish an essential approach to education in Guinea-Bissau by ensuring that educational initiatives and projects seriously consider **local contexts and realities** (Lundy 2013).

Tertiary/Higher Education in Guinea-Bissau

- Headlines continue to read:
 - “Guinea-Bissau still way behind on education” (IRIN 2013), and
 - “Guinea-Bissau Struggles to Provide Education” (Shipman 2015).
- We have to view these problems of inadequate educational capacity and provisioning as protracted.
 - **For example, in the last 25 years, Guinea-Bissau had more than 33 different ministers of education** (Santos and Silva 2017, 206).

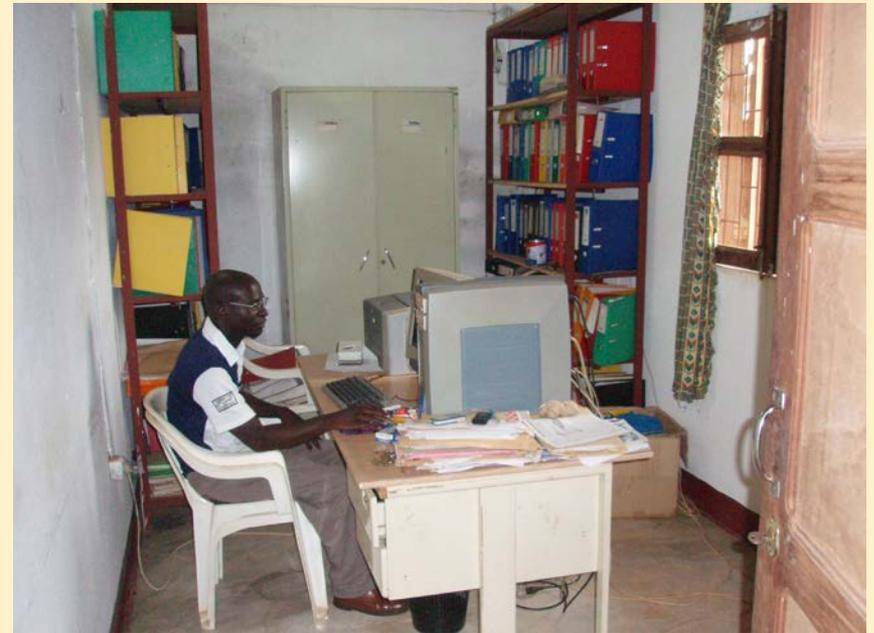


Methodology



Underdevelopment

- One respondent said:
 - *On a global level, the school is operating at the most basic level. We have only the most basic technology in use and even in that we are not using them to their full capabilities.*



Neocolonialism

- Here we see an American vocational training program hinting at possible corruption by the local government:
 - *[The local government official] said that we will have to pay a **legalization fee** of 1,080 XOF [~\$2.00] per square meter, which is about **four times more than the price we were quoted earlier this year**. He said that this fee could be reduced by 20% or more if we were willing to enter in to a partnership with Camara that would **provide free or discounted classes to Camara staff and their children**.*



Structural Violence

- Here a respondent acknowledges these barriers in higher education:
 - *The major constraints of the institution ... are (i) lack of commitment to quality education, (ii) lack of horizontal relationships between students and professors, (iii) **sexual harassment and misogyny**, (iv) professors not questioning their teaching and evaluation methods, and (v) a **lack of access** to literature (e.g., books, papers) or an adequate internet signal.*



Brain Drain

- Acknowledging the challenge of Brain Drain, one respondent stated:
 - *Often times, once students receive training from the [rural] school ..., they move to Bissau where there are more opportunities to use their skills. This brain drain makes it difficult to find qualified teachers to fill the positions at the school. In talking to our students ..., most of them dream of going to school outside the country...*

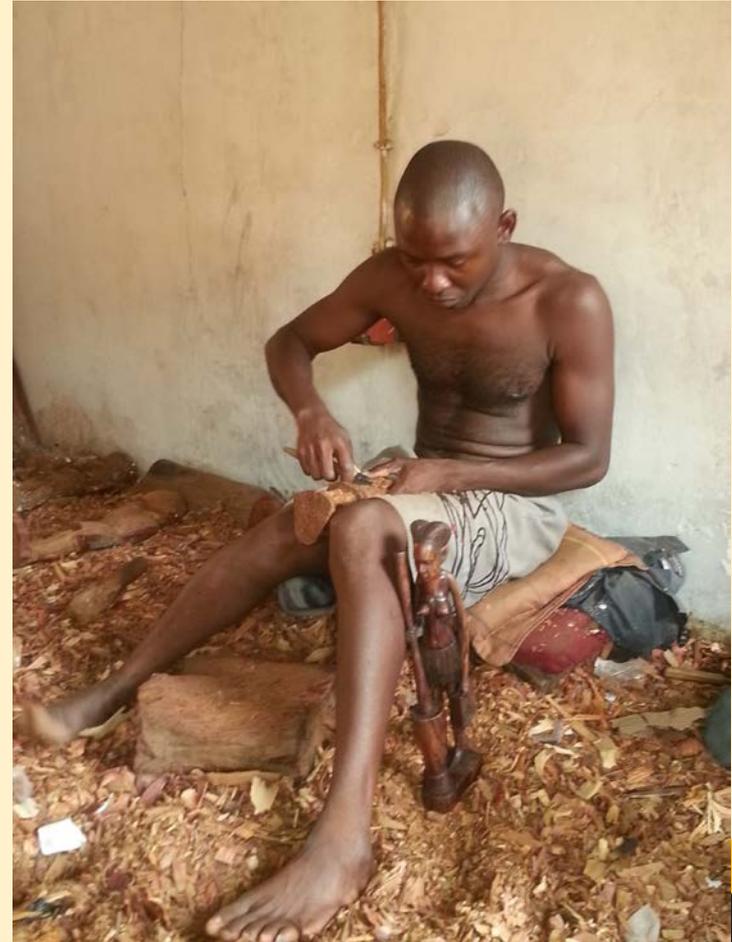


Collaboration



Building Capacity

- According to one:
 - *To date, the school has provided life-changing job skills to more than 800 women and men. The school now reaches 200 students each year. ... This [new] campus will allow [our institution] to expand its training programs to other in-demand areas such as construction, agriculture, and solar power.*



Localized Realities

- Some respondents acknowledged local challenges and opportunities:
 - *Unfortunately, right now, **many students are leaving the country to pursue higher education** because of the lack of quality programs in Guinea-Bissau. However, with an investment in quality higher education, there is a whole generation ready to enroll.*
 - *The most important available resources at the institution where I am based at the moment are the variety of degrees available and the enthusiasm of students to learn and improve...*



Future Potential

- Looking ahead, some respondents envisioned:
 - *[Higher Education] will be an important tool for the development of the country. It can help to improve the educational level of youth and **help them to organize new initiatives for employment and social services.***
 - *If given individual and adequate attention, some students improve very fast and are able to overcome the deficiencies of a low quality elementary and secondary education.*



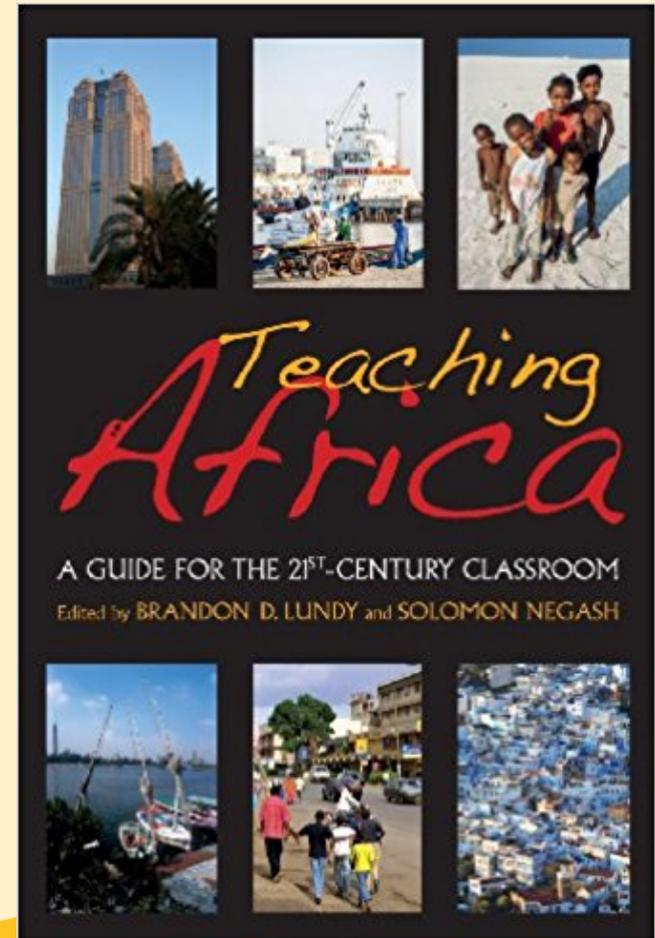
Conclusion



1. Share best practices on teaching and research;
2. assist in the development of an environmental studies curricula;
3. collaborate on projects about the essentials of the environment.

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Thank You & Questions?

