



Bimonthly Newsletter n°57, March 2023

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## Newsletter

Dear colleagues,

In many countries, vocational training for young people is one of the *sine qua non* conditions for future development: thus, Benin has decided to establish a framework law on work-linked training.

The geopolitical context is constantly evolving, and an acceleration of the “tectonics of geopolitical plates” becomes evident: in this context, what should USF do?

Finally, we present the announcement of an international conference on Training, Industrial and Organizational Engineering (AKTIION 2023) to be held soon in Guinea.

Wishing good reading. ■

Prof. Robert Laurini, Editor of the USF-AWB Newsletter.

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### Vocational training: a national priority in Benin

The professional qualifications of the Beninese population remain very low, as in many African countries. An estimated 56 per cent of the population aged 15-64 have never attended school. The economy of that country remains dominated by the contribution of the informal sector, which continues to be characterized by the predominance (81.3 per cent) of the uneducated workforce.

Since 2019, the State has taken decisions to implement a national strategy by developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) development programs aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills for the world of work.

Six priority economic sectors have been identified as engines of economic growth on which Benin intends to base its development. These six priority sectors are Tourism, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Digital, Electricity, Life Framework, Knowledge Economy, Drinking

Water and Social Protection. After two years of implementation, the 45 projects undertaken in these development sectors confirm the integration into the world of work of people who have acquired a technical qualification in these areas. Therefore, one of the objectives is to address the limits of the traditional education system, and in particular the myth that tends to make employment in the public administration the ideal path of social promotion.



Jean-Pierre BIO YARA, Director of Technical Education and Vocational Training presented the creation of vocational training units throughout Benin.

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A framework law provides for the establishment of work-linked training. The implementing decrees will enable this new mechanism to be put into operation in the near future.

A specialized agency, the Technical Education Development Agency (ADET), has as its missions the coordination, implementation, supervision and monitoring of all projects and programs relating to the National Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EFTP). The commitments undertaken lead to an extensive rehabilitation program for agricultural lyceums and a vocational school in the energy, digital, tourism, water and sanitation sectors, maintenance of vehicles and industrial equipment, public works, wood and aluminum.

The Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training of the Ministry of Secondary Education, Technical Education and Vocational Training is an essential element of this system. As its director Jean-Pierre BIO YARA points out, "the programs have been revised to give rise to adapted modular training, training of committed trainers and strengthened links with employers". Funds had to be mobilized, and international partnerships were established with AFD, Swiss cooperation, the Netherlands and Germany, to which national funding had been added.

What about vocational training in higher education? University Institutes of Vocational Education have been established. They provide a short-term response to the lack of qualified intermediate human resources in the practical, craft, agricultural and tertiary professions. In the medium term, the National Vocational Training Strategy envisages extending to higher education already operational arrangements for primary and secondary education. It will be an opportunity for the development of professional licenses and master's degrees in relation to the development of national economic sectors.

For more information, contact Professor Xavier Alphaize, [xavier.alphaize@gmail.com](mailto:xavier.alphaize@gmail.com). ■

## **USF and geopolitical plate tectonics**

### **Genesis and objectives of USF**

USF was created on the basis of a twofold finding, on the one hand, that universities in developing countries need to modernize, and, on the other hand, there are university professors, in particular, retirees, who can contribute because they have skills and time.

For a dozen years, USF has been able, thanks to its network of volunteer consultants, to help some 40 higher education institutions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Over the years, there have been developments which have slowed or even hindered this activity. The purpose of this text will be to examine them. Two levels will be distinguished, local and geopolitical.

### **Local context**

It should be remembered that, at local level, the difficulties relate mainly to the demographics associated with rapid university growth, the inadequacy of public investment, the often limited competences of local teacher-researchers, the inadequacy of practical work and laboratory technicians, the lack of research and updating of courses, the inadequacy of international partnerships, the inadequate training leading to unemployment among graduates, problems related to electricity and the Internet, lack of quality assurance and control, etc. In addition, there is the complexity of decision-making mechanisms.

In this framework, the convergence of other geopolitical developments looks more dangerous; let us examine it quickly.



Changing geopolitical tectonic plates. Photo: [Istock/Gearstd](#)

### **Geopolitical context**

The strong obligation to achieve sustainable development in those countries called for frameworks that addresses those problems and proposes and implements sustainable solutions. But for the competent people, the attractiveness of wages in developed countries takes them to other horizons.

Given the inadequacy of local jobs and the mismatch between training and the labor market, many emigrate. These international

economic migrations are amplified by political and climate issues.

On the other hand, the existence of ranking of universities Shanghai-type leads universities to seek associations that make them rise in this classification to the detriment of international solidarity with higher education institutions of the countries developing. The other mistake is the predatory attitude to attract the best talents.



Added to this, there is France's growing rejection of Africa, especially at the instigation of the Russians and the Chinese. More generally, many African, South American and ocean countries are seeking non-Western partnerships and are sensitive to the proposals of the new Moscow-Beijing axis. A "decolonizing" feeling is spreading in numerous universities and intellectual circles.

In all this, we must take into account the existence of jihadism and its repercussions in sub-Saharan Africa, without forgetting the ravages of the drug economy.

### What to do?

Faced with this complex situation, which could be compared to plate tectonics from a geopolitical point of view, the answers far exceed USF's capabilities. However, our activities in some 40 universities in developing countries may offer a small ray of hope.

As Mother Teresa said: "What we do is just a drop of water in the ocean. But if this drop wasn't in the ocean, I'd miss it".

For more information, contact Professor Robert Laurini, [Robert.Laurini@usf-awb.org](mailto:Robert.Laurini@usf-awb.org). ■

### International Conference on Training, Industrial Engineering and Organization (AKTIION 2023)

The International Research Valorization Network (<https://reuniir.mines.albi.fr>) and the

three university establishments (The Gamal Abdenasser University of Conakry in Guinea, the Kofi Annan University of Conakry in Guinea, and the School of Mines Telecom the IMT Mines Albi-Carmaux in France) convene the 2nd International Conference on Training, Industrial and Organizational Engineering (AKTIION 2023). This second edition will take place from 07 to 09 November 2023 at the Gamal Abdenasser University in Conakry, Republic of Guinea, and the main theme is "Contribution of Industrial Engineering to sustainable development in Africa".



It is a multidisciplinary conference, and the computer aspect is very present (digitization and impacts, decision-making aid, technologies for security and defense, knowledge engineering, artificial intelligence, control and intelligent management of energy). For more details (submission deadlines, registration, etc.) see the website of this conference <https://aktiion2023.sciencesconf.org>.

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