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CASUAL PAPERS

BETWEEN POLICY AND STUDENTS: THE REACH OF IMPLEMENTATION  
IN BURUNDIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

This paper examines interrelationships in implementation among the three main types of primary school policy in Burundi: instructional policies, access and selection policies and school management policies. It is based on a set of pilot studies conducted in 1988. The schools studied mirrored national priorities in that access and selection policies dominated what happened at the grass roots. School management policies, though constrained by the imperatives of access and selection, were also being implemented to a considerable and perhaps surprising extent. The instructional policies of ruralization and Kirundization, however, were more fundamentally undermined by other priorities. Thus these studies indicated that it is the interactive effects of policy that are critical. Although each set of policies has its own logic and may make sense if examined independently of other policies, this seeming independence has little to do with what happens in practice.

In May 1988, about 65,000 sixth grade students in Burundi took the secondary school entrance examination known as the concours national. Of this number, only 11% were to pass, the pass rate being determined by the number of spaces made available in secondary school. It is hard to overemphasize the importance of this event to the students and their families. The few who were successful would be given the opportunity to compete for continued education through the university and for entry into elite jobs. But for the rest, who represented approximately 96% of their age cohort as well as 89% of the sixth graders, the effects of primary school were much more uncertain. It is with this latter group that this paper is particularly concerned.

Burundi is a small, landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. With a population of about 5 million, it is one of the two most densely populated countries in Africa. It has few natural resources other than fertile soil and water to support its rapidly growing population (about 3% per year). Although Burundi is among the poorest countries of the world in terms of per capita income (estimated at \$250 or less per year in the 1980s), it is almost entirely self-sufficient in food production. More than 90% of the population depend on subsistence agriculture; most farmers also grow some coffee for cash income. The country is unusual in Africa in that, except for immigrants and refugees from nearby countries, all the people speak the same mother tongue, Kirundi. However, since independence from Belgium in 1962, the country has been the victim of intermittent communal violence between its two main ethnic groups, the minority Tutsis who have historically

had the most power and who constitute approximately 15% of the population and the majority Hutus who make up almost all the rest of the nonimmigrant population. Until a recent change of government in the fall of 1988, discussions of ethnicity were taboo. The new government has taken important steps toward ethnic reconciliation, steps which in some respects have already started to affect the educational structure reported in this paper.

#### Evolution of Educational Policy and Government Priorities

As with many other African countries, Burundi has put much importance on primary education. Since 1973 a variety of policies have been adopted which are intended to improve the quality of primary schools while at the same time increasing access to the system. This paper has to do with the interrelationships among the three main types of policy adopted in pursuit of these ends: instructional policies, access and selection policies, and school management policies. Instructional policies are concerned with what children are able to learn in school and how they are taught, that is, with the content and methods of teaching. Access and selection policies control who gets into and through the educational system while school management policies have to do with the provision and control of the personnel and materiel needed to make the system work. One of the main questions to be addressed in this paper is how these types of policy affect each other and what sort of instruction results from this interaction among policies.

### Instructional policies

In 1973 the Government of Burundi adopted policies which were intended to alter fundamentally the instruction given in primary schools. Since that time these reforms have been designated by the terms ruralization and Kirundization but at the beginning the intent was more global and far-reaching than these slogans would indicate. Ruralization was to be more than the teaching of agriculture and Kirundization was to be more than the facilitation of learning through use of mother tongue instead of French. The grand design was to have a system of community schools in which teachers and community people would collaborate in practical instruction which would help produce innovative farmers capable of playing a key role in the rural development of the country. More specifically, the objectives of these policies have been described as follows:

In the short term, gradual Kirundization of primary education, beginning with the first year;  
establishment of curricula and methods of active education which would give a larger role to practical work integrated with study of the environment with a view to its improvement; inservice for management and teaching personnel for the double purpose of raising their professional level and introducing the new community education approach; production and distribution of necessary instructional materials; progressive replacement of traditional primary schools

by community schools, with support from school cooperatives which are to be opened to representatives of parents, teachers and public and private civic organizations; setting up by stages a structure for rural development and continuing education, based on the seeds of development to be found in the community schools (cited in Butare, 1988).

It can be seen from these objectives that the reforms were not limited to curriculum and language of instruction, but rather were intended to encompass all the access and management policies needed to bring about the community school. At the same time schools were to continue to prepare a small minority of students for secondary schools, in which the language of instruction would be French.

But later these aims had to be scaled back. School management and access policies took on a life of their own, disconnected from the overall aims of the ruralization policy. The specifically agricultural aims of educational policy were limited. Schools were still expected to have school gardens and to sell the produce of such gardens through school cooperatives, but the time allotted in the national syllabus to teaching agriculture was reduced to a minimum: 30 minutes per week in grades 3-6. And for the most part, this instruction was kept separate from science and emphasized purely practical skills. This practical emphasis can be seen in the behavioral objectives found in the instructional materials produced at the time (for example, "the child must be able to clean out an anti-erosion ditch," "the children must be

able to weed crops appropriately without spoiling them," and "the students must be able to grow corn [or beans, sorghum etc.] correctly").

Kirundi, too, has not become as important in primary school as hoped. It has been the prescribed language of instruction in grades 1-4, but French remained the principal language in grades 5 and 6. At the time of the study reported here (before a government decision made French still more important by starting it in grade 1 instead of grade 3), the number of hours per week devoted to language instruction in French and Kirundi at each grade level was as follows:

	<u>Kirundi</u>	<u>French</u>
Grade 1	7 hrs., 30 min.	0
Grade 2	8 hrs.	0
Grade 3	4 hrs.	5 hrs., 30 min.
Grade 4	2 hrs., 30 min.	6 hrs.
Grade 5	2 hrs.	7 hrs., 30 min.
Grade 6	2 hrs.	7 hrs., 30 min.

It can be seen from this table that already by grade 3 there was more language instruction in French than in Kirundi and that this trend was accentuated in grades 4-6. It should also be noted that the teachers guides published by the Ministry remained in French even for subjects taught in Kirundi.

The net effect of all these changes in the grand design was to leave unanswered the question of what primary schools are to accomplish for students not going on to secondary school (cf. Greenland, 1974). In the international literature, attempts to teach vocational agriculture in primary school have been much criticized and the assertion is made

that basic literacy and numeracy are more important for all students.

It is no longer seriously disputed that the main emphasis of the primary and lower secondary curriculum should be on imparting the basic skills of language and mathematics and a basic knowledge of the social and natural environment (World Bank, 1988, p. 38).

But this was not the position of the Government of Burundi which continued to espouse policies of ruralization. Given the difficulties posed by these policies, examining what actually goes on in schools is a way to decipher what the instruction might mean for those who will not continue with formal education.

#### Access and selection policies

The deemphasis on ruralization and Kirundization was due in part to a change of policy in the early 1980s which gave priority to universalizing primary education over the earlier curriculum-oriented objectives of the reform. Since that time Burundi has been moving swiftly toward universal primary education while maintaining an extremely selective secondary system. The difficulties of coping with the tension between giving access to all and selecting a few have swamped the larger issues of what children are gaining from their time in school.

The key decisions were to increase access by instituting double shifts and reducing repetition rates. At the same time the secondary school entrance examination was maintained largely unchanged in order to

limit secondary school enrollments to the small number of places made available.

Double shifts and collective promotion. According to a World Bank report, the gross primary enrollment rate in Burundi was 21% in 1960, 30% in 1970, 29% in 1980 with a sharp rise to 45% in 1983 (World Bank, 1988). Primary enrollments surged from 176,860 in 1980-81 to 301,278 in 1983-84 and 452,424 in 1986-87, an increase of 256% in 6 years (Burundi, Etude Sectorielle, 1985; Burundi, Statistiques Scolaires, 1986-87).

In achieving these higher enrollments, the government had few options. Even with an extensive program of school construction, financed in part by the World Bank, there were not enough schools and teachers to achieve universal primary schooling without the use of double shifts. Nor could the additional schools and teachers be financed with the resources likely to become available. Therefore, in 1982 the system of double shifts was made the norm for teachers throughout the country, with each teacher expected to teach two different groups of children, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. In 1982-83 this system was limited to first grade and then it was applied year by year to succeeding grades until it reached the sixth grade in 1987-88, the year of the study reported here.

The double shift system reduced the time available for instruction. In September 1984 the Director-General of Basic Education distributed a new schedule for the third grade. On this occasion, he noted that "the new situation has not profoundly changed the intentions and the educational principles of the 1973 reform." Nevertheless, the

time allocated to certain subject-matters in the syllabus was dramatically shortened. The number of hours, for example, devoted to practical agriculture and home economics, was reduced from 4 hours to 1 hour a week. When double shifts reached the sixth grade in 1988, the official schedule provided for 18 1/2 hours of instruction per week (recess and physical education not included). Of this total, 17 hours or 92% of the time was devoted to the four subjects examined on the secondary school entrance examination: French, mathematics, Kirundi, and étude du milieu (a mixture of history, geography and science).

At the same time that double shifts were instituted, the Government moved to reduce repetition rates and thereby make sure that the limited space in primary schools was not too much taken up by repeaters. This policy was known as collective (meaning almost automatic) promotion. The Government attempted, with little success, to achieve average rates of 10% for repetition and 5% for dropout throughout the primary grades (Niyongabo, 1986, p. 49).

Secondary school entrance examination. The flood of students in primary schools had to be brought down to a trickle in sixth grade when only about one tenth of the students were selected to continue in secondary school. To be eligible, a student had to take a relatively short exam known as the concours national produced by a special unit within the Ministry of Education. All questions were multiple choice or short answer. In 1988 there were 15 multiple choice items in the French reading comprehension section focusing on a short text written in a literary style. There was also a section of 50 short answer questions on French grammar and spelling. The mathematics section included only 8

items, but these were among the most difficult items of the exam. The following is an example:

A shopkeeper buys 100 meters of cloth at 650 francs a meter. He resells  $\frac{3}{5}$  of it with a profit of 15%. At how much a meter must he sell the rest in order to earn 19,850 francs in total?

The Kirundi section of 12 multiple choice items was a mixture of grammar, vocabulary and cultural knowledge. Finally, the étude du milieu section tested student recall of specific facts of history, geography and science. In the 1988 examination, 6 of the 20 multiple choice items in this section dealt with the history of African colonization. For example:

One of these four countries has gained independence after a long armed struggle. The country is \_\_Tanzania \_\_Mali \_\_Zimbabwe \_\_Congo

The student's score was derived as follows: the French reading comprehension counted 30 points; French grammar and spelling, 50 points; mathematics, 80 points; Kirundi, 20 points; and étude du milieu, 20 points. Thus, French and mathematics counted for 80% of the total 200 points. One can compare this to the prescribed weekly schedule which allocated 40% of the total instructional time of 18.5 hours to French, 27% to mathematics, 14% to étude du milieu, 11% to Kirundi, and 8% to

all those subjects not examined on the secondary school entrance examination (practical agriculture, home economics, religion and moral education). These figures left little doubt as to the predominance of French and mathematics both in the exam and on the syllabus. All students, whether or not they went on to secondary school, were subject to these priorities.

#### School management policies

In the organization of primary school learning, Ministry policies left remarkably little to local autonomy or chance. Burundi has been particularly well-organized in its attempts to provide schools with qualified teachers, clear objectives, detailed instructional guides, close supervision and regular inservice training for teachers and school directors. In many respects these prescriptions resemble the recommendations made by the effective schools and direct instruction movements in the United States. A few examples will suffice to give a sense for the prescriptiveness of these policies, before we turn to indications of how these intentions were implemented within particular schools.

Teacher qualifications. Burundi has been able to staff its primary schools almost entirely with trained teachers. In 1969 the country had a total of 4,849 primary school teachers of which only 1,992 or 41% were considered qualified in the sense of having had 4 to 7 years of postprimary education with an emphasis on teacher training (Butare, 1988). In 1986-87, of a total of 7,616 teachers, 6,808 or 87% had reached this level (Burundi, Statistiques Scolaires, 1986-87).

Finances have made it difficult to bring the teachers from different schools together for inservice training. Each school has been required to hold an inservice day once a month. The school director is charged with organizing and leading these sessions. For each session certain topics have been specified by the Ministry while others are left up to the school.

Provision of instructional materials. The Ministry in recent years, with World Bank support, has made extensive efforts to provide teachers with instructional materials. Since it is too expensive to give each student a textbook in every subject, student textbooks are intended only for French and Kirundi (and even then they may be in short supply). In general, therefore, the key document is not the textbook but the teachers' guide (fichier) which includes detailed instructions for teaching the national curriculum. For example, in the sixth grade teachers' guide for mathematics, there is a lesson devoted to concepts and problems involving the average speed with which objects move. The guide includes objectives expressed in terms of what the student should be capable of doing at the end of the lesson (e.g., naming moving objects for which one would need to compute an average speed as opposed to a uniform speed, solving problems on average speed where time is expressed in different ways). These objectives are followed by a section which shows the teacher how to present the lesson. The teacher's guide lesson ends with two exercise sections, one for oral and one for written assignments.

School directors as instructional leaders. The Ministry leaves no doubt about whether school directors should be instructional leaders.

It has published a document entitled, Duties of a School Director, in which one set of tasks is enumerated as follows:

- Make class visits . . . . The minimum called for at the end of the year is 150 visits or at least 50 visits per term.
  
- Give demonstration lessons. The minimum required is 30 lessons at the end of the year or at least 10 lessons per term.
  
- Administer monthly tests and do a critical analysis of the results.
  
- Monitor the examination questions chosen by the teachers to see if they are adapted to each level of instruction.
  
- Do a critical analysis of the student outcomes for each term with a view to giving clear directives for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching in the following terms.
  
- Give regular attention to syllabus coverage so that, insofar as possible, the syllabi can be finished by the end of the school year.

- Hold teachers' meetings during which problems of a pedagogical nature are dealt with (Burundi, Les Tâches, 1986).

Further indication of the Ministry's expectations in this regard come from a session observed by one of the authors during a month-long inservice workshop for new inspectors and primary school directors in August 1986. At the session observed, about 50 new directors listened as a representative of the Ministry discussed the prescribed curriculum for étude du milieu. The instructor was emphasizing the need for teachers to check on their students to make sure that all have acquired the idea being taught. For example, the instructor noted, teachers may need to check student notebooks to see if all students really can follow directions to draw a map or a diagram of an insect. At that point one of the directors present suggested that with double shifts it was difficult for the teachers to check student work so closely. The instructor's response left the directors no alternative: "It is your duty to see that the teachers really evaluate the students." Yes, she agreed, it was difficult, but even so there are directors who have found ways to do it.

#### Pilot studies

As a first step in studying the implementation of these policies, in preparation for a larger, more representative study in 1989, three primary schools in three different regions of the country were selected for pilot research in the spring of 1988. This project was planned and conducted in collaboration with the Centre de Perfectionnement et de

Formation en Cours d'Emploi (CPF) and the Ministry of Education in Burundi. Two research assistants were assigned to each site for two months to collect data. One was responsible for collecting data inside the local school while the other was responsible for household surveys which focused on the contribution of schooling to agricultural practice and productivity (Eisemon, Prouty & Schwille, 1990). The studies inside schools relied on questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations as well as general observation of the school setting. The work of instrument development, obtaining access to the sites, training and supervision of research assistants, coding and analysis of data, and preparation of a preliminary report was carried on by a team of Burundian and expatriate researchers in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The school research assistant was trained to accomplish, at a minimum, 20 classroom observations in grades 3-6, 2 structured interviews with each of the teachers in grades 3-6, and 3 structured interviews with the school director. Extensive write-ups were required for all observations and interviews. In the analysis below, the quotations are in fact translations from these original write-ups which were done in French. Hence, the wording below should be regarded as approximations of the original.

The following is a background description of the three schools selected for the pilot studies in 1988. These schools are indicative of the variety of schools found in rural areas of Burundi. Each is advantaged in certain respects and disadvantaged in others.

School A. The area served by school A, though densely populated (350 inhabitants per square kilometer), is mountainous and isolated with

little road traffic. The public school enrollment rate among 7-12 year-olds in the surrounding commune has been very low (32.6%) with more children attending Catholic literacy classes than the public school. The school itself had 562 students in 1988. It was built in 1979 by a World Bank project and is in good condition. The six teachers in the school were all considered qualified according to the earlier national standards requiring at least 4 years of postprimary training. The teachers continued to receive inservice as mandated by the Ministry: 7 inservice days in 1987-88 up to the point of our study. In spite of these advantages, however, the school did poorly on the national secondary school entrance examination. It had a pass rate of about 4% compared to the national average of 11%.

School B. Although school B is in a less densely populated area (130 inhabitants per square kilometer), it is near a small commercial center with two secondary schools, a hospital and various development projects. Constructed by missionaries in the colonial period, the school was in bad shape at the time of our study. Its roof leaked, its doors did not close, its lighting was poor and it was poorly equipped in other respects. With regard to teachers, however, the school's situation seemed particularly favorable. Even though the school is in a locality with a high enrollment rate and a high repetition rate, the school had 12 classroom teachers (plus 2 substitutes) for only 514 students, giving a student-teacher ratio of 42.8. Nominally, the school complied with the national norm for double shifts, but in practice shifts or classes were often grouped together. The school also provided field experience for teacher training students at one of the nearby

secondary schools. The school's success rate on the national secondary school entrance examination was not as high as one might expect, given these advantages. In 1988 15% passed.

School C. School C is in a region to which many people have moved in recent years from other more densely populated areas of the country. The school is readily accessible, only 2 hours by good road from the capital. The school enrollment rate was a high 76% at the time of our study. The school buildings were in generally satisfactory condition, but very crowded. This was a school with a very high success rate on the secondary school entrance examination, 30% in 1988 or about three times the national average. One contributing factor could be the leadership of the school director, who was diligent in carrying out the national policy for instructional supervision (e.g., by making three class visits per week, inspecting student work, giving demonstration lessons).

#### Observed Lessons in Policy Implementation

What happens to students' opportunities to learn when different policies come together within a school setting? Each of the policies in question has its own internal logic, which may be more or less compelling. But the effects of a particular policy depend not only on its own logic, but just as importantly on the extent to which the policy in question is reinforced or counteracted by other policies (see also Nyaburerwa, 1989). Policy makers would do well to understand this process better.

Current policies are policies of ignorance in the sense that they do not rest on an adequate understanding of how external policies affect what teachers and students do (Schwille et al., 1983, p. 371).

It will therefore be instructive to analyze lessons observed within pilot schools as well as interviews with teachers and directors to see what more can be learned about the policies in question and their potential effects.

#### An observed capability for organizing learning

The lesson observations suggest that the Ministry's efforts to prescribe the content and method of instruction were not mere rhetoric. To be sure, the three pilot study schools were in no sense a representative sample of Burundian classrooms. Surveying such a sample was to be done later in the project. In the meantime, the pilot studies provided qualitative data to illustrate the way in which policy was being implemented. These studies also indicated a potential on the part of the Ministry for making a significant impact on students if countervailing obstacles could be removed.

The well-orchestrated lesson. On April 22, 1988 an étude du milieu class was observed in the fifth grade of one of the pilot study schools. Of the three schools studied, this was the one where one might expect the least exact implementation of the teacher's guide. The class began at 4:07 in the afternoon and ended at 4:32. It took place in a classroom of about 7 by 9 meters which held 63 students. According to

the observer's notes, the lesson began as follows (this is a translation from the French, except where Kirundi was used by the teacher or students as indicated):

4:07 pm the teacher writes the word "seeds" on the board; teacher shows a seed to the students; teacher asks students "What is it?" Students raise their hands; teacher calls on student. Student: "It's a seed." Teacher to class: "Look carefully at the parts of the seed." Teacher circulates in the rows and gives seeds to the students for observation.

4:10-4:12 pm students observe seeds in silence. 4:13

pm teacher to class: "What are the parts of a seed?"

(Each time a student answers, teacher writes response

on board.) Student: "The gemmule." Teacher: "What

else?" Student: "The sprout." Teacher: "Is that

all?" Student: "The radicle." . . . 4:17 pm. The

teacher calls the students to the front, row by row,

telling them to observe the different seeds found on

the front benches. Teacher: "You see these seeds.

Listen, I have some seeds. I am going to sow these

seeds. What can I do to have a good harvest?"

Teacher [rephrasing question]: "When you are at home what do you do before going to sow the seeds?"

Student: "Eat." Teacher: "No, do you take seeds like

that and go out in the fields to plant?" Teacher

switches to kirundi: "Imbere yo kuja guteragira mubanza kugira gute?" (What do you do before you go plant?) Students raise their hand. Student: "Kubirobanura" (to sort out the good seeds). Teacher: "Vuga cane" (speak up). Student: "Kubirobanura" (to sort out the good seeds). Teacher: "Before sowing, one must first sort." Teacher: "Who will repeat?" Student: "Before sowing, one must first sort." Other students repeat . . . Teacher: "How does one sort the seeds?" Teacher responds in place of the students: "One sorts the seeds by hand, by winnowing, or else by floating. By floating, the bad seeds float on the water." Teacher writes on the board: "Sort by hand, by winnowing, by floating." . . . Teacher: "Now we are going to select from the seeds that you see before you." The teacher calls students by name and they begin to select.

Later the teacher went on to ask the students about the differences between seeds selected by the rural population and seeds selected by specialists. The teacher again had to answer the question himself: "Seeds selected by specialists come from plants that have not been attacked by diseases." He made students repeat this statement one by one. Then he switched to Kirundi: "Itandukanirizo y'izi ntete n'izindi ni uko ziva mu biterwa bitagwaye." (The difference between the selected seeds and the other seeds is that they are selected among seeds

which have not been attacked by diseases.) The session ended as the teacher explained the significance of the dates on packages to indicate when seeds are no longer good to use.

The observer for this lesson also recorded what the teacher had written in his preparation notebook. In this case the teacher had written not only the objectives and materials to be used in the lesson but also a detailed script (teachers were expected to do this for certain lessons but not all). The following is an excerpt from the script which parallels part of the dialogue above:

Q: I want to sow some seeds and get some good plants.

What can I do with the seeds? A: One must sort them.

Q: Does one take any seed whatever to sow? A: No,

one takes the good seeds, well-formed. Q: How can one

sort them rapidly? A: By hand, by winnowing, and by

floating.

Both the lesson and the plan closely followed the teacher's guide (fichier) published by the Ministry. Somewhat less detailed than the mathematics guide, but nonetheless prescriptive and specific at the lesson level, the étude du milieu guide for fifth grade contains a two-page summary of this lesson. It starts with the topic of the lesson ("selection of seeds by sorting in order to improve plants"), the instructional objective ("the child must be able, with harvested seeds, to sort those that are good to sow and to explain the reasons for doing this") and the aids required ("selected seeds and defective seeds"). Most of the description is contained in a section entitled "Conduct of

the Lesson." It starts with a review of what the students were supposed to learn in the preceding lesson about the parts of the seed. Then the main part of the lesson is described as a practical exercise in which students are put before piles of seeds of variable quality and asked to discuss what they should do before the seeds are sown. The main points of the lesson as given are all found in the teacher's guide. The main difference between the intended lesson and its enactment is that the guide at least by implication calls for an in-depth, inductive problem-solving discussion whereas in the lesson as observed the points to be made were transformed into a more traditional question-and-answer recitation. Finally, the guide called for the students at the end of the lesson to construct devices for the preservation of seeds. When the lesson ended at 4:32 p.m. the observer made a note that this step was left for later.

This lesson demonstrated that there can be a close correspondence between what the Ministry prescribes and what is done in classrooms. There was a clear attempt to implement the teacher's guide faithfully. But the limitations of the lesson as implemented were also indicative of the limitations of Ministry policy and the inability of this policy to deal effectively with a full range of student talent. In part the lesson taught what students already knew, but were unable to bring to bear in the lesson because of difficulties with French. But it also taught some abstruse French terminology for the parts of a seed which the students not going to secondary school might have no occasion to use outside school. In other respects the lesson was rather easy and thus not particularly well suited to preparing students for the secondary

school entrance examination, which is more concerned with difficult and tricky points of mathematics and grammar. The lesson also ostensibly integrated science and agriculture, since it was taught within the science part of the étude du milieu syllabus, but in fact little in the way of scientific principles was being taught and the primary emphasis, as in the practical agriculture classes, was on rules of good agricultural practice.

None of this tells us directly how much students were learning from such a lesson and whether it would be of value to them in the future. It should be noted that the Ministry, too, lacked this information on the effectiveness of what it was requiring.

Inservice days. Data on inservice likewise provided indications of Ministry potential to organize learning although here, too, we lacked evidence of impact. In interviews both teachers and school directors were asked about this inservice. On certain points, such as the most recent inservice day attended, this process provided considerable interview data from multiple respondents concerning the same event.

The various teachers interviewed in one of the three schools reported on how this monthly inservice worked. From October through May 1988 this school had held seven sessions, missing only one month. The main topics were as follows:

October: double shifts and collective promotion;  
use of teachers' observation notebooks.

- November: contents of new first grade Kirundi book; instructional materials throughout primary school.
- December: criticisms of French instruction and what to do about it; the school cooperative.
- January: nutrition in the syllabus for home economics; analysis of first-term results.
- February: difficulties and solutions in the teaching of arithmetic in primary school; student notebooks.
- March: what to do with 6th grade students who are weak in French; athletic awards; preparation for the end of second term.
- May: the teaching of geometrical figures in primary school; school fees.

One of the teachers interviewed went into considerable detail on the May session. In this session, the teaching of geometrical figures for each grade was reviewed, starting with the square and rectangle in grade 1 and ending with the classification of triangles, rectangles and polygons in grade 6. Another teacher recalled specific discussion of

how to calculate an angle of a triangle when the other two angles are known.

In another school the school director reported on the 8 hours of inservice he had organized on 24 April 1988. This inservice included two demonstration lessons for Kiliundi, one for second grade and one for fourth grade, plus discussion of the following: syllabus coverage and analysis of student results for the second term; problems caused by the double shifts, including in particular, the reduction in time available, the overburdened syllabus, the low level of student achievement, the lack of knowledge of French in grades 5 and 6, and insufficient rest for teachers. A teacher in the same school noted that during a similar session the director had talked for a long time on "how to prepare a lesson." He had shown the teachers how to look for teaching aids and how to use them. These teachers had asked questions and taken notes.

It must be said that teacher opinions of the utility of these inservice days varied widely. Most claimed that the sessions were helpful, but a few said they were useless.

Classroom supervision by the school director. Even within the three pilot schools, implementation of the Ministry's detailed prescriptions for supervision of classrooms varied considerably. The number of visits required was the same, regardless of the number of teachers at the school. In fact, however, some directors found it difficult to meet what were described as minimum expectations. One director with 12 classes reported an average of 2 visits per class each quarter. This would, if accurate, represent approximately 72 visits over the course of the year. Another director with 12 classes reported

2 or 3 visits each month for each class. Over a 9-month period, this would be well over the minimum required. He did, however, indicate visiting fewer classes when the teachers were more experienced. All three directors reported visiting beginning teachers more frequently than experienced teachers.

In making visits, directors were supposed to fill out official evaluation grids, but this was apparently done with much variation in detail. Two of the three directors reported that it was not possible to fill out every blank for each visit whereas the third director said that each item is necessary. One director also admitted filling out several reports at the same time for different teachers whose classes were combined in a practical agriculture class together. He said that this was the easiest way to satisfy the requirements.

The classroom visits were likely to focus on easily quantifiable behaviors, such as the teacher's assiduity in keeping a broad range of administrative documents up to date. This may be particularly true for the more experienced teachers whose classroom performance reveals no urgent shortcomings.

I visit first the classes where we have new teachers. This is because they have difficulties in these classes. I stay through their lessons, then I give advice and we discuss the results. In addition to practical counsel, I give pedagogical advice. As for the experienced teachers . . . , I look at whether the documents are kept up.

One of the directors said that because there are so many documents which teachers are required to maintain, some of his visits were purely administrative in nature.

If I make an administrative visit, I only consult the documents. The documents required of the teacher are 14 in number. First of all, there are administrative documents: the weekly program, the register, the inventory list, the class schedule, the school finance notebook, the receipts notebook. Then there are the pedagogical documents such as the lesson outlines, the general lesson plans, the student observation notebook, the assignments and quizzes notebook, the examination notebook, the grade book, the school radio notebook, the teachers' meeting notebook.

In spite of their best intentions, directors were often unable to visit classes because of other commitments. When teachers were absent, the director was often required to fill in. These emergency substitutions may last for a prolonged period of time. During the second year of the study, for instance, we found one director who had been teaching for several months during the prolonged maternity leave of one of the teachers. The directors were also generally absent for one or two days each month to collect the teachers' paychecks.

With the constraints listed above, along with a much more visible role in the community than would be the case in many countries, it might

be expected that directors would lose sight of their role as instructional leaders. And yet, this was not the case. Consistently, the directors interviewed defined their role as one which is intimately related to the improvement of the classroom performance of teachers and the academic output of students. The following remarks were typical:

- What we are particularly looking for, what is important, is how the teacher monitors the students' work. We expect better results from his teaching. We look at the climate between the teacher and his/her students . . . . I can't guarantee excellence, but when I work with the teachers, there is improvement.
  
- I prefer to observe the subject matter in which the teacher is experiencing difficulty in order to help him/her.
  
- If I visit a class, my observations will be limited to the methods used, how well the students assimilate the subject matter, the teacher's attitude and how well the objectives are met.

Without exception, the directors in the pilot schools, through their comments, showed that they did not perceive their own role as one of passive implementation of Ministry policy. They openly expressed their concern about a number of Ministry policies which affected their

role as instructional leaders. For example, three said that the curriculum requirements could not be met with the time currently available for teaching and all three have devised strategies with their teachers to address this problem. In addition, they all mentioned the lack of continuity between the existing grade 4 and grade 5 curricula, although they have not felt empowered to solve this problem at the school level.

#### The observed imperatives of access and selection

Inasmuch as the primary schools of Burundi are faced with the necessity of enrolling as many children as possible and getting them ready for the draconian selection that takes place at sixth grade, these obligations overshadow all else. The double shift and collective promotion policies have placed great strains on these schools, particularly in sixth grade. This is illustrated not only by the opinions of teachers expressed in interviews, but also by the objective conditions as noted by our observers. Class sizes of over 60 were observed in each school (though in school B this was due solely to combining shifts or classes for particular lessons). The crowding was most intense in sixth grade when teachers combined shifts to prepare for the secondary school entrance examination. The following observer's notes are illustrative of this situation:

Grade 6, étude du milieu class, 18 April 1988: 83 students (51 boys and 32 girls, between 13 and 18 years old) study in this class. The teacher had put the two morning and afternoon groups together so that

they could study all day. The students were sitting very close to each other on little school benches and had difficulty writing. There was very little unoccupied space in the classroom.

In interviews the teachers had many adverse comments about the double shift system; the following are examples from three different teachers:

- With this system we are obliged to reduce either homework or student seatwork, but it is not enough just to present a new lesson. One must give as many exercises as possible. Given the limited amount of time, we are forced to give very few exercises since we can't correct them.
  
- We don't have time to correct student seatwork and homework; we have even found that for some subject matters the syllabus is not covered by the end of the year ... [Yet] we are required to give much homework, one graded assignment a week in each subject ... There is no time to copy notes during lessons or school hours; we leave the notes on the blackboard and the students take them down during a free moment.
  
- With double shifts, the teachers have no time, everything has to be done at home; and the students in

order to take notes, they have to come very early in the morning to copy down the notes.

Very few schools have escaped the regime of double shifts. In contrast, the policy of collective promotion has been unevenly and incompletely implemented. In 1987-88 the average national repetition rates as reported by the Ministry was 17.1% in grade 1, 17.0% at grade 2, 17.3% at grade 3, 20.0% at grade 4, 28.0% at grade 5, and 43.6% at grade 6. Mean rates among the country's 31 school districts (cantons) varied still more as did the three pilot study schools. One school reported a repetition rate of 74% in sixth grade, far above the national average, while the second school with 40% was near the national average and the third school at 30% well below the national level.

The teachers interviewed believed that double shifts and collective promotion lead to lower standards among students; this is illustrated by the following comments of three different teachers, all from the same school.

- Even if you go into the sixth grade, there are students who do not know how to write.
  
- When the director evaluates the teachers, he wants all the students to succeed at 100%. He has said many times that we have to promote at least 90% in all classes. But unfortunately in sixth grade it's impossible with the secondary school entrance

examination. ... I feel that students ought to be promoted on the basis of a fairly high standard and not with the whole class. We have noticed that there are students who leave sixth grade without being able to write their name or without being able to write a short letter.

- There are students who have left fifth grade without knowing anything, so for their first year in sixth grade, they are still doing fifth grade, and their second year in sixth grade, it's the first year in sixth, and their third year in sixth grade, they're really doing the second year of sixth; that goes to show you that the students who are promoted from fifth to sixth don't know the material covered in the fifth grade.

Repeating was thus perceived to be a way of increasing the student's chances on the sixth grade examination. One sixth grade teacher reported that the year before he/she had 20 repeaters and 10 of these had passed the secondary school entrance exam. The other sixth grade teacher also in the same school reported having had 20 repeaters of whom 6 had passed. In another school the sixth grade teachers were emphatic in emphasizing the superior performance of the repeaters:

- Among the repeaters I had last year, 8 received the national certificate [for passing the secondary school entrance examination]; all those who passed were repeaters; there were no new ones.
  
- Last year I had 12 repeaters and of these 12, there were 6 who succeeded on the exam; among the nonrepeaters, for the last three years, there have never been any successes on the exam, either in my class or in the other sixth grade class.

Examination pressures. The success rate on the secondary school entrance exam differed dramatically among the three schools studied. In school A, only 3 of 81 candidates passed in 1988 and as a result of similar rates in years past, students in this school were reportedly dejected and disengaged. In school B, 13 of 88 students succeeded, slightly above the national average. In school C the success rate was much higher; 51 of 165 candidates or 30%, yet even here the number of failures far exceeded the number of successes.

In each of these schools there were multiple indicators of the importance of the examination, including in particular the extent to which the pace of instruction was related to the exam as well as the attitudes of teachers and school directors toward the exam. Even school A where the success rate was so small put much emphasis on preparation for the exam.

In each of the three schools there were additional tests prepared by the school district (canton) intended to prepare students for the examination. The idea was both to assess the knowledge of sixth grade students and to familiarize them with the exam process in order to reduce their anxiety. The results of these tests were made public within all the schools of the district so that school directors and teachers could see how their school ranked.

According to the teachers interviewed, review often starts early: "It's useless to wait very long, you have to start very early in September." "You must never wait for the end of the syllabus. A good preparation takes place as one progresses."

One of our observations provided an example of a class given over entirely to practice exercises for the secondary school entrance examination. The observer described this sixth grade mathematics class as follows:

The teacher had written 11 problems on the board; the students worked individually in their notebooks; the teacher talked only at the end of the session. . . . the exercises were varied. There were problems on fractional shares, percentages, scales, moving objects, and exercises on division, subtraction, addition and simplification of fractions. In short, the exercises covered many of the chapters dealt with since the beginning of the year . . . the teacher circulated through the rows and once a student finished, his or her notebook was passed up to the

teacher's desk . . . Every ten minutes the teacher told the students that they had to learn to write rapidly in order to be able to complete the secondary school entrance examination.

As mentioned above, the double shifts themselves were sometimes modified in the sense of providing more time for examination preparation. Certain teachers combined shifts or classes to gain more time. Several ways of combining groups of students were used: one was for the teacher to combine his or her morning and afternoon shifts so that the students could be in school all day; another was for one teacher to take on the two morning classes for subjects like practical agriculture; sometimes even classes from different grade levels were combined for the subjects considered less important. The result was to free up time for students but at the cost of the teacher being in charge of 70, 80 or more students at one time. In school B where enrollments were low relative to the number of teachers, classes or shifts were frequently combined even at the lower grade levels (i.e., in 13 of the 17 observations for which observers collected data on number of students).

Following the examination at the end of May, the school year continues for another month. In the pilot study schools, the classroom observations revealed a letdown in grade 6. In one school the observer made the following notes to summarize his impressions of sixth grade students after the exam:

When sixth grade students have just finished the secondary school entrance examination, they think there is nothing left to do at school. They come when they want, they're absent when they want, and their teachers are not strict about their being tardy or absent.

In another school a session was observed during which all the sixth grade students went over the étude du milieu questions from the recently taken exam. Although 74 of the 80 students were present for this Monday morning session, the teacher began by asking why 15 students had been absent the preceding Saturday. Noting that the year was not yet finished, he asked the students not to miss more classes and to be well-behaved and punctual as well.

In short, by the time students reach sixth grade, the pilot studies as well as later research suggest that schoolwork is largely driven by the secondary school entrance examination. Double shifts and collective promotion may have brought many students into schools, exposing them to instruction which tends to follow Ministry directives as closely as teacher expertise and time will allow. But these measures appear not to have brought instruction within reach of this broad range of students; such difficulties are seen still more clearly if one looks at the problems in implementing policies of ruralization and Kirundization.

### The observed fate of ruralization and Kirundization

The remaining traces of ruralization. Even the few classes of agriculture and home economics that remained in the syllabus were sometimes skipped. And when they were given, they differed greatly from other classes. On May 17, 1988 two fourth grade classes in one of the schools were observed taking their agriculture lesson together. The whole lesson took place outside school. At 8:45 am the teacher distributed baskets to certain students. The teacher and students walked to a field of coffee trees which was about 600 meters from the school. Upon reaching the field at 9:00 am, the teacher told the students to pick all the ripe coffee beans, including whatever fell on the ground; not to leave anything; not to pick unripened beans; and, on threat of severe punishment, not to break the tall branches when pulling them down to pick the beans. At 9:12 the students began to pick the coffee. The teacher watched them and made sure that all the ripe coffee was picked. At 9:35 the teacher chose the strongest students to carry the coffee back to school. The students had picked four baskets of coffee. The observer, after documenting what he had seen, recorded his general impressions as follows:

During the lesson, the students did not have time to talk. It was the teacher who talked and the students who carried out the orders of the teacher. From the explanations given and the manual work of the students, I concluded that the students were used to this kind of work to such a degree that the

intervention of the teacher was not necessary except perhaps to organize and supervise the students so that they can pick as much coffee as possible, breaking fewer branches and having less coffee lost or stolen.

In all three schools, agriculture lessons were observed in which there was likewise little or no instruction and in which students carried out tasks to which they were accustomed at home, including other classes for harvesting coffee, washing coffee beans, mulching coffee trees, harvesting a food crop, weeding in the coffee field, and weeding wheat.

After the class on mulching coffee trees, the observer asked why there had been so little explanation from the teacher during the lesson. The teacher responded:

It's because the students usually do that at home after school. Almost all the families have a coffee field and when students return home after school, they go get straw to cover the field. They know why this should be done.

The pilot studies thus illustrated the fact that agriculture was playing an unimportant role in Burundian primary schools. This subject had little time on the syllabus, it was not on the national examination, it was largely disconnected from science instruction, it was neglected by teachers, and it consisted largely in practicing skills that students had already learned at home. Agriculture classes had become occasions

for work on the school garden in order to earn money for the school cooperative.

French and Kirundi in stalemate. Problems such as the lack of time for teaching, the challenge of covering the syllabus, and the less selective student body are all exacerbated by severe difficulties of classroom communication. Because French is used on the national secondary school entrance examination and as the medium of instruction in secondary schools, it continues to be critical in primary schools as well. Yet, according to these present studies as well as other knowledgeable sources of information, most students arrive in sixth grade without much knowledge of French. The problem of students not having sufficient command of French to understand instruction came up repeatedly in all the data collection activities of the pilot studies, including observations, interviews, and discussions of inservice.

This theme emerged frequently in the follow-up interviews conducted immediately after the classroom observations. Even in the lesson on seeds discussed above, which dealt with a topic already familiar to the children, the teacher said afterward to the observer that the children had had difficulty understanding the French being used. Likewise, after a fifth grade French lesson in another class, the teacher reported that the students had experienced difficulty understanding the terminology used in class, formulating complete sentences and writing all the words correctly since their background in French was very weak. The observer in summarizing his impressions of the observation concurred. He noted that, when students were going over exercises that had already been done orally, none of the sentences

written on the board by the students was entirely correct. More even when the students were reading in class, they made many mis

Certain teachers went much further in condemning student k of French as can be seen in the following remarks which are take interviews in all three schools:

- If I consider my class, I find that the level of the students is very low in all subjects except Kirundi. In French, for example, the students cannot bring themselves to speak a single word.
- At the end of the primary school, the children are n ready to produce a complete sentence in French.
- With the double shifts . . . in my class there is no a single student who is capable of writing a complete French sentence correctly.
- Students enter secondary school without sufficient background in French. We should go back to the old system where the students began French in first grade

When asked which inservice day interested him the most, one teacher talked about a discussion of what to do about sixth grade students who cannot follow instruction in French.

This is a problem that is of concern to me because my students do not understand this language of instruction. In addressing this topic, I was able to get together with colleagues to study the problem as a group . . . . (Interviewer:) During this session which seemed most useful to you, what did you learn that you could use or that would facilitate your teaching? (Teacher:) My colleagues gave me the advice to use simple vocabulary because sometimes I throw in complicated terms. (Interviewer:) Have you made use of this advice? (Teacher) Yes. (Interviewer:) What did you conclude afterwards? (Teacher:) I found that the students understood as the advice of my colleagues had suggested.

It should be noted that this teacher was not always positive when evaluating the inservice sessions he had attended.

Given these difficulties, teachers find it necessary to use Kirundi even in fifth and sixth grade subjects which are supposed to be given in French. A few teachers said that they switched almost entirely to Kirundi for certain lessons:

In étude du milieu, all explanations are given in Kirundi, except for the lesson summary which is written in French.

If a lesson contains many difficult words, more Kirundi words are spoken than French words.

But, except for practical agriculture, no such lessons were observed during the pilot studies. To be sure, in practical agriculture, the classes were generally conducted in Kirundi. An informant at the Ministry of Education suggested that this was because, given the nature of these classes, the teachers did not even consider themselves teaching and thus subject to the official policy concerning the use of French as the language of instruction in grades 5 and 6. Yet even in agriculture, we observed one fifth grade class in which some of the instruction was given in French.

In other subjects the use of Kirundi was much more limited (Eisemon, Prouty & Schwille, 1989). The teachers, when asked about when they used Kirundi, gave various examples such as this one:

The teacher ought to give explanations in French but this is impossible. The child needs some explanation in Kirundi. . . . For example, in étude du milieu there is a lesson on the adaptation of animals in the way they eat. To be able to distinguish herbivores, carnivores, and omnivores, we deal with the eating habits of the cow, the dog and human beings. . . . I have to first explain what vegetable matter is, I give examples of vegetable matter--trees, grass etc. But if the children don't understand, I explain vegetable

matter as ibimera. In that way they can give examples after having understood the explanation.

Other teachers appeared to try to avoid use of Kirundi as much as possible. A grade 5 teacher gave examples of teaching about animals and fruits which are easy to explain in French whereas the same teacher admitted to using more Kirundi in history where there are more expressions that are not familiar to the students. In grade 6, the observer of an étude du milieu lesson on the food chain noted that the teacher never used Kirundi whether for posing questions or giving explanations. Likewise, in a math lesson given by the same teacher, the observer pointed out that not a Kirundi word was spoken either by the teacher or the students.

In general then, it appears from the pilot studies that the students had not learned enough French to be able to benefit fully from instruction given in French. Classes in all subjects became occasions for teaching French rather than the subject itself. Yet French cannot be abandoned without provision for the students going on to secondary school. Success in attaining any of the multiple objectives of primary education in Burundi depends upon finding some resolution to this problem.

### Conclusion

Each of the pilot study schools provided indications that national policy in Burundi has been effective in many ways, but not so successful from an overall point of view. The three schools mirrored national priorities in that access and selection policies dominated what happened

at the grass roots. School management policies were being implemented to a considerable and perhaps surprising extent, but their effects were constrained by the imperatives of access and selection. Ruralization and Kirundization, in spite of being the supposed keystone of government policy since 1973, were undermined by other priorities. This state of affairs has been widely acknowledged by the Burundians themselves. Much has been said about the need for ruralization and Kirundization, but the reality of schools lies elsewhere.

What needs to be examined thoroughly and systematically is the question of what children are actually learning under these conditions and the value of what is thus acquired. Success in these schools has been operationally defined in terms of success on the national secondary school entrance examination. But this is an exam whose sole purpose is to select a tiny fraction of students for further education. It was not designed to drive the curriculum in the way that it seems to do.

This is a case in which policies about what should be learned need to be informed by an understanding of what is being learned and what can be learned. Instructional policy in Burundi as well as many other countries has yet to be subjected to this acid test. And, although an enormous and in many ways admirable effort has been put forth in the expansion and improvement of Burundian primary schools, the pilot studies suggested that very little is being learned by many, perhaps most students in the primary schools of Burundi. With some qualification, this hypothesis was confirmed in the large-scale quantitative survey carried out in 1989 (Eisemon, et al, 1990, ERCW).

The pilot studies indicated that it is the interactive effects of policy that are critical. Each set of policies has developed according to its own logic and in response to different priorities, but at the working level this independence does not apply. When put into practice, each set of policies can be amplified or limited by other policies. For example, any given policy for allocation of instructional time may be perfectly adequate for a given domain of content, but the same policy may be inadequate for another more complex domain. A policy for school management may be adequate to ensure that students learn a certain domain but may be inadequate for students to learn another domain. In the context of Burundi, issues of language of instruction, content selection and allocation of time to content are all crucial. If they are not taken into account, other school improvement policies are destined to failure. Policies are too often made in the absence of rich empirical data on teaching and learning. With such data, policy analysis can start with an understanding of how students are presently taught and what they presently learn (or fail to learn). Qualitative data from the three pilot studies are a step in this direction. With this understanding, one can better predict the effect of marginal changes in such matters as:

- allocation of time to subjects and topics;
- mix of French and Kirundi in instruction;
- content of the national secondary school entrance examination;
- integration of science and agriculture instruction;

the school calendar and the organization of double shifts.

In contrast to the bleakness of much writing about the quality of primary education in those areas of the world that suffer from a harsh lack of resources, in Burundi one can be guardedly optimistic about the results of this bottom-up approach to policy analysis.

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