

# THE NEW PUBLIC POLICY OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN SENEGAL

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My research analyzes the new public policy reforms of higher education in Senegal. These reforms were initiated by the Senegalese government with the goal of developing quality human capital resources capable of having a direct influence on national productivity.

Today, the so-called “demographic dividend” is a dominant issue in the public policies of African countries. By 2050 Africa is projected to reach a threshold of generational renewal, with twice as many people as the current active population on the continent. According to a 2014 study by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development program (NEPAD), the number of young people in Africa will double by 2045. African states are aware that the demographic dividend presents a window of opportunity, a unique and hardly ever renewed potential for economic development. In this context, the implementation of public policies for human capital development is crucial for African countries, which must effectively

control the growth of their population.

In 2014 the Government of Senegal adopted a new national strategy for economic and social development: the *Plan Sénégal Emergent* (PSE). Due to the size of Senegal’s working-age population—estimated in 2013 by the National Agency for Demography and Statistics at 7,728,868, representing more than half (58.2%) of the resident population in Senegal—one of the key priorities of the PSE is the development of human capital. This development of human capital, however, requires a structural and in-depth reform of the higher education sector.

Higher education was introduced in Senegal in the colonial period, with the establishment of the School of Medicine of Dakar in 1918. From independence in 1960, the government has undertaken various efforts to reform and adapt the imported colonial model to the local context, so as to better respond to national needs. However, the failure of various waves of reform, growing unemployment among university graduates, and the increase in the number

of high school graduates (which went from 11,207 in 2003 to 40,942 in 2013—an increase of 365% in 10 years) led to an unprecedented crisis in Senegalese higher education. To face these challenges, Senegal has more recently undertaken a new process of reforms. These reforms are the subject of a sub-sector development strategy set out in two Higher Education and Research Development programs.

My dissertation aims at understanding how the government of Senegal conceptualizes the development of human capital as part of a strategy of economic development, and to analyze the capacity of the state to rethink the role of higher education within the productive process. It analyses how these new public policies are defined, the instruments for implementation, and the role of different actors in this process. It also aims to constitute a theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of public policy analysis in Africa, not yet a full-fledged subfield in Senegalese political science.

My time at the Center for African Studies provided me an opportunity to strengthen my theoretical understanding of public policy and human capital development. As a next step in my research, I plan to conduct interviews with officials from the Ministry of Higher Education who implement the new reforms, teachers and students who participated in the national consultation on the future of higher education in Senegal and the technical and financial resource partner organizations that are financing the reform project.

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