4.1 Country profile

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau is a country situated in west Africa, bordered by Senegal to the north, Guinea-Conakry to the south-east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. With a surface area of about 36 125 square km, it is one of the smallest PALOP in Africa, alongside São Tomé and Príncipe. Guinea-Bissau was the first PALOP country to become independent from Portugal. After 11 years of struggle for independence, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) unilaterally declared independence on 24 September 1973, which was later acknowledged by Portugal on 10 September 1974. Luís Cabral became the first president of independent Guinea-Bissau, as his brother, Amílcar Cabral, was shot dead in January 1973.

Luís Cabral governed the country until 1980, the year in which João Bernardo Nino Vieira, alleging deterioration of the country’s economic conditions, deposed the Cabral’s government in a bloodless coup d’état. After suspending the constitution, Vieira chaired a nine-member military Council of Revolution until 1984, the year in which a new constitution was approved, returning the country to civil government. From 1984 to 1999 Vieira ruled as president of the country. In the beginning of the 1990s, like many African countries, Guinea-Bissau abandoned the one-party political system and the socialist economic approach, and moved towards multiparty democracy.

In 1994, the first democratic elections were held, won by Vieira and PAIGC. In 1998, before the end Vieira’s term in 1999, disagreements between Vieira and a military chief, Ansumane Mané, led to a civil war, opposing government forces and rebels loyal to Mané. The civil war forced Vieira to quit the presidency and to move to exile in Portugal. Elections held in 2000 led the opposition leader, Kumba Yalá, to power, but he was deposed by a military coup d’état in 2003. The elections held in 2005 enabled Vieira to resume power, but contradictions with General Batista Tagme Na Wai resulted in him being brutally murdered in 2009.
Malaim Bacai Sanhá was elected president in 2009, but military interventions intended to control the civil government continued, as in 2010, the current Guinean prime minister Carlos Gomes Junior was taken hostage by military chiefs. In 2011, Sanhá became terminally ill, leaving the country under the leadership of Carlos Gomes Junior while he went to France for treatment. Sanhá died in Paris, and new elections were called for in March 2012, with Gomes running for the top position with other fellow party members from the PAIGC as well as the opposition leader and former president, Kumba Yalá.

Guinea-Bissau has therefore experienced its share of political instability and a troubled historic trajectory, characterised by coups d’etat and military interference in civilian governments. By April 2012, which is the time of finishing this report, Bissau was still in political turmoil. The coup d’etat of 12 April 2012, which took place between the two rounds of the presidential election, plunged the country into serious mayhem. President Malam Bacai Sanhá died on 9 January 2012 and Raimundo Pereira, the speaker of the parliament, was due to act as head of state until elections were organised. But former prime minister and presidential candidate Carlos Gomez Junior, who was the favourite following the first round of voting, had said he planned to reform the armed forces. To anticipate and prevent the announced reform, a military junta seized power and halted the election. If the economic and financial sanctions envisaged by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are implemented, they will have a substantial effect on the country’s economy.

Constitutionally, the country is a semi-presidential republic: the president is the head of the state and the prime minister the head of the government. According to the website of the ministry of economy, planning and regional integration (INE-Guinea-Bissau 2011) the country had a population of about 1 520 830 inhabitants in 2009. Although Portuguese is the official language of the country, the majority of Guineans speak Creole (Kriol) which is the de facto lingua franca of the country.

Bissau is the political, economic and cultural capital of the country. Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2010 its nominal and per capita GDP were USD 825 million and USD 508 respectively (IMF 2010). The population’s life expectancy was 46 years and child mortality rate: 99.8/1 000 in 2011 (The CIA World Factbook 2011). According to the United Nations Development Programme Report (UNDP 2010) in terms of HDI, Guinea-Bissau was in 167th position in a list of 192 countries, and its literacy rate was 64.6% in 2009 (UNDP 2009). According to the Inquérito Ligeiro para a Avaliação da Pobreza¹ (República de Guiné Bissau 2011, INE/UNDP 2010), about 69.3% of Guineans were poor², and 33% of the total Guinean population was extremely poor.

4.2 Background and historical context of higher education

While it can be argued that Guinea-Bissau’s higher education has evolved and transformed significantly since its inception in the 1970s, the ultimate effects of these changes on the

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¹ Poverty Assessment Inquiry.
² The document considers poor to be those living on less than USD 2 a day, and extremely poor those living on less than USD 1 a day.
underlying character of the country’s higher education have not led to the constitution of an integrated higher education system. Nonetheless, the emerging features of higher education in Guinea-Bissau shows that its governance structures, funding mechanisms, the organisation of its primary processes – teaching and learning, research and services – and the general political, economic, and social condition under which the HEIs are operating are geared towards establishing an integrated and coordinated field. In addition, change from a central state-planned economy and regulation of higher education to an increasing reliance on market-driven competition in steering higher education can be observed in Guinea-Bissau. It can be argued that these changes are a result of global trends in higher education, but can also be linked to internal transformation in Guinea-Bissau in the last 30 years.

Guinea-Bissau does not have a public university. There is an on-going process to establish Amílcar Cabral University as its first public university. Thus, this chapter discusses the governance of higher education in Guinea-Bissau at faculty level, since there was no university structure. In this sense, the structure of this chapter is different from others where the discussion was situated at systemic level.

4.2.1 The development of post-secondary education

Bolama was the first capital of Guinea-Bissau during the colonial period from the 1870s until the 1940s. It was in Bolama that the Portuguese established the first teacher training school in Guinea. According to the former minister of education, Delfim da Silva, Bolama was regarded as an ideal place to establish the first HEI in Guinea, since it is located in the outskirts of Bissau (Da Silva 2012, interview). However, no university was ever established in Bolama. The Portuguese colonialists only established universities in two of their five colonies in Africa: Angola and Mozambique (Langa 2006, Bervejwik 2005). According to Perkin (1997: 29) Portugal was less active in colonial education than Spain; for instance, the first Brazilian university at Rio de Janeiro was not founded until 1920, nearly a century after independence. Thus, this particular feature of Portuguese colonialism is reflected in the African Portuguese speaking countries’ delay in establishing HEIs.

Access to education, and higher education in particular, would constitute a key demand of the Guinean nationalism; and staff training was to occupy a central place in the concerns of the national liberation movement. This continued as a central concern for the state of Guinea-Bissau as a legacy of the national liberation struggle and the thinking of its leader, Amílcar Cabral (Landim 2011, quoted in Monteiro et al. 2011).

In 1977 Guinea-Bissau began to sketch the architecture for its first HEI. The National School of Law was established in 1978 with the purpose of training staff for public administration and law, but also for teaching (Landim and Monteiro 2012, interview).

Soon thereafter, in 1979, the vanguard pedagogic detachment Tchico Té was established as a school for teacher training for secondary education. The concept and style of this institution was reminiscent of the Cuban influence in the early years of post-independence national reconstruction. The Cuban government was at the forefront of supporting most African countries that gained independence and adopted socialism. In the same years the National
School for Physical Education and Sport was established. The process of establishing an institute of higher education supported by the German Democratic Republic, was interrupted by the coup of 14 November 1980 (Silva 2011 quoted by Monteiro et al. 2011; Silva 2012, interview). In the early 1980s another attempt to establish HEIs led to the creation of a unit to train civil servants, called the Administrative Training Centre (CENFA). In 1984 a research institute in the field of social sciences was established, the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (INEP), followed in 1985 by the Instituto Nacional de Educação (INDE) which developed from a failed project to establish a pedagogical institute. In 1986 the Faculty of Medicine was established, but it did not form part of a university structure. The School of Medicine was upgraded and gained the status of a faculty ten years after its establishment in 1976. These changes occurred simultaneously with the restructuring of technical and vocational education in the country.

Table 4.1 shows the names of the HEIs in Guinea-Bissau and the year they were established.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Year of creation</th>
<th>Tutelage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National School of Health (ENS)</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Normal School Tchico Té</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National School of Physical Education and Sports (ENEFD)</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal School 17 de fevereiro</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National School Amílcar Cabral (ENAC)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Administrative Training (CENFA)</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's field work 2012

4.2.2 The birth of university education: Faculties of Medicine and Law

4.2.2.1 Faculty of Medicine

The School of Law and the School of Medicine evolved to become the first two academic faculties in the history of Guinea-Bissau’s higher education. These establishments marked the beginning of de facto university training in the country. In 1985 the School of Medicine was upgraded to a Faculty of Medicine, but officially it was elevated to the new status on 23 October 1986, by Decree 31/986, published in the Supplement to the Official Gazette 4386. The Faculty of Medicine was made official by a government Public Act of 12 November 1986. From its inception, the Faculty of Medicine received technical support from Cuba in the areas of medical assistance and scientific and technical support. The first cohort of 34 students enrolled in the pre-medicine programme. Until 1993 more than 30 Cuban teachers taught different subjects in the Faculty of Medicine, ranging from mathematics, physics and chemistry to biology and Spanish.
In July 1998 the political situation changed radically in Guinea-Bissau, with the advent of military unrest that lasted for more than eleven months and affected all sectors of society, including the cooperation with Cuba. It was only after an agreement was signed in July 2001 that the Cuban mission of seven members returned to its activities in Bissau to work at the National Hospital.

This mission of technical staff returned to Cuba on 11 May 2003 on the basis that the minimum working conditions were not in place. On 9 May 2005 a new group of 45 Cubans reached Guinea-Bissau, including 30 employees and 15 medical students working as assistants who were studying in Cuba. On 25 February, the head of the Cuban mission visited Bissau to assess in situ the living and working conditions that his team experienced in Bissau. Following his assessment the Faculty of Medicine was reopened on 20 January 2006. The reopening of the Faculty of Medicine was marked by the establishment of the Lusophone University Amílcar Cabral which formed the basis for admission into the medical programme. The students admitted to attend pre-university training in the area of medical sciences would qualify after passing a final exam and obtained the marks required to undertake a medical degree (Licenciatura).

The Faculty of Medicine is endowed with special status and is basically run by Cuban doctors of different specialisations and an administrative structure, with the ministry of public health of Cuba appointing the dean. The Faculty had units scattered across six different locations called medical or health regions. The idea of medical regions does not coincide with that of territory and governmental division. There are six medical/health regions:

- Health region of the autonomous sector of Bissau with headquarters in Bissau, at the Simon Mendes national hospital;
- Health Region of Cacheu, with two locations: one in Bula and the other in Santos Domingos;
- Sanitary Oio region, based in Mansoa;
- Health region of Bafatá, based in Bafatá;
- Health region of Gabu, based in Gabu; and
- Health region of Biombo, based in Quinhamel.

Between 1986 and 2011 the Faculty of Medicine graduated 340 medical doctors who are distributed throughout the country.

4.2.2.2 The Law Faculty

The establishment of the Law Faculty was a slow process that went on for more than a decade. The faculty evolved from the Law School established in 1979. The Law School was set up to train public servants and officials early after independence and was meant to fill the vacancies in the state bureaucracy created by the departure of the Portuguese settlers. A process of selection was put in place to attract secondary school graduates and professionals experienced in the administration of justice who did not have formal training, to become the first students of the new faculty.
The Law School operated with the support of teachers from different countries who had good diplomatic cooperation with Guinea-Bissau. At some point, problems of coordination hindered the Law School, leading to its closure for a few years. However, the dire need for trained personnel in the legal professions turned out to be increasingly critical for Government and it was decided to establish the Faculty of Law of Bissau (Decree 34/90, 26 November and amended again by Decree 4A/2005, 18 July). Since 1990 the country therefore has had a second university institution as the product of cooperation between the Republic of Guinea-Bissau and Portugal. Under the cooperation with Portugal exchange agreements were signed that enabled students and staff mobility.

The Law Faculty was established as a public institution with managerial, financial and academic autonomy. The main programmes offered in the institution are law and public administration. The course length is five years plus one year of a *propaedeutic* (i.e. an introductory course) which is usually called year zero. The current fee is CFA 70 000 (USD 133), equal for all levels, which makes the faculty the cheapest in the sub-region.

Although Guinea-Bissau still does not have a fully-fledged public university, in 2010 the government approved a new law for higher education and scientific research that established the condition under which the sector will be regulated (Lei do Ensino Superior e da Investigação Científica 2010). The new law regulates some aspects of the governance of higher education in Guinea-Bissau. For instance, according to the new law, rectors are appointed and dismissed by the council of ministers, upon the proposal of the minister responsible.

4.3 Trends of expansion, diversification and differentiation

As in most PALOP countries, the 1990s witnessed an increase in private higher education in Guinea-Bissau. According to Da Silva (2012, interview) the end of the socialist experiment in Guinea-Bissau, at the same time as in most countries of Eastern Europe and previously socialist Africa, represented a shift in the political economy to embrace a market-like economy and representative democracy. Da Silva (2012) mentions some factors that, in his view, contributed to the rapid marketisation and commercialisation of higher education in Guinea-Bissau, namely:

- The end or decline in financial support from the former socialist countries (including Cuba) that continued to pursue a socialist ideology;
- The dramatic reduction of scholarships for Guineans to study in former socialist countries; and
- The demographic pressure and increase of graduates from secondary schools that increased the need to offer local opportunities in their own country.

Pressure from society and the limited resources from government to supply public higher education forced a rapid liberalisation of education and thus opened the space for private providers.
As mentioned earlier, apart from the two isolated faculties of Law and Medicine, which had the support of Portugal and Cuba, Guinea-Bissau still does not have a public university. In 1981, Mario Cabral, then minister of education and culture, made advances in this direction with a proposal to establish a regional University (RENs-3), covering the small countries from PALOP without university education, namely: Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe (Monteiro and Da Silva, 1993). However, following changes in the political atmosphere, namely the coup d’état that ousted Luis Cabral from the presidency of the republic and the abandonment of the project to unite Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde as one political entity, the idea of a regional university faded away along with the demise of the socialist experiment.

4.3.1 Emergence of private higher education

While in most African countries public universities had a near monopoly for years after independence, countries like Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Principe, and Cape Verde were exceptions to that trend. The latter countries had no (public) university several years after obtaining their independence. However, the market-friendly reforms initiated under structural adjustment programmes, deregulation policies, and the financial crisis of the state created an encouraging environment for the emergence of private higher education in Africa (Varghese 2004). The first institutions with university status in these countries were a product of the legislative measures initiated in the 1990s to enable the provision of higher education through private providers. In 1991 the Government approved Decree 07/91 of 20 May and for the first time made space for private operators in Guinea-Bissau’s education. In this context, by 1995 the private Portuguese University Lusíadas was in advanced talks with the former minister of education Paulo Silva with a view to commencing operations in Guinea-Bissau.

The process was interrupted by the fall of the government headed by Colonel Saturnino da Costa. Immediately after, there was another initiative in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts (UMASS), led by former Finance Minister Manecas Santos and Prof. Donald Macedo to recover the bulk of the proposals by Carlos Lopes (Monteiro 2011). In 1996, by Presidential Decree, an installation committee was appointed and established, headed by Peter Mendy, Director of the INEP. But there was a stalemate regarding the configuration of the university/polytechnic institute, and the political-military conflict on 7 June would disrupt the process again (Landim 2012, interview).

However, during this interim period, in an effort to resolve the conflict in Casamance³, Andrew Lewin, then ambassador of France in Guinea-Conakry and Senegal, presented to the French, Senegalese and Guinean authorities a proposal to establish a regional University

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³ The Casamance Conflict is a low-level civil war that has been waged between the Government of Senegal and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) since 1982 over the question of independence for the Casamance region.
of Senegambia, encompassing Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia and Casamance (Monteiro 2011, Landin 2012, interview). His proposal had little echo in the diplomatic circles, visibly hampered by his strong political involvement in the problems of southern Senegal (Casamance).

Finally, in 1999, the Government of National Unity created the Lusophone University Amílcar Cabral, personally and strongly pushed by Francisco José Fadul, then prime minister, and Galdé Baldé the then minister of education of the transitional government. The Lusophone University was established out of a public-private initiative, but the honeymoon period was so short that the two parts fell apart and the government abandoned the project. This issue is covered in more detail later in this chapter.

4.3.2 The rise of a new higher education landscape

The late 1990s were a period of profound political change, which had grave consequences for politics and the educational landscape of Guinea-Bissau. This period was marked by the establishment of Amílcar Cabral University, in collaboration with the Lusophone University of Portugal, in 1999 and a year later, the establishment of the University Hills Boé by a group of businessmen and intellectuals.

The small privately-run university Hills of Boe opened its doors in Guinea-Bissau in September 2003 (IRIN 2003; Lundim 2012; Monteiro, L 2012, interviews). Currently the country has a somewhat diverse higher education landscape. Bissau has six HEIs, one of which is public and the remaining others private institutions.

In fact, they are five universities in operation, all private: Lusophone University of Bissau (the former Amílcar Cabral University); the University Colinas de Boé (UCB); the Jean Piaget Institute; the Catholic University and the University of the West Africa International Sup management, a school-oriented private polytechnic, which operates in the old school of Taborda. With the emergence of new HEIs offering tertiary level education in Guinea-Bissau, the country’s HEI landscape became diverse and differentiated. The Lusophone University offers 13 undergraduate programmes, UCB offers 4, joining the law courses and teacher training that already existed, given by the Faculty of Law of Bissau and the Escola Normal Superior Tchico Tê.

The education system in Guinea did not have Grade 12. The two existing universities introduced a propaedeutic⁴ year (APES), through which they offered to new students who had completed Grade 11 additional training to consolidate their knowledge of languages, computers as well as specific training in selected areas and disciplines.

The proportion of women is not satisfactory. However, female representation varies by institution and programme. UCB presents a more balanced gender parity and equity in their student body. Interestingly, it is the teacher training school that observed one of the lowest female representation, contrary to the situation in Guinea-Conakry and in most countries, where teaching is a profession dominated by women (Monteiro, H 2011, interview).

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⁴ Propaedeutics or propedeutics is a historical term for an introductory course into a discipline.
### Table 4.2 Courses and programmes offered by higher education institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Courses and programmes</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Fem</th>
<th>% Fem</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Colinas de Boé</strong></td>
<td>Public Administration and Social Economy</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting and management</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media and Marketing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APES</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>352</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Amílcar Cabral (No longer operating)</strong></td>
<td>Pedagogy and Educational Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration and Company Management</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>211</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Communication and Journalism</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-University Course</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 187</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>1 822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Escola Normal Superior Tchico Tê</strong></td>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 253</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>3 249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteiro H 2005

#### 4.4 Amílcar Cabral University: A dream deferred


Currently, the ULAC does not operate due to a disagreement between the government and the institution representing Lusophone University. The government removed itself from the joint venture, but Lusophone University continued to offer programmes using
Government facilities and premises (Landin 2012, interview). The set of colleges and faculties that were supposed to integrate a comprehensive institution were split up to operate in a school system of non-integrated university. The month of November 2008 marked the end of the joint administration, and the Government of Guinea-Bissau declared the transfer of the administration to its total bilateral partner, Lusophone University of Portugal, thus giving rise to the Lusophone University of Guinea (ULG).

The following quotation, lifted from a newspaper, shows the short-lived dream of Amilcar Cabral University.

*President Henrique Rosa has formally opened the first public university in Guinea-Bissau, nearly 30 years after the small West African country achieved independence from Portugal. The autonomously managed university, created by a government decree in 1999, will admit its first students for a year of pre-degree course studies in January. Until now, Guinea-Bissau relied on bursaries to send its students to foreign universities, especially to Portugal, Cuba and Eastern Europe. However, Professor Tcherno Djalo, the rector of the new Amilcar Cabral University, said at the opening ceremony on Thursday this policy had proved a failure. He noted that about 80% of all Guineans educated abroad had decided to remain there to work afterwards. They therefore failed to contribute to building this desperately poor nation of 1.3 million people. The Amilcar Cabral University, named after the founder of the PAIGC liberation movement that fought for Guinea-Bissau's independence, will offer degree courses in education, law, medicine, veterinary medicine, engineering, agronomy, economics, sociology, modern languages and journalism. Students will be required to pay fees of 15 000 CFA (USD 26) per month – the equivalent of Guinea-Bissau's minimum wage. (IRIN 2003)*

It began as a national dream: the creation of a public university. Since independence Guinea-Bissau was always interested in establishing new fully fledged university in the country. The project failed for two main reasons: the first has to do with a significant number of scholarships given to Guineans to study abroad during the first years of independence, especially from Eastern Europe and Cuba. The new country often did not have enough candidates for these grants. There was a greater supply of scholarship grants than demand for it. Because of this, the government was not encouraged to establish a university in the country given also the small size of its population. The second reason was the shortage of qualified staff. This situation delayed the project of creating a university for a long period.

However, following the fall of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War, along with the decline in the number of scholarships available and the increase of secondary education leavers, the need to establish a national university became a paramount and irreversible priority. However, the steps taken to that end did not succeed since it created a university with a hybrid public-private management system which proved to be a failure (Landim 2012, Da Silva 2012, Moteiro, I. 2012, interviews).

In November 2011 the ministry of education set up a committee for the reopening of
Amílcar Cabral University (UAC) as a public university. During my fieldwork in Guinea-Bissau, I had the chance to interview the president of the re-establishment committee of Amílcar Cabral University, Mr Rui Landim.

_Hopefully this time we can restore the initial proposal for a public university worthy of the name. The Faculties of Law and Medicine, as well as other units that we deem relevant will join the Amílcar Cabral University, as part of its organisational units._

(Landim, 12 February 2012, interview)

### 4.5 The governance of higher education

The governance and coordination mechanisms of higher education vary from country to country. In Guinea-Bissau the body that coordinates and supervises the activities and quality of higher education is the directorate general of higher education, which is part of the organisational structures of the ministry of education. As a result of this study it was found that the situation of higher education in the country in terms of governance, management and state control has not been consistent due to, amongst other factors, the political instability which brings constant changes of the governance structures. In the last 20 years, Guinea-Bissau had more than 27 ministers of education.

There were no clear structures for governance of higher education in Guinea-Bissau. The only structure at the time we visited Bissau was the directorate general for higher education, within the ministry of education. In an interview held with the director general of higher education in February 2012, he stated that he was in the process of reorganising all the legislation and would be calling on institutions operating in the country to follow suit (Ribeiro 2012, interview). However, this was before the last coup d'état in March 2012 in the aftermath of the presidential election to fulfil the vacancy opened by the death of Bacai Sanhá in January 2012.

#### 4.5.1 An unregulated system? Quality assurance

The rise of universities in Guinea-Bissau predated the existence of a basic law to govern the establishment and functioning of HEIs. This legal vacuum led to a disruption in the opening of the universities which also greatly influenced the supervision of curricula and consequently the quality of higher education. Currently, this regulation breach has been mitigated by the promulgation of legislation dealing with the development, improvement and control over higher education in Guinea-Bissau. Some of these are:

- Higher education law;
- Law on the status of training for a career in teaching;
- Law on higher education and scientific research; and
- Basic law of the education system.
Political instability frequently derailed plans for the establishment of legislation to regulate the system. The overall situation of higher education governance and management in Guinea-Bissau is still developing. In places where there is some kind of legislation, the implementation structures are very fragile. The sector has no system for quality assurance, accreditation of courses or validation of diplomas. Present course offerings are largely inadequate in meeting the needs and priorities of the country. For instance, despite its being an agricultural country, it has no programmes associated with the agricultural sciences; in addition there are no courses of history or anthropology, both of which are essential for knowledge creation, preservation and intervention in the socio-cultural and economic life of the country.

There is a lack of research centres. The existing universities are concentrated in the capital. In terms of infrastructure, most HEIs in the country operate under conditions that are inimical to quality university education. The universities often lack libraries, laboratories, functional classrooms, and have poor lighting. Nonetheless, the sector is very attractive in that there is strong demand from mostly young students, and the cost of education is relatively accessible in terms of affordability. There is even an increasing interest from international institutions in opening new institutions. The challenge is that there is little capacity and availability of regulation and management from the side of the ministry of education.

The new higher education and scientific research law defines in its second chapter the prerequisites for the establishment, suspension and cancellation of courses and programmes, covering both the universities and other kinds of HEIs. An application for the creation of a new course must be presented to the ministry of education, by the authority empowered to do so in accordance with the statutes of each institution (LESIC, Article 20, paragraph 1). The authorisation for the establishment of courses, as well as the power to suspend and cancel higher education courses, is vested in the directorate general of higher education (LESIC, Article 20, paragraph 2). Among the requirements for creating a course, the act lists the staff composition of the faculty, presentation of a curriculum and facilities for the provision of the course.

4.5.2 Financing and access in higher education

Like many other African countries, Guinea-Bissau faces inadequate public financing. However, the share of private resources in higher education financing is expanding. In Guinea-Bissau the contribution from households accounts for more than 50% of national expenditure (state and households) on higher education. Overall, HEIs in Africa generate about 30% of their income, though this ranges from less than 5% in Madagascar and Zimbabwe to 56% in Uganda and 75% in Guinea-Bissau (World Bank 2010). According to the World Bank report Guinea-Bissau spends about 70% of its higher education budget to support its students. In 2007 and 2008, more than 80% of Guinea-Bissau students’ scholarships were for study abroad. However, household financing of higher education is relatively low when compared to household investment in other levels of education (30% of national
expenditure in primary education and more than 45% in lower secondary education). This situation is peculiar to Africa and contributes to inequality in the education system, with the introduction of selection based on family resources well before a student’s entry into higher education. Different forms of cost sharing are being implemented in most African countries. As of 2009, at least 26 countries in Africa charge either tuition fees or other types of fees such as examination fees, registration fees, identity card fees, library fees, and management information system fees.

From the emergence of higher education to the current academic year (2012), there has not been an official standard and unique set of criteria to regulate access to higher education in Guinea-Bissau. In the absence of a law governing higher education, access rules were very different from institution to institution. A general rule was for a candidate to possess a certificate of attendance of Grade 11 or equivalent. The two oldest universities (UCB and UAC) set up a preparatory year that candidates must successfully attend prior to enrolling in their degree courses. In the Law School of Bissau (FDB), the entry was subject to *numerus clausus*. Candidates were selected by the results obtained in a competitive entry exam and admitted according to vacancies. The remaining establishments had no special requirements other than possession of Grade 11 certificate. Each private institution establishes its fee rates. These schools live entirely off these earnings. However, this same condition occurs in some public institutions, namely the Faculty of Law of Bissau and CENFA.

### 4.6 ICT in higher education

ICT infrastructure in Guinea-Bissau can be characterised as inadequate and poor. A survey report compiled by Agyeman (2007) shows that there is little that can be said about enabling factors in ICT development in the country. For Agyeman (2007) assistance from donors and banks is required to help re-launch the country’s economy and provide the infrastructure necessary to contribute to the deployment of ICTs.

The situation observed in 2007 remains practically the same in 2012, and the following are some of the impediments to the meaningful introduction of ICT into the curriculum at all educational levels in Guinea-Bissau:

- Government’s limited and inadequate budgetary and financial resources
- Lack of high level information technology training institutes or schools
- General lack of ICT skills in the teaching population
- Low levels of teacher training
- Poorly equipped training institutions
- Irregular and insufficient electrical power supply across the country that obliges individuals to resort to fuel-powered generators at great cost – a cost that cannot be borne by the national government in the educational sector even when computers are made freely available by donors
- Inadequate and unavailable telecommunication infrastructure and services including the internet
• Concentration of national efforts on the massive reconstruction and rehabilitation of infrastructure destroyed in the 1998–1999 civil war

Adding to this dismal scenario, the political instability remains the greatest hindering factor to the development of the ICT infrastructure in the country. Just to illustrate this point, it is worth noting that the writing of this report was negatively affected by the most recent coup d'état in April 2012, since I could not correspond with my research assistant when most of the communication channels were shut down, including the internet.
REFERENCES


## Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position category</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Local</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alex Pierre</td>
<td>Director</td>
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<td>29/03/2012</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CIFAP</td>
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<td>Fafali Kuodawo</td>
<td>Reitor</td>
<td>UCB</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colinas de Boé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Delfim da Silva</td>
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<td>Ministério da Educação</td>
<td>17/02/2012</td>
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<td>16/02/2012</td>
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<td>16/02/2012</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>16/02/2012</td>
<td>Hotel Malaica</td>
</tr>
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<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ensino Superior</td>
<td>16/02/2012</td>
<td>Ministério da Educação</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Presidente</td>
<td>Committee for the re-installation of University Amilcar Cabral</td>
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