



## IERPE Promoting High School Math Education in Benin

The *Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy* (IERPE) is bolstering mathematics education as a means of supporting Benin's economic development.

**SETTING THE SCENE** —In the 1960s, Benin provided the majority of West Africa's mathematicians and math teachers. In recent years, however, the number of high school students in Benin choosing the National Baccalaureate's Series C, which focuses on mathematics, has not increased at the same rate as other fields of study.

**"MATH PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS AMONG OTHER KEY INDUSTRIES THAT LEAD TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EXPANSION."**

DR. JOEL TOSSA,  
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE  
OF MATHEMATICS AND  
PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

**WHAT IERPE DID** —IERPE is a non-profit, independent educational organization, dedicated to research in the evaluation of public policies. The

Institute aims to contribute to the education and development of the next generation of teachers and researchers in political economy.

In light of the country's dire need for future mathematicians and math teachers, IERPE hosted a public debate on January 30, 2014 entitled *The Disaffection of Mathematics by Students in Secondary and Higher Education*. Officials from the Ministry of Secondary Education, the Institute of Mathematics and Physical Science, and other civil society leaders contributed to the debate that examined why students are not interested in mathematics and what can be done to correct these problems. Experts explained that students choose other fields of study because of the lack of qualified math teachers during their educational experience, a limited understanding of career options available to those studying math, and teachers who intimidate their students and discourage them from pursuing math-based studies.

During the debate, IERPE unveiled a new partnership with the Ministry of Secondary Education to implement a pilot program that will allow students from IERPE's *Master's in Public Economics*



and Applied Statistics program (MEPSA) to teach math in secondary schools in Benin. Through this initiative, IERPE's graduate students will re-teach key concepts that students are struggling with in order to prepare them for the National Baccalaureate in both Series C and D (on mathematics, physics and biology). Through this initiative, the institute aims to demonstrate to the Ministry of Secondary Education that IERPE is invested in supporting quality teaching.

**THE OUTCOME** —As a result of this agreement with the Ministry of Secondary Education, from March 3 through May 30, 2014, 17 students from IERPE's MEPSA program will lead review sessions in public high schools across Benin. Overall, they will serve as exemplary teachers to inspire excellence among current math educators. As an additional benefit of the program, the student teach-

ers represent countries from across francophone Africa, so they will bring their own high school learning experiences into the classroom, creating a forum to exchange best practices.

The Ministry will evaluate the pilot program's success and will sign an agreement to formalize the program that will begin in the 2014-2015 academic year. Through this innovative approach of providing teachers to Benin's public schools, IERPE will gain first-hand knowledge of the challenges surrounding math education in Benin. With this unique perspective, IERPE will be able to provide data and clear examples to the Ministry of Secondary Education on what can be done to develop effective education policies that will provide Benin with skilled workers for its future development needs and goals.

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For more information on IERPE, go to <http://www.ireep.org>

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