Rural schools in developing countries: A case of Donon Manga in Eastern Tandjilé in Chad

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The schools in rural areas in developing countries are often confronted with difficulties which are, in general, related to poverty, the quantitative and qualitative insufficiency of the professionals and the organization. Consequently, every year, the examinations results are unsatisfactory playing on the curriculum and excellence in the educational system. Donon Mango in Tandjilé in Chad is one of the examples with more than 70% of its schools held by the Community teachers who are sometimes without any formal qualifications. The study was carried out by interviewing pupils’ parents, pupils, teachers and the authorities in charge of education. The weakness of the financial contribution by the State (on average 20%) for the operational budget and the deficit of follow-up and control (0.01 inspectors by establishment for 0.004 per teacher) led to a completion rate cycle of 37.5% for primary education and a range of 5 to 18% for the secondary. The rates of success in the baccalaureate are always one of the weakest in the region. These have led to the closure, not without consequences, of secondary schools.

Key words: School, rural, teacher, community, Tandjilé.

INTRODUCTION

The results of the baccalaureate for 2012 session in Chad were cancelled shortly after their publication by a decree from the Prime Minister. The poor results (6.8% pass rate for more than 6000 candidates) were at the origin of this cancellation. Those of the following year were not much satisfactory either (8.7% pass rate for more than 70,000 candidates). The recurrent weak success rates in the examinations led the high authorities of the country to close the grammar schools in cantons and sub-prefectures and center them into the main towns of the departments for some and regions for others.

The incisive reactions of the authorities to close hundreds of schools are justified insofar as they aim at rectifying the situation of the educational system. However, what are the socio-economic consequences and policies which the activated engine can generate and also the starting and final areas? What are the resources implemented to resolve the supposed problems? To answer these questions, it is more than necessary to make initially an inventory of fixtures of the countryside.

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The latter from the example of one region allows the modeling and interpretation of the consequences which one can face.

The insufficiency of the results in the exams, generally, is not recent in Chad. It has been a recurrent phenomenon for more than two decades. Therefore, it is advisable to know the causes of the drawdown. This makes one to wonder what is the responsibility of province schools, in general and the rural schools, in particular. Especially, when it is believed that efforts were made by the authorities in the capital as well as principal cities to improve success rate and promote excellence.

In Toumai’s country, the rural population dominates widely over the urban one (INSED, 2009). The same applies to the non-educated population (MEN, 2010). From primary to secondary schools, the number of schools and students in the rural areas exceeds the urban ones. The capital and the urban centers account for average of 38% of schools in the year 2010, according to education statistics.

However, under what conditions do rural schools dominate in number of classes and learners? Such question deserves to be asked, because excellence of whatever order depends directly on the material and financial investment allocated to it.

These are the main concerns which are the object of this article, using the sub-prefecture of Donon Manga in East Tandjilé.

The choice of this sub-prefecture for this research is not a coincidence. Indeed, the latter has been for the last (6) six years one of the centers for the baccalaureate examination. However, none of the results of these successive years reached a success rate of 5% (MEN, 2010).

In 2012, the center of Donon Manga is one of those whose rate of success is almost nil. The percentage of pass rate in baccalaureate was 1.05%. In 2013, none of the candidates for all option succeeded in the baccalaureate resulting in 0% pass rate. These rates, however deplorable, are certainly due to the school drawdown. These poor results depend on the deficiency in the quality of the education, the training of the teachers and the management of the education system for which responsibilities are to be shared among.

Donon Manga is the administrative center of the sub-prefecture which bears its name. It is located in the South-east of the Department of Tandjilé East, one of the two among the region of Tandjilé (Figure 1). Since independence, the candidates for BEPC (Patent of studies of the first cycle) as well as baccalaureate exams were obliged to travel at least 75 kms to Laï to sit for these examinations. It was only in 2000 that a center for BEPC exam has been created locally followed by a center for baccalaureate 7 (seven) years later.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The methodology used for this article includes investigations, interviews and direct observations. We could not refrain from using work of those which preceded us in the themes. The data collected through Statistics Direction of National Education were compared, in the national context. Those collected from the departmental inspection of education were very important.

The investigations were carried out on a sample of 556 people from 9 different villages. The targeted groups of people were mainly:

1. Pupils’ parents (21.6% of the sample) to appreciate the mechanism of support and follow-up of the education of their offspring;
2. Teachers of the visited schools (14.39% of the sample). Three elements drew particularly our attention in the inquiries among the targets responsible for the education of the man of tomorrow. It is about their statute, knowledge level and the type of their training, the documentation of the school and the supports for the course.
3. Pupils (63.51%). They were surveyed to appreciate their personal work after the class, the relative distance between their residence and the school they attend as well as their personal documentation.
4. People in charge of management and inspection were not spared (0.5% due to their numerical inferiority). The average is of 0.01 inspectors by establishment and 0.004 per teacher in the department.

The objective sought in this target is to understand the difficulties as well as the assets. Furthermore, the reports of the final academic year were not less significant to us in the analysis. The numerical data of the investigations were treated with SPSS and Space software in MapInfo 8.5.

RESULTS

Poverty: restrictive factor of access to school

Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world despite its entry into the group of the oil-producing countries.
From independence to within the last two decades, the weakness of the productivity in primary sector which absorbs more than 80% of the population, had limited its economic growth for a long period of time. The vast structural reform Programs such as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) launched since 1994 have certainly raised the growth rate from 2.6 to 15.5% in 2003 (INSED, 2006), due to the oil revenue. However, this growth is far from solving the populations' hardship, especially in rural areas where the economy is already precarious.

Generally, the results of the investigations on consumption and abstract sector showed that the vital minimum is reached by an approximately expenditure of 396 F CFA per day and per person corresponding to an annual expenditure per capita of individual of 144,500 F CFA (INSED, 2006). People living below this poverty line are about 55% of the total population from which more than 80% are from the rural areas.

The rural economy is primarily based on cotton in decline and groundnut in southern zone and the septentrional zone. A comparative study of the profitability of cotton and groundnut given by average of the gross incomes shows it is equal to 90,750 and 140,000 F CFA (NDOUTORLENGAR, 2011). One can deduce that the expenditure per capita per day is 248.6 F CFA for the cotton producer against 383.5 of groundnut, which is the principal commercial product of the Southern zone.

The Northern zone is recognized for the breeding which is not practiced by all, creating a disparity between people. Also, it is difficult to estimate their annual incomes. Generally, the financial income of the Chadian peasant does not enable him to suitably ensure the schooling of his offspring. The school in Chad is said to be free. However, in reality, an amount which varies based on year, establishment and place, is required by the Association of pupils' Parents (APE) at the beginning of the operation of public schools which are supposed to be free. It varies in the cities depending on the establishments, between 3 000 and 5 000 F CFA for boys and 1 500 and 3 000 F CFA for girls. This complies with the policy for woman's promotion, which started since the nineties. However, officially, these amounts are fixed respectively at 2 500 and 1 500 F CFA in the cities. In the rural areas, the situation is different. The amounts have been reduced to 1 500 and 750 CFA respectively for boys and girls. This reduction has not only been implemented unanimously but is not respected in a unanimous way. It does not always solve peasants' problem. The main goal is not to register a child in school. For a good result, there should be a follow-up, care and necessary school stationeries. This is not within the reach of these peasants.

In spite of being exempted from paying school fee, it is naturally difficult for a Chadian peasant to support the school's expenses of his children. This limits the progression of studies in the rural areas. The completion rate of the cycles proves this assumption. For the primary education cycle, it is 37.5%, whereas the secondary is between 5 to 18% in Tandjilé. These rates are respectively 47.8% for the primary education against 19.9% for the secondary according to the Direction of the Statistics of Education (DSE) at the national level.

Illiteracy: Problem of following-up learners

The illiterate population accounts for 67.1% of the total population (INSED, 2009). The poor are, in their majority, more illiterate than the non-poor. The rate of poverty is more accentuated among women than men. By residence, the rural world has higher concentration of illiterate people. More than 88% of the illiterates are rural people (INSED, 2009).

For the studied zone, 78.2% of the surveyed people can neither read nor write even less speak French. 82.1% of those stated had never visited school where their children have been registered. 67.3% never asked their kids to present their transcripts for the academic year.

The consequences of this fact are numerous. Firstly, the pupils' parents who cannot follow up their kids are simply satisfied with what they tell them. For example, a pupil can present his negative result as good to his parents.

Certain illiterate parents of rural areas hinder their children from learning, even though they are willing to learn. A pupil’s parent, who is stock breeder in the septentrional can ask a teacher to release his child to look after the herd for a day or more before returning to school. In the South, a farmer can prevent his child from going to school in order to help him in the field, compelling him to resume school late as against the resumption date of the academic year scheduled.

Teachers are not spared. Rural teachers, even civil servants, do other activity like pastoral work (82.7% of the surveyed teachers) to increase their incomes. Thus, harvests which often coincide with the start of the new academic year often prevent them from going to school for several weeks. Often learners are used to harvest cotton.

The distance between the school and residence is not likely to support the follow-up of learners even for able parents. At the primary education level, the average travel distance to school is 3.5 km for the whole territory. In the rural places, one records a disparity for the secondary schools especially when one travels ten kilometers to find a grammar school or high school. The sub-prefecture of Donon Manga has only one high school and eight grammar schools. The first is located in Donon Manga centers while colleges are disseminated in the villages.

The average distance from the residence to the high school is 9.8 kilometers. The consequences of this distance are among others, the delays, and the lack of concentration due to tiredness and all forms of violence.
Villages are often separated by savannas. On the way to school, acts of violence and retaliation occur between the pupils without help or assistance.

The beginning of new academic year: A difficult disparity to solve

Every year, in the whole country, the new academic year officially starts within the first week of October. However, for different reasons, there are regularly disparities in the starting date in cities. The reasons differ based on whether one is in the North or in the South of the country.

In the southern most part of the country, the reasons for the delay are closely related to the duration of the raining season. Generally, in zones below 10 N, the raining season starts between March and April and finishes in November, reducing the duration of the academic year to five months only instead of nine recommended by the international standard (Figure 2).

If in the city classrooms are made with durable materials, those schools from rural areas, in general, are assembled in precarious local materials, that is, wood and straws (Figure 3). One can observe that classrooms whose wall are made with bricks and roof with straws are enclosed in secco; their straw roofs are on woodwork posts. There are also free air classrooms.

According to data from Statistics Direction for Education, from the 28394 classrooms for primary schools recorded in 2010, 14096 are made with secco, corresponding to 49.64%. Open air classrooms are 334 (2.36%). So the majority of classes in the country are exposed to bad weather (52%), even though it is counted among the oil producing countries more than a decade ago.

The "cooked bricks" replace benches in the classrooms. They are either built or scattered in the rooms. In all cases, at a given time, the classroom would be found invaded by scattered bricks which constitute a risk for the pupil and the teacher. So the teacher limits his movements around the blackboard due to the lack of alleys. Nevertheless, teacher's free access to pupil will enable him to better check their works.

From the very beginning of the rainy season, the working conditions become difficult as well for the teachers and learners themselves. The only alternative is to empty the classes. This supposes stopping the class between April and May. Also, rebuilding the classroom in the new academic year is compulsory. It is necessary to wait until the end of rains to find straws and timber posts. The rainy season ends between October and November where one can hope to find straws even though timber can be found constantly throughout the year (Figure 4).

From Ter-village to KagaMbassa, there are three grammar schools. All are built in secco. Efforts were made by the populations from these two villages to bring bricks they made for their home as part of their contribution to build classrooms. However, the construction delay is due to lack of money to pay builder. The causes of these delays can be related to the youths of these secondary establishments. However, for primary schools, it is difficult to find convincing explanations because some of them are dated from the colonial periods.

For the academic year 2012-2013, for example, the grammar schools from Ter-village and Ter-Mission restarted for the reasons mentioned above, practically in mid-November. It takes time after the rains to rebuild the classrooms which disappear immediately after the academic year due to the bad weather and the cattle in divagation.

The delay in starting school for other rural area is justified rather by the floods. Certain zones such as Mayo Kebbi as a whole and Tandjilé in its Western part including Laï, because of their very low topographic level, regularly undergo floods which could last for months even after the rainy season.

The cultivation methods are also the causes for the delay of the school re-entry in the rural zones. November
and October coincide with the period of harvests. Learners are retained to help parents and even the teachers to harvest their fields. For the septentrional zones, the reasons are different. The case is not to generalize the problems which the rural schools of this part of the country are confronted: they include the distrust in the Western education on one hand and trans-human, on the other hand (Khayar, 2009). The preference is given to Coranic School. With the approach of the rainy season, the movements of the herds are directed towards the South of the country where they spend months in the search for pasture. The insecurity prevails in the East and West which formerly were used for pasture. Their stay often creates fatal conflicts between farmers and stockbreeders. The trip sometimes takes more than a month letting teachers to wait for a long time for nomad schools.

Community schools: who teaches there and what is taught?

According to 2011 data from the Direction of Statistics, the Chadian rural world counted on its own a rate of 79.20% of primary schools from which 49.55% are Community schools, created on the initiative of the rural communities and managed by them (MEN, 2011) (Figure 5).

These schools disseminated throughout the country are held by 19078 Community teachers out of 27,905 in 2010, that is, 68.6 %, of which only 49.4% underwent the training organized by the Ministry of Education since 2009.

The community masters are in general people who did not succeed in their studies and remained in the villages or people who dropped out from schools. Some have only primary and elementary study certificate (CEPE) or nothing; some others have the first cycle (BEPC) certificate. It is necessary to add to this list demobilized soldiers. In other words, it includes all those who failed down town and who do not hold any qualification to deserve another employment.

The sub-prefecture of Donon Manga has more than forty primary community schools and eight colleges for general education. The first are managed almost entirely by the community teacher. Often, only the directors of the schools are the state’s civil servants. Among the eight colleges, four have a director and a supervisor regularly appointed by the Ministry of Education. Three others have a director without a supervisor and the latter from Ter did not receive any appointment of a professional at his head office. The teaching personnel are primarily made up of temporary teachers and volunteers.

Following our investigations, the education level of all the Community teachers intervening in the sub-prefecture hardly exceeds the baccalaureate level. 23.7% had stopped studies after gaining the CEPE against 49.2% who hold the BEPC.16.1% had abandoned studies after having failed several times in the baccalaureate. The teachers who do not have any qualification are about 11% of the total number. 3% of these teachers underwent the training organized by the Ministry of Education with the support of the development partners. The maximum level of study of teachers for grammar schools is limited to baccalaureate.

In certain schools, due to the large number of inferior teachers, only one manages two to three classes at a time. In other schools, two levels sometimes even though different are combined into a single classroom and taught by the same teacher. On average, a teacher out of six holds two classes against two classes out of six, which are combined for only one teacher.

The consequences in operating this way are significant. They include mainly the supervisors’ level of education and the lack of training for teachers for which the majority is not subjected. Being limited in training as mentioned above, the supervisor can only give what he knows.
without considering the agenda or finding out whether his teachings have been understood or not. The lack of teaching material led to improvisations and repetitions of the courses. In Year 1 and 2 classes, pupils spent most of their time singing. Some recite books passages without being able to read them.

**Lack of textbooks**

Lack of the educational materials is the common problems for teachers and pupils in rural areas in general and Donon Manga in particular.

It was difficult to find the data related to the teaching manuals for primary schools from years 3 to 6. However, the ratio of books by pupil, for all levels and disciplines, in the Tandjilé zone is 0.7. This ratio has the disparities when subdivided within the department, schools and discipline. By department, the Western Tandjilé, more disclosed, takes a step forward with 0.6 books per pupil against 0.4 in the Eastern Tandjilé.

In the sub-prefecture of Donon Manga, 58.3% of the sample of questioned teachers do not have textbooks for the program and use the old lessons which were not sometimes even prepared by them. Five learners out of hundred have a book in all disciplines. Those of the level and the program of the carriers are 2%. The Catholic Cultural Center of Donon Manga is the only place which acts as library in the sub-prefecture. However, it contains more documents related to teaching of life rather than education.

Lack of didactic materials constitutes an obstacle in the self-stem for both trainers and learners. The latter cannot practice outside class hours due to the lack of documentation, except pupils in the exam classes such as terminals and the ones preparing the BEPC/T who take part in evening preparation courses organized by some teachers. Teachers can neither innovate nor improve the course. In the worst case, they may not follow the teaching agenda due to lack of inspection.

In Chad, each of the 22 regions of the country has a regional delegation for education. The delegations are subdivided into inspections for primary and secondary education according to the number of departments in the area. For Tandjilé area, there are two departments: Western Tandjilé and Eastern Tandjilé having each inspector for the primary education and another for the secondary. The first has eight inspectors and the second has seven. The ratio gives 0.01 inspectors by establishment and 0.004 per teacher. The deficiency in control and inspection is mainly due to the excessive number of pupils. It is naturally difficult for fifteen people to look after thousands of pupils and teachers.

The sub-prefecture of Donon Manga has forty-two primary education establishments and nine secondary schools. Only the grammar school was visited twice by the inspection since its creation. The other establishments have been left to themselves. The given reasons are the insufficiency of the travelling means and the limited budget allocated to the institutions for its operation are not enough to cover the establishments’ needs.

**The operating budget**

Considering the data related to the contribution for the operation by zone according to the 2010 data from the financing department, Tandjilé seems to be one of the privileged areas. From the 22 areas in the country, it takes the 6th position (with 356,120,992 F CFA) respectively after the communes of Ndjamena, Mandoul, Logone Oriental, Logone Occidental and the Moyen Chari (Figure 6). However, the contribution from the state for the area accounts for only 23.41%.

The free school supposes that the state provides a full sponsorship; however, for all schools, the principal sources of funding are the school fees and the contribution from Associations of the Pupils’ Parent (APE) and the local communities (MEN, 2011). For Tandjilé region in general, the State grant comes in 3rd position respectively after the contributions from the school fees and the APE. This subsidy hardly reaches the departments which often function, only with the contributions from school fees and APE.

In principle, it has been programmed to subsidies a
sum of 150,000 F CFA and between 200,000 to 500,000 F CFA respectively for grammar and high schools. However, this money is not directly paid to people in charge of the aforementioned establishments. It is granted to the tradesmen in Administrative Cash Voucher (BCA) who can perceive it with the treasure even a year later. The tradesmen supplies schools with what they need, replacing with the vouchers.

In this system, the normal price of an article can be tripled making a lost for the buyer sometimes between 15 and 50% from their value. There are cases where the tradesmen and the persons in charge agree to share this support to the detriment of the establishments. The equipment such as chalk, pens, books are declared after being discharged. They enable schools to function while waiting for the school fees and the contributions from pupils' parents.

**Challenges of the new reform for education policy**

The new reforms carry consequence that, in one way or another, the whole society has to pay for:

**Difficulties of access and/or abandonment of the continuation of studies:** The restriction of the colleges in the departments supposes moving high-school away from pupils’ home town. Thus, in addition to the initial school fees, there is also the new maintenance cost (for rent and subsistence) to be considered. The State did not prepare the facilities for relocating students or to ensure their maintenance. Pupils whose parents are unable to support such an engagement are confronted with the difficulties in the pursuit of their studies. It will be followed by abandonment or a temporary interruption with incidences on the school age.

**The relapse in the rate of completion for girls’ schooling:** In 2011, the number of the girls in the colleges accounts for 24.48% for 334 schools disseminated throughout the country (MEN, 2011). This rate is reached due to the proximity of the open establishments with the decentralization period. Then the closing of those would reduce the number of the girls and young women to carry on with the studies. Parents and husbands from the rural places, for certain reasons and others, could not afford to see their daughters or wives go beyond the limits of the residence regions. And even if some of them allow it, the difficulties would expose the candidates to prostitutions to tackle the high cost of living in the big urban cities. Those who remain in the villages will be subjected to early marriage, which often delays schooling in the rural area.

**Families’ burden in urban centers of reception:** 37% of the surveyed pupils hope to have a foster family in Laï to continue their studies. The arrival of the new candidates increases the household expenses which is 5.4 people; already difficult to support from the minimum wage of the population. The social consequences related to the household surcharge are also plausible.

**The plethora in the classrooms in reception colleges:** On the whole, 5 high schools out of 7 of the department of Tandjilé East are closed. The average number by establishment of these five establishments is 175 pupils say nearly 1000 pupils relocated in 3 three high schools such as Lai, Guidary and Donon Manga. The two last are unable to accommodate all pupils due to the lack of reception facilities (for example 4 classrooms for all the college of Donon Manga). Lai remains the only destination with possibility of overcrowded classrooms.

**Increase in rent:** As better demonstrated by economists, the cost (value) elastic with increase in demand. The example of Koutou with Moundou in Logone Occidental is more than illustrative. Prior to the construction of the University of Moundou in Bonon, the rent in Koutou, in the outskirt of Moundou hardly exceeded 2500 F CFA. However, with the arrival of the students, it doubled up because some students preferred to settle there in order to minimize transport cost to the university. It did not regress any more even though students vacated these places with the arrival of the buses from the National Center for University Works (CENOU). The flow of the pupils in the departments is likely to create the same phenomenon in certain districts in towns of reception.

**Consequent policies:** The proliferation of the colleges on the extent of the territory occurred due to decentralization which emphasizes local development by the autochthones. The closure of some and others, sometimes without the respect of defined criteria, is likely to create socio-political conflicts in certain departments. This is the case of the populations of Donon Manga who will not understand that the college of Donon shall be closed due to the proximity to the college of Guidary. It is not excluded to imagine that the populations of the zones where the colleges are withdrawn would fight for the promotion of their region into department. Only departments are eligible to have high-schools. A new administrative subdivision is possible in the future.

**Conclusion**

Education or training is a matter which involves more than one person. Thus, attempting to answer questions such as "who are the concerned people or partners?", "under which conditions and by which means do they work" can certainly cause people to bandage bleeding wounds which are the origin of the draw down.

For Chad’s case, it is not less true that the origins of the wounds of the excellence of schools were very old.
They are sometimes neglected and sometimes maintained. The war had opened the door to evils such as poverty, illiteracy, favoritism, corruption and the implication of the politic.

The insufficiency of the results in successive years must cause an awakening of conscience for a revival which must take into account the real problems that confront establishments. The educational policies must take into account the conditions of access to education, the recruitment methodology, the training and follow-up of the teaching personnel, the documentation and the operational budget without which the various efforts undertaken will remain a blow of sword in the water. The incisive decisions for the closure of high-schools must take into account the realities and must bear measures of accompaniments.

**Conflict of Interests**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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