

## **Difficulties and Resilience of the Girls Sent to School in the Secondary Cycle of Education: Investigations Carried out with the Teachers of High Schools in Brazzaville in Congo**

**Virginie KOUYIMOUSSOU**  
Marien NGOUABI University (ENS)

### **Abstract**

*This article leans on data gathered through questionnaire to teachers' sample of secondary cycle about school difficulties encountered by the girls sent to school in their course. The analysis of these data allowed to highlight school difficulties of the girls and the factors determining their success. Difficulties met by the girls are of different kinds: school, family, social, psychological, cultural. According to teachers the girls meet the same difficulties as the boys in their school course. The boys take out better because they are less vulnerable than the girls. However, the girls who succeed in spite of difficulties owe it especially to their determination and their representation of the school as factor of further education and of empowerment.*

**Keywords:** Schooling, Resilience, Representations, Opinions.

### **Introduction**

The educational systems face up problems linked to the sub-schooling of the girls, which preoccupy the actors of the educational system in Africa in general, and in the Republic of Congo especially. In the social imagination the school favours the access to the modernity and to the emancipation of girls and of women. Indeed, school is viewed as an institution, which, by transmitting new values, calls into question ancient values which are the foundation of a social order anchored in traditions. The traditional representations linked to the masculine and female roles in the society constitute a factor determining school difficulties which hinder girls' emancipation. Difficulties met by the girls sent to school, cannot be understood without reference to teachers who are key actors of the educational system and to social context. Therefore, it is necessary to gather the opinions of the teachers and to take into account the social and cultural context to understand the determiners of success and of failure at school. This article leans on the data of a research carried out in the schools of secondary cycle in Brazzaville on school difficulties of the girls in their school course. It gives an account of problems and of hypotheses, methodology and of research outcomes.

### **1- Research Question and Hypotheses**

The question of the schooling of girls is the object of many researches. In the school course, the intensification, which illustrates failure often, generates anxiety, stress and shame on pupils in general and on girls particular. Various factors can explain the failure experienced by girls in their school course. Indeed, girls are the object of mockery, of reprimands, of harassment from teachers and their peers. In the family circle, girls are sometimes obliged to mix schooling and housework, domestic and agricultural works as well as other extra-school activities, such as the exercise of generative activities of incomes. Therefore, living conditions in some household do not allow girls sent to school to devote the time necessary for schoolwork.

In the Republic of Congo, the poverty, which touches several families, pushes some parents to oblige their daughters to exercise profitable activities to survive, instead of encouraging them to follow their schooling. Various factors explain the phenomenon of school losses, which affects particularly the girls, who drop out of school because of precocious pregnancies, repeated failure and of the prejudices, which tend to minimise the importance of the schooling of girls. These decisive factors in the process of schooling, condition school success or failure (Zoungrana and Marcoux: 1999; Lange: 2000; ROCARE-CONGO, 2011).

Girls are the victims of discrimination coming, as well as, from pedagogic practices of teachers, from the attitude of the school administration, as well as, from behaviours of the peers. Practices of pedagogy and of teachers' assessment do not give opportunity to girls to express themselves and to speak in class. The didactic and pedagogic organisations of the class still do not take into account the principle of mixing sexes. Relationships between boys and girls are often uptight and interspersed of insults of any kind.

In this context, it appears that some girls succeed in overcoming difficulties encountered and achieve their studies. This official report provoked interest for a research with following main interrogations:

- Do the girls sent to school meet specific difficulties in their school course?

- What factors determine success and failure of the girls in their school course?

#### • Hypotheses

- The girls sent to school would be faced up, in their school course, with different kinds of difficulties linked to their gender.

- Various factors would favour the success of the girls sent to school faced up with different kinds of difficulties.

## 2- Methodological Steps

### Field of investigation

Investigations have been carried out in Brazzaville in six (6) high schools: Mafouta, Nganga Lingolo, Chaminade, Agostino Neto, Lumumba, and Thomas Sankara B. The choice of this city is justified by its positioning in terms of population. Indeed, the capital city is the point of convergence of populations coming from various horizons. People from every walk of life are represented there.

### Target population

The target population of the fieldwork is constituted of teachers of six high schools teaching in classes of different branches in Brazzaville.

### 3- Techniques of data collection

The first part of the questionnaire is an introductory letter where the objectives of the inquiry, interest and anonymous character of given answers are recorded. The second part has three sections: the first section includes information on the institution. The second invites the teacher to say a word on difficulties or recurrent obstacles that hinder female pupils in their school course, and to say to what they attribute the success of these, in spite of difficulties and obstacles, which they meet. Finally, the third section allows gathering information concerning approaches of solutions and perspectives of future.

### 4- Techniques of data analysis

The analysis of data was fulfilled by resorting to the following softwares: EXCEL, STAT, SPSS, and CSPRO.

### Sample and Sampling

A sample of 63 teachers of different disciplines coming from six (6) institutions (high schools) was constituted. This sample was conceived by undertaking a printing haphazardly, according to a mode of exhaustive and simple unpredictable sampling<sup>1</sup>. The teachers kept in the sample intervene in sixth grades and classes of final year students and come from six secondary schools (high schools) as the table below shows it.

**Table n°1: A Sample of Teachers investigated by High school**

High school	Number	%
Mafouta	10	15,87
NgangaLingolo	9	14,29
Chaminade	12	19,05
A Agostino Neto	10	15,87
Lumumba	14	22,22
Thomas Sankara B	8	12,70
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source: *Investigation by V. Kouyimoussou, 2017.*

<sup>1</sup>A simple unpredictable sampling is based on the principle that all elements of the population have an equal likelihood (not null) to be part of the sample: it is a method of sampling allowing to choose unit n among N of the population in an unpredictable way, that is to say, so that each of CNN possible samples, has the same likelihood to be chosen. The combination CNN allows to calculate the number of samples that it is possible to form, from the complete population composed of N individuals, each of the including samples n individuals drawn haphazardly among the N (Bréchon P., on 2008).

### 5- Findings

The answers of the questioned teachers allowed to identify different kinds of difficulties met by the girls in their school course.

**Table n°2: Types of difficulties met by the female girls in their school course**

Difficulties encountered	Yes		No		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Sexual harassment	40	63,49	23	36,51	63	100,00
Financial difficulties	40	63,49	23	36,51	63	100,00
Parents' divorce	34	53,97	29	46,03	63	100,00
Death of a parent	27	42,86	36	57,14	63	100,00
Repeating a year/Resuming a class	18	28,57	45	71,43	63	100,00
Diseases	11	17,46	52	82,54	63	100,00
Handicap	2	3,17	61	96,83	63	100,00
Pregnancy	40	63,49	23	36,51	63	100,00
Untimely motherhood	41	65,08	22	34,92	63	100,00
Housework	29	46,03	34	53,97	63	100,00
Lucrative activities	5	7,94	58	92,06	63	100,00
Field Works	3	4,76	62	98,41	65	100,00
Uneasy understanding of Exact sciences	1	1,59	62	98,41	63	100,00
Prostitution	1	1,59	62	98,41	63	100,00
Oedipus complex	1	1,59	62	98,41	63	100,00
Genetic diseases	1	1,59	62	98,41	63	100,00

Source: *Investigation by V. Kouyimoussou, 2017.*

According to the opinions of the teachers, difficulties met by female learners, during their school course, are of different kinds: difficulties linked to the situation of the parents; difficulties linked to some taught subjects; difficulties linked to occupation by not school activities; difficulties linked to diseases and to the very girl.

The table below shows the different sources of difficulties met by the girls in their school courses.

**Table n°3: Sources of difficulties met by female learners in their school course**

Sources of difficulties encountered	Yes		No		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Familial	41	65,08	22	34,92	63	100,00
Social	45	71,43	18	28,57	63	100,00
Cultural	15	23,81	48	76,19	63	100,00
Gender-linked	17	26,98	46	73,02	63	100,00
Psychological	26	41,27	37	58,73	63	100,00
Individual	12	19,05	51	80,95	63	100,00

Source: *Investigation by V. Kouyimoussou, 2017.*

According to the questioned teachers, the girls and the boys do not meet the same difficulties. That is say, the girls meet difficulties which are specific for them. Male learners take out better than the girls facing difficulties met in their school course. According to the opinions of the teachers, male learners take out better than the girls facing difficulties met in their school course. The teachers questioned on the reasons which explain the fact that the boys take out better than the girls, consider that the pupils of masculine sex are less vulnerable and they have a higher conscience of the sense of responsibility.

**Table n°4: Opinions of the teachers on reasons explaining the school success of the girls, in spite of difficulties.**

Reasons of success	Opinions					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Marked will	56	88,89	7	11,11	63	100,00
Courage	35	55,56	28	44,44	63	100,00
Abilities or aptitudes	9	14,29	54	85,71	63	100,00
Combativeness	30	48,39	32	51,61	63	100,00
Ability to overcome difficulties	41	65,08	22	34,92	63	100,00
Attention and input from parents	1	1,59	62	98,41	63	100,00

Source: *Investigation by V. Kouyimoussou, 2017.*

The opinions of the teachers questioned about the girls who take out, in spite of difficulties, show that it is because those girls have more determination or they are more motivated. Opinions expressed to explain the fact that girls achieve, in spite of difficulties encountered, recall marked will, capacity to overcome difficulties, courage, fighting spirit, perseverance, capacities or aptitude, attention and support of the parents.

The review of the related literature refers us to works of Poletti and Dobbs (2000), which showed that the way the person in situation of adversity succeeds in difficulties or in not overcoming them derives, at the same time, from social and cultural circumstances in which they evolve, from received affection and security, which they felt in their attachments.

The results of this research confirm the purposes of an author, in this case Bernard, B. (2004) when he maintains that resources likely to favour the state of resilience would be the contribution of circle, friends, teachers and of quite another person capable of supporting the girls. The girls who achieve their studies distinguish themselves from others by their will, their courage, their strength of character, their motivation and their capacity to overcome these difficulties or obstacles.

### **Synthesis**

From teachers, we got a population of sixty-three (63) teachers of any disciplines from six (6) high schools concerned by study. The opinions of the teachers according to difficulties or obstacles met by the female learners, more half bring back that, precocious motherhood (41, 65,08 %), sexual harassment (40 are, that is 63,49 %), financial problems (40, that is 63,49 %), pregnancies (40, 63,49 % are), the divorce of the parents (34, that is 53,97 %), housework (29, that is 46,03 %) and the death of one of the parents (27, that is 42,86 %) are difficulties or recurrent obstacles with which female learners are confronted.

These difficulties or obstacles are for most of social origin (45, that is 71, 43 %), family (41, that is 65,08 %), psychological (26, that is 41, 27 %), and linked to the stereotypes of gender (17, that is 26,98 %). Also, (18, that is 28, 57 %) teachers think that the effort of female learners comes from good scores in assignment (18, either 28,57 %), from their determination (18, or 28, 57 %). They attribute the success of the girls in their marked will (56, that is 88,89 %), to their capacity to overcome difficulties (41, that is 65,08 %), to their courage (35, that is 55,56 %), and with their character of fighting spirit (48, 39 %). The help brought to female learners by teachers is not negligible. It is advice (51, either 80, 95 %), moral, psychological (31, or 49, 21 %), and school support (20, or 31, 75 %). The majority of teachers think that school is a protective milieu for girls.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of opinions collected from the teachers allows to show that the girls sent to school are confronted with specific difficulties, such as precocious motherhood, sexual harassment, financial problems, pregnancies, divorce of the parents, housework and death of one of the parents. The teachers think that the success of the girls to their asserted will, their capacity to overhang difficulties, their courage, fighting spirit and perseverance. The results of this research allow to envisage conditions likely to favour the resilience of girls in their school course. The support of the teachers and of the parents linked to good living conditions and working conditions are decisive factors, which favour the success of the girls in spite of difficulties met in their school course. These data lead to underline the importance of the roles that the school institutions, the parents of pupils and the structures of the State have to play with a view to creating conditions favourable to the success of the pupils in general, and girls in particular.

The research in this domain allows the development of more efficient programmes of prevention aiming at bringing down the impact of factors linked to obstacles of any types, to socioeconomic difficulties, stereotypes of genders and school inequality, while giving resources and support adapted to the needs of the girls in addition to encouraging strongly educational success and development of the resilient girls.

### References

- Abric, J.-C.**, 2003f, *Pratiques sociales et représentations sociales*, Paris, PUF.
- Benard, B.**, 1993, Fostering resiliency. In kids, *Educational Leadership*, 51 (3), pp. 44-48.
- Dubar, C.**, 2010, *La socialisation: construction des identités sociales et professionnelles*, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Huberman, M. et Miles, M.** Analyses des données qualitatives: accueil de nouvelles méthodes, Bruxelles, De Boeck-Wesmael, 1994.
- Lange, M.-F.**, 1998a, *L'école et les filles en Afrique: scolarisation sous condition*, Paris, Karthala.
- Marcoux, R., Zoungrama, C.-M et al.** (1999) « le travail des enfants, population et société au Mali, Paris, l'Harmattan.
- Mingat, A.**, 2006, Disparités sociales en éducation en Afrique subsaharienne: genre, localisation géographique et revenu du ménage. Dijon, Université de Bourgogne *IREDU/CNRS*.
- Poletti, R., et Dobbs, B.**, 2001, *La résilience: l'art de rebondir*, Saint Julien en Genevois Cedex, Jouvence.
- Taffe, M.A.**, (2004). Effects of parametric feeding manipulations on behavioral performance in macaques, *PhysiolBehav*, **81(1)**:59-70. [PubMed Abstract] [Publisher Link] [Request PDF] Corrigendum in *PhysiolBehav*, **82(2-3)**:589 [Publisher Link].