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Strategies for Managing School Flow in the Primary Cycle and Relationship to Students' Knowledge in the Cameroonian Context: Didactico-Critical Perspective and Perspectives

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Abstract: The issue of school flow is a central concern in the educational policies and strategies implemented in Cameroon. The aim of this study is to study the impact of government strategies for managing school flow on pupils' performance in primary school, based on a study conducted in the city of Garoua. The objective is to examine the limits of infrastructural, financial and even pedagogical mechanisms in order to envisage prospects for improving the relationship to knowledge of students. Our methodological approach was based on a qualitative approach with the use of the interview guide administered to 8 randomly selected teachers from the city of Garoua. The analysis reveals that government strategies for managing the flow have little impact not only on the quality of education in our country, but also on student performance. There is therefore an urgent need to improve the existing pedagogical technical platform, to dwell on the didactic relationship between a learner and the object of the knowledge to be transposed, without forgetting to redefine the selection criteria for educational inspectors.

Key points: school flow, relationship to knowledge, pedagogical-didactic device, performance

Introduction

The Cameroonian government had adopted in November 2020, its National Development Strategy for 2030 (SND30), one of the axes of which is the development of Human Capital through the real implementation of sectoral strategies with a social vocation. It is clearly a question of taking a critical look at the following modalities: education and training, health, protection, employment, etc. The main objective of this document is to: "promote an education system at the end of which any young graduate is sociologically integrated, bilingual, competent in a field that is crucial for the development of the country and aware of what he or she must do" (MINEPIAb, 2022 p.87). This main objective is broken down into several subsidiary objectives:

- Ensure access to primary education for all school-age children;
- Achieve a 100% completion rate at the primary level;
- Reduce regional disparities in terms of school infrastructure and teaching staff;
- Promote functional literacy for young people[1].

These objectives already give an overview of the government's strategy to manage and regulate its school flow with a view to considerably reducing the phenomenon of school dropout within it. School flow can be understood as a movement that determines the educational path of students in a particular education system. This movement, designed in the form of a pyramid, traces their educational path from entry into the education system to certification, without forgetting to take into account their qualifications and skills to integrate into the increasingly demanding socio-

[1]Ibid.

professional world. Visually, the phenomenon of school flow can be perceived as a funnel-shaped pyramid made up of three main strata: at the top, the entry of pupils into the education system (phenomenon of massification of the workforce), in the middle, their progression in the teaching/learning process and at the base, the exit (qualification), the phase of certification and the activation of professional know-how in one's society.

In the implementation of strategies for the management of Cameroonian school flow, several initiatives have been taken by the ministerial department in charge of Basic Education, not only on the logistical level with the aim of improving the quality of the technical platform called to contain more than 13 million school-age children, but also on the pedagogical level, in the implementation of pedagogical-didactic devices capable of improving the quality of its education. These initiatives were readjusted during the Covid-19 period to regulate the flow and ensure the continuity and life of the school. In this reflection, our research problem will focus on the impact of government strategies in its management of flow on students' academic performance. Our main research hypothesis is the following: *government strategies for managing school flow have little impact on the quality of the educational level of primary school students*. The bivariance of the following modalities will allow us to find possible solutions to this problem: quality of existing infrastructure on student performance; pedagogical-didactic measures implemented by the State on student performance and the impact of government measures on the quality of education in our country. What is the state of play on the question for which didactic solutions?

1. Indicators on the phenomenon of school flow in the Cameroonian primary cycle

The primary cycle in Cameroon has been experiencing a steady increase in enrolment for years despite some disruptions recorded between 2013 and 2018. Thus, "between the years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, we went from 4,731,585 to 4,944,290 students, an increase of about 4.49%" (MINEDUB, 2023, p.75). This demand is accentuated in the PTA area with 48.8% and the other regions outside the PTA 52.2%. The number of primary school students remains more concentrated in rural areas (58.0%) in 2021/2023, with a predominance of boys in both areas. In 2023, the age range of children who were to be educated in primary school (under 15 years old) was 5,649,760, with the East and Northern regions constituting the Priority Education Zones (ZEP), alone concentrated 1,759,931 of children aged (6-11 years old). The Far North region had the highest demand from school-age children, at 337,683. The total number of children in primary school was 4,944,290, an increase of 4.9%[2] compared to the previous year, and its gross enrolment ratio (GER)[3] estimated at 119.2%.[4] Despite a clear improvement in these indicators, the overall objective of the SPU (Universal Primary Schooling) has not been achieved, because out of 100 students who access the primary cycle, only 75 reach the CM2 class, i.e. 77.7% in the North Cameroon region (65.2% of girls compared to 90.3% of boys). In addition to this problem of performance, there are the socio-political crises in the North-West and South-West and the structural challenges in the ZEP. Even if the internal efficiency coefficient (CIE) is 0.68 in primary school for the year 2021/2022, an increase of 1% compared to the previous year, the observation of the partial coefficients shows a constant increase in the phenomenon of school dropout. To improve an education system that is tending to run out of steam and to manage its school flow as well as possible, concrete actions have been taken both at the pedagogical-didactic level and at the infrastructural level.

The Cameroonian Ministry of Basic Education has set itself the roadmap of regulating its school flow and ensuring quality education for all children of school age (*legal age of admission to formal and institutional primary school, between 6 and 11 years old*), young people who are out of school or who have dropped out of school in order to fight and systematically reduce the phenomenon of school dropout (*an expression that refers to a double problem in the teaching/learning process*: *repeating a year and dropping out in school or during study*). In order to put these guidelines into practice, MINEDUB (2023) has set up four programs, three of which are of particular interest to us:

[2] This rate is particularly low in the Far North region (7.9%) where demand is one of the highest in the country
[3] Total enrolment at a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population within the official age group
[4] A value greater than 100%, inflated by early entries, late entries and repetitions.

Program 102, "universalization of the primary cycle", which analyzes the issues of access, retention, completion but also on the quality of education in the primary cycle. Programme 103, "Literacy", the objective of which is threefold: to increase the literate population, to offer education and training prospects to out-of-school children and to make available the necessary resources as well as the regular and constant monitoring of performance indicators, and finally Programme 104, "Governance and institutional support", which is a matter of effective practice not only in terms of mobilization and availability of resources, but also the monitoring of performance indicators (MINEDUB, 2023, p.xxxi). The data presented above give us a general and panoramic view of the phenomenon of school flow in Cameroon to evaluate not only the strategies for managing this phenomenon but also the degree of effectiveness of the measures taken.

2. Presentation of some elements of the Cameroonian primary education system

The right to education is enshrined in the Cameroonian Constitution of 18 January 1996. The main mission of education is to train the child with a view to his or her emotional, intellectual or cognitive, physical and moral or psychomotor development, while guaranteeing his or her harmonious integration into society. This manifest right to education is taken up and reinforced by Law No. 98/004 of 4 April 1998, which guarantees and gives national priority to basic education in Cameroon, through organization and control at all levels. Thus, the State benefits not only from the effective support of decentralized local authorities thanks to Article 161 of Law 2019/024 of December 24, 2019, on the General Code of Decentralized Territorial Authorities (CTD), which further strengthens the institutional environment of education in Cameroon but also that of actors in the religious environment, families, public and private institutions... Formal basic education in Cameroon includes preschool and primary education. In order to guarantee the principle of equitable access to education in all regions, the public authorities have erected certain regions as Priority Education Zones (PTZs) on the basis of this principle of equity, in particular the East, Adamawa, North and Far North regions. With the advent of the decentralization process, the State transferred certain competences to the municipalities in the field of education (161.a.): the aim being to ensure and promote participatory management of education by all. The teaching/learning process is mostly done face-to-face in primary schools, except in the event of a serious major crisis where this process will be carried out remotely and in previously defined e-learning structures.

According to Decree No. 2012/68 of 11 June 2012, the Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for the development and implementation of government policy at this level of education. Several missions are also assigned to it, in particular those of the organization and operation of primary and nursery education, the preparation and determination of teaching programs and their implementation; in-service training of teachers, construction of adequate infrastructure; the preparation and dissemination of the rules and procedures of evaluation...

Article 9 of the Education Framework Law of 1998 stipulates that primary education is compulsory and that every child of Cameroonian nationality has the right and duty to attend primary school regardless of his or her origin, sex, physical or mental condition, and on this principle, primary and nursery education is therefore the basis of inclusive education. In the sense of SDG4, basic education in Cameroon has three fundamental and essential missions: *(i) to instruct, (ii) to socialize, (iii) to qualify*. The primary cycle lasts six years and is organized into three levels of two courses each, in which collective promotion is effective within the levels in accordance with the regulations in force. However, Decree No. 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21 February 2006 clearly stipulates that the repetition can be effective on the basis of the parent's appreciation. The end of the primary cycle for the French-speaking subsystem is sanctioned by the primary school certificate (CEP). What are the strategies for managing the school flow put in place by the State of Cameroon?

3. Current strategies for managing Cameroonian school flow in the primary cycle

The various PAREC (*Support Program for the Reform of Education in Cameroon)* training courses from 2014 to 2023 that were set up aimed to significantly reduce the repetition rate in our primary cycle and help the child to raise self-esteem in his learning process, as it is considered one of the obstacles in his schooling. Thus, one of the sectoral strategies for Education and Training 2013-

2020 put in place aimed to reduce school dropout "by reducing the average repetition rate of the primary cycle from 12% in 2010 to 5% in 2020... This objective is taken up in the SND30 by setting the completion rate at 100% by 2025" (MINEDUB, 2022, p.70). The exponential demand for schooling for school-age children (6-11 years old) is constantly growing in our country, i.e. 65% of the school-age population. Thanks to targeted policies (SND30 and the Education and Training Sector Strategy (SSEF)), it will be noted that in primary school over the period from 2016 to 2022, an increase of 1.7% was observed overall, i.e. 2% for girls compared to 1.4% for boys. Based on this growing demand for school-age children, several strategies have been put in place, including:

3.1. Sources of funding for the management of school flow in primary school

MINEDUB benefits from two types of financial resources to implement its action plan and regulate its school flow as well as possible: Internal resources and external resources. The first resources are essentially made up of the State's budget allocations received by the Basic Education sub-sector. Due to the inflation caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in general (MINEPAT, 2022a) and the twin security and health crises in particular, these resources have decreased due to the low mobilization of tax revenues, which stood at 16% in 2021 (MINEPAT, 2022b). As for external resources, they come from international institutions such as (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, African Development Bank, French Development Agency, etc.) and organizations of the United Nations system (UNESCO, UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, etc.). Specifically, the international community recommends allocating 20.0% of budgetary resources to the education sector. Since 2017, the overall share of the education sector in the State Budget has averaged 14.0%. In 2022, current public expenditure in the education sector is estimated at 24.2%, a difference of 2.4 points compared to the target of 26.6% planned for 2030. Each year, an average rate of 7.2% of the overall amount allocated to MINEDUB is transferred to the Decentralized Local Authorities. Thus, the budget to be leased to MINEDUB for the year 2022 was 245 billion 860 million CFA francs, i.e., 164 billion 682 million CFA francs as a provisional amount of staff salaries, an increase in absolute value of 5 billion 631 million CFA francs and 3.54% in relative value (MINEDUB, 2021). This represents more than 78% of current expenditure on basic education.

3.2. A considerable infrastructural reception system

To speak of the flow of schooling is first of all to take a critical and analytical look at the current system of reception of the mass of pupils of school age. A significant effort has been made with regard to the availability and quality of the facilities for the reception of pupils. Out of a total of 113,016 classrooms available and listed in primary school throughout the country by MINEDUB in 2023, 49.9% are in urban areas, 91.6% of which are built with permanent materials and 3.5% with temporary materials. In rural areas, 60,018 classrooms are listed, 78.8% of which are made of permanent materials, and 11.1% of which are temporary materials. As presented, it can be seen that most of the infrastructural availability of final materials is concentrated in urban areas, which suggests poor management of available infrastructural resources. This unequal distribution of resources has a significant impact not only on the quality and quantity of facilities for primary school pupils, but also and above all on the phenomenon of rural exodus of school-age children. The PTA alone has 28,712 classrooms, i.e. 44.6% of the classrooms available throughout the Cameroonian national territory, i.e. 82.8% in terms of final materials.

3.3. Public School Operating Regimes

In this concern for the regularization of the school flow, the State of Cameroon has set up a system for the operation of public schools. This regime is not homogeneous and differs from one school to another, depending on a number of criteria, the most recurrent being that related to the inadequacy of classrooms. In this case, four regimes are listed:

- Full-time: this regime organizes the teaching and learning process from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in accordance with the regulations in force, with the exception of the derogation granted to private schools, which can go up to 3:30 p.m.

- Double shift: this scheme consists of using the same infrastructure (classrooms) for two pedagogical groups belonging to two different public schools, i.e. one group in the morning (7:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.) and the other in the evening (12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) and vice versa the following week. Each group enjoys its own administrative autonomy.
- The Mixed system: in this system, in the same school, some classes operate under the half-time system and others full-time. Priority is given to graduating or end-of-cycle classes (CM2).

3.4. The effectiveness of collective promotion as a solution in the management of school flow

Collective promotion in primary education is a very important and effective mechanism in the regulation and management of school flow. The aim of this system is to significantly limit the problem of repetition and school dropout. Article 7 (1) of Decree No. 315/B15/B1/1464 MINEDUB of 21 February 2006[5] sets out the terms and conditions for the promotion of pupils in the primary education cycle (1); Article 8 (1); Article 9 (1) and (2); Article 10 (1) and (2) provides guidance:

- The programmes aim to identify and define for the cycle, the skills to be mastered by the pupil of each level;
- When the student is not satisfied with the assessment, he or she is entitled to remediation;
- The assessment must be diagnosed formative within the levels
- The student must be promoted to the next level
- Promotion is collective within a level, however, the repetition of a student may exceptionally be at the request of the parent of the student concerned

The lack of knowledge of Article 10 paragraph (2) in this collective promotion system is, in our opinion, at the origin of the poor level of performance of our children insofar as most parents are unaware that they can oppose the passage of their children's level, if they believe that they do not have real skills to advance to the next class. This state of affairs is justified by the fact that MINEDUB has not really communicated on this modality.

3.5. The regulation of pedagogical approaches and methods (PPO, NAP, APC, MAP, etc.)

The challenge behind the constant pedagogical reforms observed in our education system is justified by the State's permanent concern to offer all students a quality education based on so-called active and innovative pedagogical approaches, putting the student at the center of his teaching and learning process, while promoting his autonomy of thought. The new so-called active pedagogical approaches (NAP, APC, MAP) are similar in that they consist of putting the learner into action during classroom practice. In concrete terms, these methods are presented as learning instruments that allow students to build and co-construct their knowledge by themselves with or without others. They seek to empower the learner in the face of the object of knowledge, while providing him with tools to learn by himself and to learn to learn. This is why the psychologist Jean Piaget speaks of "self-structuring of knowledge". Practice and manipulation are central to these approaches and as (Sallé, 2019, p.8) says: "it is by doing that we learn".

The so-called active pedagogical approaches in our country very quickly became opposed to the so-called classical or magisterial pedagogy (APO) then in force, a pedagogy where the teacher was considered the sole holder of knowledge (Meirieu, 2015) and where students were passive, in a situation of listening and memorization during learning activities. The advent of the APC is part of this epistemo-pedagogical paradigm shift because the teacher becomes an accompanist, a guide, an engineer and no longer a dictator in the process of didactic transposition. These methodological approaches give the teacher the opportunity to be an active observer while assessing the needs of his students and to differentiate pedagogical strategies adapted to the didactic environment. All these active methods have allowed students to gradually become independent of the teacher in the construction of their skills; to demonstrate that the Cameroonian school is not a hostile and boring

[5] Ministerial Orders, Circulars and Laws of Education in Cameroon, 1996-2006

environment, but the place of integration and social inclusion with a safe and stimulating climate, which promotes the individual and collective development and learning of the group, important factors of success and in the management of the school flow.

4. Relationship to pupils' knowledge: an unknown modality in the search for solutions for managing the school flow

Several strategies have been put in place in the management of school flow in the Cameroonian context. More or less significant and innovative solutions for the time being, have been tested by the State both on the quality of the infrastructure systems for welcoming learners, and on the implementation of pedagogical-didactic reforms. All these approaches did not dwell on the personality of the learner, much less on his learning strategies while evaluating his relationship to knowledge (scholarly knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills). In order to assess the student's responsibility for the phenomena of failure, success or dropping out of school, the notion of the relationship to knowledge can give the teacher a new reading grid to analyze and understand the phenomenon of heterogeneity of his class group, including their individual capacities. These elements, which are part of the learner's pedagogical-didactic strategies, can help us to adopt other strategies for managing our school flow. What is the relationship to knowledge and what are its impacts on the management of Cameroonian school flow?

4.1. Clinical approach to the relationship to knowledge in the management of school flow

The origin of the concept "relation to knowledge" goes back to Lacan (1969), but it was around Beillerot and his colleagues (1996) that the concept was developed. This is the relationship that a learner has with an object of knowledge and which would impact his or her performance. The clinical approach to the relationship to knowledge dwells on the learner's "desire to know" and as a result, knowledge is considered as an "object of desire among many others" (Bernard, M-C et al., 2014, p.34). Knowledge from this didactic perspective has the characteristic of being distinct from the learning subject and external to him. Learning here becomes "the appropriation of the object of knowledge by the subject and ... a kind of recreation of the object in the learning subject that transforms it into an internal object" (Masconi, 1996, p.85). In fact, in the various attempts to manage the school flow, the learner has rarely been considered in his didactic approach in relation to the manipulation of the knowledge to be learned, i.e. in his mechanisms for transposing knowledge individually or in groups. The failure to take into account this principle of "desire" between the learner and the object of knowledge is at the origin of the various crises observed in the teaching/learning process, insofar as the solutions provided by the teacher to regulate and remedy are limited only on a procedural level.

All the solutions provided so far by the State do not show at any time that it has taken an interest in this question of the didactic approach, i.e. in the conceptions and representations of the learner in relation to an object of knowledge, even though these are decisive in the development of his or her skills. In addition, the training of primary school teachers prepares them very little to master the characteristics of managing the heterogeneity of their class group and the impact of this heterogeneity on the mechanisms for managing socio-cognitive conflicts, in order to promote learning and thus ensure a natural management of school flow through the prism of children's good results. Learning is a complex process that requires several types of mediation, it is important to know the process by which, a learner from "acquired knowledge, produces new singular knowledge, allowing him to think, transform and feel the natural and social world" (Beillerot, 2000, p.51). The failure to take into account this criterion of the learner's "desire to learn" in the search for solutions to the school flow gives us an additional element in the understanding of the problem of failure, success and school dropout, problems that are dear to the management of the school flow.

4.2. Socio-anthropological approach and the relationship to knowledge in the management of school flow

The socio-anthropological approach to the relationship to knowledge was developed by the ESCOL team[6]around Charlot, Boutier and Rochex, and is rooted in the fact that anthropologically, man learns from the time he is a baby until his death. The fundamental question that Charlot (1997, 2003) develops here is that of school failure, or rather students who fail at school. Thus, it is in his faculty of learning that the child builds his relationship to knowledge in interaction with him: "it is the subject who learns (no one can do it for him), but he can only learn through the mediation of the other (...) and by engaging in an activity" (2003, p.48).

The concepts of *mediation* and *activity* are central to this socio-anthropological approach to the management of school flow. By mediation we mean a set of devices to be implemented by the teacher, to help the student to build, to co-construct his thought, his knowledge and to appropriate it during a cognitive or socio-cognitive collaboration. The learning subject is therefore confronted with specific objects of knowledge mediated by the teacher or by an adult, a tutor or society (socioconstructivism). It is therefore necessary to evaluate these different types of mediation that operate between the learner and his or her knowledge, in order to try to understand the origins of failure or academic success. It is impossible to propose solutions for a better management of the school flow, without first questioning the different mediations that link a learner to his or her object of knowledge.

This combination of "mediation" and "activity" gives us another new reading grid for analysing the different types of heterogeneity in the class group, with the aim of understanding the individual differences that exist between pupils. This approach shows the singularity of the learner in "learning", in his progression, his path, the development of his skills and competences. Seeking solutions in the management of school flow also means dwelling on these different mediations that link a learner with his or her knowledge to learn. Taking this socio-anthropological aspect into account becomes an additional element in the search for solutions for managing the flow of students

4.3. Anthropological approach to the relationship to knowledge in the management of school flow

This approach, born in the 92s, is the work of the mathematics didactician Yves Chevallard. Each learner has a particularly complex relationship with knowledge, and it is up to the teacher to identify the various epistemological obstacles that hinder the appropriation of this knowledge. According to this approach, an object (knowledge) exists only in an institution (institutionalization of knowledge) with a wide extension. This knowledge "subjugates" the learner in the act of learning. For there to be learning, the learning subject must accept to gradually modify his conceptions and representations, his prerequisites, to submit to an institutional knowledge that is imposed on him. To transpose this knowledge, he must define his didactic mechanisms and approaches to get in touch with this knowledge and thus promote learning and the development of his skills. This system thus presented promotes the acquisition of performance and allows a better natural regulation of the number of students from one class to another, from one level to another, based on a performance indicator. A "good subject" (Chevallard's terminology) is one who has a personal relationship "to the object in accordance with the institutional relationship to the said object" (Caillot, M. 2014, p.9). The teacher's consideration and respect for these parameters gives him or her a reading grid in the redefinition of educational objectives. However, to achieve this, each teacher must master the epistemology of his or her discipline, i.e. the evolution of this disciplinary knowledge in space and time, the critical differences that punctuate crises and advance his or her science.

In view of the following, the State of Cameroon has put in place significant measures that impact the academic performance of learners in order to manage its school flow and fight against school dropout, dropout and failure. We are entitled to ask ourselves whether all these measures taken have

[6] ESCOL: Education, Schooling, Local Authorities. University of Paris 8.

a significant impact not only on the quality of training (teaching), but also on the quality of performance.

5. Research Methodology

As part of this reflection, we set ourselves the mission of finding out if there was a relationship between the school flow management strategies undertaken by the State of Cameroon and the performance of students in the northern region, and particularly in the city of Garoua. We therefore used the qualitative method defined by Strauss and Corbin (2004) as any type of research that produces results neither by statistical procedures nor by other means of quantification. As this research is part of a descriptive and comprehensive logic, it has been privileged to describe the experiences as they are lived by the participants (Giorgi, 1997).

5.1. Participants' Choice

The study concerned teachers of CM2 classes in the city of Garoua. They come from ten primary schools. The choice of CM2 classes is explained by the fact that it is a class that symbolizes the end of a learning cycle (CM2). It is a question of seeing whether the efforts undertaken by the State in its management of school flows on the infrastructural and pedagogical level, have an impact not only on the performance of students at the end of the cycle, but also on the quality of education in our country. The choice of participants was accentuated on the following modalities: availability, experience in the classroom and interest in the problems of academic failure. The corpus to be analyzed is based on a random sample of 8 teachers, i.e. 03 women and 05 men. This sample was obtained on the basis of a free subscription:

Table 1: Study participants

No.	Names of the selected institutions	Number of participants
01	Kolléré Public Schools Group 1; 2 ; 3 ; 4	03
02	Garoua Public Schools 1a; 1b; 2a; 2b.	03
03	Bilingual schools in Foulbéré 1 and 2	02
Total		**08**

5.2. Collection Instruments

The main instrument used is the semi-structured interview guide. The use of this tool is justified by the fact that teachers were willing to discuss issues of common interest with us. According to Lessard-Hebert, Goyette and Boutin, 1990, the interview makes it possible to collect valid data on the beliefs, opinions and ideas of the subjects.

The study is based on data collected between March and May 2024, carried out on eight teachers in the city of Garoua in focus groups. The interviews were conducted in person and according to the availability of the participants. The maximum duration of interviews is between 15 and 20 minutes. The uniform maintenance guide for all groups highlighted the following modalities: impact of the quality of infrastructure on student performance; impact of the pedagogical-didactic measures put in place on pupils' performance. Impact of general measures taken by the State on the quality of education. These modalities are closely related to the problem of managing school flow in the North Cameroon region.

5.3. Data processing procedure

In the absence of suitable software, the data were transcribed via Word software, while taking into account the orientations of (Bachelor and Joshi, 1996), i.e. to grasp the overall meaning of the text, identify the units of meaning, delimit the central themes and elaborate the individual narratives. Subsequently, we delineated the respondents' responses and themes around one or more variables. And finally, we analysed the content based on the interviewees' opinions on all the stories to identify convergences, divergences and particularities.

6. Analysis and discussion

6.1. Impact of the quality of infrastructure on student performance

The quality of the infrastructure is an essential element in the learner's teaching/learning process with an effect on his or her performance. It would not be an exaggeration to postulate that there is a significant link between the quality of infrastructure and students' academic performance, especially since Janssen, T and Amoroso (2017) estimate that they explain 16% of the variation in students' academic success in primary education.

Infrastructure refers to all the facilities necessary for the operation of a service. It is a set of equipment whose purpose is to improve the quality of service and the socio-professional performance of its potential users, so the terms "upkeep" or "maintenance" are crucial. According to the teachers of the primary schools in the city of Garoua, their primary schools lack modernity: "*surely the State is doing a lot in the infrastructure of other schools, but here at home, we lack everyone... look for yourself at the quality of the paintings, tables, benches, let's not talk about the children's latrines like the teachers' latrines"* (teacher of EP Kolléré*)*. This assertion calls into question the report of the (Minedub, 2020) which stated that most schools in urban areas "are built of definitive materials" (p.122), understood as structures that shine with a certain quality and comfort. This statement shows that there is a distance between official reports and reality: "*Our school is in a very advanced state of dilapidation, everything is old and we even wonder what the APE is for. Everyone eats for himself and leaves" (*teacher of EP Kolléré). This statement brings to light not only the problem of the responsibility for the maintenance of school infrastructure, the State or parents, but also and above all that of the embezzlement of funds allocated to maintenance: corruption.

The report (Minedub, 2020, p.124) stated that to date, the North Cameroon region has 6918 classrooms, i.e. 5037 in permanent equipment. It turns out that: "*not only is our school old, but there is no computer equipment, the computer here is done in books"* (teacher of Garoua EP). "*Outside of these classrooms that we have, it is the teacher who fights for his students to go to the next class*" (EB teacher of Foulbéré). This last statement shows that the teacher is the last bastion in the process of performance management and workforce regulation through the quality of his or her delivery, and that the infrastructure helps him or her very little. However, the report of (Abou Pokou, 2021, p.10) demonstrated that "basic infrastructure can serve as an incentive mechanism for schooling... The improvement in the quality of school pushes households to send their children to school" However, "the unavailability of certain basic infrastructures (latrines, electricity, drinking water, etc.) pushes children to leave the education system". All this shows that the quality of school infrastructure is a significant indicator in the management of a country's school flow.

6.2. Impact of the pedagogical-didactic measures put in place by the State on pupils' performance

The effectiveness of an education system depends, among other things, on the quality of the pedagogical-didactic systems that are put in place to regulate and professionalize teaching/learning with an impact on children's performance. By pedagogical-didactic devices, we mean all the mechanisms for regulating and controlling the performance of teachers in the exercise of their function: in-service training and pedagogical supervision, there are several types. According to the Education for All report, available data suggest that a "proportion of primary school teachers lack academic qualifications, training and content knowledge... this suggests that initial training is often ineffective" (Unesco, 2004, p.121). To compensate for these disparities in the academic and professional training of teachers, the State is setting up a retraining system to guarantee the quality of education. " *It is true that per year, we have several types of training: the UNAPED (Pedagogical Animation Units), the pedagogical days, the CEPED (Pedagogical Cells) and even the PAREC (Support Program for the Reform of Education)" (*PE teacher city of Garoua). These training courses are of paramount importance in the regulation of school flow according to the following scheme: good classroom practice of the teacher + student performance = management and natural regulation of the school flow.

It is therefore not enough to set up a plethora of retraining methods for teachers, it should also be associated with a good system of control, inspection or pedagogical supervision: "*Here in our school, we have two types of supervision. The Director sometimes and the inspectors can also come by from time to time"* (Teacher EP of Kolléré group 2*).* It is clear that both supervision and inspection are done randomly and by surprise; the goal being "*to allow the teacher to teach well all the time, because we really have colleagues who disturb and do not prepare their lessons*" (Teacher, EP of Garoua, 1b). However, these in-service training courses in the field raise another problem in the qualification of trainers and, as Aboubacar (2007b) points out, the quality of trainers has ended up completing the few capacities developed in this sector. Teachers in the city of Garoua note the dubious quality of the level of their trainers, which manifests itself in doubt, trial and error, lack of presence and objectivity: "*Sometimes these trainers make mistakes all the time. They don't know. We are on the ground and they come to tell us things that do not fit with the field."* In view of the following, it is urgent to think about reviewing the selection criteria and even the programs of the retraining seminars of these inspectors on the strengthening of their skills: "*who does not know that it is enough to have someone in front to be appointed, Kai..." it is rarely a question of skills in their appointments there" (*EB Teacher of Foulbéré). Roegiers (2000) already pointed out that the first distinction of a trainer must be competence and performance. "While performance simply refers to the fact of carrying out a task, of taking action, competence measures the potential to accomplish this task... of an educational or professional nature" (p.20). Competence, the primary modality in the choice of trainers, is based on "knowing how to act and react" (Le Boterf, 1998, p.34). Generally, when seminarians try to question some of the scientific guidelines of these formators, the latter put them in the form of prescriptions: "*They often tell us, take it like this and leave the spirit of rebellion. This is the policy of major instructions also in education...* ".

A good trainer is not "the one who can say how to organize a class, but the one who can organize a class concretely..." we see that the exercise of a competence necessarily takes place in a situation of significant integration" (Roegiers, 2000, p.26). It is now clear that there is a significant link between pedagogical-didactic devices on students' academic performance. These performances have an impact on the management of school flow insofar as a poor system of retraining or in-service training of teachers, irregular inspections and poorly qualified trainers will have a negative impact on the construction of student performance and in the general construction of the quality of the education system. This situation will have a direct impact on the fluidity of the natural management of class sizes by accentuating repetition, school dropout and even school dropout.

6.3. Impact of government measures to manage school flow on the quality of primary education

One of the indicators to check the solidity or quality of an education system is related to the level of children's academic performance. In the North Cameroon region, according to the Regional Delegation for Basic Education Education, the success rate for the CEP (primary school certificate) certificate certificate in the city of Garoua is excellent and has been around 80% over the last three years. This success rate, if left at that, would alone justify the excellent quality of education in public schools in the Northern Region and Cameroon as a whole. However, quantity in terms of success rates does not always pace with quality in terms of the development of students' skills and performance. According to some teachers in the city of Garoua, "*the level of our children is increasingly low. We are making efforts but it's not going well... ".* (Teacher, Garou EP 1b). In this regard, the report of (UNESCO, 2014, p.233) showed that the quality of learning, an important indicator in the evaluation of the quality of an education system, depends strongly not only on the quality of teachers, because "the better the quality of the teacher, the lower the level of achievements", but also on the pedagogical and didactic technical platform, not to mention the salary scale. Our look at the professional certification of primary school teachers in the city of Garoua, with a view to understanding this problem of poor student performance, shows that almost all the teachers in these schools have a professional diploma, with the exception of trainee students. According to (EB Teacher of Foulbéré 1), "*the poor results of the students can also be explained by*

the fact that parents have abandoned the education of their children to the sole responsibility of the school... Homework is given, but they don't."

If the "master effect" is crucial in the construction of the quality of education in a system, the work of Rasera (2012); Berbard (2007) and Hanushek (1996) have shown that other contextual factors annihilate this master effect, such as: the wage bill, the academic level of the teacher, the absenteeism of the teacher and the student, etc. To this other variances and social skills specific to each teacher would explain these poor performances such as: the charisma of the teacher and his ability to motivate his students. If the academic and professional level of teachers, the wage bill, the quality of infrastructure and teaching and pedagogical materials are pointed out for the decline in the quality of education in our country, how can we justify these good performances of students in the classroom and in the certifying exams, the case of the CEP?: "*The political system and ourselves. We are sometimes forced to inflate students' grades with the agreement of the administration to avoid overcrowding in our classrooms and repeating a year, because the demand for schooling is very high in the North. It is also important to know that even in the CEP, it is the same work that is done in the deliberations"* (Teacher, Garoua EP).

The academic success rate in the official CEP exam is excellent in our country, however, these results are the mirror effect that hides the real malaise of an education system at the end of its rope and whose poor performance of these students sufficiently informs the hidden part of the iceberg. There is therefore an urgent need to rethink the government's strategy for managing school flow as a whole in order to hope to change the curve, because so far, the relationship between the strategies for managing school flow by the State and the quality of education has been negative with regard to the indicators mentioned above. The alarming observation remains this: "*I can tell you that more than 80% of students go to our high schools and colleges without knowledge, neither reading nor writing*". (EP teachers of Garoua). There is an urgent need not only to redefine the principle of performance through the prism of meritocracy, but also to set up a good system for the maintenance of existing infrastructures or to build new ones: "*I am convinced that the current state of our schools has an impact on the quality of education, which is very low, and on the performance of colleagues* " (Teacher EP of Kolléré 4).

7. Perspectives

In view of what has been developed, we cannot close this reflection without putting forward some perspectives with the aim of improving the system for managing the school flow on two main levels: infrastructural but also and above all on the implementation of a pedagogical-didactic system called upon to improve the quality of the education system with an impact on the performance of children. These two solutions could provide a new reading grid in the search for strategies for managing Cameroonian school flow.

On the infrastructural level, while it is necessary to recognize here the efforts of the State in the search for funding thanks to its internal and external partners to improve the existing pedagogical technical platform, however, considerable efforts are still to be made. The report of (MINEDUB, 2023) shows that there is an inequality in the management of existing infrastructural resources between rural and urban areas, because most of these resources in final materials are concentrated in urban areas, it is urgent to look for other more astute ways to regulate this situation, build new adequate devices in order to, to limit as much as possible the phenomenon of rural exodus of children to the big cities, in search of acceptable conditions for schooling, thus emptying these villages of human resources. We also recommend the establishment of a joint teacher-parent ministerial commission, responsible for managing the financial resources of APE available for purposes of general interest, to modernize and ensure the maintenance of existing infrastructure.

On the pedagogical-didactic level, if it is true, as stated in the report of the (MINEDUB, 2023, p.70) that one of the objectives of the State's school flow management strategy is to limit the phenomenon of school dropout, this same urgency must lead this ministerial department to dwell on the issue of "the relationship that a learner would have with an object of knowledge in a classroom situation". The lack of knowledge, on the one hand, of the psycho-cognitive and heterogenic characteristics of

the class group and, on the other hand, those relating to the didactic approach specific to each learner, proves to be disastrous in the search for pupils' performance indicators despite the quality of the existing material. The absence of these modalities proves to be dramatic in the implementation of the socio-cognitive conflict called upon to resolve the error, thus improving the children's performance. In addition, there is an urgent need to review the policy on the appointment of trainers (inspectors/pedagogical supervisors) for in-service teacher training seminars. Only the principle of competence should be the key word. These trainers, thus appointed, must imperatively drink from the school of didacticians to retrain and update themselves on innovative pedagogical-didactic techniques and devices that can impact and improve the socio-professional skills of teachers.

Conclusion

In short, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of government strategies for managing school flow on the performance of students in primary school, a study carried out in the city of Garoua. The presentation of the Cameroonian primary education system allowed us to highlight the efforts made so far, while bringing out other unknown didactic modalities in the management of its school flow. By limiting our research to the qualitative and therefore relational aspect alone, we did not claim to have carried it out on all levels, which is why we invite potential researchers to investigate the omitted aspects or themes. Three lines of research allowed us to collect information from some teachers in public primary schools in the city of Garoua. At the end of the analysis and interpretation of the data, a few recommendations should be presented: in terms of infrastructure, the quality of existing school infrastructure should be improved, but also a system of regulation of these in both rural and urban areas should be considered in order to limit the phenomenon of the rural exodus of children to large cities, in search of better schooling conditions. On the didactic level, we believe that all research that aims to improve the quality of the pedagogical-didactic system of the student's training should not be carried out on the margins of the lack of knowledge of these psycho-cognitive characteristics and of his didactic approach which defines his relationship to knowledge. It is also important to change the paradigm for the appointment of pedagogical trainers while taking competence as the only selection criterion. In addition, all new trainers must be retrained at the school of didactics to update their teaching techniques and methods. Taking these recommendations into account will certainly give a better reading grid in the management of the Cameroonian school flow.

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