



## Parent Perception of Young Girls Schooling in the North Eastern Part of Benin: A Case Study of Parakou Young Girls

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**ABSTRACT:** *The objective of the present study is to determine the level of schooling girl's and to analyze parents' opinion about it. The study has been conducted in the North-East of Benin and has taken in account 120 households during an investigation held in May 2012. The Average comparison test and a qualitative analysis through the frequency tables have been done.*

*It has been noticed that girls schooling level remains lower in spite of sensitizations and the fact that school is free of charge made by the government and NGOs in order to promote an equitable access to basic schooling for all. In fact, the results showed that the girls schooling rate in this area (92.27 %) is lower than the national percentage (98.3%). The results have also shown that 75% of the parents recognize school as a place for both boys and girls and 100% of the surveyed parents agree that girl's education is good. In spite of that positive aspect, schooling level is still lower as mentioned above. In fact, 59.1 % of women have lower income of about 30,000F cfa, this reduce the chance of children's education, particularly girls.*

**Key-words:** *Schooling level, girls, perception, North-East of Benin.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an inherent right for every human being, a right acquired from birth by each child. This right is important for every human being. That's why the Benin constitution of the 11, December, 1990 reserves an important place to that fundamental right. One of the important dispositions of that constitution is in Article 13 which makes schooling compulsory and free of charge. The government of Benin concretizes the principle of this article by proclaiming in October 13<sup>th</sup> 2006 the free access to nursery and primary education. This declaration is based on the political will of the government to reduce schooling charges for the population namely the poor.

However the government is reforming the sector of education, there is a deficit in population sensitization to send their children especially the girls. «If one can notice with satisfaction that the gross rate of children's schooling increased these last years (38% in 1990 and 77% in 2005), we should deplore the persistent difference between girls and boys (18 points for 2005-2006 academic year), the half of boys registered in primary school finish their education whereas only a third of girls can reach this level» (Danish program for Benin, 2008). This remark has been confirmed in decennial plan for education sector improvement from 2006 to 2015.

The 2007 follow up report on Education for All (EFA, 2007) points out that 77 millions of children who should be in primary school have never been educated. The 2011 edition of the same report, estimates that the number of non-educated children is decreasing slowly, because in 2008, the total number was still 67 million and if the current trend is going on, the non-educated children number will increase in 2015. In spite of international assistance, girls education is still a problem: 60% of children who has not access to primary school are girls (JAY, 2000).

Parakou, our area of investigation, is greatly Islamized and followed by Christianity. The population of Parakou like several African societies mainly Islamic, is focused on socio-cultural beliefs that prevent young girls from intellectual emancipation. Most of parents think that school is a destabilization factor of girls.

That is why; in spite of all sensitizations and the free of charge education, girls' school loss still remains (ACC-SARL PDC 2 PARAKOU, 2011).

From all that comes before, it is important to make that investigation so as to show the real level of girl's schooling in the North-Eastern part of Benin and parents' opinion about girls' education.

## **II. THEORY ON EDUCATION**

### **2.1- Macroeconomic approach of education**

In Lucas' (1988) view, the production of an economy is composed of three elements: capital, work and the work efficiency that reflects the quality of human resource.

A lasting growth is possible when the population is formed permanently. This style is based on the improvement of available knowledge within the population rather than increasing the level of training. The increase of human resource will lead to a meticulous growth of life level.

### **2.2- Sociological approaches of education**

Education is the action made by old generations on the non-mature generations for their social life as defined by Durkheim. In fact, according to Durkheim (1992), two elements are needed to talk about education. It is a matter of the presence of grown-ups generation, young's generation and the action made by the formers on the latter. « It aims at inciting and developing in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral behaviors that the political society in whole and the social environment asked for ». That education conceals a double aspect. It is at the same time single and multiple. Multiple, because every society is made up of several social milieus, and to each social environment corresponds to a different kind of education. It is « one » in the sense that « there are no people where there is not a certain number of ideas, of feelings and practices that education must inculcate in all children mind indistinctly to any social category that they belong to ». It is then clear that global society members receive the same education except some particularities relative to each social group.

Following the same idea as Durkheim, Thanh (1995) shows how important is education in the production and reproduction of societies. Education is taken here in whole sense, in schools and out-schools, formal and non-formal, because for him, inside this institution which is education, there are complementarities but contradictions as well: the non-official education doesn't always convey the same values as school; and school itself has opposite effect depending on the angle that one envisages.

The society non schooling would be of great benefit to public education; so does family life, politics, security, faith and the communication between human would profit a similar experience. School is considered as the only place where we are educated; whereas most of educative experiences have made out of school. For him « to attend school » is not « educated ». The instruction contributes to individual training. There is a permanent process that follows human being all his life. Then, for this author, educate is to learn how to live: to live by one self, to live with others and to live with the world. However, our societies can be dropped out from school, but they cannot escape from education. So for him the schooling system doesn't lead to education and doesn't serve the social justice.

### **2.3- Socio-cultural approach of education**

Certain authors claim that the classical school and the western values that it conveys are considered as menace as well for Islam values as for those of tradition and their influence will more affect women. That is why conservatives do not want to put girls in contact with this western culture (GUISON, 2004).

## **III. AREA OF STUDY AND DATA**

Parakou, city of about 254254 inhabitants (INSAE, 2013) is located in the Northern side of Benin, at 415 km from Cotonou. Country town of Borgou-Alibori departments, it is the largest town of this northern region and the third town with particular status of Benin, after Cotonou and Porto novo. It is situated at latitude 9°21' North, at 2°36' longitude east, at half latitude of 350m and presents a modest landscape. The commune of Parakou is particularly an appropriate place for studying, because despite all the opportunities in education domain such as the existence of projects, programs or support institution to education sector, one keeps registering a low rate of population that can read and write. What is relevant is the problem of girls schooling: the global rate of 2009-2010 students' promotion is about 76.93% of which 75.78 of girls; at the end of the year 7.13 of girls have lefts school versus 5.82 % of boys (DDEMP Parakou, 2012).

The data collection is provided by two methods: the documentary study and an inquiry led by administration of questionnaire in 120 household where they are children in age of being educated with at least a girl. The enquiry (investigation) has covered all the town of Parakou which is composed of three districts. In each district, 40 families have been retrieved randomly and simply then investigated.

The individual questionnaire has permitted to have in 2012 quantitative and qualitative data on the total number of people living in the household, the number of children in the household, the number of girls in the household, the number of educated girls in the household, the number of girls continuing at school in the household, the parent's opinion about girls schooling, the children equal access to school or not.

#### IV. RESULTS

##### 4.1 Socio-economical characteristics of Households

The families' socio-economical characteristics are composed of the marital status of parents, their jobs, their levels of schooling, their sectors of activity and incomes as well as their origins and socio-cultural groups. The targets of the investigation are composed of men as well as women. We have found more women than men in households during the enquiry. That is 55% of women versus 45% of men. This difference is due to the fact that most of the men are in their office and so they are not at home during our visit.

The table 1 shows the sharing out of parents of the studied sample according to their levels of schooling.

It has been noticed that 24% of parents don't know how read nor write. This rate is very higher with women (83.3%). Among parents, 35% have only stayed in primary school. 20.8% have reached the secondary level versus 7.5% who attended university.

One may notice that 11.7% have received a professional training and 5% know how to read and write. In the households of target people, it has globally been noticed that men are more educated than women. Moreover, concerning how to read and write in national language, men are largely impacted than women. When having a look about the average of schooling rate from primary to University, this rate is higher than the one of women. All this shows the importance that one has to put on education and the maintenance of girls at school so as to establish equality of sex.

**Table1:** Table showing the level of schooling of target households.

Number		Male	Female	Together
Level of Schooling (%)	Illiterate	7.4	30.3	20
	Literate in nation language	7.4	3	5
	Primary level	25.9	42.4	35
	Secondary level	27.8	15.2	20.8
	Professional	18.5	6.1	11.7
	Upper level	13	3	7.5

Source: Enquiry, 2012

From the analysis of table 2, more than 43% (of which 59.1% of women) of parents possess an income under 30,000 FCFA whereas 25% have an income superior to 90,000 FCFA.

**Table2:** table showing the investigated household incomes.

Number		Male	Female	Together
Level of Earning per target people	0-30,000	24.1	59.1	43.3
	30,000 – 60,000	13	12.1	12.5
	60,000 – 90,000	20.4	18.2	19.2
	More than 90,000	42.6	10.6	25

Source: Investigation, 2013

##### 4.2- The rate of schooling in the area of investigation and at national level

From the results, it has been showed that only 2 (2.07) girls have been registered at school on average. The average rate of schooling in the sample is estimated to 92.7%.

As far as the rate of girls that are still in school, the results of table 3 show an average rate of 85.78 % and they are on the average around 1.78 that attend school in the studied sample.

**Table3:** The average number of educated girls and still at school.

Indicators	
Number	120
Attending school girls	2.07(+ or-1.34)
Girls still attending school	1.78 (+ or -1.39)
Rate of schooling	0.927 (+or-0.3)
Rate of maintenance at school	0.857 (+ or -0.31)

Source: Investigation 2012

The analyze of table 4 reveals that the rate of girls schooling in the area of investigation (92.27%) is lower than the rate of girls schooling at national level (98.3%). Moreover the test of student of comparison of averages to realized average shows that probabilityof signification is 0,000. This is lower to the probability of signification which is about 0.01. The average difference is so consequent to the threshold of 1%. This confirms that the rate of girls schooling in the commune of Parakou is lower than the one of national level.

This result shows that there is under schooling of girls in the commune of Parakou comparing to the all Benin.

**Table4:** Comparison of the rate of girls schooling in the target area and at the national level.

	Average	difference-type
Girl's schooling rate	92.27	
Difference of average	dim= -97.37*	
Test t of student	t=-3.31; ddl=110; p=0.001	

\*Significative to the threshold of 1%

Source: 2012 investigation

The higher rate of girls schooling at national level shall not then hide the level still higher of female under-schooling rate in the commune of the country.

#### 4.3- Parent's position about school

In the area of study, 75% of parents recognize school as a place of children education; 17.5% recognize it as a place of future; 3.3% combines the first two by saying it is a place of education and future; and 4.2% pretend that it is a place that offers enough advantages.

**Table5:** Parent's opinion about school

Variables	Number	Percentage (%)
Place of education	88	73.3
Place of future	21	17.5
Place of education and future	6	5
Place that gives enough advantages	5	4.2
Total	120	100

Source: 2012 investigation

#### 4.4. Parent's position about the question of children schooling

The analysis of table 6 shows that the future is the main interest of children schooling. It has been raised by 34.2% of inquired people. Next, 26.7% of parents evoke as interest of schooling, the fact of knowing how to read and write. Then, 13.3% of parents said that teaching literacy is the interest of children education. Other minor answers can be read in the same table.

**Table6:** parent's opinion on the interest of children education

Variables	Number	Percentage
Be alphabetized	16	13.3
Prepare ones future	41	34.2
Know how to read and write	32	26.7
Defend oneself	8	6.7
Know how to read and write and be full-blown	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Source: 2012investigation

#### 4.5 Parent's expectation from children's schooling

The analysis of table 7 at first sight shows that 100% of investigated parents agree with girl's schooling. 62.5% of parents have evoked the will of a good future for their girls (children) that attend schools. 14.5% of parents assert that schooling will lead their girls to be independent (free).

**Table7:** Parent's opinion on the expectation of their girls schooling

Variables	Number	Percentage (%)
Independence	17	14.2
Better future	75	62.5
Be educated	8	6.7
Be educated and have better future	9	7.5
Help parents later on	3	2.4
Others	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Source: 2012 investigation

#### 4.6 parent's position on the schooling of both sex and the reasons

As it can be noticed in table 8, the majority of the investigated parents, 96.7% agree with the parity in children's schooling. For these parents, the schooling is profitable for a child, whatever the sex. 2.4% of them have not given their point of view in that question.

The main reason evoked by parents, as we can see through the reading of table 9 on the schooling with both girls and boys, is that they consider that whatever the sex, the children are equal, and there is no reason to give a chance to one against the other. That opinion is asserted by 87.5%. There are others opinions led by parents on this topic. In fact, 3.3% of parents say that the schooling with both sides will favor the girls to be self-satisfied as well as boys. Other reasons evoked are: the importance of school and the help that women will give to their husbands.

**Table8:** Opinion of parents on the question of sending both girls and boys to school.

Variables	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	116	96.7
No	1	0.8
Don't know	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Source: 2012 investigation

**Table9:** Parent's opinion on the reasons of schooling both girls and boys

Variables	Number	Percentage (%)
Are equals	105	87.5
To be self-satisfied like boys	4	3.3
To assist their husbands	2	1.7
Because of the school importance	4	3.3
To assist their parents	1	0.8
Total	116	100

Source: 2012 investigation

#### 4.7 Parent's position on sending their girls to school

The judgments are a little bit different on that question. Nevertheless 35.8% of the interviewed say it is for a better future and a change in the society that girls need to be sent to school. Because educating a girl, means educate people since they are responsible of the well-being of the household. Others reasons are also evoked for the sending girls to school: education /instruction, every child has right to the schooling and other things that can be read in the table10.

**Table 10:** parent's opinion on the matter of: on what basis are girls sent to school?

Variables	Number	Percentage
Education/instruction	12	10
Better future / become an executive	43	35.8
Parity	15	12.5
Children right for schooling	10	8.3
Blooming	7	5.8
Financial independence	7	5.8
Education and become an executive	6	5
Others	20	20
Total	120	100

Source: 2012 investigation

#### 4.8 parent's position on the minimum level a girl must have

In developing countries, parents are aware that children education will be a financial responsibility, although they don't quite know the real amplexness of expenses. So an investigation has been led on the minimum level of education that a girl needs to manage herself according her parents aspirations. Referring to the data of table11, one notice that parents reveal the higher level to their girls. So the majority of parent's, 72.5% of inquired wish their girls the University that is second cycle studies; 14.2 wish their girls to get at least the baccalaureate, 8.3% the doctorate and only 2.5% wish BEPC for their girls. The other parents didn't specify a given level. They let the girl reach what her intellectual capacity can lead her to. They represent 2.5%.

**Table11** Parent's opinion on the minimum level a girl must have.

Variables	Number	Percentage
BEPC	3	2.5
BAC	17	14.2
University level	87	72.5
Doctorate	10	8.3
The best level that she can reach	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Source: 2012 investigation

## **V. Discussion**

In patriarchal societies, man is the chief of households. That's to say households are generally ruled by men who are the mainstays economically. Moreover, in our traditional societies, the place of the woman is in the household and kitchen. It's the reason why women are in majority present at home (55%) during our surreys; versus 45% of men. Children education is left to women. But those women of our sample don't know how to read and write with a rate of 83.3% of illiteracy whereas men, in majority, know to read and write. It can be noticed in general from our analysis that the level of instruction of men is higher than the one of women. So, parent's level of instruction is a non-negligible indicator in children training. We notice that 30.3% of female parents are illiterates versus 7.4% of men; 3% women know how to read and write in national languages versus 7.4% of men; 42.4% of women have a primary level versus 25.9% of men. In secondary level, women percentage is about 15.2% versus 27.8% of men. The women are feebly represented in professional studies (6.17% and 18.53% respectively for women and men). And in higher studies (3% and 13% respectively for women and men). This situation reveals women's under-schooling phenomenon. This feeble level of instruction of the mother affects much girls schooling. In fact, (Bourdieu, 1964) shows that school trajectory perceptions are different depend on whether one is son of a senior manager or son of workingman; because the first, in addition to have one chance over two to attend university, find in his environment the right inheritance to follow his parents steps. As everything is equal, a girl having an educated mother and having higher level, has chance to be registered at school, to keep studying more than a girl that has not these advantages. It what reveals the results of our analysis comparing to the causes of desertion: insufficient of school results (67%). As well, with a feeble level of study, a mother can't ensure well her children education unless she pays private tutorials, what is not so easy for all parents. (N'Doye, 2006; Diagne, 2007) say that parents instruction namely the one of the mother has positive effect on children education, the family and the society, because she is the one in charge of children education. Her pedagogical assistance and/or affective enhances the school results chances. It is more important for the girl whose first model is the mother.

Several works have pointed differences in schooling according to the sex of the chief of household: on the one hand, children are more educated when the chief of the household is a woman and on the other hand the girls' under-schooling is less (Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; wakam, 2000). Contrariwise, in our sample; 59.1% of women have an income inferior to 30.000F, what lessens the chance of children schooling particularly the one of girls, because of their level of income. Diallo's and al. work (2009) have shown the chance ratio of children attendance to primary school according to the sex and the household life capacity. One can notice from this that inequality is important in low income households. In other households, the relationship is not constant because the tendency is neither higher nor lower for inequalities passing from a level of life to the next. However one notice that the discrepancy of inequalities is relatively feeble, as everything is further more equal, a girl has 47%, 44% and 46% less of chance than a boy to be educated if she lives in a weak level, average level or a high level household ». Other phenomenon that's still in disfavor of girls: it's the spread of Islam. In the sample of our study, it is noticed 50% of Muslims versus 45% of Christians, what lessens the chance of sex in education plan. Zan (2007) has pointed it out his works when he shows « in the households ruled by Christians children have higher rate of school attendance (about two times the rate of muslims and three times the rate of animists). They are also the ones who have the best parity of sex in terms of school attendance»; moreover in the households of our sample, women are in 56.1% of Muslims, less educated, so more conservatives. Those elements led us to confirm our first hypothesis. From students t test one notice that the difference of average is significative threshold is 1%. The rate of girls schooling in the commune of Parakou is less to the national rate. Then, from our results whatever the cycle, girls are less educated than boys and when girls grow up, they have less chance to attend school. That's to say it lessens girls' schooling chances. Some studies led in Africa, in the southern part of Sahara reveal a positive relationship between the level of household and children schooling. (From Diallo and al, 2007).

According to those authors, the nature of relationship between the level of household and children schooling is explained by the existence of family assistance networks in sub-Saharan Africa that allow them to accept most of the time people coming from outside of the household. One can then notice from their works that children belonging to middle class households are more attending school than the other households children. However, the inequality is in favor of girls living in large family (more than 10 people). Whereas the mean size of study sample represents 69%. This should favor girls schooling in the commune of Parakou.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The objective of the present study was to evaluate the level of schooling and to analyze parent's position. The analysis has been based on five years old children and more. The girls schooling rate in the commune of Parakou is lower than the one of the national rate. Moreover, the interviewed in majority recognize school importance and agree with the schooling of both sexes. They admit that school is a place of bright future. In fact, the opinion that parent have now are globally positive on girls schooling.

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### **Author Biography**

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