



Republic of
Gabon



Association for the
Development of
Education in
Africa

Peer Review in Education in Africa

Gabon

For a Quality Education
Accessible to All



Edited by
Ibrahima Bah-Lalya and Alhassane Yenikoye

Gabon
For a Quality Education Accessible to All

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Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)
African Development Bank (AfDB) – Temporary Relocation Agency
13 avenue du Ghana – BP 323 – 1002 Tunis Belvédère – Tunisia
tel: +216/ 71 10 39 86 – fax: +216/ 71 25 26 69
e-mail: adea@afdb.org – web site: www.adeanet.org

Conducting Peer Reviews
in Education in Africa

Gabon

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Ibrahima Bah-Lalya and Alhassane Yénikoye

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Foreword

It is a real pleasure for me to recognize this report which is the result of a study commissioned by the Gabonese Government as part of the peer review undertaking initiated by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

This diagnosis was an opportunity to pull together national and international expertise to scrutinize the Gabonese educational system achievement and needs.

The outcome of this peer review confirmed our certitude that, despite formidable achievements, there are still considerable shortages to overcome.

At a time when everybody is recognizing that our educational system is faced with difficult challenges in its strive for excellence so that it better answers to the imperatives of globalization, the outcomes of the Peer Review in Gabon has come at the right time to contribute to our effort to improve our schools and other learning centers, as prescribed by the President of the Republic, El Hadj Omar BONGO ONDIMBA, in his social program entitled “My program: Acts for Gabon”

I would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa and to all Gabonese Development Partners for their continuous support to our education. I wish that our cooperation get stronger in the future. As I am concerned I will do everything possible to strengthen it.

This is also an opportunity for me to express warm thanks to my predecessors, the former Ministers of Education who contributed to this undertaking:

- » Professeur Daniel ONA ONDO
- » Mr François ENGONGAH-OWONO and
- » Professor Albert ONDO OSSA.

Their contribution was critical to achieving peer reviewing the Gabon educational system.

I would like to recall that Peer Review in Gabon is an important diagnosis of our education. It is, therefore, necessary that we acquaint ourselves with it so that its recommendations can be effectively implemented according to the directives set by His Excellency El Hadj Omar BONGO ONDIMBA. Schools and other learning centers in Gabon should be highly efficient so that they are in a position to train competent men

and women, who are capable of participating in the economic and social development of our beautiful country.



Michel MENGA m'ESSONE
Gabon Minister of National Education and
Training for Citizenship

Acknowledgments

This study was commissioned by the government of Gabon, through an agreement between the Ministry of National Education and ADEA. Between the time when the agreements were concluded and that of the study's completion, the ministry's executive teams changed without ever hampering the country's desire to see the work successfully finished. On behalf of the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, the WGESA, I would like to express here our sincere gratitude to all the teams who were successively at the head of the Ministry of National Education and the Gabonese university system for their favorable disposition and their invaluable contributions. Without these contributions and those of the educational partners, this study could never have been carried out.

I also wish, on behalf of the WGESA executive committee, to reiterate our sincere thanks to the ADEA executive committee and the Association's Bureau of African Ministers for their invaluable support and their enlightened directives. We are also grateful to all the partner agencies for their comprehension and their professional as well as financial support.

The peer review is founded on the existence of common educational values held by the African countries. The Peer Review Exercise in education in Africa was initiated in 2004 by the ministers of education in African countries, with the support of ADEA, and was implemented by the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA). The goal was to improve the conception, planning and implementation of initiatives taken in the education sector in Africa. This exercise received technical and financial support from institutions such as IIEP, the OECD, the World Bank, NORAD, SIDA and USAID, as well as other development agencies that work with ADEA.

A peer review involves a country inviting external experts to join its national team to examine part or all of the education system, in this way making it possible to define recommendations for improving the education system's performances.

The approach adopted offers certain features that warrant being noted:

1. The review proposes a forum for a constructive dialogue on the most important issues for the countries themselves, the officers in charge of running the education system and the national and international stakeholders involved in education. Public debates are encouraged as much for the review process as for its conclusions;

2. The team of experts is mainly composed of Africans with solid experience in the field concerning the formulation and implementation of education policies;
3. Collegiality with the national experts is encouraged as well as the full and total participation of national experts at all levels;
4. The review calls on a sample encompassing the entire sector and including actors other than government decision-makers;
5. Each review relies on solid technical bases and is therefore credible from the programming viewpoint.

The team of international experts went to Gabon from Benin, Guinea, France, Mali, Mauritius and Niger to join the national team, launch a professional dialogue between colleagues, examine, together, the Gabonese education system and suggest, as peers, solutions that have the potential to really succeed because they have succeeded elsewhere in Africa. The international peer approach is eminently collegial.

The international team that went to Gabon was comprised of officers chosen on the basis of African diversity, complementarities between the different members, the wealth of experiences accumulated over several years and the mastery that these officers have demonstrated in developing national education programs. This team's composition clearly reflects African diversity and richness.

At the same time, it also reminds us what we owe to Africa's friends who committed themselves alongside this team in the framework of an equitable partnership that was enriching and beneficial to all the parties.

We wish to warmly thank all of them for their abnegation, their availability and their willingness to work under sometimes difficult conditions. Special mention must be made here of Prof. Yenikoye for the spontaneity with which he kindly replaced the first team leader when the latter was prevented from participating by other obligations.

These international experts came from the following organizations and countries:

Benin Dr. Djibril Mama Debourou, professor at the university and deputy at the national assembly of his country

WGESA/ADEA

Prof. Ibrahima Bah-Lalya, former professor at the Guinean university, WGESA coordinator, responsible for the review's implementation

Guinea Mr. Alpha Mahmoudou Diallo, director general of the National Institute of Research and Pedagogic Action (INRAP), former national director of primary education of his country

Mali Mr. Bakary Kante, specialist in education and finance

Mauritius S.E. M. Steven Obeegadoo, former minister of education and scientific research and co-leader of the team of experts

Niger Prof. Alhassane Yénikoye, rector of the Abdou Moumouni National University, leader of the Gabon review team of experts

OECD/France

Mr. Bernard Hugonnier, OECD deputy director for education and
Mr. Serge Ebersold, specialist in education

The peer review, moreover, fundamentally respects the Gabonese vision. It would like to follow this vision and the plans laid out by the country. That is why we must acknowledge here, the enormous contribution of the team led by Prof. Fidele Nze Nguema and the ministry's officers. It is their contribution that made it possible to build the foundation on which the review was erected.

Lastly, WGESA would like to thank the entire ADEA Secretariat and the executive management of the pilot agency, IIEP, for their advice, their logistics support and their programming backing. We would especially like to thank IIEP Director, Dr. Marc Bray, Minister Mamadou Ndoye, Mrs. Françoise Caillods and Dr. Hamidou Boukary. Their desire was that this study be completed as rapidly as possible and under the best conditions so that it enriches, in a timely fashion, the educational reforms undertaken in Gabon for a better future for the Gabonese learner, Africa in general and the international community. On behalf of WGESA, I would like to see this wish granted.



Ibrahima Bah-Lalya, Ph.D.
Senior Education Specialist
ADEA Working Group Co-ordinator
Education Sector Analysis

Acronyms

CP	First year of primary school
DUES	University Diploma of Scientific Studies
DEUG	Diploma of General University Studies
DSCRDP	Strategic Growth and Poverty Reduction Document
EDICEF	Editions Classiques d'Expression Francaise
EPID	Insertion and Development Practices School
ESAM	Higher Institute of Arts and Professions
FCFA	CFA francs
FESENA	(Union) Federation of National Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HECI	International Canadian Higher Studies
IDA	Delegated Academy Inspections
ISG	Higher Institute of Management
PATESP	Private Sector Development and Capacity Building Project
SENA	National Education Union
UEHOBO	El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University
UPK	Polytechnical University of Kougouleu
USTM	University of Science and Technology of Masuku

Synthesis note

Key messages and tracks to be envisaged to meet the challenges encountered by the Gabonese education system

The international team met the representatives of the Ministry's technical departments as well as those from higher education, the unions and the partner ministries such as the Plan, Finance and Social Affairs. The African Development Bank as well as other representatives from the development partner community were called on.

Moreover, the international team made use of synthesis documents such as the national self-evaluation report, which it found particularly enriching. It used the preliminary mission report that arrived in Gabon eight months earlier to mark out the phases of the review.

The documents provided by the departments and institutions visited, completed the two reports to compose basic reflection elements.

The mission was still not able to precisely determine all the aspects due to the contingencies and limits that the statistical data, for the most part too old to reflect the most recent evolutions of the Gabonese education system, imposed. But it could nevertheless extract a few findings that are of a nature to contribute to the positive development of education in this country.

This first key message provides an impression of solidity and sustainability that emerges from the Gabonese education system. With a GER above 130%, a NER of at least 93% and a boy/girl spread of less than 1.5%, Gabon's achievements are especially impressive. It is particularly interesting to note that its results are supported and maintained by a stable framework and national education policy. The reforms Gabon has undertaken are resolutely turned toward the country's endogenous values, but at the same time allow room for other values, whether they are African or international.

The Gabonese education policies and their implementation can, however, benefit from certain improvements to make the system even more efficient. It is in this spirit that the peer review identified a few tracks that the country can already follow to consolidate and ensure its achievements for future development that is coherent and quality-oriented.

In preschool education

The subsector is currently facing several challenges; four of which seem particularly serious:

- » The insufficient number and inappropriateness of the infrastructures for pre-schools, especially in rural areas;
- » The problem of pedagogic supervisory personnel considered not specialized enough;
- » The need to develop legal and shared measures to define the roles and responsibilities of the ministries and departments that work with preschool; and
- » The necessity of identifying alternative approaches that fit the socio-economic contexts of each area.

The review, after having studied these challenges, suggests that an inter-sector and inter-minister commission including all the parties concerned be activated to examine the problems as a whole with particular attention paid to drawing up eagerly awaited school mapping.

In primary education

Three questions were considered urgent: the redeployment of teachers, drop-outs and the skills-based approach.

The redeployment of teachers

Measures exist but they are not all applied because of social considerations. Vis-à-vis these problems, there are several interesting experiments in West Africa, notably in Guinea and Burkina Faso. The review suggests that a Gabonese mission be sent to these countries to study the implementation means that are successfully applied there.

Grade repetition and drop-outs

This is a major problem in primary school. To tackle it, the review suggests launching a study to determine the quality indicators specific to Gabon that will take into account all the parameters that must be considered to determine the quality level and the measures to be implemented to improve this quality.

The skills-based approach

This avant-garde method is already being broadly applied in several African countries. It has only however been truly successful when certain preliminaries are fulfilled, notably those linked to the field actors' adhesion. The review recommends that a steering committee comprised of representatives of parents associations, schoolteachers, unions and

other actors be created and dynamized. This committee could identify obstacles, propose solutions and handle the implementation follow-up of these solutions.

In secondary education

At the level of secondary education, the greatest challenges can be summed up in the following problems: how to implement the orientation law passed in 1966 so that all Gabonese under 16 benefit from an education offering that fits their needs in secondary and how to best take care of disadvantaged groups.

- » **Extension of the education offering to all children from 10 to 16 years old.** The major challenge seems to be extending the education offering to all young Gabonese under 16 by 2015. Once this goal is attained, the secondary school admission exams would no longer have to exist. The same would be true for the articulation between primary and secondary. The review suggests that a common trunk of knowledge and indispensable skills be defined that would take concrete form in the creation of integrated curricula for a basic program on the basis of nine years (from age 6 to 16). This task could be handled by the National Pedagogic Institute (IPN).
- » **Development of a national plan to increase admission capacities in secondary education.** The review suggests that a national plan be created whose purpose is to increase admission capacities in secondary according to needs. This plan would be based on the following elements: (i) construction of classrooms by the state or the private sector, especially in the regions; (ii) reintroduction of the double shift with appropriate accompaniment measures in the city; (iii) definition of a new partnership with the private sector; (iv) fighting exclusion.
- » In order to fight against this exclusion, the review suggests: (i) that a specific education policy be envisaged for the insertion of disadvantaged children such as street children, handicapped children, children with serious intellectual deficiencies; (ii) that financial assistance from the state (in particular the 25,000 CFA franc bonus) be rethought so that any child who attends school regularly has access to it; (iii) that, to be equitable, this financial assistance take into account school fees in the private sector.
- » **Diversifying technical education and systemizing the reform of the sub-sector** so as to meet both modern and traditional needs, and to properly solve the problem of drop-outs.

In higher education

The difficult transition to higher education and the delays accumulated by students in the training program have taken on worrying proportions. The review therefore suggests three types of corrective measures:

- » **Improvement in access:** The major challenge in higher education is the improvement in access, internal efficiency and cost control in this subsector, which costs the Gabonese government and parents billions of CFA francs.
- » **Improvement in the relevance of programs:** The question of relevance in training programs vis-à-vis the job market is also critical. The review therefore suggests: (i) the creation of a special commission that would be comprised of representatives of the university and secondary school, as well as parents, students and leaders in economic circles to seriously revisit the articulation between the two levels; (ii) the creation of short programs, such as the two-year university degree, in order to train qualified technicians, focused on questions of technological and socio-economic development. This would make it possible to solve the problem of eternal students in higher education and the unemployment rate of graduates.
- » **Improvement in structures, curriculum and programs:** The review encourages the reflection underway on the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system, which is the wave of the future. The university, the Ministry and all the social partners could combine their efforts in order to examine all the implications for the sector as well as the broader ones for the nation.

Concerning system management

The review notes that all these recommendations could only be effectively made concrete if management, financing and administrative questions are precisely defined. Consequently, it encourages:



➔ A primary school in the outskirts of Libreville.
©Photo Collection BM

- » The finalization of the expenditure framework in the medium term;
- » The allocation of subsidies to private schools on the basis of shared criteria of efficiency and quality applicable to all, with particular attention paid to disadvantaged social groups;
- » Better coordination of actions and resources of the development partners;
- » The immediate creation of an ad hoc group to reflect on financing.

ADEA and its principal partners, including the OECD, will work alongside Gabon for all these proposals to raise awareness in the international partners.

These are a few tracks that the review proposes to explore in this report, with a collegial and participatory perspective and as its goal, a better future for Gabonese young people and the Gabonese nation in general.

Terms of reference of the peer review of Gabon

Context

The ADEA Biennial held in Mauritius and the ADEA executive committee meeting, as well as the Forum of Ministers that (was) took place in Chavannes de Bogis, recommended organizing peer reviews on education in Africa. Fourteen countries expressed their interest in this review including: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of (the) Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria and Zanzibar. Three of them were chosen for the experimental phase: Mauritius, Gabon and Nigeria.

Policy and programming supervision was assigned to a subcommittee of the ADEA executive committee especially created for this purpose. The responsibility for implementation was given to the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, WGESA.

The Ministry of National Education of Gabon wished to transmit to ADEA the letter of 000847/MEN/Cab/CTEPT in which Gabon indicates the areas that the peer review must concern, namely:

1. The articulation between secondary education and higher education;
2. Preschool and primary education;
3. Secondary education.

His Excellency the Minister of National Education wished to renew and confirm, during the ADEA Biennial held in Libreville, his country's interest in the peer review exercise. He expressed the wish of seeing this review completed as quickly as possible so that its results could serve the development of Gabonese education reform.

Objectives

Referring to the framework defined by the letter of 000847/MEN/Cab/CTEPT, as well as the suggestions and recommendations of the preliminary WGESA mission carried out in April 2005, the Gabonese national self-evaluation report of March 2006, and the recommendations of His Excellency the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research of Gabon, the review:

- (i) Will deepen reflection on the subjects and questions indicated by the Gabonese authorities, particularly the questions on the evaluation of achievements in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education, as well as questions on the articulation between the different education levels;
- (ii) Will formulate concrete proposals with a view to improving education policies in Gabon and their implementation;
- (iii) Will help prepare phase V of the peer review, in accordance with the needs specifically expressed by Gabon.

Activity fields

Taking into account the preceding, the mission will explore the entire reform underway with particular attention paid to subjects and questions that were identified during the preliminary work, namely:

Concerning preschool education

- » The examination of the means to be implemented to guarantee quality preschool education for all (infrastructures, facilities, number of schoolteachers, quality of their initial and ongoing training, pedagogic material, etc.);
- » The examination of the opportunity cost of such a reform vis-à-vis the increase in resources in primary to improve the quality of education and limit grade repetition;
- » The examination of the accompaniment policies needed for the success of the education reform (in terms of regional development to avoid the rural exodus, for example), family policy or emigration.

Concerning primary education

- » How to ensure that the reforms are seriously evaluated before being broadly implemented, with particular attention paid, during such evaluations, to the aspects linked to continuity and sustainability;
- » How to ensure that the system's external as well as internal partnerships are sufficiently taken into account (in particular, what are the nature and quality of the relations with associations, unions, the private sector, the other education levels?);
- » How to deal with overcrowded classrooms;
- » What measures are to be taken to further improve operations and optimize the use of current resources?

- » How to continue and strengthen the extraordinary progress accomplished in the area of equity so as to ensure equality of access to a quality education in cities and the countryside, according to socio-professional origins and taking into account children who suffer from physical handicaps or learning problems? How, under these conditions, can a harmonious development of private secular education be ensured?
- » How to include non-formal and informal education in a holistic vision of the development of education and how to make available implementation resources that meet the challenges of a quality education accessible to all. What roles can these two subsectors play in EFA and the MDG?

Concerning secondary and higher education and the transition between the two levels

- » Studying the conditions for a better deployment of personnel. Such an operation must be preceded by serious documentation and an analysis of the various parameters;
- » Clarifying the situation of private secondary education (its structures, personnel, its impact on the entire system, etc.). It is important to be able to measure the contribution of private education in the training of Gabonese young people. The analysis of private education, to be compared to that of public education will surely make it possible to determine the problems linked to admission to higher education (secondary-higher transition);
- » Examining the problem of quality in depth: the average success rates on secondary education exams would be between 30 and 33%;
- » Examining the articulation between university research, private sector research and the needs of social partners and society in general;
- » Verifying if the following exist:
 - ♦ Organizations playing, on one hand, an integration role between education and research and in transversal research programs and, on the other, that of consultation, dialogue and strategic orientation through arbitration between the major choices that have been made on education and research and societal problems to be solved;
 - ♦ Doctoral programs, pedagogic resources departments, a coherent publishing policy and a further training strategy for human resources in higher education;
 - ♦ A national structure and a university admission, information and orientation structure for pupils and students and their professional insertion;
 - ♦ Social dialogue mechanisms in the university community, validation of the national policy on higher education.

Methodology and agenda

In accordance with the recommendations of the cooperation framework, the international team will combine a group of strategies including a review of the literature, interviews and data analyses that should result in a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that characterize the Gabonese education system. The review will lead to concrete proposals that should serve to improve the Gabonese education system's performances in the specific areas identified by the country.

National report

Commissioned, supervised and validated by
the Gabonese National Peer Review Commission,
Ministry of National Education of Gabon

Principal consultant:
Professeur Fidèle Nzé Nguema,
Rector of the El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba
National University

Section I

SELF-EVALUATION OF THE GABONESE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Presentation of the country

Geographic framework

Gabon is located in Central Africa between three countries and an ocean: to the north, Cameroon, to the northwest, Equatorial Guinea, to the east and south, the Congo. The Atlantic Ocean stretches out on its western side, with 800 kilometers of coastline whereas the country is crossed from the southeast to the west by the Ogooué river and its tributaries, navigable over 1,200 kilometers. The country straddles the equator. It covers 267,667 km².

The relief is uneven, with three characteristic zones: a coastal plain in the west, plateaus in the north and east – including the Batéké plateaus – and mountainous massifs including the renowned Mt. Chaillu. The mountainous part is a genuine water tower for the sub region and is the starting point of the mountain chain that culminates in Mt. Iboundji, 1,575 m in altitude.¹

Despite its accelerated urbanization, the country still has an enormous plant cover, represented by 85% of tropical forests of which 35% is primary forests that are still undeveloped today.

Gabon's climate is of the humid tropical type that is characterized by a long dry season between June and September, an even longer rainy season from December to April and two short intermediate seasons.

Gabon (268,000 km²) is one of the smallest African countries. It only represents 1/150th of the continent's area, which is 30,310,000 km².

1. F. Meyo Bibang F. and Nzamba F. *Le Gabon*, Géographie, Paris, EDICEF, 1990.

It is however larger than São Tomé-et-Príncipe (1,001 km²), Gambia (11,295 km²), Rwanda (26,338 km²), Burundi (27,834 km²), Equatorial Guinea (28,051 km²), Malawi (119,310 km²) and Ghana (238,537 km²).

The country has immense potential with subsoil in which there is oil, as well as uranium, manganese, niobium, phosphate, gold and other natural resources. The forest cover mostly comprised of okoumé, is estimated at 22 million hectares with about 12.5 million CFA francs of commercial value. The country has 6,000 plant species, 19 primate species, 20 predatory species and over 600 bird species. The rivers and maritime coastal area contain a very diverse fish population.

Peoples and cultures

Gabon was inhabited by successive waves. The first inhabitants were the Pygmies, then, in great numbers, the Bantu, who are now the majority. The latter are divided into about 40 ethnic groups with nine main ethno-linguistic groups: the Fangs (36%), the Mpongwé (15%), the Mbédé (14%), the Punu (12%), the Bandjabi, the Bakota, the Obamba and the Batéké. The Pygmies constitute a little less than 1% of the population.



The first Europeans, the Portuguese, moored on the coast in the fourteenth century. It was France however that colonized the country following a treaty signed with Chief Mponguwe on February 9, 1939. Gabon acquired its independence on August 17, 1960. At the time, it was one of the least densely inhabited African countries, with a population of 448,564. This number gradually increased over the years to 552,184 in 1970, 1,014,976 in 1993 and 1,330,000 in 2002. The current density is 3.8 inhabitants per km².

The gender ratio is about 102 women per 100 men. The foreign population is estimated at 15.2%. The average annual growth rate is 2.5%.

The Gabonese population is very young. Those under 15 years of age represent 41% of the total. The active population (16-55 years old) is estimated at 500,000 people and is concentrated in Port-Gentil and Libreville where most of the rural émigrés and foreigners live.

Life expectancy in Gabon is estimated at 53 years. This figure, however, could be lower in the future because of the AIDS pandemic that has struck the country. The prevalence



rate is currently estimated at 8%. This situation has been worsened by the growth of poverty following the economic problems the country has experienced since the 1980s.

Economic framework

Four periods have marked the evolution of the Gabonese economy since its independence.

The first, from 1960 to 1973, was characterized by a serious shortage in infrastructures and in human as well as financial resources. The country's mining and agriculture potential were underdeveloped. During this period, the GDP was less than 100 billion CFA francs.

The second period was from 1974 to 1978. It was characterized by a remarkable economic boom, with an increase in oil production of 34% between 1973 and 1974 and a revaluation of the barrel price of oil from \$3.40 to \$9.70 in 1974. Unfortunately, the end of this period was marked by a faltering in the economy because the spectacular expansion of 1973 to 1976 was followed by a strong recession. Between 1976 and 1978, the GDP dropped by 25%.

The third period, from 1980 to 1985, was marked by a short-lived recovery due to the combined effects of an expenditure stabilization plan and a new hike in oil prices.

Starting in 1986, a new recession affected the national economy and the crisis grew deeper as a result of the deterioration of the international environment. Hence the country's submission to the first structural adjustment program between 1986 and 1994 under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund. These adjustments had a deleterious impact on the social sector, especially education. The informal sector already provided work in 1993 for over half the population of the urban centers and represented 49.9% of all jobs. Concurrently, rural employment was evaluated at 34.5%, mostly without any serious professional qualifications.

In 2000, Gabon undertook another macroeconomic and social reform through the development of a strategic framework for the fight against poverty (DSCR, Strategic Growth and Poverty Reduction Document) for which the improvement in the functioning and achievement of the education system is one of the fundamental pillars. This DSCR was adopted in July 2005 by the government and civil society. In this new framework, the improvement in the Gabonese education system's efficacy is one of the principal strategic pillars of growth and poverty reduction.

Today, oil reserves, which represent Gabon's primary source of wealth, are evaluated at 2.96 billion barrels. Annual production is 18 million tons. The area allocated for mining

operations covers 3,754 km², 77% off shore and 23% on land. Despite this, indirect taxes from oil are in free fall.

At this time, with debt service of 600 billion CFA francs, or over half the budget revenue, the chances of a redeployment of the economy based on state intervention are very low. It is symptomatic that in terms of the HDI, Gabon is ranked 123rd out of 177 countries.

The effects of this situation are considerable in the education-training sector as is demonstrated by global education expenditures. Gabon allocates 3.7% of the GDP (of which 3.1% for public expenditures) to the education system. In 20002, the share of total public education expenditures compared to total government expenditures was on the order of 14.6%.

But this budget allocation is modest when compared to that of most of the sub-Saharan African countries whose GDP is clearly below that of Gabon: the highest estimation (3.7%) is below the sub-Saharan average (4%) and very much below the international average (5.8%). The countries with an equivalent level of wealth appropriate more than 5% of their GDP to education.³ In fact, in 2002, the global education expenditure was on the order of 132 billion CFA francs for a GDP of 3,611 billion CFA francs.

Administrative and political context

Gabon has a presidential regime with El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba as president of the republic, succeeding Léon Mba, the country's first president, in 1967.

Between 1968 and 1990, Gabon had a one-party system; in 1990, it changed to a multi-party system like most of the other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Gabon is divided into nine provinces, each run by a governor. The provinces are themselves subdivided into departments under a prefect and into districts under sub prefects. French is the official language, alongside local languages.

In 1996, a law was passed that instituted the principle of subsidiarity in the division of competencies between local administrations and the state. The transfer of competencies to the local administrations also had to take into account the principle of progressiveness in clearly distinguishing the competences that were the province of the state, those devolved to the departments and lastly those transferred to the communes. The

2. L. Ada and JB Rasera (2001), *Étude des coûts unitaires de l'éducation au Gabon*.

3. *Étude des coûts unitaires de l'Éducation au Gabon*, World Bank/PATESP, October 2001, pp 9-11.

law thus associates the state and the local administrations in the country's achievement of economic and social development.

Education in Gabon

Brief summary of the colonial period

The place and orientation given to education and training in Gabon during the colonial period was conceived to fit in with the interests of the French colonial system established in the country. There were two objectives: on one hand, auxiliary officers called on to accomplish execution tasks had to be trained and, on the other, French civilization was to be inculcated into the indigenous population. Education was therefore to serve as a support and carrier for “the civilizing mission of France” whose corollary was its assimilation policy.

The education given in the schools, mostly private and denominational, remained almost entirely limited to the primary level until 1945. After World War II, many secondary schools were gradually opened.

Education reforms after independence

When independence was declared, the highest diploma that could be obtained in Gabon was the baccalaureate awarded at the end of secondary school. The training of high-level managers took place in universities and the “*Grandes écoles*” in France.

The enrolment and training of managers were strategic options clearly announced shortly after independence in many countries. In the new Gabon, the law stipulated that education was free, mandatory from 6 to 16 years old and secular. Six years after independence, the constitution and the law of 1966 guaranteed equal access to education, professional training and culture for all. French was the sole language of instruction.

In 1983, on the occasion of the general assembly of education, an evaluation of the entire system led to a redefinition of the vision and objectives of Gabonese education, which was summarized in three principal orientations:

- » “Education should ensure the training of fulfilled men and women, enamored of freedom and respectful of human dignity;
- » The training of men and women who respect traditional values and are capable of combining tradition and modernity;
- » The training of responsible men and women who are capable of creativity in the scientific and technical fields.”

The current situation

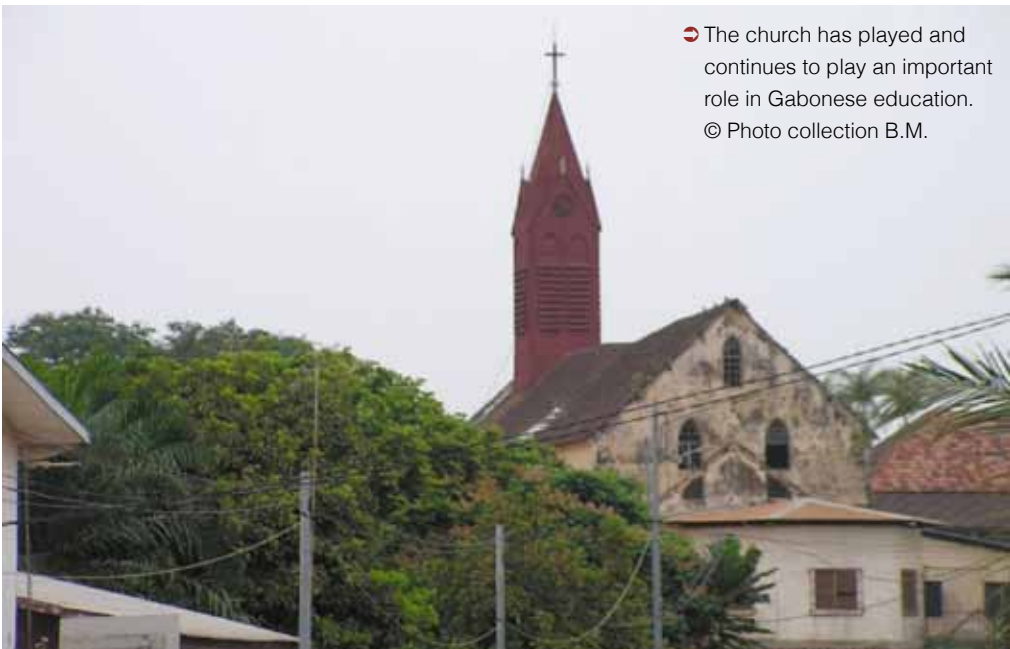
(a) Organization

The Gabonese education system is modeled on the French one. It has four levels: pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education. School management is centralized but decentralized on the provincial level through delegated academy inspections (IDA) and 19 school districts administered by an inspector, of which the country has nine.

The IDAs are responsible for steering the education policy in preschool, primary and secondary.

Most of the schools are public. The private sector, however, is developing, especially in preschool where so-called “secular” private schools may be found alongside traditional private denominational schools. The latter are of three types: Catholic schools (the majority), Protestant and, for the last few years, Islamic centers, which are few in number.

Secondary education takes place in public as well as private schools, the latter recruiting 26% of the school population and playing a role, in a certain manner, of a recovery reservoir for students excluded from public schools because of mediocre marks or discipline problems. In all cases, the state finances some of these private schools, whether they are denominational or secular, from the moment when they are recognized as being for the public good.



Higher education is mainly available at the National University of Gabon founded in 1970 and renamed, in 1978, the El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University (UEHOBO). In 1987, the scientific and technological section of the UEHOBO was transferred to Franceville (capital of Haut Ogooué) and became the University of Science and Technology of Masuku (USTM).

After the creation, in 2002, of the University of Health Sciences, the former medical school of the UEHOBO, the University of Libreville had two faculties: the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences and the Faculty of Literature and Humanities.

In addition to these schools, there is a constellation of *grandes écoles* and higher education and postgraduate structures:

- » A preparatory class in higher mathematics;
- » Teacher Training College for general education;
- » Teacher Training College for technical education;
- » National School of Water and Forests;
- » National Magistrates School;
- » National School of Administration;
- » Polytechnical School of Masuku;
- » Secretarial Training College;
- » Institute of Economics and Finance.
- » National Institute of Management Science.

There are three seminaries in Libreville: the Saint-Jean seminary (secondary education) and the Saint-Augustin and Père-Brothier seminaries (higher education).

The private sector is gradually entering the Gabonese university system through internationally recognized structures like the International Canadian Higher Studies (HECI) and the Institute of Economic and Accounting Techniques (France). Moreover, an increasing number of local higher education institutions such as the Polytechnical University of Kougoueu (UPK), the Higher Institute of Management (ISG) and the Higher Institute of Arts and Professions (ESAM) are being created.

(b) Functioning

In Gabon, the legal admission age for primary education is six years. It is the first school experience for most Gabonese youngsters. This reality is partially due to the high cost of preschool education whose offering is mainly in the private sector.

The cases of exclusion due to age limit no longer exist. Students enter secondary school at an increasingly younger age. This trend will be strengthened as the duration of primary school was shortened from six to five years in 2004.

The proportion of children who attend private schools is relatively high in Gabon compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The state partially finances private schools, which are recognized as being of public utility, whether they are denominational or secular. It should be noted that these subsidized schools admit 90% of the students in private secondary and 77% in private primary.

The state grants students admitted to higher education a study allocation of 63,000 CFA francs, regardless of the country where they are admitted to continue their education in Africa. This stipend is renewable provided that university grades are satisfactory.

In Gabonese schools, the marking system is based on 10 in primary and on 20 in secondary. In this way, pupils obtaining an average of 5 in primary and an average of 10 in secondary are considered as passing. However, in practice, a current exception to this norm consists, in secondary, of giving a second chance to students with an average of 9.5/20, while candidates are authorized to take the baccalaureate exam with an average of 7.5/20, automatic passing requiring a minimum of 10/20.

The main motivation of students in secondary today remains the allocation of a stipend of 24,000 CFA francs per student and per trimester provided the student obtain a quarterly or annual average equal to or higher than 10. The other advantages, notably urban school transportation in Libreville, have been gradually reduced over time. Air transportation, which in the past benefited students, has been almost entirely eliminated with the privatization of the airlines.

Public school teachers in Gabon belong to one of two union organizations: the National Education Union (SENA) or the (Union)Federation of National Education (FESENA).

Analytical evaluation of the development of education

Access and equity

Preschool

Preschool education prepares children to start primary school under the best possible conditions. It especially prepares them for socialization, the development of attitudes favorable to a good school career and the development of a foundation of basic knowledge appropriate for preschool.

➔ A preschool in the outskirts of Libreville. © Photo collection B.M.



The subsector is under the responsibility of both the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Preschool Education. It concerns children 5 years old and under.

Official figures show a distinct progression since 2000 with a gross attendance rate rapidly increasing, going from 5.6% in 1990 to 41.4% in 1999. And as the table below suggests, school populations have constantly increased ever since.

Table 1.1. Progression of preschool teacher and pupil populations between 1999 and 2003

School year	Number of schools	Number of classes	Boys	Girls	Total population	Number of teachers
1999-2000	14	27	520	513	1,033	22
2000-2001	48	77	813	838	1,651	75
2001-2002	65	126	1,671	1,719	3,390	123
2002-2003	82	144	2,221	2,213	4,434	196

There are three types of early childhood development structures: health, specialized and family.

1. **The health structures** are oriented toward follow-up to ensure that the child is in healthy physical and psychological condition. They include the 17 Infant and Maternal Health Centers (CSMI) and the pediatric services connected to the hospitals and dispensaries, all of them under the Ministry of Health. There are also private initiatives that help extend the network of pediatric services linked to clinics and health structures that are part of the National Social Security Fund.
2. **The specialized structures** are run by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs as well as private initiatives. The Ministry of Education has strengthened the former structures with the opening of 129 preschool classes. The Ministry of Social Affairs offers a certain number of structures including the school for deaf children in Nzeng-Ayong (Libreville), the reception center for abandoned children in Angondje (Libreville), two crèches in Libreville and 37 nursery schools. Private initiatives have established a school for handicapped children (Horizons Nouveaux, Libreville), a reception center for abandoned children in Sainte-Marie (Beatitudes), seven nursery schools for the Ministry of Defense, four nursery schools for the municipality and secular private nursery schools.
3. **Family structures** deal with the organization of the family, society's basic unit, on which children's physical, psychological and social development partially depends. Since 2003, the Ministry of the Family has been involved in preschool enrolment through the creation of a few part-time daycare center projects throughout the country.

These structures are run by specialized personnel who are trained locally and abroad. Inadequate in number, these qualified personnel are mostly based in major urban centers. They are currently shared out by ministerial departments as follows:

1. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Affairs have 300 qualified officers in charge of preschool classes (preschool educators, technical preschool education officers, nursery school auxiliaries) and five preschool inspectors;
2. The Ministry of National Education has six inspectors, 13 pedagogic counselors, 113 class personnel (assistant teachers, teachers, technical officers, educators).

It is necessary to extend this subsector throughout the country since preschool plays a critical role in academic achievements.

The necessity of extending this subsector throughout the country and the fact that preschool plays a critical role in academic achievement after preschool are serious concerns that must be considered. As pointed out above, preschools are rare in rural areas. This imbalance would partially explain the poor results of pupils in these areas. Consequently,

there is a high rate of national repetition, which stands at about 53% during the first few years of primary school.

Moreover, the deployment of personnel is problematic. The assignment of teachers does not reflect the real needs of schools taken individually. Libreville has too many teachers. And the problem of housing must be taken into account. In certain areas, teachers have decent housing provided by the state while the majority does not.

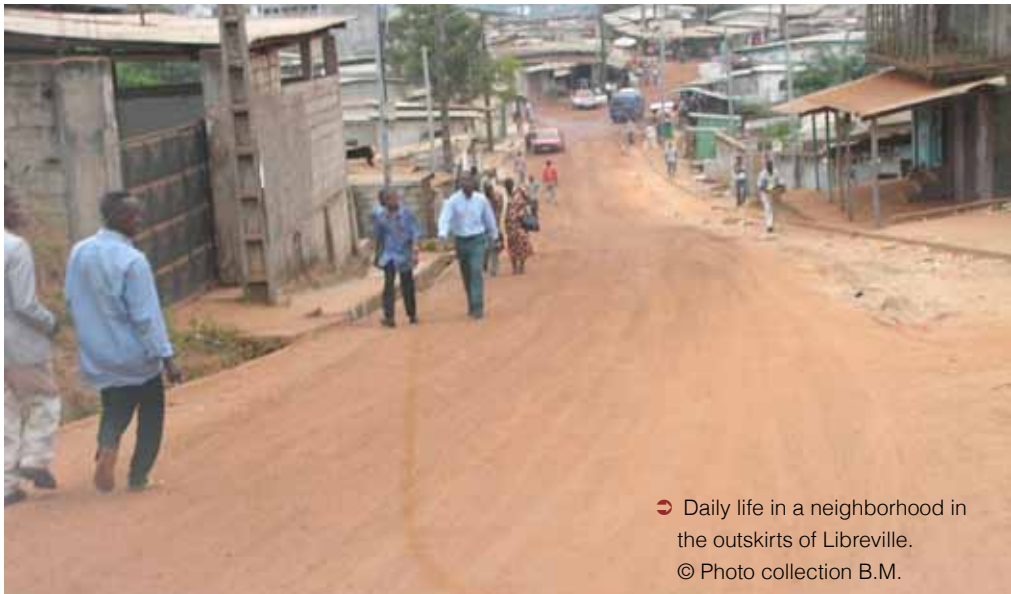
In addition, the allocation of financial resources does not match the schools' real needs. It has been observed, for example, that for the same number of pupils, two schools could have a very different number of teachers or extremely unequal financial resources.

Furthermore, it appears that it is not possible to objectively establish a relevant relationship between the financial resources attributed to a school and the children's performances in terms of cognitive acquisitions.

These problems are worrying and would require immediate measures.

Three tracks could be envisaged:

- » The examination of the resources to be implemented to guarantee a quality preschool education for all (whether the resources are infrastructures, facilities, number of teachers, their initial and ongoing training or pedagogic material);



➔ Daily life in a neighborhood in the outskirts of Libreville.
© Photo collection B.M.

- » The examination of the opportunity cost of such a reform vis-à-vis the increase in resources in primary to improve the quality of education and limit grade repetitions. As an illustration, we can ask ourselves to what degree an allocation of 25,000 CFA francs per child given to parents who are civil servants is positive discrimination when we know that this allocation does not concern the unemployed.
- » The examination of the accompaniment policies required for the success of the education reform, for example, concerning regional development, family policy or emigration.

Primary school

The measures of law 16/66 of August 9, 1966 very much favoured massive access to education for school-age children (6 to 16 years old). It should be pointed out, as the table below shows, that Gabon reached effective parity between the two genders.

Table 1.2. Gross admission rates between 1994 and 1997

	1994/1995	1995/1996	1996/1997
Taux brut d'admission (TBA)	115,32	128,03	124,15
Garçons	117,95	132,94	127,81
Filles	112,76	123,26	120,62

Source: EGEP data taken from the work of the DSCR

The additional social demand in education in primary was estimated, on the average, at 3,027 pupils a year between 1994 and 1997 (Table 1.3). These new pupils were added to the repeaters. This explains why the gross enrolment rates are quite a bit higher than 100%.

The grade repetition rate during the first few years of primary school can reach 53%, which necessitates the implementation of immediate corrective measures, including the widespread use of textbooks, now free thanks to a government measure in 2005.

Table 1.3. Education demand

Admissions	1994/1995	1995/1996	1996/1997
School-age population in primary (6-11 years old)	165.299	168.578	171.352
School-age population in secondary (12-18 years old)	160.496	166.919	173.480
Total school-age population (6-18 years old)	325.795	335.497	344.832

Source: DPPI, 1999

Table 1.4. Primary enrolment rate, 2005

Categories	Gross enrolment rate (GER)	Net enrolment rate (NER)
Gender		
Boys	139.08	91.90
Girls	140.58	92.99
Region		
Libreville	130.82	91.25
Port Gentil	134.55	93.02
North	153.93	92.72
South	149.80	94.82
East	149.26	93.54
West except Libreville and Port-Gentil	138.14	92.08
Other urban centers	142.31	92.94
Rural-	152.24	93.72
National	139.82	92.44

Source: EGEP data taken from the work of the DSCRCP

General and technical secondary education

Access to general secondary education is through a selective exam. The success rate between 1994 and 1997 is low as the table below shows.

Parity between boys and girls has continued in secondary school attendance but the gross enrolment rate is low. In addition to this problem, there is a difference in access between public and private schools. In fact, many students are oriented toward subsidized private schools whereas others are oriented to public structures.

Table 1.5. Success rate on the entrance exam in 6th grade

Year	Candidates	Admitted	% success
1994	25,259	6,005	23.8
1995	26,128	7,257	27.8
1996	26,216	8,204	31.3
1997	29,293	7,781	26.6
1998	27,803	9,915	35.7
1999	30,228	11,242	37.2

Source: State of the education system – technical and professional education included. According to population projections on the basis of RGPH 1993 - MEN/DPPI Statistics Department – May 1999

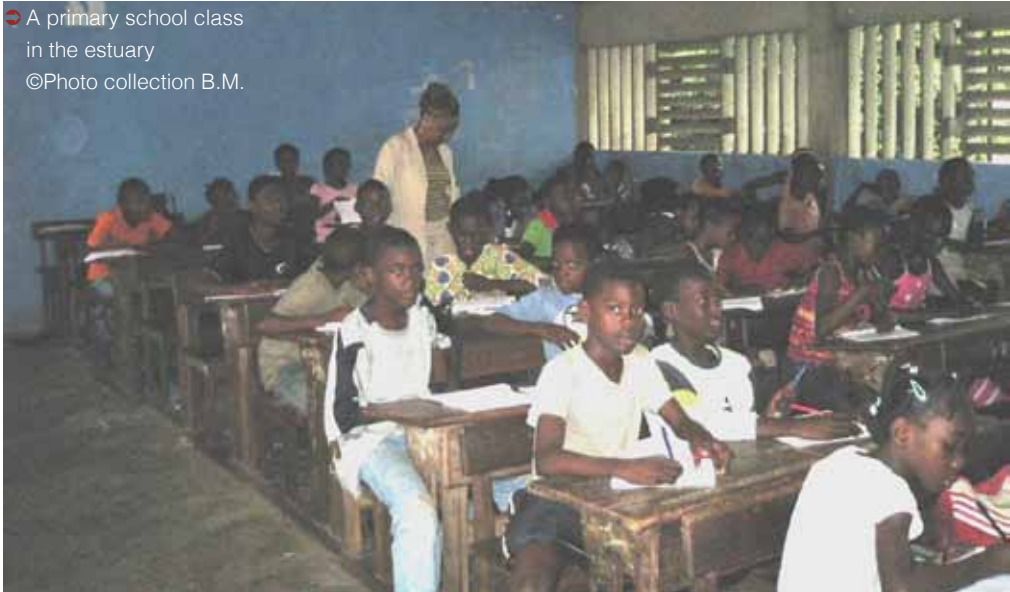


Table 1.6. Student populations in general secondary education – lower and upper secondary, for the year 2002/2003

Type of schools	Nbre of students	Age range	% GER
Public secondary education	76,452	12-18 ans	
Private secondary education	27,962	?	
Total	104,414	220,857	47.28

Source: DPPI

The situation of technical and professional education is very worrying in light of the low level of interest that students show for this training stream (Table 1.7). The consequences are disastrous for the quality of the training and national development. In fact, this stream only attracts students who do not meet the criteria for entering general education. Technical and professional education, however, is indispensable for Gabon’s development while contributing to full employment. A resurgence of interest must be brought to this subsector by the political authorities so that it becomes one of the stars of the Gabonese education system.

This education is handled by 11 schools that are part of the structures below:

- » The Ministry of National Education, which receives about two thirds of the populations (6,500 students in 1996/1997);
- » The Ministry of Higher Education;

- » The Ministry of Labor and Employment;
- » The private sector (companies).

Table 1.7. Participation in technical and professional education

	1988/1	1994/1	1995/1	1996/1
% des inscrits dans l'enseignement général	76,9	91,5	90,3	91,96
% des inscrits dans l'enseignement technologique	20,8	8,05	9,05	4,21

Source: Ministry of National Education, DPPI /DE

Among the technical schools are the following:

1. A commercial education lower secondary school in Libreville;
2. Two industrial education lower secondary schools in Fougamou and Libreville;
3. A national business school in Port-Gentil;
4. Two commercial professional high schools in Franceville and Mouila;
5. Two industrial professional high schools in Oyem and Tchibanga;
6. Three technical high schools in Libreville, Moanda and Port-Gentil.

Recruitment is done via a competitive exam:

- » At the end of 7th grade for admission into the lower secondary or professional high school;
- » At the end of 9th grade for admission into the National Business School and the technical high school.
 - ♦ The existing training streams such as secretarial work, bookkeeping, masonry, building carpentry, automobile mechanics, the service sector, maintenance mechanics lead to a certificate of professional aptitude (CAP) in three years.
 - ♦ Existing training streams such as industrial drawing for the building trades, motorized equipment, construction carpentry, interior renovation, metal works, secretarial and office work, management accounting, electro-technical work (being created), plumbing installation (being created) lead to a professional studies diploma (BEP) in four years.
 - ♦ Existing training streams such as business, management and administration lead to a national business school diploma in four years.
 - ♦ Lastly, existing training streams such as cold storage and air-conditioning and diesel engine mechanics lead to a technician's diploma (BT) in three years.

The operation of private schools under illegal conditions as they are not recognized by the state penalizes these schools' students and deprives Gabon of a potential source of young graduates in the technical and professional streams.

Professional insertion and reinsertion programs are primarily implemented by the National Employment Office and the Gabonese Institute of Support for Development (IGAD).

To fight against exclusion from the job market, the National Employment Office has designed short training programs (a few months long) for victims of structural unemployment or those who risk it. It may be noted that 8,191 job-seekers asked for such a training program between 1994 and 2003. The table below presents the types of programs requested.

Table 1.8. Requests to the National Employment Office for training programs

Training programs requested	Men	Women	Total
Management, IT, communication	31.0	26.2	57.2
Services for individuals and local administrations	0.6	0.1	0.7
Distribution, sales	1.8	0.5	2.3
Industry	0.1	0.0	0.1
Mechanics, electricity, electronics	15.2	0.8	16.1
Civil engineering and extraction	12.0	0.4	12.4
Tourism and transportation	2.7	0.4	3.1
Agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and forests	0.4	0.1	0.4
Crafts	0.1	1.1	1.2
Arts	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hotel and restaurant business	1.9	0.4	2.3
Initial and ongoing training	0.5	1.0	1.5
Local development	0.1	0.0	0.1
Wood industry	0.0	0.0	0.0
Technical managers in industry	0.0	0.0	0.0
Health	0.0	0.0	0.0
Performing arts	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: National Employment Office, Insertion and Reinsertion Funds, Activity Report 2003

It is important to mention the role of the Gabonese Institute for Support to Development (IGAD) in training and the fight against poverty. The IGAD provides training in agricultural professions in two centers in Libreville and Ntoum. The Libreville center is specialized in market gardening while that of Ntoum handles food crop production. The IGAD's activities take place in the outskirts of major urban centers (Libreville, Oyem, Franceville).

Its objective is to provide support for creators of small agricultural and para-agricultural firms by setting up pilot projects and training farmers, notably in market gardening, food crop production and pig rearing. In 2004, the Institute trained 626 people.

Higher Education

In Gabon, admission to higher education remains closely dependent on obtaining the baccalaureate. Access through a special entrance exam to the university or the law school exam is low. The mediocre results on baccalaureate exam clearly illustrate the difficulties in accessing higher education. As the annual success rates between 1994 and 2006 show, passing the baccalaureate exam is a serious problem because the rate gravitates between 29 and 40%, including the results obtained in the private sector.

Table 1.9. Pass rates on the baccalaureate exam

Year	Enrolled	Admitted	Pass rate (%)
1994	4,658	1,380	29.6
1995	5,215	1,961	37.6
1996	7,338	2,390	34.6
1997	7,145	2,474	34.6
1998	7,671	2,966	38.7
1999	8,235	2,922	35.5
2000	8,818	3,253	36.8
2001	9,552	3,500	36.6
2002	10,767	4,114	38.2
2003	11,714	4,729	40.4
2004	nd		
2005	nd		
2006	12,400		37.9

Source: From the data of the National Baccalaureate Office

Table 1.10. Admission to the baccalaureate exam in private secondary education in 2004

Type of school	Rate (%)
Catholic	56,1
Protestant	18,5
Christian Alliance of Gabon	25,5

The Islamic schools newly created were not surveyed and therefore have not been accounted for.

Despite this low success rate, the student population has considerably increased since 1970, the year the Gabonese university was founded. The rate has risen by 62% since the university's creation.

The gross enrolment rate, however, has remained low as the data below show.

Table 1.11. Enrolment rate in higher education

Categories	1999-2000	2002-2003	2004-2005
Student populations	8,600	10,076	
Age range 18-24 years	168,634	191,260	201,790
GER	5.4	5.3	

Non-formal education: literacy training and professional training

Literacy training, in the strict meaning of the term, is the action of bringing a person out of illiteracy. It is done through teaching the mechanisms and tools that enable a person to read, write and count in the learner's native language or the one used in his or her milieu.

Functional literacy training gives the learner, in addition to these mechanisms, the technical skills needed to exercise a trade.

Literacy training also has a broad or integral meaning: it opens the doors to all the knowledge on the regional, national and international environment to better take into account the transitions underway. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates in Article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2, that "Everyone has the right to education... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Law 16/66 of August 9, 1966, Article 1, guarantees legal access for the child and the adult to education, professional training and culture.

Educational needs concern the essential tools of learning (reading, writing, oral expression, arithmetic, etc.) and fundamental educational contents (intellectual knowledge, aptitudes, values, attitudes, etc.) required for developing society, improving living conditions and its integration.

The state ensures professional qualification for young people and adults of both genders who have left the traditional school system. This training was provided by the missionaries before the law on professional training was passed. Decree 159 of May 5, 1966 fills this gap and determines the major tracks of the application of the organic text.

The first public centers in Gabon were created in 1964. Since then, several structures of this type have been opened, in particular:

- » Two centers in Libreville;
- » One center in Port-Gentil;

- » One multi-purpose center in Tchibanga;
- » One multi-purpose center in Franceville;
- » One specialized center in Koulamoutou (secondary center);
- » One center under construction and nearly finished in Oyem.

From 1973 to 1998, the centers of the National Agency of Professional Training and Improvement (ANFPP) trained 9,108 people (secondary and higher education sectors combined).

When it became independent in 1960, Gabon had an illiteracy rate above 80%. The state launched a literacy training program for the populations. Between 1961 and the present, this program has had the following results:

- » Creation of a bureau of adult education in the Ministry of National Education (1961);
- » Launch of three literacy campaigns throughout the country (over 4,000 learners reached);
- » Training of several staff members and officers in specialized schools: Minkong, ENCR, ENDR, IPD, CUSPOD, IHEPS, etc.;
- » Organization of two major orientation seminars in 1982 and 1984;
- » Creation of the General Department of Popular Education (DGEP) and acquisition of headquarters;
- » Creation of provincial departments;
- » Production of 20,000 reading, writing and math manuals;
- » Literacy training for 50 drivers at SO.TRA.VIL;
- » Organization of International Literacy Days each year;
- » Establishment of two didactic material workshops (the audiovisual and infographic center);
- » Production of a documentary on literacy training in Gabon;
- » Organization of a seminar on functional literacy training in Oyem with the assistance of UNESCO;
- » Allocation of an average budget of 30,000,000 CFA francs per year from 1972 to 1992;
- » Literacy training for 1,500 peasants in the framework of the APG/FIDA project (1993-1995);
- » Training of about 40 personnel in literacy training;
- » 15 literacy training centers exist, five in Libreville and the remaining centers in the interior of the country;

- » 650 learners enrolled for the year 2001, nearly 300 of whom in Libreville.

Since 2001, Gabon's needs in literacy training have become crucial given the growing number of adults who cannot read and write, especially women and young people affected by their parents' poverty, school drop-outs and immigration.

Moreover, the centers' admission capacity remains inadequate: barely 300 adults finish their literacy training program each year. This training does not considerably improve their living conditions as it does not give them access to the job market or to economic channels.

This is perhaps one of the reasons for the slowdown in literacy training activities, the closing of most of the centers due to the inadequacy of the resources allocated to the General Department of Popular Education. The unfavorable economic situation and the government's economic policies contribute to marginalizing this subsector to the benefit of others.

It is henceforth important to give new impetus to this sector and to formulate new goals for EFA 2001-2015 based on an analysis of all the strengths and weaknesses of literacy training in Gabon.

The weaknesses identified can be summarized in nine points:

- » The fact that the programs are not adapted to the learners' needs;
- » The inadequacy of national competencies in literacy training planning and didactic material production;
- » The lack of basic literacy trainers;
- » The fact that national languages are barely or not used;
- » The insufficiency of financing;
- » The low level of support from donor agencies and development partners;
- » The absence of appropriate training structures;
- » The poor condition and obsolescence of production workshop facilities;
- » The absence of follow-up and evaluation activities.

The strengths identified can be summed up in five points:

- » The availability of supervisory personnel in sufficient numbers for the country;
- » The decentralization of literacy training services;
- » The availability of buildings, television viewing networks and reading centers;
- » The collaboration of private promoters;
- » The desire of the populations to invest themselves in literacy training.

Quality and internal efficiency

The problems of the Gabonese education system were identified at the General Assembly of Education in 1983. These problems still remain unsolved despite the efforts made by the government and its partners.

Primary education

The pupil/classroom and pupil/teacher ratios are 50 on average. These ratios conceal however some disparities. There are still classrooms with 80 even over 100 pupils per class. This situation is amplified by the massive rural exodus phenomenon. In the estuary provinces of Haut Ogooué and Ogooué Maritime, the average ratios are on the order of 65 to 80, even more in certain schools that have a part-time class system.

Other factors explain these overcrowded classrooms.

- » The strict application of law 16/66 of August 9, 1966 in primary schools requires that attendance from 6 to 16 years old means that it is not rare to find children of 15 and above in primary schools. Primary, which should normally have children aged 6 to 11, keeps an abnormally high number of children older than 11 in its classes. In 2002, 30.54% of children 12 and above were in primary school.
- » This situation is aggravated by the absence of professional training structures at the end of primary education.
- » Furthermore, many children enter primary school quite late, especially in rural areas, without considering the effect of grade repetition, 34.47% on average, which is one of the highest among the sub-Saharan African countries.
- » Another non-negligible factor is that nearly 50% of all primary school teachers do not seem to have the required diploma or other academic qualifications. In Libreville in particular nearly 60% of all teachers do not have this qualification.

The pupil/teacher ratio, which is 36.04, does not always reflect the reality observed in the field (classes with large groups in major urban centers and multi-grade classes in rural areas). The shortage of teachers in primary schools therefore remains a challenge to be met.

In the rural milieu, teachers' living conditions are precarious: uncomfortable housing, isolation and salaries paid late. In addition to the inadequate numbers of inspectors and the problems they encounter in traveling from one school to the other, there is the problem of teacher absenteeism. There are only seven inspectors and 14 pedagogic counselors available for 3,851 teachers.

Gabonese primary education is characterized by the quantitative and qualitative inadequacy of teachers and pedagogic supervisory personnel. There is also Hence the neces-

sity of increasing the training capacity of the country's teacher training colleges including Franceville and Libreville.

All these constraints hamper the internal efficacy of primary education. Hence the low probability of a pupil completing primary school. Primary education is characterized by high repetition rates (34.47%) and drop-outs (10%), for example, in 2003. So out of a cohort of 1,000 pupils in 1st grade, only 40 enter 5th grade without repeating, or a 4% completion rate.

The drop-out rate remains a worry because children excluded too early from school lose the knowledge acquired and become illiterate again.

The exam results show the zigzag evolution in success rates between 1960 and 2003 with high rates (80%) in 1984 and low rates (30%) in 2003. The success rate on the certificate of primary studies (CEPE) exam is very close to the real rate of promotion from 5th to 6th grade. This observation permits the elimination of the 6th grade admission exam to be proposed for all pupils admitted to the CEPE exam who wish it or inversely, in granting the CEPE to all those admitted to 6th grade in the event that the decision is made to replace the exam by grade-based admission.

In terms of efficiency, the Gabonese education system produces a primary school graduate in 14.3 years/pupil instead of 6 years/pupil, or more than double (2.38) the normal time. Gabon is therefore one of the countries in Africa in which education expenditures are the least efficient. In fact, the cost of educating a primary school pupil is 1.94 times higher than the minimum required, which is estimated at nearly 120,000 CFA francs per year calculated on the 1999 budget data. So for a complete primary school education, a pupil costs the Gabonese state: $120,000 \times 6 \times 1.94 = 1,396,800$ CFA francs.

Table 1.12. Internal output of public primary education (1996/97)

Class	Admitted	Repetition rate	(1- repetition rate)	Years-pupils	Promotion rate	No. of promoted	Drop-out rate	No. of drop-outs
1st gr.A	1,000	0.439	0.561	1783	0.429	765	0.132	235
1st gr.B	765	0.339	0.661	1157	0.700	810	-0.039	-45
2nd gr.	810	0.373	0.627	1292	0.550	710	0.077	99
3rd gr.	710	0.261	0.739	961	0.693	666	0.046	44
4th gr.	666	0.298	0.702	949	0.630	598	0.072	68
5th gr.	598	0.282	0.718	833	0.647	539	0.071	59

Source: Statistics directory 2000-2003

Graph 1.1. Evolution of the success rate on the CEPE exam, 1960-2003



General secondary education

The admission capacity offered by secondary schools is lower than the demand. For example, in 2005, there were 34,049 candidates for 13,170 places. The students were therefore admitted into 6th grade in proportion to the available places (51% in 2001, 49% in 2002 and 51% in 2003).

Moreover, there are no sports facilities in the schools, or didactic materials or new information and communication technologies. In addition, there is a shortage of modern libraries, textbooks, labs and facilities for experiments in science subjects.

There is equally a major shortfall in qualified personnel and expatriate teachers are heavily represented. This is especially notable in the following subjects: math (86.33%), physical sciences (86.28%) and French (69.28%) where the needs are the greatest, as Table 1.14 shows.

The majority of the teachers (62%) holds a university diploma, but has had no initial pedagogic training. For the last few years, a special effort has been made to improve and strengthen the training of inspectors and pedagogic counselors for which the teacher training colleges and the National Pedagogic Institute are responsible.

The internal outputs of secondary education are low and public expenditures not very efficient: the repetition and exclusion rates are respectively on average about 30% and 20% for lower and upper secondary (Table 1.15). The success rate on the lower sec-

ondary study diploma (BEPC) exam constantly dropped between 1962 and 2004, going from 58% to 23%.

According to certain data, the production of a lower secondary diploma requires 17 student-years and costs the Gabonese state 400,000 CFA francs a year.

To meet the demand for education and improve its quality, it is recommended to:

- » Build the admission capacity of secondary education;
- » Train and recruit teachers;
- » Facilitate the transition between primary and secondary by eliminating the 6th grade entrance exam (Ministry of National Education project).

Table 1.13. Needs calculated in terms of the rational use of teaching personnel

Subject	Estimated needs	Available	Shortfall
French	313	285	-28
Math	323	270	-53
History Geog.	174	189	+15
Physical sc.	198	180	-18
Life sciences	192	187	-5
English	184	171	-13
Spanish	86	107	+21
Economics	29	46	+17
Philosophy	35	40	+5
Drawing	51	54	+3
Phys. Ed.	106	111	+5

Table 1.14. Secondary education with percentages for repeaters

Class		1988/9	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7
6 th	Boys	30,58	21,55	19,75	23,87
	Girls	30,58	24,18	21,13	25,87
	Combined	30,58	22,86	20,45	24,86
7 th	Boys	32,88	22,73	20,39	23,00
	Girls	32,88	25,44	21,52	26,89
	Combined	32,88	24,01	20,96	24,88
8 th	Boys	28,35	23,19	21,60	21,79
	Girls	28,35	27,03	22,75	25,32
	Combined	28,35	24,98	22,16	23,47

Class		1988/9	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7
9 th	Boys	30,61	24,33	22,60	25,98
	Girls	30,61	28,43	24,68	27,33
	Combined	30,61	26,16	23,57	26,60
10 th	Boys		27,28	25,20	24,60
	Girls		23,99	26,88	21,61
	Combined		25,87	25,97	23,27
11 th	Boys		28,89	28,51	24,95
	Girls		27,17	28,00	25,94
	Combined		28,19	28,27	25,40
12 th	Boys		40,04	31,39	30,64
	Girls		39,62	36,04	32,72
	Combined		39,86	33,45	31,53
Total	Boys	30,77	24,88	22,41	24,20
	Girls	30,63	26,52	23,61	26,20
	Combined	30,71	25,64	23,00	25,15

Technical and professional education

There is a lack of admission structures as the student/classroom ratio, which varies from 60 to 80 students, shows for a capacity of 25 to 35 students per classroom.

It is not unusual to see workshop groups of 55 to 60 students around 15 to 20 workstations for lack of adapted pedagogic material in sufficient quantity.

These problems explain to a great extent the low performance indicators of this education sector:

- » Global success rates on exams of 30% on average;
- » Particularly high rate of drop-outs that can exceed 50%;
- » Grade repetition rate of 26.45% that can reach 40% in certain schools;
- » Exclusion and drop-out rate of 18.4% that can reach 28% in certain schools.

On the other hand, the results on the baccalaureate exam are satisfactory with a success rate that can reach 65.40%.

Higher education

Higher education has insufficient structures and a limited number of supervisory personnel particularly in “scientific” schools. A high proportion of assistants, estimated at 60% of the teaching corps, may also be observed.



➡ A school complex in Libreville.
©Photo collection B.M.

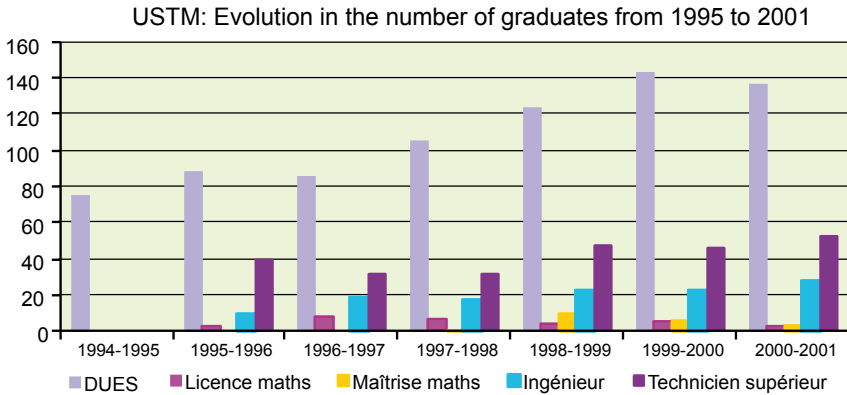
There is a strong disparity in the average supervisory rate between one school and another. So, the so-called scientific schools have the lowest rate with 5.45% at the ENEF, 13.99% at the medical and health sciences faculties, while social science faculties have the highest rates with 17.16% at the National Institute of Management Sciences and 28.34% at the law and economic sciences faculty.

The failure rate is very high and can reach 84% in the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences and 66% in the Faculty of Literature and Humanities.

Most students obtain the DUES (university diploma of scientific studies) and a DEUG (diploma of general university studies) in 3 or even 4 years instead of the usual 2 years because of repeating. It can also be noted that half the students give up their studies after one year (about 40%) or two years (10%) as has been observed at the University of Science and Technology of Massuku (USTM).

The average age of first-year students is between 21 and 25. This university has more two-year diploma graduates than three or four-year diploma graduates, engineers or qualified technicians.

Graph 1.2. Evolution in the number of graduates at the USTM



Relevance of programs and methods

The external efficacy of the education system is based on a large part on the relevance of the programs and training methods as well as the resources implemented.

The job market situation reveals a lack of adequacy between the demand and the supply (Table 1.15), which is reflected by a relatively high unemployment rate for young people under 26 years of age (26.5%). Unemployment affects men more than women (31% and 20.7% respectively) (Social Report, 1978).

Table 1.15. Job market situation by qualification level

Level of Qualific.	Managers engineers and equiv.	Qualified technicians	Technicians	Employees	Workers	Unskilled labor
Demand	4.0	6.0	7.9	47.0	16.0	19.0
Supply %	6.0	16.0	19.0	35.0	18.0	6.0

Source: National Employment Office, 2003

This situation is mainly linked to the following factors:

- » The weakness of the national economy;
- » The lack of relevance of programs and training methods;
- » The inadequacy of the resources used.

In fact, the situation of the technical and professional schools clearly illustrates these conditions. Theoretically focused on employment in the modern sector, many streams are no longer adapted today and professional education does not correspond with employers' needs. The programs and training methods have remained practically unchanged for over 10 years. Inadequacy between orientation, training, and employment is therefore

partially explained by the lack of relevance of educational contents vis-à-vis the job supply. The penury in material and didactic resources, the obsolescence of facilities, the lack of labor, the non-recycling of trainers, the absence of dialogue with the employers results in training that is more theoretical than practical, cut off from the economy's real needs and the job market's requirements. In addition, new information and communication technologies are not integrated into the training programs and English – the first language in worldwide communication – is not mastered.

Management of the system

(a) Organization

The law on regional development devotes an entire section to the reorganization of management of the Ministry of National Education to make it more efficient. In this context, the question of personnel management takes on a very particular character.

In a study carried out in 1999 on the Gabonese education system, it was shown that the methods of assigning personnel to the schools are characterized by a fairly low level of coherence. To remedy this, it would be necessary to:

- » Reorganize the organization chart of the Ministry to better define the responsibilities connected to each position and to prevent conflicts in duties;
- » Follow the career path of the personnel to improve motivation. For example, personnel who have completed a training course often remain without any assignment;
- » Implement a policy of adapting the profile to the job because people appointed to certain jobs do not always have the corresponding profile;
- » Build the capacities of the general inspections and the central human resources department to optimize the human resources potential and to establish regulatory texts guaranteeing more social justice.

The shortage of steering tools also hampers the actions of the Ministry of National Education. School mapping has not been operational since 1995. Mapping is a management and rational planning tool for human, material and financial resources.

(b) Financing

Global expenditures on education represent 3.7% of the GDP whereas they are 5% on average for the countries on the same economic level. The education budget in 2005 represented 14.8% of the state's budget, which is insufficient vis-à-vis the objectives to be met with in this social sector and despite the fact that this subsidy tended to rise between 2001 and 2005 (tables I.16 and I.17).

Table 1.16. Evolution of the operating budgets of the main education levels

Amounts in millions of CFA francs	2001	2003	2005 (forecasts)
National education			
Permanent balance	51,180	53,733	52,347
Excl. permanent balance	8,609	8,343	9,511
Secondary stipends	2,984	2,948	3,692
Total	62,773	65,024	65,550
Professional training			
Permanent balance	311	328	354
Excl. permanent balance	308	981	1,121
Total	619	1,309	1,475
Higher education and research			
Permanent balance	7,121	7,255	5,666
Apart permanent balance	6,826	7,269	7,359
Higher ed. stipends	19,045	27,345	34,115
Total	32,996	41,869	47,140
Total secteur éducation			
Permanent balance	58,616	61,316	58,367
Excl. permanent balance	15,743	16,593	17,990
Stipends	22,029	30,293	37,807
Total	96,388	108,202	114,164

Source: in Gabon/ADB – Strategic study of the education sector, provisional report October 2005

Table 1.17. Evolution of the weight of each level of public expenditures for education

Total in millions of CFA francs	2001 Initial alloc.	2003 Initial alloc.	2005 Initial alloc.	2001 Ex-ecution	2003 Ex-ecution
Total education sector	107,266	118,163	134,079	106,634	115,162
of which stipends	21,755	32,317	37,807	22,029	30,293
National education (%)	66.2	61.7	54.9	64.5	59.7
Training (%)	2.8	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.8
Higher education (%)	29.3	34.9	42.0	31.4	36.1
Research (%)	1.7	1.6	1.3	2.6	2.4

Source: in Gabon/ADB – Strategic study of the education sector, provisional report October 2005

Table 1.18. Evolution of public expenditures per student in dollars

	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94
Primary and secondary	485	405	514	529	560	545	397
Primary only	172	154	158	No data	No data	No data	212

Source: Country profile, National EFA Report

The investment budget also depends on needs in infrastructures and facilities. So in 2005, 676 millions CFA francs were invested to meet an urgent need for renovation and construction of the infrastructures of 10 billion CFA francs, or 1/15 of the total.

What emerges is a decrease in public expenditure per student, notably in primary and secondary sectors (Table 1.19).

This situation is due to several factors:

- » The budget arbitration system that does not always take into account the needs expressed by schools;
- » The weakening of the Gabonese economy, which has brought about a reduction in public expenditures;
- » The lack of evaluation and prospective studies on the education sector therefore depriving it of a correction and anticipation system.

(c) Implementation

The teaching methods implemented vary according to the education level and subject. In primary education, the so-called skills-based pedagogic approach implemented since 2004 makes it possible to improve the basic quality and internal efficacy of teaching. On the secondary level, objective-driven teaching by objective is the pedagogy that is still in use.

In technical and professional education, a skills-based approach is being used. In higher education, it is the modular approach.

All these methods need to be evaluated in terms of relevance, quality and internal efficacy.

The ministries in charge of each subsector organize and are responsible for administrative and pedagogic management in the schools through several departments whose missions are:

- » Steering the system and strengthening the schools' autonomy;
- » Adjusting training conditions and resources;

- » Providing training for trainers and supervisory personnel.

On the level of higher education, however, the situation is very different. The schools have a certain amount of academic autonomy and even governance.

(d) Evaluation methods and tools

In the education system, evaluation encompasses the learner and teacher as well as administration and financial management. It enables the difference between the objectives set and the results obtained measured objectively and with a certain amount of precision. From this viewpoint, it is an essential tool for steering the education system and reframing the education policy.

The evaluation of the student is the direct responsibility of the teacher. It consists of oral tests and quizzes, assignments and individual exams.

In all cases, promotion to the next grade is dependent on the grade average obtained.

The evaluation of teaching and supervisory personnel falls under the jurisdiction of the General Inspection of National Education. It then concerns pedagogy, school life, administration and financial management, for the central administrations as well as the departments not part of the Ministry of National Education.

(e) Participation by the people

The Jomtien Conference marked a decisive step in the recognition of the education demand. The claim to the right to education expressed so forcefully in all the regions of the world is presented as a demand for justice and equity. Thus the governments and the local administrations were obliged to review their intervention mode to consider the phenomena of the liberalization and affirmation of civil society.

The liberalization process expresses the will to win acceptance for the supply and demand logic. In this regard, we are witnessing a greater opening of the “education market” to new partners and new sources of financing, principally from the private sector, such as paragraph 19 of Article 1 of the fundamental law of the Gabonese Republic, which permits individuals and legal entities to invest in the education sector by founding schools.

This has enabled technical and professional education to call more closely on business leaders.

The launch and implementation of a decentralized cooperation policy has also made it possible to create links with the Aquitaine region and the Teacher Training Institute of Valence (France).

The Gabonese government has equally started a dynamic partnership policy with parents associations, teachers unions, private school founders, non-governmental organizations, economic operators and “international donor agencies”.

Principal findings

The Gabonese education system is characterized by a high enrolment rate. Nevertheless, insufficiencies that have a negative impact on its internal and external efficacy are to be noted and corrected. These insufficiencies are:

- » Access to primary and secondary schools that is low and are concentrated in the cities;
- » Operating and investment credits that are inadequate and are allocated without respecting budget rules and procedures;
- » Planning and management of human resources that are lacking;
- » Teaching personnel and pedagogic supervision that are inadequate in quantity and quality on every educational level;
- » Internal efficacy at every educational level that is mediocre with high student repetition and drop-out rates, bottlenecks at the end of each educational level and an increasing illiteracy rate;
- » External efficacy that is low and marked by a high unemployment rate among the young.

(a) Objectives and strategic orientations

These are contained in the regional development and planning law (LDAT) that mentions the necessity of developing human resources and the fight against the current dysfunctions of the subcomponents of the global education-training system to make its tools more efficient and interactive.

This law sets a certain number of general objectives whose aim is to reduce the drop-out rate and structural inequalities between schools.

But the achievement of these objectives depends on:

- » The establishment of an education system capable of meeting the Millennium Goals in education and the requirements of a modern economy focused on growth and sustainable development imperatives;
- » The mobilization of appropriate resources for the restructuring and reform of the education system.

(b) The reforms

The Millennium Goals in education consist of ensuring that in 2015, 100% of all primary school-age children will complete the entire primary school program, the condition for the irreversibility of basic knowledge (reading, writing, calculating). In the medium and long term, i.e., in 2008 and 2015, this would mean the following ambitions for Gabon:

- » Reaching an enrolment rate of 30% in 2008 and 100% in 2015 for children 4 to 5 years old;
- » Reducing the repetition and drop-out rates by 10 points by 2008 and by 25 points by 2015;
- » Increasing the survival rates in primary, secondary and higher education to 50% by 2008 and 100% by 2015;
- » Raising the primary/secondary transition rate to 70% by 2008 and 100% by 2015;
- » Lowering the pupil/classroom and pupil/teacher ratios to 50 in urban centers by 2008 and to 35 by 2015;
- » Increasing the exam success rates: CEP to 100% and the BEPC to 60% and the baccalaureate to 50% by 2008 and 80% by 2015;
- » Improving external output by lowering the unemployment rate from 30 to 15% by 2008 and to 5% by 2015.



➤ An educational center for hearing-impaired children in Nzeng-Ayong, one of Libreville's residential neighborhoods
©Photo collection B.M.

Proposal A: Extending preschool throughout the country

Preschool is in the embryonic stage, which necessitates:

- » A sizable allocation in appropriate infrastructures (construction of preschools in large urban centers and preschool classrooms in rural areas and playgrounds);
- » The training of teaching and supervisory personnel;
- » The conception of schoolbooks and didactic materials.

The following are therefore proposed for the 2006-2008 period:

- » The building and equipping of 360 classrooms to lower the ratio to 30 pupils per class (28 schools of 10 classes in urban centers) and 80 classrooms in rural areas;
- » The carrying out of a study on preschool in rural areas in 2006;
- » The training and recruitment of 440 teachers over three years in the teacher training schools whose admission capacities must be increased.

Proposal B: Improving the pupil/classroom and pupil/teacher ratios in primary

The implementation of this action is done by the recruitment of teachers and the increase in admission capacities in the teacher training schools, the strengthening of infrastructures in major urban centers and the renovation and construction of new classrooms in rural areas.

The following are proposed for the 2006-2008 period:

- » The extension of 27 primary schools throughout the country;
- » The construction of 15 schools in major urban centers, the training of 1,534 teachers;
- » The construction of two teacher training schools;
- » The creation of insertion and development practices schools (EPID).

Proposal C: Accelerating the technical and professional education reform

This action has taken concrete form by carrying out a study and creating insertion and development practices schools (EPID) under the Ministry of National Education, and the restructuring of the ANFPP of the Ministry of Professional Training and Social Reinsertion.

In the first project (creation of EPIDs), the target public is composed of young Gabonese with age above 14 who have 6th grade level and who take admission tests.

The structures are made up of existing sites to be revamped and equipped. These sites are scattered over the entire country and will offer proximity activities with companies or natural activities of the training pool.



➤ Overcrowded classrooms in peri-urban areas favor absenteeism. © Photo collection I. B-L.

The trainees can have the technician's diploma, the technical studies diploma or the professional studies diploma to train for the specialization of a one-year duration.

There are many streams that meet the expectations of companies that are short of qualified labor in certain areas. Moreover, the financing of micro-projects will make it possible to offer jobs to the unemployed in a branch of the economy in which the majority of jobs are held by expatriates without any professional qualifications.

Proposal D: Revising education programs

The revision of curricula in primary schools is underway with the skills-based approach, but will be intensified and diversified by the development of scientific and technological education at every level, the continuation of the creation of programs in the new streams of technical education, the introduction to new information technologies and the teaching of English starting in primary school.

For secondary education, pilot projects such as “micro-sciences and didactics” and “globe” started in 2001 for the former and 2003 for the latter, and through a lack of financing were not able to begin experiment. They will be revived over the next three years by equipping 65 schools with didactic materials, training teachers in scientific subjects and revising programs.

As for higher education, what is needed is establishing complete initial two-year programs in all fields and at the postgraduate level. Students with post-baccalaureate, two and three-year diplomas will be able to more easily access the job market. Postgraduate programs and centers of excellence⁴ should meet needs in ongoing training and the training young people in research. The local reorganization of the university must be based on the logic of regional specialization centers.

Proposal E: Increasing access to secondary education

This concerns the improvement of the student/classroom ratio to bring it down to 50 students per classroom.

The improvement in internal performance in this case concretely means increasing admission capacities and continuing to train and recruit teachers. The construction of two high schools with complete programs in Libreville (one in the first district and another in Angondjé) and the extension of several other schools in Libreville and in the rest of the country is recommended.

Proposal F: Improving the quality of pedagogic supervision

This action includes training actions for supervisors at all levels as well as the construction of MESRIT (Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Technology) buildings.

Proposal G: Improving the information system

To improve the management of the educational system, it is necessary to build planning capacities, draw up school mapping and create a structure responsible for evaluation and forward planning. Moreover, the Ministry of National Education must be computerized and an Internet network installed; the computerization of the MESRIT, schools and research centers is an important action in order to open up the educational system and permit the circulation of information both internally and externally.

A multimedia library must also be built at the University of Health Sciences.

4. Cf. among others, the Ginestié report on professional training (p. 84).

To implement Gabon's development orientations and for a more efficient university system, it is essential to create a development plan for research and research units. Lastly, at the Ministry of National Education, it is mandatory to renovate the DGAGAFE building, build and equip the Inspections of the departments as well as the examination office. The central administration must also obtain utility vehicles. These actions could provide, by the end of 2008, more visibility and better management of the human and material resources of the national school system.

Proposal H: Reducing repetitions and drop-outs

This refers to increasing the distribution of textbooks in primary and secondary schools, that is, one textbook per student and per fundamental subject. The bachelor's-master's-doctorate system should be adopted by the end of the next three years. The training of trainers, especially in scientific subjects, will hold an important place during this same period. The extension of university housing with three buildings per school would offer students better working conditions and reduce rental and travel expenses.

Proposal I: Increasing access to higher education

The construction of new faculties must be undertaken in order to alleviate overcrowding at the El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University (UEHOB), and complete short programs and postgraduate centers of excellence should be created. To be able to feed itself, Gabon must develop the agriculture sector and create a training center for agricultural trades (INSAB).

Proposal J: Strengthening the fight against HIV/AIDS in schools

The multi-sectorial program on the fight against HIV/AIDS, given tangible form by the COLUSIMEN project, and established a few years ago in the Ministry of National Education, must be continued with the hope of obtaining results by the end of 2008. The main education-training goal is to create a breeding ground for human capital in all the activity sectors. The fight in schools involves teachers and students and consciousness-raising operations must be intensified.

Follow-up and evaluation

The education-training system is part of the set of measures supporting the poverty reduction strategy as a growth support sector. The participatory process has made it possible to integrate decentralized structures and civil society, namely: central administrations, decentralized local administrations, the private sector, civil society, NGOs, the populations themselves (membership organizations, associations, villages, etc.) and development partners.

The follow-up and evaluation of strategies consists not only in varying the indicators, but also the data collection methods at the different stages of the process.

All the partners will have a role to play in following up the strategies of the DSCR in the education-training sector: the state, through the steering committee that will be created, the private sector, civil society and the development partners

Civil society will play a dominant role. It is called upon to participate in the follow-up process, notably to see to the proper use and allocation of resources, the efficacy of expenditures vis-à-vis the beneficiaries. It must question the state, the economic operators and the population on deviations, the role and sharing out of responsibilities and good governance.

The development partners must play their role of technical and financial partners. They must ensure the proper destination and assignment of the resources they invest into projects and see to good governance by means of periodic audits. Indicators and benchmarks will be set by mutual agreement between the parties.

The budget for these actions must be drawn up via a commission composed of experts from all the departments in charge of education with the support of the DSCR national coordination of the Ministry of Development Planning and Programming.

Each of the three ministerial departments in charge of education-training will take part in indicator follow-up and program evaluation through the appropriate structures. For the Ministry of National Education, this is the Department of Investment Planning and Programming (DPPI) for construction and facilities, The General Inspection of Pedagogy (IGP) for training sessions and programs at every level and the National Commission on Evaluation and Forward Planning (structure to be created) to calculate the indicators and evaluate the impact of the actions approved.

Recapitulation of the national team's proposals

1. Extending preschool countrywide
2. Improving the pupil/classroom and pupil/teacher ratios in primary schools
3. Accelerating the reform of technical and professional education
4. Revising education programs
5. Increasing access to secondary education
6. Improving the quality of pedagogic supervision
7. Improving the information system
8. Reducing repetitions and drop-outs
9. Increasing access to higher education
10. Strengthening the battle against HIV/AIDS in schools

The international peer review

Team comprised of experts from the following countries:

Benin: Dr. Djibril Mama Debourou, WGESA focal point

WGESA: Prof. Ibrahima Bah-Lalya, review coordinator

Guinea: Mr. A. Mahmoudou Diallo, expert, basic education

Mali Mr. Bakary Kante, expert, finance

Mauritius: S.E. M. Steven Obeegadoo, co-leader, expert team

Niger: Prof. Alhassane Yénikoye, leader, expert team

France: Mr. Bernard Hugonnier, representative, OECD and
Dr. Serge Ebersold, expert, OECD

Section II

PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

Toward quality learning adapted to Gabonese conditions

General context

Gabon is one of the richest countries in African continent with major resources such as timber, agricultural products, oil, gold, uranium and other wealth. The macroeconomic context however has been difficult for the last few years due to the turmoil of the oil market, which represents 81% of the country's exports.

Moreover, Gabon is in a demographic transition with an annual growth rate of 2.5% and a population of children under 15 years of age representing 41% of the total. This means that the pressure on the education system is strong and risky in the years to come.

Gabon has made education a priority. The sector's recurrent expenditures however do not seem to meet the needs and education policies decided on by those responsible for the sector. In fact, scarcely 3.7% of the GDP and 14% of the national budget is devoted to education as opposed to 4% and 20% respectively for the other sub-Saharan African countries.

Preschool

The nature of the available statistics and the documentation obtained by the peers did not thoroughly examine the preschool situation to see what the effects of the government infrastructure growth policy on school populations and on the quality of education in preschool. Likewise, it did not make it possible to closely take up certain questions on education programs, pedagogy specific to this education level as well as questions on teachers and their deployment vis-à-vis populations. These aspects could be examined in depth through more specialized studies.

Government has made a commitment to extend preschool education to the entire country. The protection and development of early childhood is governed by the law 10/84 that defines and spells out the general organization of preschool education. In 1999, the public authorities placed it under the dual supervision of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs (notably through its department managing “healthy children’s schools”) in order to ensure its country-wide implementation. The number of schools increased fivefold between 1999 and 2002/2003: there were 14 in 1999 and 82 in 2002/2003; the number of classes went from 27 to 144 in the same period and the number of children more than quadrupled (1,033 children in 1999/2000 and 4,434 in 2002/2003). In 1992/1993, the percentage of children not enrolled in preschool was 66.7%.

Table 2.1. Breakdown of the 5-to-7-year-old population by type of schooling

	Total population		Not in school		Preschool		Primary		Others	
		%		%		%		%		%
5-year olds	29,193	100	14,479	66.7	6,204	21.2	3,352	11.4	150	0.7
6-year olds	30,145	100	9,653	32.0	2,265	7.5	18,009	59.7	204	0.7
7-year olds	28,530	100	3,071	11.0	391	1.3	24,936	87.7	118	0.4

Source: The Evaluation of Education For All in the Year 2000: country report

The education offering is primarily ensured by private secular schools and private denominational schools: in 2003, 93% of the pupils were enrolled in private schools. In



1992/1993, 21.2% of 5-year olds were in preschool. This percentage was 7.5% for 6-year olds and 1.3% for 7-year olds.

This institutional framework has its parallel in a specialized framework run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and includes specialized structures that propose to develop aptitudes and talents of “healthy children” and, in so doing, favoring their insertion. In Libreville, children below 6 can be enrolled in the schools previously described: 2 pre-nursery school 37 nursery schools, 7 nursery schools connected to the Ministry of Defense managed by the municipality and 4 nursery and private secular nursery schools.

These structures must protect the child from street dangers, home accidents and solitude: they must constitute an environment favorable to the development of the child who is entrusted to an adult likely to answer his questions, his expectations and his needs. The children are present in the educational structures from 8 a.m. to 12 noon Monday through Friday. Attendance is optional in the afternoon for the sections that admit children under the age of 5. These structures follow the rhythm of the official school calendar and programs, often modeled on the French school and vary from one structure to another. Until 2001, more or less sporadic screening actions were carried out by educators and physicians.



➔ A private school combining pre-Nursery and primary classes. © Photo collection I. B-L.

The development of the preschool sector seems to be carried out in a rather inequitable way since it is very embryonic in rural areas. Such structures principally exist in the urban milieu where qualified personnel are also concentrated: the Ministry of Social Affairs has assigned 300 people responsible for preschool teaching (educators, technical staff, nursery school assistants) and five inspectors to preschool education. The Ministry of National Education employs six inspectors, 13 pedagogic counselors and 113 people in charge of classes (assistant teachers, teachers, technical personnel, educators). This disparity is not without consequences as children between 6 and 7 years old still not enrolled in school. Children in rural areas are later enrolled compared to children living in urban areas.

As the schools are mostly private, no material is given to the children by the authorities or the schools: it is the parents' responsibility to supply didactic material, pedagogic material being, in certain cases, purchased abroad. The very high amount of school fees makes access to preschool education difficult for poor families.

Access to preschool education is also particularly difficult for the handicapped. These difficulties may be linked to cultural barriers: families may be inclined to keep a small child at home for as long as possible, behavior also sanctioned by tradition. The people met also brought up a major obstacle of rich families that generally do not have the means to meet the costs inherent in a form of education that is mostly handled by the private sector. They of course also stressed the lack of accessibility of the public space and premises that make enrolling children with a handicap particularly difficult. Lastly, they regretted the absent of a real screening policy in the schools that would allow the schools to be more receptive to diversity.

These difficulties make access to primary education particularly unequal, contributing to and increasing the weight of social differences and the handicaps that may be linked to them. At the beginning of the 1998/1999 school year, out of 28,570 children enrolled in first grade (CP), only 20% had benefited from early childhood protection and development programs⁵. Moreover, the enrolment rate of 5-years olds is below 12%⁶. Lastly, the access difficulties experienced by handicapped children make the development of screening and early intervention policies likely to reduce the functional and cognitive impact of technologies and to take in charge development and growth delays that can lead to malnutrition particularly problematic. In fact, 21% of all children below 5 years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition and 7% from severe malnutrition, percentages that are much higher than one would expect to find in a well-fed and healthy population. Furthermore, delays in growth increase proportionately with age: from 3.8% for below six months, the percentage increases to 14% for 6 to 12 months to reach a maximum

5. Peer Review, *Rapport d'auto-évaluation du système éducatif gabonais*, mimeographed doc., 2006.

6. Ministry of National Education, *Plan d'action nationale de l'Éducation Pour Tous*, mimeographed doc., March 2005.

of 29% at 12-23 months. As previously, it is in the rural milieu that the proportion of children with delays in growth, moderate (29%) to severe (10%), is greater. Lastly, these access difficulties contribute to delegating to the families alone the responsibility for putting their child in school. The weight of cultural traditions, as well as that of financial constraints, is then singularly made heavier.

Primary

The primary subsystem will be examined through the following aspects: access, quality and system management. Particular stress will be placed on children with special needs.

Access

Despite the low level of public resources allocated to education, the gross and net enrolment rates (137.2% and 91.5% respectively in 2002) have continued to increase. This growth is due to the rise in the number of repetitions, the number of schools, as well as that of teachers in the public and the private sector. Paradoxically, the state is a major donor for private schools, which have developed a great deal more in large urban centers like Libreville and Port-Gentil than in peripheral areas.

The same teaching programs are used in public and private schools and the pupils take the same exams. Unlike other African countries, the Gabonese school has remained traditional with relatively few pedagogic innovations or alternative solutions.

The ratio is about one teacher for 50 pupils. This ratio conceals real disparities. Classes of 80 to 100 pupils are easily found in the cities. Breaking down the net rates in schools and villages, universal schooling runs the risk of not being attained by the year 2015. Even though the gross and net rates are high, certain areas still lack schools either because access is difficult, there aren't any children or the single-school structure (up to six classes) is costly. In addition, teachers are in short supply, they are not properly assigned or they are not motivated to work in disadvantaged schools in rural areas.

Despite the effort made in making classrooms and teachers available, repetition contribute massively to reducing the number of places and to increasing the drop-out rates. Two factors can explain this situation. As observed above, the first reason is that it is impossible for many pupils to go to school in their areas because of the absence of adequate structures or the distances the children must travel to go to school. The second reason is the requirements imposed to go from one grade to another.

Two main factors can also explain repetitions and drop-outs.

- » The characteristic of the school even if the program is complete can raise problems. It is possible that the parents are not satisfied with the teaching content and the school calendar;
- » The direct costs and the opportunity costs covered by the parents can be the basis for premature dropping out when the expected benefits are perceived as lower than the costs incurred.

Quality

The quality objective is that all children have a real education-learning experience that meets expectations.

Praiseworthy efforts have been made in different areas, but many problems remain. These are due to several factors linked to the high repetition and drop-out rates, a curriculum reform that had problems being accepted by certain teachers and principals, difficulties in training personnel and challenges in the management of the system. The work of ADEA, through the products of its two biennials in Mauritius and Libreville and follow-up, could help diminish all the problems in question and offer possible solutions on quality.

Repetitions and drop-outs

Repetitions and drop-outs are critical elements in the evaluation of the system's efficiency. Repetitions in particular have seemed to be on the wane in Gabon for the last decade: 39.74% in 1988, and only 34.85% in 1995 and 34.49% in 2002. These statistics however, encouraging in themselves, barely mask the constant increase in the real number of repeaters, taking into account the constant growth in the number of children recruited by the education system. Moreover, it must be taken into account that with repetition at 30 to 40% in the first year alone, the result is that 30 to 40% of children at an age to go to school will not be enrolled because there is no room for them.

Drop-outs are less frequent but, like repetitions, they make the school costly. Also, because drop-outs occur more in the intermediary classes, the majority of these pupils become illiterate again.

As for equity, primary education is, in many respects, a source of inequalities and poverty. It favors low school rates which reinforces illiteracy, especially among women: in 1998, UNESCO estimated this rate at 14% of the total population. This low school rate strikes first and foremost those who, like the handicapped, were not able, through a

shortage of schools and financial resources, to access preschool and in this way acquire the first bases of reading, writing and arithmetic. The pupils who don't know how to read or write when they enter first grade often have no solution other than taking paying remedial courses, a solution that is very difficult for the most disadvantaged families.

This low school rate also affects the pupils with health problems or those whose parents are ill with, for example, AIDS⁷. In fact, even though there are service socials in secondary schools, there is no service of this type in primary schools.

The curriculum reform

A curriculum reform is underway using the skills-based approach. But in order for this approach, like any other innovation to be long lasting and form part of a dynamic of qualitative change, the main actors must be involved in the entire implementation process

The curricular reform is an undertaking that is based on the partnership with and the taking into account in education of essential training needs by the entire population. Apart from exchanges with the actors and certain leaders, this approach was introduced without any evaluation of objective-driven pedagogy, which was the approach being used. In addition, consensus-seeking, consciousness-raising and training of the actors that are the indispensable preliminaries for the success of the reform were insufficiently carried out. Likewise, curricula should come out of an output profit and a skills benchmark adopted by the teaching corps and the social corps.

Lastly, accompaniment measures for its establishment (teacher training, didactic materials, etc.) have been inadequate.

Textbooks and didactic materials

Studies confirm that there is a strong correlation between the availability of textbooks and the quality of the products. The statistics are not up to date but according to the information received the shortage is considerable and the books distributed inequitably between the regions and the zones (urban, rural).

Individual and collective didactic materials are also insufficient. It must be acknowledged, nonetheless, that the state allocates 20,000 CFA francs as a subsidy to certain children. These funds are often used to buy school uniforms and other supplies.

Personnel training

7. According to updated UNAIDS statistics, the prevalence among people from 15 to 49 years went from 2.8% in 1991 to 7.7% in 2001 and 8.3% in 2003. The number of people who are seropositive is estimated at 48,000 and with 3,000 deaths in 2003.

Like many African countries, Gabon has the thorny problem of teacher training in terms of both quantity and quality. In point of fact, budget constraints lead to episodic recruitment. Although the recruitment level is now the baccalaureate (instead of 10th grade), training in teachers college lasts one year. This duration is insufficient for taking in charge the child and applying the required pedagogic methods, especially in a context of large classes.

It is therefore not infrequent, notably in the rural milieu, that full-time employed teachers are pedagogic assistants locally recruited to deal with the shortage of official teachers.

For those who work full-time, the levels are heterogeneous. There are monitors, assistant teachers and teachers. The supervisory rate is low: 17 inspectors for the entire country, or one inspector for every 200 teachers.

Follow-up-evaluation and inspections are rare, due to a lack of resources. Ongoing training is disparate; it does not always take training needs into account and the decision is made at a level far from the school and the teacher. Specialized centers have a difficult time operating because of a lack of resources.

Apart from the acknowledged insufficiency of teaching personnel, a poor geographic distribution of available personnel was observed.

In fact, there are large disparities between urban centers (Libreville, Port-Gentil, etc.) and rural areas. The result is a relative abundance of teachers in these cities for various reasons: living near spouses and various social, political and union concerns.

In addition to the deliberate geographic distribution of teachers, there is also the problem of a lack of motivation.

This brief diagnosis permits a few proposals to be suggested:

- (a) The rapid creation of an efficient personnel management tool;
- (b) The establishment of a job reference system and job descriptions whose corollary is recruitments that match positions;
- (c) The decentralization of teaching personnel management;
- (d) The motivation of teachers based on rigorous and objective criteria;
- (e) The implementation of measures guaranteeing transparency in personnel management (through the lessening of pressure from the political power and the unions, etc.).

System management

Concerning management, the system has several problems:

- (a) The poor distribution of the personnel; in the absence of operational school mapping, there are indications that tend to prove that there is an overabundance of teachers in cities to the detriment of rural areas;
- (b) The supervisory corps (inspectors and assistants) is insufficient;
- (c) The availability of elements such as textbooks, blackboards and basic furniture is not very satisfactory;
- (d) Schools with resources seem to have extremely different results in terms of what their pupils learn, hence the weakness of the relationship between resources and the pupils' acquisition level;
- (e) A large administrative corps operating with an organic framework that varies from one school to another;
- (f) Very few initiatives developed at the grassroots level;
- (g) The unit cost of education is high in dispersed habitat areas because the schools are small.

Schools with a lower performance level cannot be identified because there is no steering by results.

On the central level, statistical data is not produced annually, which is a handicap for programming.

Consensus-seeking structures (steering, follow-up, coordination committees, etc.), even if they exist, do not function, which makes collaboration between the departments and units difficult because the system is managed by several ministerial departments and/or units.

The team would have needed to have more reliable, relevant statistics that were more up to date in order to carry out more in-depth analyses.

Proposal I: Strengthening as soon as possible the education management and information system (EMIS) in Gabon

The situation of children with special needs

Gabon considers as handicapped “any person who, suffering from a physical, sensorial or mental deficiency, congenital or accidental, experiences problems in carrying out his normal functions”. At this time, there is no reliable data making it possible to determine the number of handicapped people, their breakdown by age or gender. The existing information is very partial and old as it comes from the 1997 census. According to this census, Gabon had about 107,000 people who were vulnerable for one reason or another. Among them, 64,000 were indigent, 19,000 single mothers, 10,000 had been hurt in an

accident. This census also presented 9,118 people with a deficiency, or 0.65% of the total population⁸.

Of the people presenting a motor deficiency, 51.2% of them had polio, 9% were victims of an accident and 6.8% were amputees. Their deficiency could also be linked to a congenital ailment (10.1%), leprosy (5.6%) and elephantiasis (5.5%).

Table 2.2. Breakdown of handicapped people by type of handicap according to the 1997 census

Categories	Percentage	Populations
Motor impaired	46.4	4,233
Mentally handicapped	10.1	927
Visually impaired	14.2	1,295
Blind	9.4	861
Multiple handicapped	6.1	556
Deaf mutes	10.0	911
Drepanocytics	3.2	296
Invisible handicaps	0.4	39
Total	100.0	9,118

Source: Handicaps without Borders, annual report on the policies in favor of handicapped people in Gabon in 2001, mimeographed doc.

Of the people with intellectual deficiencies, 26.9% are epileptic, 37.3% are, according to official terminology, “severely retarded”, 17.4% are “moderately retarded” and 17% are “slightly retarded”. Sensorial deficiencies are mostly congenital (77.7%); they result from meningitis in 10.4% of all cases.

Enrolment of children with special needs

There is no reliable data on the enrolment of children with specific needs. The existing data is from the 1997 census or, when they exist, activity reports drawn up by the structures that admit these students. As this data is quite old, it is very partial, all the more so as there is no data at this time that determines the causes of academic failure and this being the case, the proportion of students likely to fail because of a cognitive problem or deficiency.

8. This figure undoubtedly underestimates reality considering that it does not include Ngounié acknowledged as a province with a large number of handicapped people. In addition, the various actors met agree on the figure of 13,000 handicapped people in Gabon, or 0.92% of the total population.

According to the 1997 census, 9% of all handicapped people went to primary school, 4.2% to secondary school and 0.6% were enrolled in higher education institutions. Out of all handicapped people, 86% had never been in school at all. This absence of schooling is quite striking in a country that widely implemented primary education and whose gross enrolment rate is 139.8% and net rate 92.4%. It is less marked in those who are visually impaired (76.2%) and drepanocytics (78.1%), who seem to have better access to education than the other groups of handicapped people.

Table 2.3. Academic level of handicapped people according to the 1997 census

	Primary		Secondary		Higher ed		Illiterate		Total	
	%		%		%		%		%	
Motor impaired	7.8	265	4.8	163	1.1	39	86.1	2,909	100	3,376
Multiple handicapped	11.4	49	2.8	12	0.4	2	85.3	367	100	430
Blind	0.1	1					99.9	699	100	700
Visually impaired	14.9	143	8.4	81	0.4	4	76.2	733	100	961
Deaf mutes	9.8	62	0.2	1			92.4	568	100	631
Mentally handicapped	5.0	37	2.6	19			92.4	682	100	738
Drepanocytics	39.1	93	9.7	23			78.1	122	100	238
Miscellaneous	21.6	8					78.1	29	100	37
Total	9.2	658	4.2	299	0.6	45	85.9	6,109	100	7,111

Source: Handicaps without Borders, annual report on the policies in favor of handicapped people in Gabon in 2001, mimeographed doc.

It is, however, particularly marked in the blind (99.8%), the mentally handicapped (92.4%) and deaf mutes (90%) for whom special schools have been established.

Enrolment of the hearing impaired

Hearing impaired students can be enrolled in a specialized school created in 1982 by a missionary and recognized in 1985 by the public authorities⁹. This school admitted 88 students in 2005/2006. Pupils presenting deafness combined with another problem are refused, the school considering that it does not have the resources to ensure them the specific support they may require. The students' ages and levels can vary greatly: tests can then be administered to identify the students' acquisitions and the fit with their centers of interest. Certain students who are 22 years old can thus be enrolled in 5th grade and share the same education as very much younger and very less mature youngsters.

9. Decree no. 0012/MASSSSBE of November 5, 1985 concerning the creation of a school for deaf mute children. Let us point out that the creation of a Center of Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and the Visually Impaired (CERAM) proposing to readapt people on a community basis and run by Protestant missionaries was planned in 2001.

Enrolment of visually impaired children

The enrolment of children with a visual or intellectual impairment is only noticeable if it takes place in a specialized milieu, notably through schools created by the Horizons Nouveaux foundation. This foundation includes a “readaptation center for the visually handicapped” and a “neuro-psycho-pedagogic center” more specifically for children presenting an intellectual deficiency.

The “readaptation center for the visually handicapped” opened in November 1996 and has 10 classrooms, a library, a computerized transcription room, a music room, a “home economics” room and a science laboratory. In 2005/2006, it admitted 20 children who were blind or seriously visually impaired without any other handicap and who are no longer able to be educated in a normal school. One of them was enrolled in preschool, nine in primary and nine in secondary. One student was taking a post-high school preparatory class.

Admission is done on the parents’ request after a medical certificate attesting to the student’s blindness is submitted.

Enrolment of children with an intellectual deficiency

Existing information on the enrolment of children with an intellectual deficiency or having learning problems is not very reliable. Access to preschool education not being widespread, problems and deficiencies cannot, as is the case in many countries, be identified by teachers and educators. Furthermore, if it seems that children with a slight deficiency are enrolled just like other pupils, the needs and particularities of children experiencing academic problems are very rarely evaluated and it is impossible to know the proportion of pupils with specific needs among those who repeat or drop out. Children with a more serious deficiency can, in certain cases, remain at their parents’ home or, when conditions allow it, be admitted to the neuro-psycho-pedagogic center (CNPP) created by the Horizons Nouveaux foundation in 1996.

This center admits children of 4 and older presenting genetic complications, speech and language delays, psychomotor delays, hearing impairment, precocious psychoses, academic delays, behavioral problems and epileptic episodes. Admission is done under the same conditions as those for pupils with a visual deficiency: after an interview with the school’s principal, the pupil is examined by a pediatrician who qualifies the child’s handicap. A psychologist establishes an intellectual assessment, the psychomotor therapist identifies any possible psychomotor problems (spatial and temporal orientation, global and fine motor skills problems), and the speech therapist targets any possible language problems. After these exams, a committee meets to validate the child’s admission. When the child presents a motor deficiency, he is often refused admission, the school not having adequate physical access conditions.

The children admitted are divided into four groups: a section for the youngest with 27 children aged 4½ to 10 years old, divided into four subgroups, a section for somewhat older children, aged 10 to 14 years old, divided into three subgroups, a section for teenagers and young adults aged 12 to 20 years old and a fourth group of children aged 7 to 14 years old who have serious problems. When the peer team visited the center, it had 118 youngsters out of which 76 were boys.

Enrolment of abandoned and orphaned children

The taking in charge of abandoned children is governed by decree no. 005/MASSN CRA/SG/DGAS/DAS/SAS of May 5, 1985. No exact census of abandoned or street children seems to exist to our knowledge. Certain of our contacts located 137 children in Libreville and estimated that there are about 400 in this situation in the entire country. Three specialized centers were created in Libreville for these children. One of them, the farm school of Mélen, is run by the Ministry of Social Affairs. An agreement permits it to admit 10 young pre-delinquents and delinquents aged 13 to 21 years old and to provide them with educational and psychological support as well as professional training. The two others are private and have about a hundred children

One of them was created in 1984 by a Catholic missionary and then received government approval from the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1992. Since its founding, this center has taken in 587 children. When our survey was being done, it had 51 children. Among them, six were orphans, 13 had been abandoned, 29 children were living in and off the street and three had been in a family breakup situation.

Table 2.4. Breakdown of pupils admitted in 2005

	Populations	Percentage
Preschool	11.7	6
Primary	43.1	22
Secondary	45.1	23
Total	100.0	51

Source: study visit

This center has three volunteer educators, a director and other volunteers. Its activity report shows a monthly budget of 3,480,720 CFA francs. As it receives no public financing, its resources come from aid in kind provided by the municipal police, charity organizations or individuals. Financial resources come from donations and financial support but also and perhaps especially from work that companies and local economic actors turn over to it. This work (road maintenance, mowing, etc.) is done by the center's youngsters. This helps them to find a way to acquire professional training and, in certain cases, a job.

d. Suggestions for solutions for primary

The international Jomtien Conference (1990) and the international Dakar Forum (2000) stressed the role of a basic quality education for sustainable human development with particularly high access rates vis-à-vis all the African countries.

Gabon has already had exceptional results in terms of education. Despite these enviable achievements, there are still some weak areas that must be strengthened to give all children the same opportunities.

The review, after having examined the extent and complexity of the challenges encountered in preschool, suggests:

Proposal II: Making the intersectorial and interministerial commission on pre-school education functional to examine the problems on the whole with particular attention paid to the creation of school mapping

Proposal III: Developing the multi-grade approach in primary

To launch a multi-grade approach, the first step is to establish a framework or policy that would define the criteria for creating multi-grade classes and accompaniment measures.

Among the main criteria to be taken into account are the following:

- » Low enrolment rate;
- » High repetition rate;
- » Existence of a complete school;
- » Irregular recruitment;
- » Long distances to travel;
- » Unsuitable premises;
- » Not enough teachers.

Accompaniment measures

- » Initial and ongoing training: the development of an active, child-focused pedagogy should be encouraged. To do so, it is necessary to create specific ongoing training modules for teachers of multi-grade classes and teacher training laboratory schools. All teachers should benefit from this kind of training to permit them to deal with the diverse interests, aptitudes and needs of their pupils often resulting from the age and level difference that exists between pupils in the same class in the context of the multi-grade approach.
- » Pedagogic materials and resources: providing teachers and pupils with pedagogic materials and resources (local resources, book distribution, document production

and distribution, etc.); creating didactic material favoring self-learning (self-learning guides, self-correction sheets, etc.). The pedagogic materials made available to teachers must be able to document and support the many pedagogic approaches used by teachers in a multi-grade class situation, namely and notably, collaborative and individual work.

- » Motivation and support system for teachers and community participation. At this level, this aspect concerns having the teachers' experiences in multi-grade classes shared and valorized. To do so, it is important to define and set up mechanisms for sharing information on and experiences with multi-grade classes taking into account community participation with strong involvement on the part of parents and NGOs.

Teachers should also be reassured through regular visits from pedagogic supervisors to lessen the feeling of isolation and improve pedagogic practices.

- » Management, follow-up, evaluation;
- » Making the pupils feel responsible so that they can become increasingly autonomous;
- » Increasing the practice and efficacy of cooperative learning groups;
- » Creating follow-up mechanisms for multi-grade classes;
- » Avoiding frequent transfers of teachers.

In the medium term, in addition to being a solution to the problems of school overcrowding, the multi-grade class could have a positive impact on the learners' cognitive, social and personal development.

Proposal IV: Attacking the root causes of repetition throughout the system

The repetition rate varies from 25 to 50% in primary school. One might wonder if these rates reflect the children's real level. Before a study confirms it, it would be useful to remind the teachers that the pupil's failure is also the teacher's failure and to encourage teachers to rid themselves of the mentality according to which it is necessary for a certain number of pupils to repeat. At the same time, the rigidity of exams should be eliminated and replaced by the pupil's success during the school year so that the teacher's work is recognized as being of good quality. The initial and further training of teachers must be made systematic.

It is also important that education programs be given a meaning, notably for the level at which fundamental learning is provided, because it is here that almost all elementary knowledge – reading, writing and arithmetic is built. The use of the repetition policy

could be avoided at the end of the school year and be replaced by the skills development tests aimed at by the programs.

Improving personnel training:

Initial training should be reviewed concurrently with the curriculum reform underway in the elementary schools. In addition, while maintaining the principle of one year of training in the teacher training institutes, a second year of full responsibility for the class should complete the training. In other words, a work-training program should be started. Certification and induction would take place when the participants returned to the institute.

Practical training must be structured. To do so, the following strategies would contribute to the approach's success: creation of a network of schools associated with teacher training institutes; improvement of supervision; formalization of a proximity training and supervision strategy with the associated schools; building of the training capacity of the associated schools' departments; and an increase in the resources allocated to pedagogic supervision.

As for ongoing training, it will certainly be placed under the responsibility of the national officials, but whenever possible, the responsibilities will be decentralized and devolved. Activities will be defined at the grassroots level to limit the cascade approach to training. The new strategy will be based on the field and local initiative.

Ongoing training for teachers is also aimed at the pupil. That is the reason why changes must be designed and carried out in schools with programs that favor the idea of the innovative school that places the pupil at the center of learning and takes into account the other pedagogic renovation programs.

This approach will have the advantage of meeting the real needs expressed by teachers and mobilize them around themes and renovation projects and, as far as possible, finding solutions locally to many pedagogic problems.

Proposal V: Developing a more explicit national policy on textbooks and didactic materials

As has been observed, government's desire to effectively support parents exists with the flat sum of 20,000 CFA francs allocated to a certain segment of the population. This sum, however, continues to worsen the inequality gap. It would be necessary initially to extend this benefit to all pupils. But the real solution would be the mastery of school mapping, as well as the formulation and adoption of a policy on textbooks and didactic materials.

This policy would not bring into question the already existing book policy. But it would have the advantage of presenting the specific nature of the schoolbook.

Until now, publishing textbooks distributed in the schools has been handled by the government through the National Pedagogic Institute and foreign publishing houses. The magnitude of needs vis-à-vis national capacities and resources is such that the government is forced to import a large quantity of textbooks to be adapted, notably for lower secondary. An explicit national policy would define the terms of reference (government, publisher, printer, distributor, National Pedagogic Institute, etc.) for each of the parties and would facilitate textbook acquisition.

Proposal VI: Undertaking advocacy for a better sharing of the skills-based approach

Any pedagogic innovation requires the mobilization and involvement of all the authors, which seems not to have been the case for the new pedagogic approach. As pointed out earlier, the skills-based approach is following upon objective-driven pedagogy. There are very few Gabonese teachers today who can explain the reasons for this change although on the pedagogic level, the approach has obvious advantages.

It seems that it would be useful, to launch the innovation, to explain to teachers and supervisors the reasons behind the change. First, in the framework of EFA, it is a question of “ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs” (goal 3/6 of the Dakar Forum in 2000). If objective-driven pedagogy has positive outcomes including, among others, making teachers aware of the need for a clear definition of objectives, activities on teaching practical skills and planning, it has its limits that can delay or prevent goal 3 of EFA. These are, for example, the lack of finalization and “conceptualization” of academic learning in real skills and the too rigid compartmentalization of learning units.

Since Jomtien, the social demand addressed to education systems has concerned a more relevant, more useful, more effective academic education that is better adapted to realities and development goals. It is from this perspective and with the view to meeting EFA goals that certain education systems have opted for skills-based learning.

This program development approach makes possible the interdependence of integrated elements, the mobilization of resources and the orientation of acquisitions with a goal that has meaning for both the learner and society. In short, in order to change, it is necessary to involve actors in the field through information sessions and consciousness-raising seminars whose contents come from experience and practices in the field, including the education system’s data evaluations. This means taking the following steps:

- » Identifying the needs expressed by the populations for the education of their children through meetings organizing with peasants, entrepreneurs, farmers, traders, merchants... and taking into account the elements collected in the development of skills reference system and formulating educational contents;
- » Involving society (unions, parents associations, teachers, elected officials, etc.) in the validation of the skills reference system for the level concerned (primary, secondary, etc.);
- » Obtaining the adhesion of the education authorities to the approach and the program renovation process.

As for the classroom, the implementation of skills-based learning requires considerable training and motivation on the part of the teacher. The approach should be supported by the following elements:

- » Educational contents interest the pupils and the teachers and correspond to their needs;
- » The recommended approaches put the child at the center of learning: group work, learning through peers, remedial activities;
- » The didactic material is sufficient and encourages the child to act, and the parents to follow their children's evolution;
- » The existence of a literate environment designed for the pupils, the teachers, the parents associations and other partners of the school.

To avoid prejudicing the approach, before any widespread implementation, the following should be done:

- » Testing the programs and documents produced made available to teachers with a view to evaluating their readability and their feasibility through the comprehension of ideas on skills, contents, evaluation indicators and learning situations;
- » Locating the insufficiencies linked to teacher training and the creation of pedagogic supports;
- » Observing the teachers' activities in lesson preparation, time, material, management of large classes and the accessibility of these elements by the pupils;
- » Providing, through monitoring and follow-up missions, training complements to experimenting teachers;
- » Gradual evolution (from the 1st to the 6th year) following a schedule and avoiding too rapid widespread implementation that could harm the success of the innovation.

Proposal VII: Opening the system in such a way as to better integrate alternative and decentralized options in order to free up initiatives, better meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and lessen the loads of the central structures

In the framework of the development of the system, stress must be placed on the following main tracks:

- » Accelerating decentralization and dynamizing devolvement in order to free up initiatives at every level of the education system. This would have made it possible, for example, to locally handle maintenance and school material with the parents associations as the leadership;
- » Opening up the system to alternative solutions (“second chance school”, post-primary, literacy training, etc.);
- » Building the capacities of regional structures in order to make them capable of initiatives and decision-making. They must stop being simple conveyor belts;
- » Creating data bases in the framework of a new integrated information system in order to correct the very considerable deficiency currently observed;
- » Redeploying personnel after having defined the positions and identifying needs according to profiles.

Proposal VIII: Fighting exclusion by better defining the situation of special needs children and providing the appropriate solutions

Extremely praiseworthy measures have been taken by the authorities and social partners. But services for children with special needs are still inadequate. This is as true for the physically and mentally handicapped as it is for children with intellectual deficiencies. In addition, there is a category of these special needs children – HIV/AIDS orphans – that is going to grow. The Ministry and its partners must make more systematic these measures taken in favor of these disadvantaged groups that are too often excluded from the mainstream.

Section III

SECONDARY EDUCATION

For a broad, planned education offering open to the public and private sector

Introduction

The presentation of general secondary education and technical and professional education makes it possible to measure the extent of the problems that is urgent to solve, in order to create the conditions favorable to establishing a process for training and developing knowledge, aptitudes, spirit and character for Gabonese young people.

The self-evaluation report on the education system, completed by oral contributions from the actors directly in charge of running education structures, calls on observations, analyses and simple but practical proposals.

1. The main education policy choices were noted throughout the entire documentation (written and oral);
2. Certain policy choices seem implicit and discreet whereas others are clearly expressed. In every case, all the consequences that these sovereign decisions imply must be drawn;
3. Lastly, it is useful to examine the question of the transition from secondary to higher education, propose solutions for flow management and suggest a better organization of pedagogic supervision.

General secondary education

General situation and problems

General secondary education is the logical extension of primary education. It aims at deepening, in the students, what they have learned in their previous schooling by developing a sense of observation, logical reasoning and the spirit of research.

Gabonese general secondary education admitted 77,385 pupils in 1996/1997, 38.7% in the private sector. There were 60,776 pupils (78.5%) enrolled in lower secondary and

16,609 (31.5%) in upper secondary. In lower secondary, 37.2% of the pupils were admitted to 6th grade, 27.1% to 7th grade, 20.9% to 8th grade and 14.7% to 9th grade. In upper secondary, 41% of the pupils were enrolled in 10th grade, 29.1% in 11th grade and 29% in 12th grade.

Table 3.1. Secondary school populations in 1996/1997

	Populations in %
Lower secondary	78.5
Upper secondary	31.5
Total	100.0

In 2001, the Ministry of National Education counted 2,190 teachers: 62.5% of them had no pedagogic training, notably those who taught math (77.5%), physical sciences (79.8% and French (66.7%).

As for origin, 21.1% of the teachers are Gabonese. The over-representation of foreign teachers is particularly notable in math (86.3%), physical sciences (86.3%) and French (69.3%).

Secondary education however reflects an educational system for which selection is the yardstick of quality. So access to 6th grade depends on passing an entrance exam. In 1998, 37% of the pupils were admitted to 6th grade after the exam. But passing this exam is not always synonymous with admission to 6th grade, which is done on a *pro rata* basis depending on the places available: in 2005, 34,409 pupils wanted to enter 6th grade but there were only 13,700 places available. Combined with the high failure rate that characterizes primary education, this restriction leads to a gross enrolment rate of 52.6% (with variations ranging from 28% in the rural milieu to 56% in the urban milieu) and a net enrolment rate of 21%.

Moreover, the spiral of failure started in primary continues. In fact, barely one student out of three in the same age group takes the BEPC exam (which awards a certificate at the end of mandatory schooling) and only 45.4% of those who take the exam pass. Furthermore, one child out of six meets this exam's requirements. Erosion continues through upper secondary: only half the students who obtain the BEPC take the baccalaureate exam. Within 10 years, and with constant percentages, only one student out of three in the same class arrives at the baccalaureate level (and at the end of secondary school) and one out of eight students enrolled in secondary school who take the baccalaureate exam passes it. In 2003/2004, on average, 48.6% of the students enrolled in secondary school were promoted to the next grade. On average, 29.1% of the pupils repeated, 3.5% dropped out and 19.8% were excluded.

Table 3.2. Situation of pupils at the end of the 2003/2004 school year

	Promoted to next grade	Repeated	Dropped out	Exclusion	Total enrolled
6th grade	48.1	30.0	4.1	17.8	6,560
7th grade	51.9	27.5	3.3	17.2	5,495
8th grade	51.2	27.0	4.1	17.7	5,084
9th grade	42.0	32.9	3.3	21.8	4,459
Total lower sec.	48.5	29.2	3.7	21.8	21,598
10th grade	51.1	30.8	2.8	15.4	3,923
11th grade	47.5	33.5	3.3	15.6	3,250
12th grade	47.4	21.8	2.9	27.9	3,373
Total upper sec.	48.8	28.7	3.0	19.5	10,546
General total	48.6	29.1	3.5	19.8	32,144

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

This selectivity is unquestionably linked to the requirements of the academic programs. What is expected from the pupils is in this respect a major source of exclusion: a survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs reveals that lack of work is an exclusion motif brought up by teachers for 89.6% of the excluded lower secondary students and for 54.3% of the excluded upper secondary students. Earlier repetitions are another factor in failure, notably in upper secondary: 43.1% of excluded high school students are excluded because they have already repeated a grade twice. This figure is 85.6% at the end of 12th grade for all the excluded students.

Table 3.3. Motifs of exclusion in 2003/2004

	Lack of discipline	Absenteeism	Pregnancy	Cannot repeat a third time	Insufficient work	Age limit	Total
6th	0.8	1.5		8.1	89.4	0.1	100.0
7th	0.8	2.2	0.1	4.9	90.0	2.0	100.0
8th	1.7	1.4	0.1	5.2	89.4	2.0	100.0
9th	0.4	0.7	0.1	8.7	88.5	1.5	100.0
Total lower sec.	0.9	1.5	0.08	6.8	89.3	1.4	100.0
10th	0.3	0.5	0.5	5.5	93.0	1.4	100.0
11th			0.4	9.0	88.6	2.0	100.0
12th	0.2	0.4	0.4	85.5	11.1	2.2	100.0
Total high sc	0.2	0.3	0.4	43.1	54.3	1.5	100.0
Total	0.6	1.1	0.2	18.2	77.4	1.4	100.0

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs

→ The representatives from Gabon and WGESA in negotiation for the development of a cooperation framework. ©Photo collection I. B-L



This selectivity is also linked to the compartmentalization of the education system, which takes the students' social problems, notably those in the most disadvantaged families, very little into account. Girls who drop out during lower secondary, do so for financial reasons (13%) or unwanted pregnancy (10.5%). The reason that 11.5% of these girls do not continue their education in upper secondary is that they could no longer pay for school and another 2.2% needed to earn money¹⁰. Moreover, 3% of the girls interrupted their education in lower secondary for health reasons. In 2000, 13.8% of girls aged between 15 and 19 and 9.8% of boys of the same age stated that they had a STD and/or the symptoms of a STD¹¹. A survey conducted in 2003 with eight secondary schools in Libreville revealed that 2.16% of the students enrolled were seropositive¹².

Like primary education, secondary education is not very focused on the students' success. Success is considered the responsibility of and dependent on the students, the families' resources and the teachers' personal investment. As for the latter, 62.5% of them have not had complete and appropriate training whereas they are responsible for teaching classes with a great many students and often do not have suitable pedagogic material. Success is very often linked to the financial resources the families have to access the highest performing schools and at the same time, to finance costs connected to schooling and the travel often linked to it. The access and success opportunities of the students who are the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged socially is singularly

10. Gabon, *Enquête démographique et sociale 2000*.

11. Gabon, *Enquête démographique et sociale 2000*, synthesis report.

12. Keba, P., Kuka, K.S., Mandaka, *Connaissances, attitudes, pratiques des élèves de Libreville vis-à-vis du VIH en milieu scolaire*, communication.

reduced for these reasons. Rather than strengthening the equality of opportunities, the school system reduces it and this is all the more true for students living in the rural milieu.

Despite a national effort to train teachers in the secondary and tertiary teacher training institutes, in spite of the existence of a large network of private secondary schools that complement public schools, the conditions for a sufficient and good quality education offering do not seem to be completely brought together.

It is important to devote a special section to the teacher's living and working conditions, which determine to a large extent the system's efficiency. Regular conflicts with the administration undermine the authority and power of this employer, which no longer succeeds in exercising real control over the teachers.

Those who, among the teachers, have romantic and intimate relationships with their students, whether they are boys or girls causes the collapse of their authority, alter the teacher's image and provoke crises in the class that lead to a drop in achievement.

The inopportune interventions of the political authorities in teaching personnel management create enormous problems one of whose consequences is, at least, penury in rural areas and regional disparities.

These various problems can be summed up as follows:

- » Inadequate number of teaching personnel;
- » Insufficient pedagogic supervision;
- » Weak performance of the school administration;
- » High repetition rates;
- » High failure rate on secondary school exams;
- » Disparity between the increase in school populations and the evolution of infrastructures (classrooms, laboratories, libraries, infirmaries, workshops, etc.);
- » Irrelevance of teaching forms and contents vis-à-vis Gabon's development needs;
- » Lack of a flow management and adjustment mechanism.

This situation calls for formulas to correct the system.

Solution proposals

As mentioned earlier, Gabon is one of the rare countries in sub-Saharan Africa that has resources equal to its ambitions as far as an extension of the offering to guarantee a basic education to all until the age of 16 can be achieved before 2015. The goal would therefore be to ensure schooling for all, beyond primary, in a single general secondary education stream.

It follows from this that the ministries in charge of education should consider the following:

Proposal IX: Defining a common base of knowledge and skills whose mastery by all Gabonese children would constitute the goal of Education For All, from 6 to 16 years old. The National Pedagogic Institute could create an integrated nine-year study program that corresponds to Gabon's specificities

Such an extension of the education offering to secondary school requires, all the more so, an evaluation of additional needs in infrastructures (school buildings or classrooms, laboratories and lunchrooms), pedagogic material, teachers and pedagogic supervision.

Transforming this formula into concrete action would require the adhesion of private secondary education because, as the Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Document stipulates, investments permitting the improvement of social infrastructures cannot come from the state alone. It is therefore a question of creating a new partnership with the private sector to allow the widespread implementation of secondary education. On one hand, the contract concluded with the private sector will take into account the standards prescribed by the government. On the other, a financing formula for the private sector will be drawn up by the state because by taking in charge nearly half the school populations in secondary education, the private lower and upper secondary schools fulfill a function that the state cannot assume alone. Depending on the financial capacities to move forward toward free secondary education, this financing could be partial (for example, a school bonus offered to every student with regular attendance or the equivalent directly allocated to the private school attended) or complete (public structures negotiating a global financial package allocated to private schools).

The above mentioned public-private partnership would permit the construction of new school buildings not to fall entirely on the state by recognizing the essential role of private education in democratizing access to secondary education.

In the long term, the Middle School for All would solve the problem of the articulation between primary and secondary education and would make it possible to eliminate the entrance exam. However, until such a point as the demand precisely equals the number of places required, a transitional flow regulation formula is necessary. It has been suggested that the entrance exam be eliminated and that the number of students admitted to secondary be set according to the places available. In this way, admission to lower secondary could depend on obtaining the Certificate of Primary Studies (CEP) whose success rate is already very close to the real rate of promotion to 6th grade.

In order to make Basic Education For All successful, the Gabonese authorities will be bound to draw up an insertion strategy for children from disadvantaged economic milieus. For example, the bonus at the start of the school year could be replaced by a

assiduity bonus that would also and especially concern students in private schools. Likewise, other types of incentives can be envisaged such as subsidized school lunchrooms, textbooks and school supplies at a very low cost, free or subsidized collective school transportation.

Another choice for the government of Gabon and one that has implications for the global education policy is that “of taking the greatest number of children forward to higher education”. Questions could be raised on the political foundation of a desire to lead the majority of children toward the education of the elite. Whatever the case, this choice can appear unrealistic and inefficient. A problem of flow management obviously exists with respect to which clear choices are essential.

Proposal X: Ensuring better flow management in general secondary education

Two possible formulas:

(i) A free deployment of resources

- » Gabon builds many classrooms in urban as well as rural areas;
- » Gabon trains and recruits a sufficient number of teachers;
- » A good, functional orientation and reorientation system that sustainably solves the question of repetitions and drop-outs in the education system.

These solutions have the following weaknesses:

- ♦ As Gabon cannot multiply secondary structures (middle schools, high schools, school groups, etc.) to infinity to achieve perfect mastery of flows, a better organization of double-shift classes may be envisaged in the short term.
- ♦ The poor performance of the teaching personnel management mechanism does not allow needs to be precisely evaluated.

(ii) The multi-shift solution

Three phases spread out over the short and medium term are necessary:

- » Organization of double-shift teaching exclusively in urban centers (Libreville and Port-Gentil) with accompaniment means: transportation, lunchrooms and rest areas;
- » Construction of infrastructures planned over a maximum of five years;
- » Establishment of a standardized situation throughout the country. Each pedagogic group definitively has its class.

As mentioned above, the implementation of this formula may require the adhesion of private secondary schools. The contract with the private sector will take into account the government's policy on infrastructures and overall organization.

Gabon will therefore have met the challenge of mass education. What remains is to manage its immediate consequences, in particular the quality and diversification of the education offering. And, in this frameworks, perhaps the greatest challenge is once again connected to the repercussions of the growth in the number of students on the quality of the pedagogic process.

Given the very large populations, especially in the semi-urban areas, the school system managers must show a sense of innovation in order to surmount excessive centralism. What should be done is to introduce more flexibility through making all the actors (principal, teachers, parents, the community, etc.) accountable. One of the strategies that has proven itself moreover is the so-called "school project" approach, similar to the one that has been successfully tested in Guinea and elsewhere in West Africa. This approach is based on the involvement of all the actors in the field and all the school's partners so that objectives are jointly met and school results effectively improved.

The school project integrates pedagogic, educational and cultural components. The approach strengthens relationships and breaks isolation in so-called difficult areas. It permits a real school-community dynamic to be initiated.

Another question on pedagogic management is related to the accompaniment system proposed to the students. What should be done is to revisit the missions of the guidance counselor so that he plays, discreetly, the role of assistant to the students who have specific problems and concerns. In so doing, he would protect them from the risk of behavioral deviances and would act to prevent academic failure.

As for the curriculum and as a prelude to the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system, it would be necessary to review the streams and their contents in high school to put them more in line with the streams in higher education. The renovation means that secondary and higher education must go hand in hand. Thus, the peer review suggests the following proposal:

Proposal XI: Reviewing secondary education streams to put them in line with higher education streams, which would result in the changes made necessary by the implementation of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system

It is also essential to review the evaluation systems and methods. Apart from the tests administered by regional and international institutions, regular evaluations are made only through exams. This approach should be reviewed in order to systematize not evalua-

tions on which certificates are based but the evaluations that measure the objectives, learning and acquisitions of the students throughout their schooling. Pedagogic achievement tests must be made widespread.

Lastly, the creation of bridges to regulate the flow of high school students, for young people 16 years and older, will be examined from the viewpoint of technical education and professional training.

Technical education and professional training

Problems in this education program

Technical and professional education fall under several ministries: the Ministry of National Education (which is responsible for two thirds of the students), the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Professional Education. It admits students on the basis of a competitive exam and gives access to several levels of professional qualification. Short professional training programs recruit after primary school or after 7th grade and last from one to three years. Successful completion leads to the professional training certificate (CFP), the Professional Aptitudes Certificate (CAP) and the professional studies diploma (BEP). Students can subsequently access technical training programs that last three years. They then have a choice between preparing for a technician's diploma if they wish to quickly enter the job market or a technological baccalaureate if their desire is to go on to higher technological education. The National Professional Initial and Further Training Agency (ANFPP) is in charge of professional training for young people and adults. The training sessions are given in specialized centers, but they do not lead to any diploma. Technical and professional education however seems to hold a very small place in the country: according to the self-evaluation report, general education accounts for 92% of the population as opposed to 8% for technical and professional education. Moreover, one student out of four registering for the baccalaureate exam takes it for the technological baccalaureate: 78.3% (2,302 students) of all candidates for a technological baccalaureate are in tertiary streams and only 21.7% (638 students) wish to follow another stream.

This education subsector prepares young people for employment and allows them to continue higher technical and professional studies. After analyzing problems in technical education and professional training, it is possible to uncover a few major obstacles to its development and effectiveness.

- » Weak coherence of the stream diversification policy;
- » Limited participation and involvement of employers in the steering of the training system;

- » Inexistence of parameters to assess the effectiveness of the schools' administrative and financial management;
- » Inexistence of a framework for dialogue between the Minister of National Education and the private sector and the National Employment Office (ONE).

In point of fact, technical education and professional training can only find its social and economic legitimacy if it ensures both the training of a limited number of qualified professionals for the modern sector and the complement of initial and further training, in its diverse forms, that enables the largest number of young people to access a qualification adapted to the insertion conditions in traditional sectors.

The diversification of the training offering has taken concrete form, today, through the anarchical creation of short and professionalized streams. So that this solution can be truly satisfactory, it must be based on the findings of a study that analyzes the mechanisms and opportunities of the job market. This precaution avoids throwing graduates with a profession that is useless for Gabonese society into the street.

The strengthening of technical education and professional training as is carried out with the support of the ADB, can only be half a measure, despite renovations of training schools, personnel training and the provision of didactic materials.

(i) **Proposals for improving technical education**

Proposal XII: Diversifying and systematizing technical education and professional training so as to meet the needs of the modern as well as traditional sectors. The reform begun with the creation of EDIPS and the restructuring of the ANFPP must be successfully completed

- » Defining the structures of possible collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and the other relevant ministerial departments (Ministry of Small-Scale Businesses, Industry, etc.);
- » Developing an upgrading program for teachers of technological subjects currently working in the schools;
- » Identifying needs in recruitment and/or training of equipment maintenance personnel;
- » Developing a formalized job policy;
- » Identifying promising sectors: timber, electro-mechanics and the service sector (the hotel business has unfilled jobs). Establishing a formal structure to involve economic operators and company representatives in the development of technical and professional education to ensure that teaching programs are created that meet the current and future needs of the Gabonese economy;

- » Promoting, through appropriate financial support, the start-up of operations in professional training centers by the business leaders themselves with a view to a better training-job fit;
- » Setting up training systems such as high schools for trades, but also short training programs related to promising economic sectors such as timber, tourism and the hotel business and electro-mechanics;
- » Renovating technical and professional education (in respect to teaching, facilities and the number of students per class making it more attractive);
- » Rethinking the bridges to technical and professional education vis-à-vis the adoption of a nine-year Basic Education For All strategy. For example, reviewing the transition to the CAP and BEP programs after 8th grade or to technical or professional training programs after 9th grade;
- » Studying the ways to remedy the imbalance at the level of the baccalaureate streams by limiting the students taking a literary baccalaureate and by diversifying the technical education and professional training offering after 9th grade.

The study on the employment situation will provide the overall activity rate and the unemployment level, and will determine the major challenges for the Gabonese economy, i.e., the increase in productivity correlated with the education level and the training of workers. The same approach could lead to examining the occupation of children who are not or no longer in school.

Proposal XIII: Having all the actors, in particular, the private sector, help solve the complex problems of infrastructures, facilities and the appropriateness of programs in the technical and professional subsector

The peer review's proposals, if they were validated would offer minimum governance tools likely to ensure the Gabonese education system with the means to help solve transition and articulation problems of between subsectors and types of education.

Section IV

HIGHER EDUCATION Surmounting the crisis and strengthening participation in the national development process

Introduction

Higher education in Gabon, which began in 1971 with the founding of the national university, gradually grew and is now comprised of three universities and six “Grandes Ecoles”. It has played a fundamental role in training the nation’s managers, the vast majority of graduates quickly got employment until 1988.

In 2000, national reflection days on grade repetition set off the alarm in light of the deterioration of the education-training systems. More than six years later, the system is now going through a crisis of efficacy, effectiveness and cultural identity in which several factors play an amplifying role.

The first factor is the quality of the training. The failure, repetition and drop-out rates as well as the insufficient number of supervisory personnel and facilities are manifestations of this problem.

Many high school graduates because of the absence of an information-guidance system, choose literature, humanities or social science programs in which this influx disorganizes under-supervised structures and under-equipped premises.

Another element that weighs heavily on the results of the higher education system is the deficiency of the training offering as is indicated by the weak development of professional training to the benefit of general streams and the poor employment prospects once the training is completed.

The last element is the necessity of a harmonious distribution of higher education and research institutions so that this distribution conforms with the regional development policy and is taken into account in the national human resources training strategy.

The size of the gap between, on one hand, the objectives, functioning and products of higher education and, on the other, the needs of a constantly evolving society in a world dominated by the products of information and communication technologies, calls for a revamping of the education system.

Both the Orientation of Gabon's economic and social Development Law and the Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Document recommend that the education-training system be more effective and that training actions fit the economy's needs.

Today, new technologies can help accelerate development throughout the world but at the same time there is a price to pay, namely, additional expenditures.

Globalization is here and it is an irreversible phenomenon that is amplified by the widespread use of information and communication technologies and also by its impact on the economy and the organization of markets.

But to successfully take part in globalization means that priority is given to national development (Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Document, 2005).



The peers meet representatives of higher education (Rector of the National University of Niger Prof. A. Yenikoye, second from the right; the former Rector of the EHOB University of Gabon, third from the right; the WGESA coordinator Prof. I Bah-Lalya, fifth from the right; the new Rector of the EOB University Prof F. Nze Nguéma, sixth from the right, and the former Minister of national education and higher education of Mauritius S. Obeegadoo, seventh from the right). ©Photo collection I. B-L

Gabon, a country blessed with considerable and diversified natural resources, is profoundly rural, which implies that the rural dimension of needs must be strengthened through reflection on the country's future (Long-term strategic reflection, Gabon 2025) (1994).

Higher education and especially the university are the nation's crucible. It is here, among others, that a national feeling is forged in which the importance of international solidarity can be appreciated. The strength of the university and the other higher education institutions lies in its men and women, with the desire to transmit useful knowledge as an ideal. Their weaknesses first of all come from the lack of political determination, governmental immobility and the requirements of professionalization at all levels.

In a difficult economic environment, education financing is subject to the consequences of the public finance crisis, just when the growth of school populations has increased needs. Still more important is the crisis of the end results of higher education during a period when the unemployment rate of young people is very high.

A change in mentalities, education contents, structures and training and management methods is considered a necessity.

The reforms to be implemented must be done with a view of education that encompasses the entire sector and that ensures a good articulation and a judicious balance between all the levels of education, primary, secondary and higher, taking into account the job market and the country's economic, social and cultural policies and priorities. If this balance and diversity is not achieved, the prospects and hopes of growth, social cohesion, a more equitable distribution of the fruits of this growth and poverty reduction will remain largely out of reach.

To evaluate the nature of the reforms to be undertaken and the realistic margins of maneuver that exist in order to implement them, a critical evaluation of the strengths and weakness of higher education in Gabon has been undertaken.

Academic situation of higher education institutions and major challenges encountered

Amplitude of the social demand in higher education: definitions, characterization, challenges

The evolution over 10 years (1994-2003) of the population of high school graduates, all series combined, shows a potential social demand in higher education of 3,000 applicants on average per year (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Success rate on the baccalaureate exam (all series and option combined)

Year	Enrolled	Passed	Pass rate	Change compared to the preceding year
1994	4,658	1,380	29.63%	
1995	5,215	1,961	37.60%	42.10%
1996	7,338	2,390	32.57%	21.88%
1997	7,145	2,474	34.63%	3.51%
1998	7,671	2,966	38.67%	19.89%
1999	8,235	2,922	35.48%	-1.48%
2000	8,818	3,253	36.89%	11.33%
2001	9,552	3,500	36.64%	7.59%
2002	10,767	4,114	38.21%	17.54%
2003	11,719	4,729	40.35%	14.95%
Average/year	8,112	2,969	36.60%	15.29%

This demand, however, is not homogeneous. There is an imbalance between the literary and scientific series.

So in 1999, out of 2,000 students who received the general baccalaureate diploma, 1,305 or 62.4% had taken the literary series (A and B) and 765 or 37.5% had taken the scientific series (C and D) (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Results of the general baccalaureate exam in 1999 excepting students who took the exam outside the school framework

Series	A1	A2	B	C	D	Total
Enrolled	1,431	234	1,459	175	1,156	4,455
Present	1,392	234	1,451	171	1,152	4,400
Passed	546	140	619	112	673	2,090
Pass rate	39.2%	59.8%	42.7%	65.5%	58.4%	47.5%

Source: Baccalaureate Office

The examination of the annual increase (1997 to 2003) of the student population enrolled in schools under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology shows that only 500 new high school graduates on average or 25% are admitted each year to the El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University, the University of Science and Technology of Masuku, the University of Health Sciences and the six *grandes écoles* (Teacher Training College, Teaching Training College for Technical Education, Secretarial Training College, Higher Institute of Water and Forests, National School of Management Sciences and the Higher Institute of Technology). This percentage is comparable to that of other universities in sub-Saharan Africa.

How can access to higher education be improved? What becomes of the other 1,500 high school graduates that the Gabonese education system produces each year? Will they go abroad to study? Do they enter production or are they part of the 12,000 people put on the job market every year where the available jobs barely exceed 4,000 or one third of the demand?

The configuration of higher education institutions is the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology. Their training offerings are as follows:

- » The El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University in Libreville, which admits 60.8% of the students enrolled in higher education (2002/2003);
- » The University of Science and Technology of Masuku, which admits 9.2% (2002/2003);
- » The University of Health Sciences in Libreville, which admits 9.8% (2002/2003);
- » And the six *grandes écoles*, which admit 20.2% (2002-2003), all located in Libreville or its region.

The training streams in literature, humanities and social sciences bring together about 61% of the students enrolled, which shows an imbalance with the other scientific and technical training programs (39%).

Apart from the University of Sciences and Technology located in Masuku, all the other higher education institutions are in Libreville or its region.

The absolute necessity of harmonious national development on one hand, and the amplitude of the social demand in higher education that is unsatisfied each year on the other, constitutes an opportunity for correcting, in the longer term, this imbalance between the city and the countryside in the training offering. Higher education institutions could then be real drivers of local development in view of their economic, social and cultural impact.

The real challenge remains the creation of higher education institution mapping with a global view of the national regional development policy.

Pedagogic achievement of higher education institutions: performance indicators

The failure rate recorded after four years of training ranges from 66% in the literature and humanities faculty to 84% in the law and economic sciences faculty. In other words, three students out of 10 have a chance to obtain their master's degree at the former and only two out of 10 at the latter.

It is during the first year that the failure and drop-out rates are the highest: 80% and 46% respectively.

This low achievement in higher education institutions is caused by several factors:

- » The absence of information and guidance structures to help students find the training streams adapted to their profile;
- » The inadequacy of prerequisites for new students;
- » The poor articulation between training programs between secondary and higher education;
- » The poor quality of the training given by secondary schools and higher education institutions (quantitative and qualitative lack of teachers, lack of didactic and pedagogic materials and facilities, etc.).

Another challenge is raised for higher education, that of the future of students who have failed or dropped out at the end of the first two levels in the literature and humanities faculty and the law and economic sciences faculty. Their number can reach 2,407 (2002/2003).

Professional insertion of the products of higher education: relevance of the training

In the framework of its program on the fight against poverty, Gabon needs a strong, sustained economy that benefits the poor. This is achieved through reforms that aim at diversifying the economy on the basis of promising sectors and the growth in productivity, which requires that the education system be oriented to the training of graduates whose skills meet the needs of the economy.

Gabon has many assets such as forests, the sea, tourism, mines and agriculture whose development will enable the producing sector to be re-launched to achieve growth from diversified sources.

In 2003, there were 1,094 graduates from higher education, broken down as follows:

- » Master's in literature, humanities and social sciences: 354 or 32%;
- » Master's in science, engineers, BTS, CAPCET and CAPLT: 525 or 48%;
- » CAP, CAPES, guidance counselors, education inspectors: 215 or 20%.

The diplomas granted that open the way to professional and technical training programs represent in total 68% whereas the ratio is inverted when new students enroll in higher education (60% chose literature, humanities and social sciences, which lead to a general master's degree).

This situation reveals both the ineffectiveness and the inefficacy of the education system in higher education.

In fact, the majority of high school students (62.4%) obtain a literary baccalaureate. They therefore mostly choose (60%) the literature, humanities and social sciences streams in which the academic achievement is the lowest (32%).

What is therefore required is to implement a correction mechanism for the initial imbalance between the baccalaureate series, but also a diversification of the training offering an improvement in its quality.

This correction is all the more urgent as the employment situation in Gabon shows a need for senior managers in the professional and technical sectors of 86.6% as opposed to 13.4% in the general sector (Table 4.3). This trend will strengthen in the future (87.6% and 12.4% respectively for the projected recruitments in the next five years (Table 4.4).

Table 4.3. Availability of jobs

Available positions (2006)	Finance / Accounting	Legal	HR man.	Commerce	Logistics / Transport	NICT	Electricity/ Electro-mechanics	Computers	Civil eng.	Chemistry / Biology	Mech. eng.	Total
Managers	4	5	5	7	4	5	22	6	8	6	8	80
Line managers (senior)	8		9	5	3	2	18		5	5	7	62
Total	12	5	14	12	7	7	40	6	13	11	15	142

Source: Anacle Bissielo, 2006

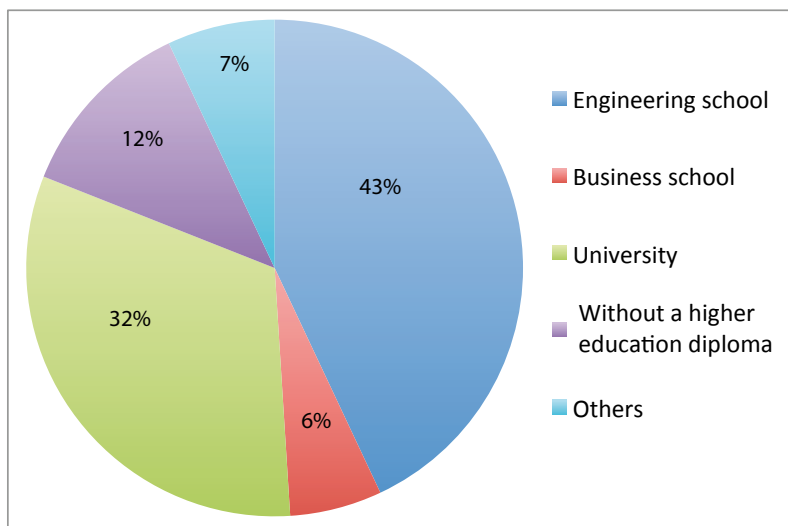
Table 4.4. Projected recruitment for the next five years

Total proj. recruit. over next 5 years	Finance / Accounting	Legal	HR man	Commerce	Logistics / Transport	NICT	Electricity / Electro-mech.	Computers	Civil eng.	Chemistry / Biology	Mech. eng.	Total
Total	43	19	55	54	43	43	125	42	68	43	63	598

Source: Anacle Bissielo, 2006

It may also be noted that university and engineering school graduates constitute the majority of supervisory personnel in companies (75% and 25% for the other graduates) (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Breakdown of supervisory personnel by type of training



Source : Anacle BISSIELO

The promising streams in the technical and professional sectors are: electricity/electro-mechanics, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, commerce and finances/accounting, and in the general sector, human resources management (Table 4.3).

Taking up the challenges

Strategies and main reform tracks

Diagnostic studies have shown a low rate of access to higher education, poor distribution of students between cities and the countryside, a very marked imbalance in the number of enrolments between the literary, scientific and technical streams, a very low level of academic achievement, very high failure and drop-out rates, especially in the first year and a low insertion rate for new graduates. Any strategy for the improvement in effectiveness and efficacy in higher education in Gabon must consider these realities. Its main objective must be to meet the major challenges that hamper higher education in terms of its internal and external efficacy and its effectiveness to better contribute to local and national development. This will concern improving internal achievement on one hand, by

reducing the high repetition, drop-out and failure rates that are costly and, on the other, increasing the access rate. The reform will also aim at developing, locally and nationally, professional streams with clear goals and a broadened partnership. With such a view-point, what seems indicated is that the strategies to implement can be divided into three main intervention tracks:

- (i) Increase in access and improvement in quality;
- (ii) Diversification of the training streams;
- (iii) The regionalization of higher education institutions because the articulation of students and teachers in a constantly broader range of the institutional model that meets development goals is becoming increasingly important to guarantee mobility and equality of access.

The reform actions proposed could therefore be the following:

Proposal XIV: Increasing access to and improving the quality of higher education

Poor conditions in teaching, learning and research affect, in the first place, the quality of education. The failure, repetition and drop-out rates are its manifestations.

To improve the quality of the training it is therefore indispensable to act on the following factors: capacity-building for teachers-researchers, the construction of infrastructures and the acquisition of pedagogic equipment and material, the introduction of ICT in education and the articulation between secondary and higher education.

Concretely, it is the synergy of actions upstream and downstream in the education system that will permit the quality of higher education to be improved.

Upstream, the following must be established:

- » A program revision system for secondary education facilitating the link with higher education (secondary-higher education fit);
- » A student information-guidance policy starting in secondary strengthened at the first levels of higher education to reduce errors in the choice of streams (poor knowledge of possible job opportunities, inadequate level in the essential subjects).

Downstream, the following measures can be proposed:

- » Establishing a control system for necessary prerequisites for enrolment in a determined stream;
- » Building the capacities of teachers-researchers through pedagogic practice and evaluation (organizing pedagogic seminars by subject, content, method,

evaluation), research (opening schools with doctoral programs), expertise and mobility (sharing knowledge with the international scientific community);

- » Creating on an urgent basis a renovation and maintenance program for premises used for education and research. Launching a program for the building of new premises and facilities and for pedagogic material (introduction of ICT in education with the support of the AUF [University Agency of French-Speaking Countries]).

Proposal XV: Diversifying the training streams in higher education

The training offering is deficient, as is indicated by the weak development of professional training to the benefit of general streams, the too-numerous populations in these latter streams and the low level of job prospects on completion of the training.

The academic organization of the universities is in the process of becoming out of phase. A rapid switch to the adoption of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system is necessary so that higher education in Gabon takes its place in the worldwide trends based on mobility and the sharing of training programs. Moreover, the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system allows for a better articulation between the secondary and higher education levels.

The development of short, professional streams and the creation of a bridge mechanism between general and professional training streams aims at increasing the relevance of the training offering and improving external efficacy so that higher education can make a greater contribution to Gabon's socio-economic and cultural development.

The following measures can be recommended for a diversification of the training streams that meets the need for relevance, quality and efficacy in higher education:

- » It is urgent to act starting in secondary school by creating a policy for promoting science, technology and innovation to students in order to succeed in rebalancing the choice between the literature, science and technical series, through awareness-raising, open house days, lectures, demonstrations, etc. Research structures such as the CNRST (National Center for Scientific and Technological Research) and academic structures such as the universities and the "grandes écoles" will make a contribution;
- » A development model for these streams must be defined, including a pedagogic and academic organization framework that corresponds to the bachelor's-master's-doctorate;
- » The training of the actors (regulatory modifications, academic and pedagogic systems, academic organization, administrative procedures including those linked to the routing of student files, the calculation of credits, training program revision modalities, training and education evaluation procedures, etc.);

- » The establishment of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system in schools: awareness-raising, training of the actors, administrative, pedagogic and scientific support, etc.);
- » The creation of strategic national development plans for professional streams;
- » The creation of a research program project in conjunction with ESR-ONE called "Training and Employment Observatory" and an operating mechanism. Launch of the joint program on the occasion of a public seminar on the theme of the fit between training and employment. Development and building of technical and material capacities of the partners.

Proposal XVI: Regionalizing higher education institutions

It is now acknowledged that the sciences and engineering are the most useful fields for development. Mastering technological improvement and adapting through training men and women to the progress of knowledge throughout the entire country is a fundamental challenge. A harmonious distribution of higher education and research institutions must be integrated into the policy of the regional development of human resources.

A strategic dialogue must be instituted between companies and training to achieve better joint programming of objectives, taking into account economic and social parameters as well as the effects that the public has the right to expect.

On this level, two major activities hold an important place in the reform:

- » Creating a national framework and then the regional application and establishment of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system, including operational planning, the analysis of critical steps, results to be expected, a definition of new responsibilities (positions and functions) connected to the establishment of the system, etc.;
- » Giving impetus to local development and coordinating training on the national level by:
 - ♦ Creating regional centers of higher education;
 - ♦ Developing professional streams that take into account the vocation and economic potential of each region, sub-regional integration and international commerce. The priority training areas identified are: the timber and maritime industries, breeding, mining, oil, tourism, commerce, company management, healthcare;
 - ♦ Establishing an institutional consensus-seeking framework with the socio-professional milieu and identifying a strategy for further training in human resources.

Success conditions for the reform

The adhesion of all the actors in higher education is a necessary condition for the reform's implementation and success. Social dialogue and participation are the two driving forces for reaching this goal.

The following actions could be proposed:

- » Developing and implementing a strategy for raising awareness about the challenges of the reform and the establishment of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system;
- » Building the capacities of higher education institutions in information advocacy, public relations, social communication and Web site management;
- » Creating an ongoing information program for the actors in higher education on the activities concerning the process of establishing the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system locally and nationally;
- » Developing and implementing a consensus-seeking strategy for the actors in higher education with the goal of formulating a shared project and creating a national forum of higher education;

Creating a national forum of higher education and developing its actions plan: a research and open discussion platform on the evolution of the higher education reform in the context of major national development projects such as the fight against poverty, Education For All, sub-regional integration of economic levers, improvement in governance, the progress of democracy, etc.

Complementary studies

Private higher education

This study has not considered the issue of private higher education institutions in Gabon, notably their evaluation in the education system and the country's development. These schools undoubtedly absorb a relatively large proportion of Gabonese high school graduates in short professional streams. Complementarities with public education seem acquired but many problems and questions remain.

Proposal XVII: Undertaking a study to effectively define the nature, role and importance of private schools and their development

The following indicators could be used: student populations, streams and training levels, teacher profiles and their qualification, tuition, accreditation of diplomas, social status of the students, academic achievements, potential and complementarity with the National Employment Office, partnership with the state and companies, etc.

Research

The national report on the Gabonese education system and the experts' visit to Libreville did not focus on examining the national research system. This gap must be filled in view of the strategic importance of research in national development.

However a visit to the CNRST (National Center of Scientific and Technological Research) and an interview with the directors and researchers of this institution and of the El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba University made it possible to highlight certain research concerns in Gabon. They are as follows:

- » Better defining the nature of research in close relation with the needs of the Gabonese society in a strategic vision for the country;
- » Better articulating fundamental research with applied research and research and development by creating genuine partnerships with public and private institutions in developing research projects and in using their results;
- » Organizing postgraduate university programs by means of a critical quantitative and qualitative mass of genuine teachers-researchers and researchers who work in a team in a high-quality scientific environment on themes that are relevant to Gabon's development;
- » Favoring the mobility of researchers in the national, regional and international research system.

In regard to the above:

Proposal XVIII: Undertaking a specific study on the scientific research situation in Gabon and on the articulation between public and private in this sector that is vital for higher education and national development

Conclusion

The education system in Gabon is faced with three major challenges: quality, relevance and the capacity to anticipate social changes nationally and internationally.

Tackling these challenges makes it possible to meet three fundamental goals:

- » Restoring the education system's social credibility (the public at this time does not view national education favorably);
- » Restoring the economy so that in the longer term modern sectors that will drive the economy appear (unemployment is no longer linked simply to an imbalance in the training-employment fit but also to regional and international competition);
- » Promoting a knowledge society to develop competence and national forward planning.

Consequently, we should adapt our action strategy to all these challenges and goals. To this end, alliances with companies, professional organizations and employers associations will transform our way of conceiving and administering our training programs. This will mean that higher education institutions henceforth develop a pedagogy of “doing” rather than that of formal comprehension, a pedagogy of desire rather than that of need.

These institutions are currently developing formal comprehension, but they seem to be neglecting “doing”, practical training. “Knowledge” is not just understanding, but it is also knowing how to apply what is learned. The changing world in which we live will therefore force us to rediscover these forgotten truths as well.

Other realities are being imposed on us. These are social mobility and the changes that result from it, worldwide scientific and technological evolutions and their impact on market organization, which oblige our societies to periodically redefine their development goals and to constantly reappraise their actions.

Only education and training are in a position to give us the capacity to do.

This reform will have an positive social impact in terms of “building the capacities of the development actors” on students who will be better trained and therefore more competent to hold jobs, on the teacher-researchers who will feel more appreciated nationally and on the schools and other training facilities whose productivity, financing and management will be improved.

The reform will also strengthen the adhesion of certain social sectors through their participation in the dialogue on higher education and financial repercussions will be expected.

Other benefits can be mentioned in favor of higher education institutions through gains in coherence, pedagogic improvement, the performances of teacher-researchers, students and administrative and technical personnel, the optimal use of resources invested on one hand and by a calmer social climate on the other.

Today, we know that education and training are means to enrich knowledge and know-how but also and perhaps especially the way to build personal development and relations between individuals, between groups, between nations and between the human being and his environment. Have we known how to use all these possibilities to their fullest?

Section V

Financing the Gabonese education sector: A few proposals for the sustainable financing of the reform

Introduction

Gabon is in the category of countries with intermediate development (World Bank, 2006). Its economy is essentially based on oil and timber. An analysis of the situation shows that the economic growth¹³ begun in 2003 and 2004 continued in 2005 because of a favorable international environment characterized:

- » **on the international level:** by sustained worldwide economic growth, the maintenance of crude prices at high levels and the continuation of the dollar's depreciation;
- » **on the subregional level (CEMAC area – Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa):** by good strength of the non-petroleum sector, the continuation of macroeconomic and structural reforms by the countries with the

13. BEAC, Economic situation notes, macroeconomic prospects in 2005.

support of the international community, an internal demand stimulated by the dynamism of private consumption, an external demand in liaison with the health of exports, strengthened by oil sales, rapid development of the service sector with principally the steady expansion of mobile telephony, the densification of truck traffic, the intensification of harbor activities, the dynamism of commerce and inflation below the CEMAC norm (3%);

- » **on the national level**¹⁴: compared to 2004, the BEAC (Bank of Central African States) financial analysts state that the monetary situation in 2005 was characterized by: an increase in net external credits (+111%), a decrease in net internal credits (7.4%) resulting from an increase in credits to the economy (+3.7%) and a reduction in net indebtedness on the state (-36.4% and a rise in the money supply of 24.2%.

These different evolutions are attributable, according to the BEAC, on the level of:

- » **Net exterior credits**, to the impact on the external position of maintaining oil prices at a high level, to the drop in payments of interest and the amortization of the public debt in liaison with the drop in the dollar as well as the reduction in external debt;
- » **Credits to the economy**, to the decline in commitments of companies vis-à-vis, on one hand, the improvement of their liquidity resulting from the partial payment of the state's internal debt and, on the other, the increase in economic activity;
- » **Net indebtedness on the state**, to the decrease in government cash flow tensions connected to a considerable contraction in public expenditures, notably in terms of external debt, combined with the consolidation of revenues due to steady oil prices.

It is in this relatively favorable context that the education sector reform is in the process of being established. This reform will extend to all the education levels (preschool, primary, secondary and higher education).

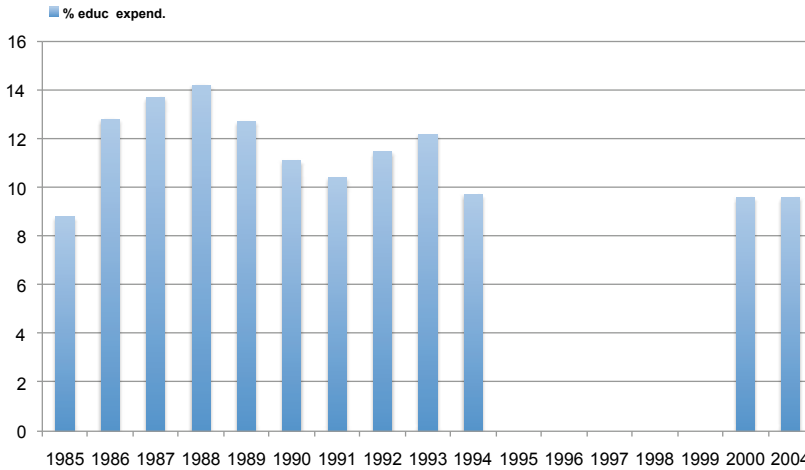
In this part of the global report, an analysis of the financing of the education sector will be presented. It will take into account the amount of the financial resources invested in education, the characteristics and analysis of the system related to the financing, the analysis and availability of resources to support the reform and policy implications in terms of conclusions and recommendations.

14. BEAC, Monetary situation of Gabon in 2005.

The amount of financial resources invested in education in gabon

Evolution of the share of the government's public expenditures devoted to education

Figure 5.1. Evolution of the percentage of education expenditures in public expenditures



Source: World Report on Sustainable Human Development, 2002

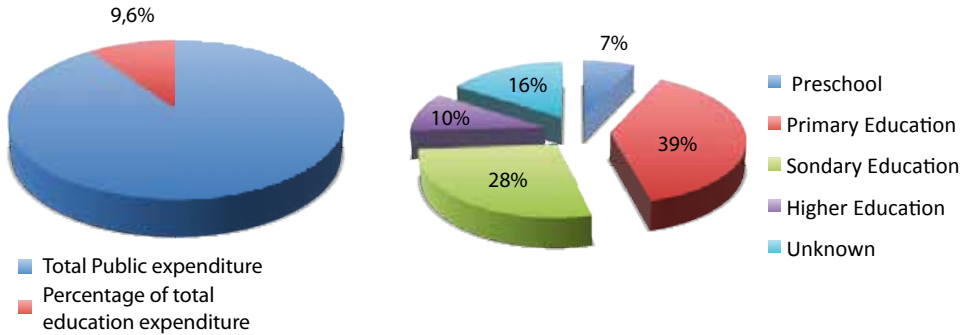
The average of the expenditures invested in education was 11.71% between 1985 and 1995. The lowest share was 8.8% in 1985; it reached 14.2% in 1988. The average dropped to 9% and held steady at this level between 2000 and 2004.

Allocation of the financial resources invested in the different levels of education in Gabon

Taking 2004 as a reference, the use of financial resources allocated to education reveals that, 28% in secondary education, 10% in higher education and 7% in preschool education. It has appeared that 16% of the resources are allocated to unknown expenditures.

“Unknown expenses” expresses all the difficulty inherent in efficiently using financial resources in education. This inefficiency results from the poor management of funds and their fraudulent misuse according to accounts. The volume of these funds is comparable to the sum invested in higher education and preschool combined. In addition, the amount of unknown funds is more or less equivalent to half the budget allocated to primary education.

Figure 5.2. Breakdown of resources in education



Source: UNESCO Web site, Statistics in brief, Gabon

In 2002, the global expenditure for education was on the order of 132 billion CFA francs. Compared to the 2000 GDP, or 3,611 billion CFA francs, the global expenditure for education represented no more than 3.7% of the GDP. This figures indicate that Gabon does not allocate a sizable share of the national resources to education, contrary to the currently widespread opinion. Education's share in the GDP, in Gabon, remains modest: the countries with an equivalent level of wealth devote over 5% to it. The highest estimated rate (3.7%) is below the sub-Saharan average (4%) and very much lower than the international average (5%). A comparative analysis of efforts in other countries is proposed below.

Comparative analysis of expenditures invested in education in countries with an equivalent level of wealth

It seemed indispensable for us to do a comparative analysis between certain countries such as Algeria, Cape Verde and Namibia, which are ranked in the same category, namely, countries with intermediate development. The gross domestic product per inhabitant is estimated at \$6,107, \$6,180 and \$5,214 respectively for Algeria, Namibia and Cape Verde. The gross domestic product per inhabitant in Gabon is \$6,307.

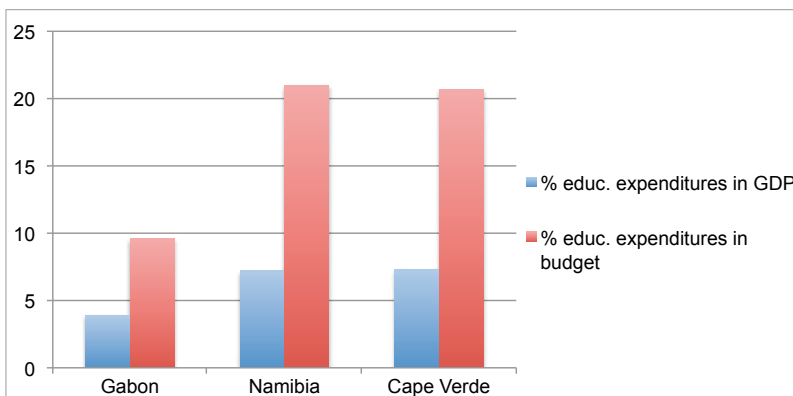
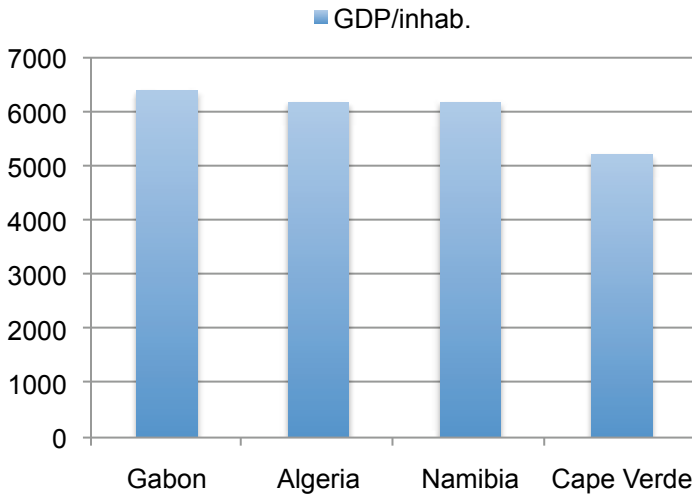
Although they belong to the category of countries with intermediate development in terms of the sustainable human development indexes, differences appear when the expenditures allocated for education vis-à-vis public expenditures and the GDP are examined.

Share of expenditures for education vis-à-vis the GDP: in Gabon, the share of expenditures for education in the GDP is half those allocated by the countries at the same development level such as Namibia and Cape Verde, or respectively 7.2% and 7.3% in these two countries.

Share of public expenditures for education in total expenditures: the share of public expenditures for education in the total expenditures of Namibia and Cape Verde is double the level observed in Gabon, namely, 21% and 20.7% as opposed to 9.6% in Gabon. Graph 3 recapitulates the figures described above.

Figure 5.3. GDP/inhabitant in \$, World Development Indicators data, World Bank, 2006

Figure 5.4. Share of public expenditures in education



Characteristics and critical analysis of the education system in Gabon that affect the use of financial resources

The education has produced very interesting results. The enrolment rate is the highest of any country south of the Sahara, but lower than that of other countries at an equivalent level of wealth.

This gross rate is higher than 130% and the net enrolment rate is above 93%. The boy/girl ratio is higher than 1.5%. However, it must be noted that the observed insufficiencies do not permit one to be optimistic as to the maintenance of acquisitions in the long run. These insufficiencies, confirmed by the last internal evaluation, must be remedied. Among others, there is the inefficacy of the system and its lack of fit with the requirements of the job market.

Inefficacy of the system

The inefficiency of the system is explained:

- » First, by the system that is marked by high repetition rates (over 30%) and a heavy proportion of drop-outs in mid-stream (10% in 2002) that affect all levels (primary, secondary, higher education) and constitute a curb on the country's sustainable development. Out of 100% of children enrolled, 69.1% finish 1st grade; out of 1,000 pupils admitted to 1st grade, only 110 do not repeat their class (or 11% of the population);
- » Second, by the quality of this schooling, which is declining:
 - ♦ In primary, for lack of qualified teachers;
 - ♦ In secondary, for lack of teachers specialized in scientific and technical subjects;
 - ♦ Because of obsolescence, even the absence of didactic materials and facilities (science labs, workshops);
- » Third, by the low level of and disparities in access to education that are notable in preschool and secondary because the too high level of expenditures for education in household revenues (23%) prevents the majority of families from taking care of their children's schooling.

Use of the budget and cost analysis

Taking the use of the budget and training costs as a reference, the budget programming process of the education system is characterized by slowness and by a strong bureaucratization tendency, factors that contribute to the system's inefficacy. The execution rates of the investment budgets in the education sectors are not satisfactory; particularly

for the capitalizations of the Ministry of National Education, these rates were 68.7% in 2001 and 34.6% in 2003. A difference like this between allocations and their execution runs counter to the strategic objectives of preschool, general secondary and technical secondary development.

It does not contribute either to relieving the pressure on schools in the country's large cities. So in 2003, these investment expenditures evaluated at 5% of the state's capital began a very strong decline whereas there is a shortage of classrooms, schools and various facilities.

What results is a certain number of consequences, the most important of which are:

- » Relatively low education rate according to the year;
- » Delays in executing projects;
- » Extension of the execution of certain projects over several financial years;
- » Interruption of work, stopping and restarting of construction sites;
- » Non-execution or partial execution of work.

Subsequent to these shortcomings, the achievement level of the Gabonese education system is low, not very efficacious and especially not at all efficient compared to the tangible results. The following observations can therefore be made:

- » The average unit cost of a pupil in primary, estimated at 134,000 CFA francs, represents only 0.04% of the GDP/inhabitant;
- » A secondary school student costs 597,000 CFA francs and a student in technical secondary 1,100,000 CFA francs, or an operating budget of, respectively, 529,000 and 978,000 CFA francs.

These ratios are very low compared to developing countries and to countries that have a standard of living equivalent to that in Gabon. The quality of the schools is very close to that of the poorest sub-Saharan African countries.

The impact of these insufficiencies on the education system is very great. Even if the education level has a strong influence on the state of poverty in a nation, which in turn affects the revenue level, it follows that a low level of education often leads to poorly paid jobs and unemployment. Gabon has an education system that generates too many failures and drop-outs and a high unemployment rate. The mediocre quality of education must be added to this painful observation. Consequently, the education system is not adapted to the requirements of its development. An analysis of the job demand and supply makes it possible to provide a few answers.

Relation between training and the job demand

The peer review team could have done more detailed analyses and formulated more specific recommendations if it had had relevant and updated statistics on areas such as the share of wages in global education expenditures and the share of average wages vis-à-vis the gross domestic product over the last three years. Despite this situation, however, the team was able to make a few observations concerning the relationship between training and jobs.

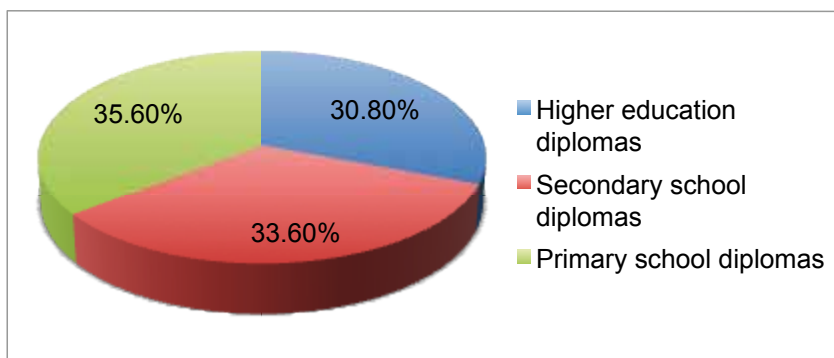
(a) Job-seekers with diplomas

The analysis of the job demand addressed to the National Employment Office brings out that people who have obtained the CEPE, the CAP/CFP and the BTS/DUT diplomas represent, respectively, 35.6%, 15.7% and 13.6% of the population of job-seekers with diplomas, the two genders combined.

(b) Job-seekers with diplomas by education level

The three education levels (primary, secondary and higher) are represented among job-seekers.

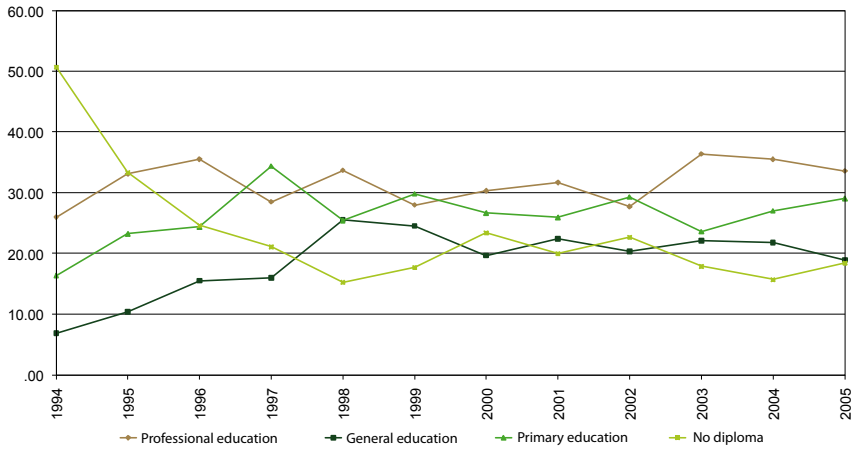
Figure 5.5. Breakdown of job-seekers with diplomas by education level



Source: National Employment Office report, 2005

The evolution of job-seekers registered according to type of education from 1994 to 2005 indicates that there are more graduates from professional education registered (31.7%) than those from general education (18.7%).

Figure 5.6. Evolution of job-seekers with diplomas by type of education



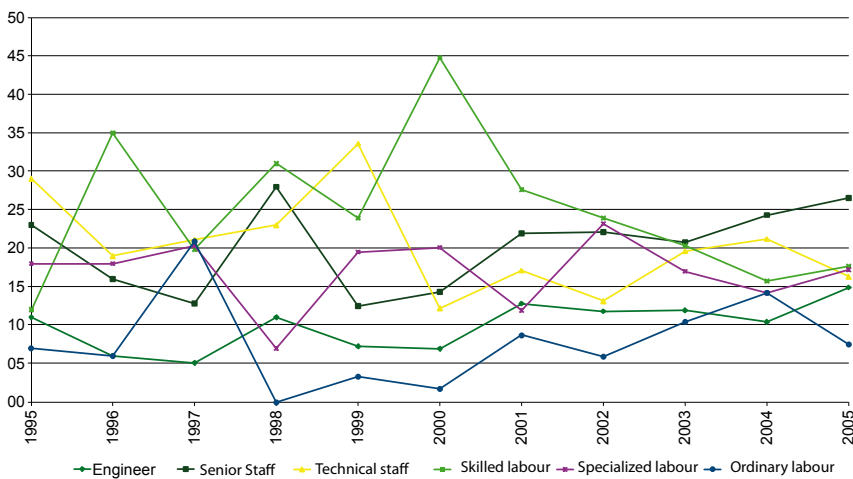
Source: National Employment Office report, 2005

The jobs offered by qualification level

(a) Evolution of jobs by qualification level

An analysis of the jobs offered by qualification level brings out that there are more jobs offered for qualified labor (24.7%) whereas unqualified labor seems to be less sought after by employers. The latter represents 7.8% of the total jobs offered since 1995.

Figure 5.7. Evolution of jobs offered by qualification level



(b) Job demand/supply ratio by qualification level

The demand for jobs exceeds the supply at all professional qualification levels. The breakdown by qualification level is given in the graph above.

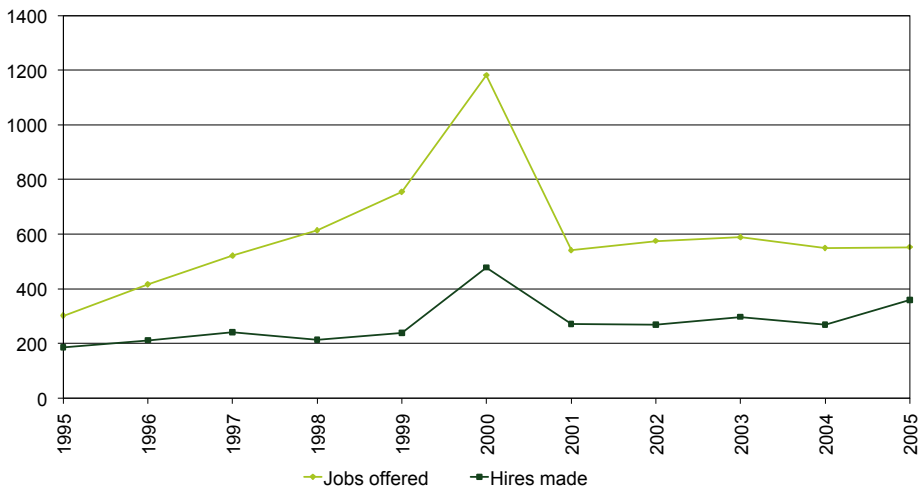
Globally, the surplus demand for jobs is relatively reduced for technicians, whose “supply/demand” ratio is 58% for qualified technicians and 62% for technicians.

On the other hand, the lack of jobs heavily strikes unqualified labor with 92.9% of the demand unfilled.

In all cases, the service sector is by far the most represented over the course of years. The primary sector seems to be less affected by the instability and uncertainties of the job market.

It should be noted that many jobs remain unfilled not because there is a lack of graduates but due to the quality of their education.

Figure 5.8. Evolution of job offers and hires from 1995 to 2005



Source: National Employment Office report, 2005

Fit between financial resources and reforms underway and to come in the short, medium and long terms

Availability of financial resources to support the reform

To support the financing of the reform, three sources of revenue can be explored. They are internal resources (state budget and local budgets) and external resources (loans from bilateral and multilateral partners).

The first source of financing for the reform remains the state budget. The current share allocated to education can be increased because of Gabon's favorable economic context since 2004-2005 as the macroeconomic indicators show. The financial resources made available to education must reflect Gabon's wealth. Consequently, they must be at the same level as those of countries that have an equivalent level of wealth.

The second source of financing must come from loans from bilateral and multilateral donors. For example, the African Development Bank is an important partner of the Gabonese government in financing education projects. In 1991, a first project for an amount of 11.2 billion CFA francs concerned the construction of classrooms. In 1993, a second



→ Youth, the future of Gabon
→ Three Gabonese girls during break, in a primary school in the Libreville are ©Photo collection I. B-L.

project of 14 billion was earmarked for the financing of quality improvement in education. A third project in 1997 of 13 billion concerned technical and professional training. This partnership has continued as the ADB financed the formulation of an action plan whose financing will be handled by the state and other partners. Gabon's partners in the education sector are France, Canada, the European Union, the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO.

Gabon, due to its political stability, should not have any problem handling part of the financing of the reform of its education system by its bilateral and multilateral partners.

The third source of financing of the reform must come from the local administrations, i.e., the municipal administrations. The current decentralization context is an opportunity that creates an intervention framework for the municipal administrations for allocating resources to the development of the education system, notably on the preschool and primary levels.

Funds that will result from the change in behavior vis-à-vis public welfare are to be added to these potential sources of financing.

The necessity of changing the behavior of the actors in the use of financial resources

The analyses have brought out that 16% of the resources allocated to education may have been used for unknown expenditures. Likewise, the accounts collected revealed poor management of financial resources. Consequently, rigorous management must be observed and a change in mentality undertaken. In this context, the resources generated will be reinvested in the regularly programming and financing of the actions envisaged by the reform.

Conclusion

In the absence of an evaluation of the reform in its totality; it appeared that this reform is ambitious and well-founded. It attacks the challenges that require short, medium and long-term solutions. Gabon should not lack financial resources to carry out this reform. To do so, it must have a political commitment above and beyond promises to make effective state budget increases, changes in mentalities in the use of financial resources and a great capacity of conviction with regard to development partners to ensure their involvement in financing the reform.

Recommendations

To support the financing of the reform, the share of the GDP allocated to financing education must increase to a minimum of 5% so that it is on the same level as that of countries with equivalent wealth. The question here is a political decision to give implementation the proper means.

Proposal XIX: In the decentralization context, the local communities should take in charge certain expenditures for preschool and primary education

Proposal XX: Instituting management rigor so that the resources allocated to education are used efficiently: encouraging the implementation of the medium-term expenditures framework (CDMT 2006/2007) when it is finalized

Proposal XXI: Allocating subsidies to private schools on the basis of shared criteria of efficiency and quality applicable to all, with special attention paid to disadvantaged social groups

Proposal XXII: There is an urgent need to better coordinate the actions and resources of development partners and to immediately create an ad hoc group to reflect on financing

Proposal XXIII: Ensuring the follow-up of the suggestions and/or recommendations formulated by the Gabonese national self-evaluation and the international peer review. The impact of their implementation must be measured and to do so, all the stages of the peer review, in particular stage V, must be executed

Conclusion of the peer review on the gabonese education system

The Gabonese education system, despite certain performance indicators that place it at the head of the sub-Saharan African countries, is undergoing a crisis in efficacy, efficiency and cultural identity in which several factors play an amplifying role. These factors are quality, relevance, management and financing. In addition, the restoring of the education system's social credibility has become a fundamental challenge at the moment when the public does not view national education favorably.

What are the corrections to be made to improve the existing situation?

On quality

Quality depends on academic and financial standards such as student/teacher, students/class and didactic material/student ratios, teacher qualification and the unit cost of supervision, which must all be close to normal.

The review suggests the improvement of these standards through:

- » An increase in the number of pedagogic supervisory personnel on the preschool, primary, secondary and higher education level;
- » A redeployment of primary school teachers;
- » An ongoing training mechanism for teachers and administrative officers in primary, secondary and higher education;
- » An increase in pedagogic infrastructures in preschool, primary, secondary and higher education by correcting the city/countryside imbalance;
- » An increase in and a modernization of pedagogic facilities on all levels – preschool, primary, secondary and higher education: schoolbooks, laboratories, new information and communication technologies, libraries; etc.
- » Budget credits calculated on the basis of the real unit cost of supervision for preschool, primary, secondary and higher education.

On relevance

Relevance depends on parameters such as the diversification of training streams vis-à-vis socioeconomic and cultural development, the professional insertion of young graduates and the partnership with the production and social sectors.

The principal goal is restoring the economy so that in the longer term modern sectors that will drive the economy appear (unemployment is no longer linked simply to an imbalance in the training-employment fit but also to regional and international competition).

The review suggests the following measures in order to improve the relevance of the Gabonese education system:

- » Introducing the skills-based approach in the primary school teaching program and creating a steering committee comprised of representatives of parents as-

sociations, teachers, unions as well as other actors for better ownership of this approach;

- » Establishing an information and guidance structure for students in secondary and higher education focused on training streams adapted to their profiles;
- » Creating a correction mechanism for the initial imbalance between the different series of general, technical and professional baccalaureates;
- » Creating a space for dialogue and action program proposals between schools, research centers and the social and economic partners to better articulate the secondary and higher education levels, constantly adapting training and research to society's needs, helping to make mind-sets, structures and methods evolve, a mandatory condition for the sustainability of production systems, peace and development;
- » Establishing the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system and creating short programs of the DUT (two-year) type in higher education institutions (awareness-raising, training of the actors, administrative, pedagogic and scientific support) focused on technological and socio-economic development. This would make it possible to fight more effectively against the unemployment of graduates and school drop-outs;
- » Strengthening research in its role as an innovative factor in the education system, notably research on fundamental pedagogic questions.

On special measures

(a) *Fighting exclusion*

In order to fight exclusion, the review suggests that:

- » Financial assistance from the state (in particular, the bonus of 25,000 CFA francs be rethought so that every student who attends school regularly receives it;
- » Through concern for equity, financial assistance takes into account tuition fees in private schools;
- » A special education policy be envisaged for the insertion of disadvantaged children (street children, handicapped children, etc.).

(b) *Developing literacy training and non-formal education*

The review recommends, in the framework of EFA:

- » The increase in the level of the subsidy granted to specialized centers;
- » The development of curricula and pedagogic methods;
- » The training of teachers who play the role of training consultants and specialized trainers taking into account a variety of types of instruction in a variety of education areas.

On management and financing

The review notes that all these recommendations could only be effectively made concrete if management, financing and administration questions are precisely defined.

Consequently:

- » As for internal partnerships, it suggests creating and implementing a strategy of census-seeking and the participation of all the actors in the education system with the aim of raising their awareness about the challenges of the reform;
- » As for external partnerships, it considers that the actions and resources of the development partners can and must be better coordinated;
- » It encourages the finalization of the 2006-2008 medium-term expenditures framework;
- » It suggests allocating subsidies to private schools on the basis of the shared criteria of efficacy and quality applicable to all, with special attention paid to disadvantaged social groups;
- » It suggests that an ad hoc group be created as soon as possible to reflect on financing.

What future can be envisaged for the Gabonese education system?

The real challenge remains the promotion of a knowledge society to develop competence and national forward planning.

The size of the gap that exists between, on one hand, the goals, functioning and products of education-training and, on the other, society's constantly changing needs in a world dominated by the products of information and communication technologies, environmental problems, the hope that biotechnologies create, the organization of the markets, impose a periodic revamping on the states of their education system.

Gabon, a country endowed with considerable, diversified natural resources, is profoundly rural, which implies that the rural dimension of needs must be strengthened in the reflection on the country's future (Long-Term Strategic Reflection, Gabon 2025).

Gabon's law on orientation and economic and social development and the Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Document recommend that the education-training system be more effective and that the training actions match the needs of the economy.

The reforms to be implemented must therefore be done with a view of education that encompasses the entire sector and that ensures a good articulation and a judicious balance between all the levels of education, primary, secondary and higher, taking into ac-

count the job market and the country's economic, social and cultural policies and priorities. If this balance and diversity in education is not achieved, the prospects and hopes for growth, social cohesion, a more equitable distribution of the products of this growth and poverty reduction risk will be out of reach.

To this effect, it is necessary to promote alliances between the education system and companies, professional and parents associations, employers associations, local administrations and development structures to bring about the evolution in mentalities, educational contents, structures and training and management methods, the condition for a better integration of the school into its environment.

It is also indispensable to modernize the academic and scientific system so that education in Gabon takes its place in the worldwide trends based on mobility and the sharing of training programs. This is based on the development of the teachers' capacities, the integration of ICT in education and the strengthening of governance and administrative and financial management.

Annexes

Annex 1
Recapitulation of the peers' proposals

Annex 2
Bibliographic Key References

Annex 3
Peer Review Teams and Key Informants

Annex 1

Recapitulation of the peers' proposals

1. Strengthening as soon as possible the education management and information system (EMIS) in Gabon
2. Making the intersectorial and interministerial commission on preschool education functional to examine the problems on the whole with particular attention paid to the creation of school mapping
3. Developing the multi-grade approach in primary
4. Attacking the root causes of repetition throughout the system
5. Developing a more explicit national policy on textbooks and didactic materials
6. Undertaking advocacy for a better sharing of the skills-based approach
7. Opening the system in such a way as to better integrate alternative and decentralized options in order to free up initiatives, better meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and lessen the loads of the central structures
8. Fighting exclusion by better defining the situation of special needs children and by providing the appropriate solutions
9. Defining a common base of knowledge and skills whose mastery by all Gabonese children would constitute the goal of Education For All, from 6 to 16 years old. The National Pedagogic Institute could create an integrated nine-year study program that corresponds to Gabon's specificities
10. Ensuring better flow management in general secondary education
11. Reviewing secondary education streams to put them in line with higher education streams, which would result in the changes made necessary by the implementation of the bachelor's-master's-doctorate system
12. Diversifying and systematizing technical education and professional training so as to meet the needs of the modern as well as the traditional sectors. The reform begun with the creation of the EPIDs and the restructuring of the ANFPP must be successfully completed
13. Having all the actors, in particular, the private sector, help solve the complex problems of infrastructures, facilities and the appropriateness of programs in the technical and professional subsector

14. Increasing access to and improving the quality of higher education
15. Diversifying the training streams in higher education
16. Regionalizing higher education institutions
17. Undertaking a study to effectively define the nature, role and importance of private schools and their development
18. Undertaking a specific study on the scientific research situation in Gabon and on the articulation between public and private in this sector that is vital for higher education and national development
19. In the decentralization context, the local communities should take in charge certain expenditures for preschool and primary education
20. Instituting management rigor so that the resources allocated to education are used efficiently: encouraging the implementation of the medium-term expenditures framework (CDMT 2006/2007) when it is finalized
21. Allocating subsidies to private schools on the basis of shared criteria of efficiency and quality applicable to all, with special attention paid to disadvantaged social groups
22. There is an urgent need to better coordinate the actions and resources of development partners and to immediately create an ad hoc group to reflect on financing
23. Ensuring the follow-up of the suggestions and/or recommendations formulated by the Gabonese national self-evaluation and the international peer review. The impact of their implementation must be measured and to do so, all the stages of the peer review, in particular stage V, must be executed

Annex 2

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Annex 3

Peer Review Teams and Key Informants

National Peer Team

Under the lead of Prof Fidèle
Professeur NZE NGUEMA

International Peer Team

ADEA/IIEP : Prof. Ibrahima BAH-LALYA -
Coordinator

Bénin : Hon. Djibril Mama DEBOUROU

France: Mr. Serge Ebersold, OECD Expert

Guinée : Mr. Alpha Mahmoudou DIALLO

Mali : Mr. Bakary KANTE

Maurice : Hon. Steven Obeegadoo

Niger : Prof. Alhassane YENIKOYE , Team
Leader of the International Peer Reviewers

Key informants

- 1 S.E. Pr. Albert Ondo Ossa
Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale du
Gabon
- 1 S.E. François Engongah Owono
Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale du
Gabon
- 2 Monsieur le Secrétaire Général,
Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale
- 3 Léontine Mebale
Secrétaire Général Adjoint, Ministère de
l'Éducation Nationale
- 4 Blandine Mefane
Conseillère technique du Ministre, MEN
- 5 Jean Louis Moussavou
AFC

- 6 François Boukangou
CSROE/DETP
- 7 Raphaël Mfoubou
SEP/DETP
- 8 Etienne Eyinzue
DETP
- 9 Clarissa Dikigou
SENA
- 10 Lea Georgina Eyeng Nefane
SENA
- 11 Fridolin Mve Messa
SENA
- 12 Isidore Doukaga
FENAPEG
- 13 Sylvain Momoadjambo
FENAPEG
- 14 Christiane Bekale
FENAPEG
- 15 Simone Nidoutoume
FENAPEG
- 16 Omar Saïd Massande
APE Lycée Oloumi
- 17 Georgette Quentin
APE Lycée Damas II
- 18 Donatien Boulingui
APE Lycée SIBANG III
- 19 Aloïse Ndong-Ona
École Normale des Instituteurs
de Libreville
- 20 Ilouma O. Agbadje

- 27 Sophie Kwenzi Olikala
Directeur de l'enseignement pré-primaire
du MEN
- 28 Anicet Simplicite Moussadji
Chargé d'études, Direction de
l'enseignement pré-primaire
- 29 Véronique Abessolo
Chef de service de l'enseignement pré-
primaire privé du MEN
- 30 Monsieur le Directeur
Institut pédagogique National
- 31 Madame la Directrice
Service des orientations de l'Institut
pédagogique National
- 32 Madame la Conseillère
l'Institut pédagogique National

**Names and Addresses of Key
Contacts for the Gabon Peer review**

Son Excellence Monsieur Albert Ondo Ossa
Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de
l'Enseignement Supérieur du Gabon
B.P. 06
Libreville
GABON
Fx: + 241 – 76-14-52

Mme Léontine MEBALE
Directeur Général chargé d'Enseignements
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Gabon)
B.P. 06
Libreville
GABON
Tel 1 +241 722830
+241 07587880
Tel 2 +241 04 09 65
Fax : +241 76 13 29
Email mebaleleontine@yahoo.fr

Prof. Ibrahima Bah-Lalya
7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix
75016 Paris, France
Tel : +33 1 45 03 77 35
Fax : +33 1 40 72 83 66
Email: lalyabah@hotmail.fr

Hon. Mr. L. Steven OBEEGADOO
Former Minister of Education and Scientific
Research
Rue La Hausse de la Louvière
Floréal, MAURITIUS
Tel : + 230 208 7385
+230 697 9978
Fax : +230 697 9979
Mobile: +230 728 7111
E-mail: kobeegadoo@intnet.mu

Prof. Alhassane YENIKOYE (PhD)
Recteur
Université Abdou Moumouni
Niamey, NIGER
Tél. : +227 73 32 38
Fax : +227 73 39 43
Mél : alyenik@yahoo.fr

Prof. Nze Nguema
Professeur à l'Université Omar Bongo de
Libreville
BP : 4114
Libreville Gabon
Tel : +241 06 24 92 88
Email: Leopanthera_2001@yahoo.fr

Prof. Djibril Mama DEBOUROU
Député, Assemblée nationale
B.P. 2585
Cotonou, BENIN
Tél. : +229 21 33 09 66
331-4304-9221 (Amir)
Fax : +229 21 21 51 61
Email: debourou2000@yahoo.fr

M. Alpha Mahmoudou DIALLO
Directeur Général Institut National de Recherche et d'Action Pédagogique (INRAP)
Ministère de l'Enseignement pré-universitaire
et Education civique
B.P. 823
Conakry
Tél. : +224/60 52 68 18/60 21 26 50
Fax : +224/41 34 41
Mél : mahmoudou_diallo@yahoo.fr

M. Bakary KANTE
Economiste
Consultant
Magnambougou Projet
Rue 393 Porte 31
TEL : 223 646 44 70
Bamako MALI
kanteb56@hotmail.com

Mme Blandine MEFANE
Conseillère du Ministre chargée de l'EPT-
point focal de l'ADEA
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Gabon)
B.P. 06
Libreville
GABON
Tel 1: +241 05 33 19 56
Tel 2: +241 07 42 66 36
Tel 3: +241 72 44 61
Fax : +241 72 19 74
Fax2: +241 76 37 59
Email: bmefane@yahoo.fr
bmefane@caramail.com

Mr. Serge EBERSOLD
OECD/CERI
2 rue André Pascal
75775 Paris Cedex 16
Tel: +33 1 45 24 93 90
Fax: +33 1 4 30 63 94
Email: Serge.ebersold@oecd.org

The Gabonese educational system is a real paradox. On the one hand it appears to be one of the most efficient system in Central Africa with a 130% Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), a 93% Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and a boy/girl ratio of less than 1.5% in the Primary. On the other hand, several studies have indicated that there is a too high concentration of students within the two main cities which leads to class overloads. There are also unusual high rate repeat cases and dropouts in the primary. Classrooms are overpopulated both in primary and secondary schools, especially in the outskirts of urban areas. There is also difficult transition from one level to the other. This transition issue is particularly acute between secondary and tertiary education and within this later level as many students face considerable difficulties in progressing from “Propédeutique” (the First-Year University Classes) to actual Faculties/Departments.

Two teams of ADEA and Gabonese peers have been assigned to work on this paradoxical situation through a review that looked into all educational levels, from pre-primary to higher education, and on transition problems observed between these levels. After a thorough diagnosis of the situation, these peers have assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of the Gabonese educational system. From the findings of the review they have recommended a few policy options to explore in order to face the identified challenges. The present report gives an account of the process they went through and the conclusion reached.

Ibrahima Bah-Lalya was a professor at Conakry and Kankan Guinean national universities. He also served as National Director of Education in Guinea Ministry of Education. He completed a Doctorate Degree at Florida State University, USA. As a consultant with UNESCO, he coordinated the education component of the Special Initiative for Africa at UNESCO Paris Headquarters, participated in developing major policies on education and took part in the preparation of regional events including MINEDAF and the ADEA Biennials. He also coordinated the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis. From 2009 to date, he is consulting in Cameroon and Tunisia with MINEDUB and ADEA. Bah-Lalya has authored or contributed to numerous publications in education assessment and planning, reforms and development and in non formal education.

Alassane Yenikoye is a native of Niger. He is a professor of Biology and the Rector of the Abdou Moumouni National University of Niamey. Professor Yenikoye is a member of several development organizations and associations in Sub-Saharan Africa especially of the Sahel region. He authored or contributed to many publications in the domain of Biology and the Management of Higher Education systems. His contribution to the Peer Review in Gabon was very instrumental in term of both content and form.

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)
African Development Bank (AfDB) – Temporary Relocation Agency
13 avenue du Ghana – BP 323 – 1002 Tunis Belvédère – Tunisia
tel: +216/ 71 10 39 86 – fax: +216/ 71 25 26 69
E-mail: adea@afdb.org – web site: www.adeanet.org