

PRIMARY SCHOOLING COST IN KINSHASA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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ABSTRACT: In the Democratic Republic of Congo, many Congolese children of school age do not attend primary school and many enrolled children drop out of school before the end of the cycle, mainly for financial reasons. We conducted a study to estimate the financial cost of a child's primary schooling in Kinshasa, to determine the essential components of this cost and compare the financial cost of a child's primary schooling according to school's status and location. A survey was conducted with a sample of heads of households (N= 580) and school directors (N= 580) in the city of Kinshasa. We then estimated that, on average, a household spends US \$191.94 per school year to enroll a child in primary school. The average was highest for private schools (Means = US \$ 215.11) followed by government-regulated (Means = US \$ 184.13) and public institutions (Means = US \$ 128.05).

Keywords: Primary schooling, financial cost, households, Congolese

JEL Classification: H52 J18

1. INTRODUCTION

The constitution of the Democratic republic of Congo (DRC) establishes the compulsory nature of primary education by stipulating in article 43, paragraph 4 that "Primary education is compulsory ...". Despite the efforts made by the Congolese government to educate all children, statistics show that many school-aged children do not attend primary school and many of those enrolled drop out of school before the end of the cycle, mainly for financial reasons (Lututala et Ngondo, 2003).

According to the results of the national survey on the situation of children and adolescents outside the school (EADE), out of 13 117 697 Congolese children aged 6 to 11, 26.8% do not attend primary school. Of these children, 15.8% are considered out-of-school and 84.2% never did attend primary school. In Kinshasa province, out-of-school children account for 20.7% and those who have never attended primary school are estimated at 3.3% (MEPS, 2012)¹.

¹ We wanted to emphasize that the results of the « Enquête nationale sur la situation des enfants et adolescents en dehors de l'école » diverges from the census reported in « Annuaire statistique de l'enseignement primaire, secondaire et professionnel 2013-2014. For the first source, the proportion of children out-of-school is estimated at 28.9% (2012).

The Statistical Yearbook of primary, secondary and professional education 2013-2014 informs us that the gross enrollment ratio at the primary level in Kinshasa is 93.7%, which leaves 6.7% of school-aged children who do not attend primary school. The drop-out rate in primary school for Kinshasa is at 15.8% and rises to 30.9% when considering the whole Republic. This suggests that almost one out of three Congolese children enrolled in the first year of primary school does not complete primary education (MEPS, 2015).

Although "the main obstacles to primary schooling have not yet been thoroughly studied" (MEPS², 2010 : p. 32), the analysis of the above report exposed the determinants of exclusion and non-attendance of these children as ones of socio-cultural and economical nature. However, the same report pointed out that low household income is an important barrier for children's schooling and is a major reason cited by households to justify non-enrollment or dropping out of school. Similarly, the EPSP Development Strategy stated that direct and indirect school fees payed by households constitute a heavy burden on children's education (MEPS, 2010 : p.14).

Therefore, there seem to be a problem of financing the primary schooling of children in DRC and particularly in Kinshasa. Whatever the status of the school to be attended by a child, primary schooling represents a cost to be paid both by the State and the households. Moreover, the authors of the EADE report found that in 2010-2011 households in the DRC devoted more than one tenth (11.2%) of their annual income to all the education expenses of their children. In 2010, the same expenses accounted for 15.5% (USD 677.90\$) of the year revenues for households in Kinshasa which can be approximated to 4373.55 USD (MEPS, 2012 : p.86). Furthermore, 39.2% of the total education expenditure of Congolese households is allocated to tuition and fees, while expenditure for the school meals comes in second with 14.8 %. Other expenses, such as school supplies, one-time intervention fees and uniforms are relatively similar (10.9%, 10.9% and 10.8%, respectively) (MEPS, 2012 : p.83).

Considering the previously cited results, we conclude that more objective and precise measures are needed to help better understand the financial issue of the education situation in DRC. Our main research question may then be cast as follows: how much is the yearly schooling cost for one child in the city of Kinshasa? To better answer this question, three objectives were determined. First, we aim to identify the various and essential components of primary school costs in Kinshasa. The second objective is to use those components to estimate³ an average individual financial cost for primary schooling in Kinshasa. Those schooling cost estimates will then be analyzed according to school status and municipality.

The relevance of the present study is to provide information to the national and provincial authorities for pursuing and expanding the program of free primary schooling in public schools. Moreover, the results of this study can be used by the budgetary authorities at both the national and provincial levels in order to plan the subsidies to be allocated to the primary education sector.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

² MEPS : Ministère de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire

³ Punctual statistic estimate

This study was carried out in the city province of Kinshasa: the latter comprises 24 municipalities distributed in 4 districts (UNDP, 2009):

1. Funa : Bandalungwa, Bumbu, Kalamu, Kasa Vubu, Makala, Ngiri-Ngiri, and Selembao.
2. Lukunga : Barumbu, Gombe, Kinshasa, Kintambo, Lingawala, Mont Ngafula and Ngaliema.
3. Mont Amba : Kisenso, Lemba, Limete, Matete and Ngaba.
4. Tshangungu : Kimbaseke, Maluku, Masina, N'djili and N'sele.

The Congolese education sector includes two sub-sectors: primary and secondary education, and higher and university education. The sub-sector primary and secondary education has three levels: the maternal, primary and secondary levels (MEPS, 2010). Under the school management regime, primary schools are either public or private. The public system comprises together public schools and *government-regulated schools*. The latter includes a network of institutions who are self-managed and for which the teachers' salaries are paid by the Congolese state. The *government-regulated schools* can be built and managed by religious congregations or philanthropic associations. The private system also includes self-financed institutions (MEPS, 2015: p.22).

Public schools are built and managed by the Congolese state. *Government regulated schools* are built either by 'partners' or by the Congolese state. In these two cases, the administrative management of the schools was entrusted through an agreement signed between the Congolese state and the 'partners', namely the Catholic, Protestant or Kimbanguist churches, etc.). Private schools are built and managed exclusively by physical individuals or moral entities.

The primary and secondary education statistics for the 2013-2014 school year indicate that in Kinshasa, out of 4072 existing primary schools, 2703 (68.38%) are private, 1130 (27.75 %) are *government-regulated* and 239 (5.87%) are public.

From the teacher's standpoint, the parents are key partners. They contribute financially to the schooling of their children by paying school fees. This contribution is required in both public and private schools. The analysis provided by the World Bank notes that, following the drastic reduction in funding by the Congolese state, primary and secondary education largely depends on the financing of households that pays teachers' bonus and contributes to the construction of certain school infrastructures (World Bank, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive and comparative methods were used in this research to estimate the financial cost of the primary schooling of children in Kinshasa and to compare it according to the status of the school and the municipality.

A field survey allowed us to collect data from a non-probabilistic sample of households in all 24 municipalities. The head of the household was considered as the reporting unit and the child enrolled, as the unit of study. We collected data from a non-probabilistic sample of primary schools, which enabled us to establish a 95%⁴ reliability rate between the households' information and the schools' Data gathering was carried out in two stages: firstly, in October 2015 with the heads of the households and secondly, in December 2015

⁴ Out of 600 surveyed schools, 580 gave matching information with surveyed households

with the directors of the primary schools. A group of 65 students⁵ from three academic institutions contributed to the data collection. Interviewer group was composed of 20 first-year undergraduate students from the Agro-Veterinary Institute in Kimwenza and 45 first-year undergraduate students in Computer Science from the Higher Institute of Computer Science Chaminade in Mont-Ngafula.

The information collected related to the school year 2015-2016. It concerned the actual head of household's expenses for the schooling of the child living in his home and then the tuition fees charged by each primary school surveyed. In the first stage, the spouses answered questions from the interviewers if the heads of households was not present at the time. The list of questions prepared for the interviews aimed to gather the following information:

1. School status where the child is enrolled: public, government-regulated or private;
2. Municipality where the school is located;
3. Tuition fees to be paid during the 2015-2016 school year;
4. Expenses on objects and uniforms;

Taking into account the means available for this study, we have established a sample of heads of households of 422. Since each investigator interviewed in his itinerary of survey the heads of households who were available to answer these questions, the selection of heads of households was considered accidental. It should be noted that the majority of heads of households reported that they buy uniforms from the schools.

The purpose of the second stage was to verify the accuracy of the information obtained from household heads. As for the first stage, we did not have a sampling frame of the primary schools in the municipalities. A final sample size of 580⁶ elementary schools was retained for the study. The selection of the primary schools surveyed was also accidental. The heads of the school or their delegates answered questions from the investigators on:

- 1) The municipality where the school is located;
- 2) Tuition fees for the school year 2014-2015;
- 3) School status: state, government-regulated, private school.

Household's expenses and school fees charged by schools are expressed either in US dollars or in Congolese francs. However, to facilitate our calculations, we converted the Congolese Francs into US Dollars at the current rate (1 US dollar = 940 Francs congolais, July 2016)⁷.

The data was compiled on Excel 2007 sheets. They were checked and cleared of aberrant data. For the quantitative variables, means, standard deviations and frequencies were calculated. The graph was developed using the Excel 2007 software. The statistical analyzes were carried out using the SPSS 20 software.

⁵ We would like to acknowledge their contribution to the present study.

⁶ A total of 600 elementary schools were first included in the survey. Data from 20 of those schools were excluded because incoherence with households' information.

⁷ Although paid in Congolese Francs in some primary schools, school fees are set in US dollars to cope with the depreciation of the Congolese currency.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Sample description

Table N°1. Description of primary schools surveyed by municipality

Municipalities	Frequency	Percentage
Ngaliema	57	9.83
Selembao	54	9.31
Mont –Ngafula	44	7.58
Limete	40	6.90
Lemba	39	6.72
Kimbanseke	38	6.55
Nsele	34	5.86
Masina	30	5.17
Ndjili	30	5.17
Kisenso	20	3.45
Bumbu	20	3.44
Makala	20	3.44
Bandalungwa	19	3.27
Barumbu	19	3.27
Ngaba	19	3.27
Kasa vubu	17	2.93
Kinshasa	12	2.07
Gombe	12	2.06
Maluku	11	1.89
Kalamu	10	1.72
Matete	10	1.72
Kintambo	9	1.55
Lingwala	8	1.37
Ngiri-Ngiri	8	1.37
Total	580	100

Table 1 shows relative frequencies of surveyed schools by municipality. The municipalities of Ngaliema and Selembao had the most surveyed schools in our sample with respectively 9.83% and 9.31% of the sample. They were followed by Mont Ngafula (7.58%) and Limete (6.90%). The municipalities of Kalamu, Matete, Kintambo, Ngiri-Ngiri and

Lingwala were the least represented in the sample, as they each accounted for less than 2% of the sample.

Figure N°1. Primary schools surveyed according to school status

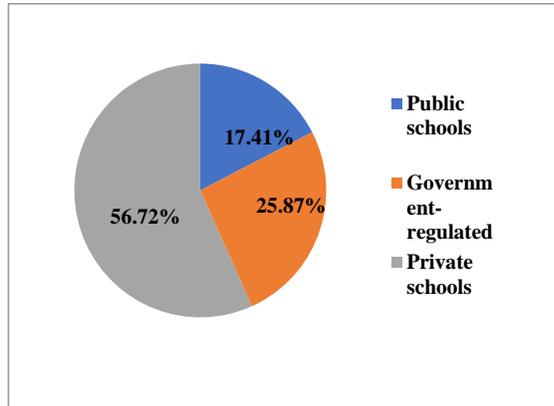


Figure 1 presents the distribution of the 580 surveyed schools according to their status. It can be observed that more than half (56.72%) of the primary schools surveyed are private, 25.87% are *government-regulated* schools (all networks combined) and 17.41% are public. Those percentages partially match the distribution of primary schools in the city of Kinshasa where 66.38% of primary schools are private schools, 27.76% are government-regulated and 5.86% are public schools (MEPS, 2015 : p.88).

4.2. Financial cost of primary education

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for school furniture and school fees (USD)

	N	Means	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
School furniture	422	38.60	21.09	13	100
Tuition fees	580	191.94	168.51	30	3000

The results presented in Table 2 refer to all schools in the sample. According to this table, the mean expenditure of uniforms and classical objects made by households is estimated at 38.60 ± 21.07 USD with a minimum value and a maximum value of 13 and 100 USD. The modal value in this sample is 20 USD which represents the amount paid by 86 (20.4%) households. The mean school fees paid by the households are estimated at 191.94 ± 168.51 USD with a minimum value and a maximum value of 30 and 3.000 respectively USD. The modal value of school fees in the research sample is 200 USD (10%). All in all, household spent a mean of 230.54 USD ($38.60 + 191.94$ USD) per school year for primary school enrollment.

Table N°3 : Descriptive statistics for school furniture and school fees by school status (USD)

	Status	N	Means	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
School furniture	Public	83	36.39	19.28	15	95
	Government-regulated	134	38.54	19.67	13	85
	Private	205	39.55	22.66	15	100
School fees	Public	101	128.05	71.77	27	489
	Government-regulated	150	184.13	92.80	50	750
	Private	329	215.11	206.93	60	3000

Considering that uniforms and classical objects as well as school fees constitute important elements which make up the cost of primary schooling, descriptive statistics for each of these variables were computed by school status (Table 3). Mean schooling cost of a child in a public school was 164.44 USD with a minimum value of 42 USD and a maximum value of 584 USD.

For the *government-regulated schools*, the average total cost amounts to 222.67 USD. The minimum value is 63 USD and the maximum is 835 USD. Private schools had the highest schooling cost mean with 254.66 USD, with a minimum value of 75 USD and a maximum of 3.000 USD.

Table N°4 : Descriptive statistics for school fees by municipality (USD)

Municipalities	Means	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Gombe	702.50	752.42	300	3000
Kintambo	427.78	421.77	160	1250
Limete	280.00	161.81	120	900
Matete	106.70	31.23	90	135
Kisenso	104.05	32.53	75	200
Maluku	61.36	9.77	50	80

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for school fees of some communities. The three first municipalities and the three latter are exposed. The municipalities of Gombe, Kintambo and Limete are the municipalities where the school fees were the highest on average and the most diverse when looking at the standard deviations. Here are the results: Gombe⁸ (Means = 702.50 ± 752.42 USD), Kintambo (Means = 427.78 ± 421.77 USD) and Limete (Means = 280.00 ± 161.81 USD). At the other end of the spectrum, schools showing the lowest average primary schooling cost reside in the municipalities of Matete, Kisenso and Maluku.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study had three principal objectives: estimating the financial cost of a child's primary schooling in Kinshasa, determining the essential components of this cost and comparing the financial cost of a child's primary schooling according to the school's status and the municipality in which it was located. Results showed that a mean household spends 230.54 USD per school year to enroll a child in primary school. This amount varies depending on whether the child attends a public, a government-regulated or a private school. Mean expenses were highest for the private schools, followed by government-regulated and public institutions. The essential components of the financial cost of enrolling a child are uniforms and school furniture as well as school fees. Statistical comparison of the mean costs of uniforms and classical objects according to the school's status reveals that there is no significant difference. However, the study found a significant difference between mean school fees in different schools. Moreover, the study also found that there is a significant difference in mean school fees across the various municipalities. The mean school fees of the municipalities of Gombe, Kintambo and Limete are higher than those of other municipalities. This result is in line with the situation of these three municipalities, which are considered to have the highest standards of living in the city of Kinshasa compared with other municipalities in the capital. We recognize that this research has some limitations that we have identified. Firstly, no discrimination was made between the several networks of government-regulated schools (Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Kimbanguist, etc.)⁹. This information would have made it possible to compare the financial costs of enrollment within the network of state-regulate schools. Secondly, we did not obtain information on the primary schools in each municipality and their distribution according to the management regime. This data would have facilitated the extraction of a representative sample in order to extrapolate the results of the study to all primary schools in Kinshasa. The results of our study show that parents in Kinshasa pay for the education at very variable rates depending on where and in what type of school their child is enrolled. Those results bring into question the Congolese State's involvement in enforcing legislation on education. Article 12, paragraph 1 of the General Law on National Education clearly states that in order to achieve basic education for all, the State should:

⁸ Gombe' commune is where government, diplomatic United Nations institutions can be found. In addition, Gombe arbor an important downtown area and many expatriates who work in Kinshasa, It also also were civil officials' children tend to go to school. In Limete, a major part of the industrial production is found. Kintambo is considered the oldest commune in Kinshasa and has a high standard of living.

⁹ Interviewers did not create sub-categories relatively to the religious congregations the state-regulated schools belonged to.

...guarantee mandatory and free primary schooling for all, in all national public education institutions, by allocating human, material and financial resources.

Public education should then be accessible for all families with children aged 6 to 11. Since schooling cost observed in the present study is recent and empirical, it gives a down-to-earth portrait of this economic and social reality in DRC. The number of public schools in the Kinshasa and other Congolese provinces as, reported in the MEPS most recent publication, is the lowest of the three school statuses (17.41%). This number gravely contrasts, to say the least, with the principle of accessibility advocated by the DRC Constitution: a strong recommendation should to the competence authorities should ensue.

In conclusion, to support our last remarks, we quote Arye L.H. and Eva J. who wrote: *"In an ideal world, primary education would be universal and financed from public funds and children would be enrolled in school, regardless of whether their parents had the means or the will. The reason is simple: when a child does not acquire the basic skills to act as a responsible and productive member of society, it is not only the child who is the loser but the whole social body. In fact, the cost resulting from the lack of education of the children is much more important than the cost of their education "*. (Arye L. H and Eva J., 2004 : p.1).

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