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# Schooling of pygmy Children in the Wamba Territory: Challenges and Perspectives

Pascal Kugana Ndasi, Kugana Safi Gisèle and Ngongo Medard Roger Second term assistant at the university of Kindu / DRC

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Several non-governmental organizations are essential with regard to the management of the education of the children of indigenous Pygmies. However, this support only applies to a small number. It should be noted in this regard that in the Territory of Wamba, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Wamba has a pastoral program that is more involved in the education of the children of this people. Thus, we considered it useful to carry out this study, the major orientation of which is in line with the logic of scrutinizing the challenges and prospects for the education of the Pygmy peoples in the Wamba Territory. This is the main idea that fueled this research.

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#### 1. Introduction

Education through educational institutions is at the center of the evolution of societies because it contributes to the development process of a country. It has been the subject of many international consultations, including the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Thailand in 1990 and the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, etc. This effectively explains why education is one of the indicators of human development. Developed and developing countries are also assessed with different parameters related to literacy and therefore to the education index \(^1\).

Literacy and therefore to the education index. In this regard, Unicef stresses that education, more than any other initiative, has the power to promote development, to make talents, to empower people and to protect their rights. Investing in education is the surest and most direct way for a country to promote the economic and social well-being of its people and to lay the foundations for a democratic society. Unfortunately, as Unesco asserts, in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, progress in education is facing greater difficulties than the world averages. And this gap is only increasing following the crisis that is raging in most African countries; which is caused by wars and other conflicts <sup>2</sup>.

Convinced of this fact, some international organizations such as the UN, Unesco, UNICEF insistently demand education for all, without distinction of race, sex, or continent. This is, in accordance with the right to education for all which was proclaimed by the UN in 1948. In this declaration of man, it is stipulated that everyone has the right to education and this must be free, at least for elementary and fundamental education<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, education is an inducer of positive change in the deep mind of the individual and gives him the ability to transform society for the benefit of human communities. This explains the importance for all country leaders to pay

sustained attention to the education of the entire population. And the Democratic Republic of Congo, like other nations, is no exception to this principle; importance is given to it via its constitution stipulating in its article 43 paragraph 1, that everyone has the right to school education which is provided by national education <sup>4</sup>.

Indeed, the Democratic Republic of Congo is made up of several peoples according to its history, including the Bantus, the Pygmies, the Nilotics, etc. all of them have the same right to a quality school education. But there is a very reluctant behavior towards education, on the part of the category called Pygmies for various reasons. And that is the reason for this research. We thus examine the challenges and prospects for the education of pygmy children in the territory of Wamba in the Province of Haut Uélé.

Bernard DUTERME in 2014 <sup>5</sup>; LOKULA MBUSE in 1997 <sup>6</sup>; Désiré NKOY ELELA in 2005 <sup>7</sup>, KATEMBO in 1990 <sup>8</sup>... Nevertheless, with regard to the Territory of Wamba in the Province of Haut Uélé, its examination is too worrying for us. In the said territory, a few years ago, the Pygmies were hostile to the schooling of their children. But in recent years, there has been a certain evolution of this people in the direction of pushing the young generation to school. This leads ipso facto to an increase in the number of Pygmy children attending school compared to the situation of past generations.

However, in their school development, a large number of Pygmy students do not complete their studies. They interrupt them during the course because of multiple reasons, namely: nomadic life, lack of financial means, discrimination by other peoples, food constraints, etc. Thus the cohabitation between Bantus and Pygmies often becomes difficult, because it is hampered by the inferiority complex from which the pygmies suffer, considered by the Bantus as the sub-

Tele:

E-mail address: ngongomedard@gmail.com

humans in their service. Also, the pygmies underestimate themselves because of the differences and gaps that are observed between them and the Bantus on various levels.

Clearly, the children of the indigenous Pygmy peoples do not enjoy equal access to education like those of the Bantu. Their villages lack educational institutions. In addition, the habits and customs, the lack of financial means and the degrading treatment to which they are subjected by the Bantu do not facilitate their task in this direction. In this perspective, the Pygmies cannot eat, sleep or wash together with the Bantu "Baoto" with whom they cannot frequent the same toilets, the same water sources, etc.

With regard to cruel treatment, we can recall and evoke, for example, the heinous episode of mass murder and the acts of cannibalism suffered by the pygmies of Mambasa and Komanda in Ituri, a sister province of the Province of Haut-Uélé where lies the Territory of Wamba <sup>9</sup>. During this period, in most countries where the Pygmies were found, some of them were offered as sacrifices for the ancestors and buried alive when a chief died <sup>9</sup>.

Far be it from us to pretend to display all the cruel treatment and the heinous mass murders of the pygmies by the Bantus and other peoples. Our primary attention is focused on the schooling of Pygmy children in the Wamba Territory.

To this end, the Constitution of February 18, 2006 stipulates in its article 43 paragraph 5 that "primary education is compulsory and free in public establishments" <sup>11</sup>. However, this article remained theoretical for a long time because the children of the indigenous Pygmy people often do not have access to primary education in the territory of Wamba. Arguing the exorbitant school fees in relation to their income. In addition, we must add the fact that the villages of the indigenous Pygmy peoples do not have school infrastructures. The schools there are usually unfinished and not adequately equipped.

The pygmies continue to educate their children in an unstructured and/or uncomfortable environment. The state of illiteracy in which the majority of Pygmies find themselves is a real obstacle to their development in a modern world where writing occupies a primordial place. In addition, access to an acceptable standard of living and involvement in the social, political and economic life of the country depend above all on the level of literacy and the training received from formal education.

Faced with the problem of the schooling of Pygmy children in the DR Congo, several non-governmental organizations are essential with regard to the management of the education of the children of indigenous Pygmies. However, this support only applies to a small number. It should be noted in this regard that in the Territory of Wamba, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Wamba has a pastoral program that is more involved in the education of the children of this people.

From all the above, it emerges that today in the Wamba Territory, the Pygmy peoples are discriminated against by the Bantus. This observation leads us to say that this people still has many challenges to meet to raise its development to the rank of that of the Bantus, but also in terms of school education. Thus, we considered it useful to carry out this study, the major orientation of which is in line with the logic of scrutinizing the challenges and prospects for the education of the Pygmy peoples in the Wamba Territory. This is the main idea that fueled this research.

The resulting anxiety that characterizes us leads us to ask ourselves the following questions:

- How does the educational enterprise of the pygmies present itself, compared to that of the Bantus of the Territory of Wamba?
- What are the challenges to be met and the future prospects for good schooling for Pygmy children in this Territory? From the above, we have advanced the following hypotheses:
- The educational enterprise of the pygmies, compared to that of the Bantus of the Wamba Territory, would be largely

deficient and incomplete and would not allow a better

- On the one hand, paternalism, discrimination of Pygmy children and teachers by the Bantus, the distance to be traveled to reach school, the low self-esteem of indigenous Pygmy peoples, attachment to habits and customs, would be the challenges to be met for a good schooling of Pygmy children and on the other hand, the construction of more modern schools not far from Pygmy camps, the self-care of the "Bambuti" peoples, their intense awareness and their integration into the customs modern would be the future

As part of this work, we want to:

Wamba Territory.

education of the Pvgmv children:

- Understand the way in which the educational enterprise of the pygmies presents itself in the territory of Wamba compared to that of the Bantus;

prospects for the successful schooling of pygmy children in

- Identify the challenges for the schooling of Pygmy children in Wamba Territory and propose options to be considered in the future to ensure better schooling for these children in Wamba Territory.

From a scientific point of view, this work contributes to the expansion of knowledge in education and development. The information collected in this work will contribute to raising awareness among the populations of the Wamba Territory whose development is conditioned by the schooling of all its sons and daughters in order to work and lead an acceptable life; which is still bogged down and marked by solid inequalities between Bantu and Pygmies.

Practically, the present study also has, on the one hand, the merit of making available to any intellectual wishing to cogitate on the education of Pygmy children a judicious working tool. In addition, this work allows legislators and political decision-makers to feel challenged by the importance and interest of the education of the Pygmy peoples of Wamba. This would lead to concrete initiatives to reverse the situation and give impetus to a new air.

As part of this work, we used an occasional sample of 80 subjects (including 50 pygmies and 30 Bantus living in the region). The questionnaire was useful for us to collect a number of opinions relating to our study. We also used the unstructured interview which allowed us to exchange freely with the respondents in order to have crucial information related to our work. The content analysis helped us strip down the data and the percentage index for processing the results.

Thus, apart from the introduction and the conclusion, this research contains two main parts, the first provides an inventory of the schooling of pygmy children in the Wamba Territory, and the second is devoted to the challenges and prospects of said schooling.

# 2. Pygme Educational Enterprise in the Wamba Territory 2.1. State of play of the educational enterprise in pygmy communities in the Wamba Territory

The educational enterprise of pygmy children in Wamba Territory is currently experiencing huge deficits for its proper functioning. Given that Pygmy children need a specific education, it was necessary for the State to set up modern schools near each Pygmy camp to enable these children to acquire quality education that could help them adapt to modernity.

Unfortunately, the schooling situation of Pygmy children in Wamba Territory is not the subject of any concern on the part of the political-administrative authorities, whether national, provincial or local. It is the duty of the State to ensure the school education of children and this without any discrimination.

#### 2.1.1. Empirically and contextually

In most Pygmy schools in Wamba territory, there is a lack of collective and individual teaching materials. Students do not have school kits. The pygmy children travel long distances of 3 to 6 kilometers or even more, on foot, to follow the teachings... The whole teaching is given in an abstract way. The children do not have slates, notebooks, reading books.

However, many of the notions taught refer to the realities that the indigenous Pygmy students have never seen. The situation is hardly satisfactory. In general, the teachings of Pygmy schools in the Wamba Territory show many shortcomings in the organization of educational situations.

#### 2.1.2.On the psychosocial level

Many teachers reproduce negative discourses and behaviors reflecting discrimination. Thus, in mixed classes, we often find Pygmy students grouped together at the back of the classes. Some teachers of indigenous Pygmy students, if not all, address these children without taking into account the sociological and psychological blockages they carry within them and which limit their physical, emotional, affective and intellectual development. These teachers are therefore poorly prepared to teach in mixed schools and do not know how to adapt to the contexts in which they work.

#### 2.1.3.In terms of infrastructure

It is important to rightly point out a strong demarcation between Pygmy and Bantu schools in terms of infrastructure. The schools of the pygmies are being built, not to say that they are not built. However, 18 schools are called "Pygmy schools", one of which is built of durable materials, 3 others are semi-durable and the 14 others are made of rammed earth. Pygmy schoolchildren study in open-air classrooms, they lack school furniture and even their teachers lack where to sit. All this is due to the lack of financial means by the Pygmies people, but also and especially following the disinterestedness of the State on the schooling of the pygmies in Wamba Territory. The teachers are unpaid, the schools not equipped, ... Faced with this carelessness of the State, we also see the Catholic Church taking charge of the Pygmy children, but comes up against a lack of sufficient means. We thus observe that Pygmy children experience a very accentuated dropout from school.

The table below provides information on the evolution of the number of Pygmy students over the 6 years.

Table 1. Evolution of the number of Pygmy students in Wamba territory from 2011 to 2016

Years	Workforce
2011	8927
2012	9853
2013	8767
2014	7833
2015	8033
2016	7959

Source: Pygmy Pastoral of Wamba Territory.

We see through this table that the number of Pygmy students was 8927 in 2011 to drop to 7959 in 2016; a gap of 968 students who dropped out of school at the 6-year interval. This dropout of Pygmy children is explained by the lack of supervision and nomadism of parents.

## 2.2. Characteristics of the educational enterprise of pygmy children in Wamba territory

The Pygmy educational enterprise in Wamba Territory has several characteristics. We can note the lack of interest of Pygmy children to go to school, the remoteness of schools from the living environments of Pygmies but also the poor conditions of school infrastructure.

#### The disinterest of pygmy children in school

The indigenous Pygmy people show little interest in school. However, it can be pointed out that in most cases, Pygmy children who go to school do not complete their studies. They therefore do not complete their course. We can't help but notice the untimely outings of these children during school hours, especially when they are hungry or when they want to go to the forest. They also have difficulty finishing all the hours of class during the day. The disinterest of Pygmy children in school is also manifested by the frequency of their attendance at school.

The table below shows that pygmy children are not regular at school.

Table 2. Assessment of respondents on the attendance of Pygmy children at school

N°	Possibilities	f	%
1	Regular	35	43,75
2	Irregular	45	56,25
TOTAL	80	100	

This table shows that 56.25% of our respondents say that Pygmy children attend school irregularly. This situation can be explained by the fact that these children are sometimes taken by their parents to the forest or downright prevented themselves from going to school as a result of the discrimination of which they are victims at school from both teachers and their Bantu colleagues, among others.

We can nevertheless point out that the insufficient number of schools in their communities is an important factor that in one way or another increases their disgust with school.

The table below bears witness to this reality:

Table 3. Existence of a school in the area of residence of the pygmies

N°	Existence of a school	f	%
1	Yes	21	26,25
2	No	59	73,75
TO	ΓAL	80	100

This table shows that 73.75% of our respondents testify that there are no schools in the living environments of the Pygmy people. This situation is explained by the fact that the schools are located at varying distances from the Pygmy camps.

In Wamba Territory, we found that Pygmy families live in camps next to villages. Thus, there are no schools in their actual camps. However, we can point out the presence or not of a school just in the village. This is why pygmy children find it funny to travel a long distance just for school. They would rather walk a long distance in the forest than attend a distant school.

The table below determines the distance between the Pygmy camp and the school:

Table 4. Distance separating the school from the place of residence

N°	Separation distance	f	%
1	0-3  Km	4	5
2	3 – 6 Km	1	1,25
3	6 – 9 Km	64	80
4	9 – 12 Km	5	6,25
5	12–15 Km	6	7,5
TOTAL 80			100

This table shows that, out of a total of 80 respondents, 64 or 80% believe that the distance separating the school from the camp is 6 to 9 km; 6 subjects or 7.5% believe that this distance is 12 to 15 km; 5 subjects or 6.25% estimate that it is 9 to 12 km; 4 subjects or 5% estimate it between 0 and 3 km; 1 subject or 1.25% estimates that it varies between 3 and 6 km.

Despite this lack of interest that Pygmy children have in school, one fact still gives us hope to make the schooling of this people effective. It is true that some Pygmy parents, following the awareness campaign led by the Pygmy Pastoral, have sent their children to school. The following table clearly shows the point of view of respondents on Pygmy children attending school.

Table 5.School attendance by Pygmy children

N°	School attendance by pygmy children	f	%
1	Yes	58	72 ,5
2	No	22	27,5
TOT	TOTAL		100

Table 5 shows that 72.5% of our respondents said that Pygmy children in Wamba Territory attend school well despite the obstacles they encounter. It is therefore important to identify the challenges to make the schooling of Pygmy children in this part of the country effective, and to consider alternatives for bypassing them.

### 3. Challenges and Prospects of the Schooling of Pygmy Children in THE Wamba Territory

Access to an acceptable standard of living requires education and training. The Pygmies have accumulated a delay that is not easy to catch up in a short time. However, the effectiveness of the schooling of pygmy children in the Wamba Territory still faces several challenges. Despite attempts to educate them, the illiteracy rate and school dropouts are only increasing. Among these challenges, we can cite poverty, the mentality of the Pygmies, the displacement of the Pygmy parents, etc.

#### 3.1. Poverty

Schooling induces many expenses related to the purchase of school tools, the remuneration of teachers... Their hunting and harvesting products are sold at low prices to the Bantu. and do not bring them enough money to meet the recurrent expenses of children's schooling. The poverty of Pygmy parents has perverse effects on the schooling of their children. Thus, the poverty in which they evolve deprives them of the possibilities of continuing to support their children's studies.

We saw for a time, in Wamba Territory, that it is the Pastorale Pygmies that takes care of the schooling of Pygmy children. This care by the Pygmy Pastoral, far from completely relieving the needs of the Pygmy children, was only an ephemeral action, making the Pygmy parents more and more dependent, because they were not initiated into self-

care. support both for their subsistence and for the schooling of their children. This form of excessive paternalism of the Pastoral, which however only took charge of part of the schooling, weakened the awareness of the Pygmy parents on the fact that they should get involved in schooling their children.

The table below presents the various problems for the schooling of Pygmy children in Wamba Territory

Table 6. Breakdown of survey responses according to the problems encountered by Pygmy children for their schooling

N°	Problems	f	%
1	Lack of awareness, social assistance and	18	14,87
	supervision		
2	Non-motivation of teachers	5	4 ,13
3	The culture of the pygmies	10	8,26
4	Hunger	15	12,39
5	Movement of parents during the hunt	16	13,88
6	Inability of parents to meet the school load	41	33,88
7	Inferiority complex	16	13,22
TO	ΓAL	121	100

It emerges from this table that the inability of Pygmy parents to provide for the school needs of their children accounts for 33.88% of the problems encountered by Pygmy children for their schooling, followed by the lack of awareness, social assistance and supervision of pygmies (14.87%). However, the displacement of pygmy parents during the hunting season (13.22%); the inferiority complex of pygmy children vis-à-vis Bantu children (i.e. 13.22%) and hunger (i.e. 12.39%) are problems that lead to the non-schooling of pygmy children.

Table 7. Other root causes of the problems of schooling for Pygmy children.

N°	Root causes schooling problems	f	%
1	Poverty	34	44,18
2	Culture	9	11,68
3	Nomadism	14	18,18
4	Support for teachers by NGOs and the State	18	23 ,37
5	Without answers	2	2,59
TO	TOTAL		100

This table shows that poverty, or 44.18% of the responses to our surveys, is the main cause of the problems of schooling for Pygmy children in Wamba. It is followed by the non-support by NGOs and the State on the one hand of teachers in Pygmy schools, and Pygmy families on the other (i.e. 23.37%). Nomadism (18.18%) and pygmy culture (11.68%) are the secondary causes. The poverty of this people is justified by the fact that the pygmies do not work, and provide no effort for profitable activities.

This table shows that the school dropout of Pygmy children (i.e. 62.31% of responses) is the main consequence of the problems of schooling for Pygmy children.

Table 8. Consequences of schooling problems for pygmy children

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N°	Consequences	f	%
1	School dropout of children	43	62,31
2	Child delinquency	13	18,84
3	Parasitism and dependence of pygmy families	6	8,69
4	Reduction in the number of pygmy students	3	4,34
5	Increase in illiteracy rate among Pygmy peoples	1	1,44
6	Early Marriages	1	1,44
7	Without answers	2	2,89
TOTAL			100

#### 3.2. The culture of pygmies

The culture of the Pygmies is another challenge for the schooling of their children in the territory of Wamba. We can reveal, for example, a great loss of time for pygmy children supposed to be in school, but blocked by their parents following initiation rites or other, for adult life. This initiation covers a period of 3 to 6 months. During this time, the pygmy children are in the forest while the others are at school.

The girls, on the other hand, are locked up in a cabin. Young adolescents who have barely had their first period are hidden and cut off from relations with the outside world and especially with people of the opposite sex. This training also lasts at least six months to allow boys from other camps to decide whether or not to marry her. All this blocks the schooling of children by attaching more importance to the cultural initiation of children, and interrupts the good evolution of their school career and leads them to school dropout; something that slows them down compared to their Bantu neighbours.

Dependent on the largesse of nature, they operate according to a schedule of activities that necessitates their periodic trips to the forest. They are absent from the camps during the months of January, February, March, July, August and September. To each of these periods correspond production activities according to the generosity of nature: a. January, February, March: fishing and hunting season; b. b. July, August September: fruit picking period.

b. b. July, August, September: fruit picking period.

Thus the Pygmies can only live in the camp for three

Thus the Pygmies can only live in the camp for three months (April, May, June). The children are obliged to temporarily interrupt their studies to participate in these productive activities necessary for the follow-up of their unitary group. The school calendar, which requires students to settle, is therefore out of phase with that of the social community.

#### The movements of Pygmy parents

The uncontrolled displacement of Pygmy parents causes harm to the schooling of their children. By leaving one environment for another, the children arrive in the middle of the year in another environment or perhaps there is no school. Pygmy parents are also at the root of their children's non-schooling.

#### The lack of motivation of teachers

The lack of motivation of any worker does not allow him to perform his work well <sup>12</sup>. Teachers in Pygmy schools suffer from lack of remuneration. The Congolese state does not concern itself too much with the education of Pygmy children, nor does it think of encouraging people of good will who take on the task of taking care of the education of Pygmy children. In our regard, we say that it is also a form of discrimination against the indigenous Pygmies, who despite everything and generally agreed to send their children to school. Something that should rather challenge the State to set up the means to recover illiterate pygmies and make them also literate like their Bantu neighbors.

## 3.3. Prospects for the good schooling of pygmy children in the Wamba Territory

The efforts already made on the ground give hope for the success of the schooling of pygmy children in Wamba Territory. We note the improvement of the education offer, social marketing throughout the school year. Teachers organize recruitment campaigns for new students in Pygmy camps... Local radio stations can also create programs to raise awareness and explain the importance of schooling by a Pygmy intellectual. The end of the school year should give

rise to emulation ceremonies to present testimonies of success of Pygmy students in order to encourage new vocations.

#### Capacity building for teachers

We believe that many efforts still need to be concentrated to make the education of Pygmy children in the Wamba Territory more effective and competitive. Thus, the various actors involved in the education of Pygmy children ensure the capacity building of Pygmy teachers, because the teacher plays an essential role in the education of children. They stimulate learning and can help students live without complex with others. Similarly, they can persuade students to adopt positive attitudes towards school and guide them for further studies.

#### Adaptation to pygmy culture

Teachers can take into account aspects of knowledge and cultures specific to indigenous Pygmies in school curricula. Because the current school programs are not very open to the history, culture and way of life of the Pygmies. Thus, without this, the domination of the Bantu culture over that of the Pygmies will be perpetuated. It therefore seems necessary to reformulate them to take into account aspects of the knowledge and ways of learning of the indigenous Pygmy peoples. For example, show in school programs and recognize that the Pygmy population, because it lives in the forest, has a culture that contributes to the progress of traditional medicine, and to the protection of the ecosystem, reading texts to studying in schools should also affect the valuation of Pygmies as an important human being.

#### **Infrastructure construction**

The construction of boarding schools to try a little to separate the children from their parents during the period of the lessons and to facilitate the supervision, the reinforcement of kits and school equipment at all the Pygmy schools to discourage the children from accompanying the parents in the forest. The improvement of working conditions in schools and the support of teachers working in these schools.

#### Self-care of pygmy peoples (Bambuti)

To achieve effective schooling for Pygmy children in the Wamba Territory, the Pygmy peoples must manage to take charge of themselves, in particular through the exercise of income-generating activities (IGA). This situation will decrease their dependence on the outside world. Thus, to promote the education of their children.

## Intense awareness and their integration into modern habits

Since the Pygmy people are not accustomed to modern culture, it is necessary to initiate awareness sessions to show the Pygmy people the importance of the education of their children, especially in this growing 21st century.

All in all, the present work thus presents a weakness in the level of choice of the study population which was done on an occasional basis, hence the impossibility of generalizing these results. Concretely, this opinion concerns only the individuals who took part in the said study.

#### Conclusion

By carrying out this study, we wanted to take up the challenges and see the future prospects for the schooling of Pygmy children in the Wamba Territory, after an inventory of the situation.

It appears from our investigations that the educational enterprise of pygmy children in Wamba territory has several characteristics that do not allow its development. The challenges are enormous in terms of education for the latter, including poverty (44.18%); poor management of teachers in Pygmy schools and Pygmy families (23.37%); nomadism

(18.18%) and pygmy culture (11.68%). We note, however, the improvement in the education offer, social marketing throughout the school year, teachers organize recruitment campaigns for new students in the Pygmy camps...in short, some efforts have already been made in this area. sense but which, moreover, require continuity and improvement.

Without claiming to have exhausted all aspects of the schooling of Pygmy children, other researchers can embark on a similar study, directing it towards the involvement of Pygmy parents in the schooling of their children; or by looking at the attitude of Pygmy parents towards the schooling of their children.

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