



RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF SCHOOL REPEATING ON EDUCATION EXPENDITURE IN BENIN

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ABSTRACT

For many years, the efforts of the public authorities in the Republic of Benin have focused on children's access to school; this, in line with the international commitments made by Benin at the Dakar Forum in 2000. In this sense, many barriers hindering children's access and participation in school have been removed. These measures, including free school fees, the creation and expansion of school canteens, have been beneficial in that they have opened up access to school to thousands of children who were initially deprived of it. This quantitative progress poorly conceals the difficulties encountered by the Beninese education system in general and primary education in particular despite the various policies to improve the quality of education undertaken in recent years and which include providing school textbooks to students, improving teacher qualifications through the reopening of Teacher Training Colleges (ENI), improving teaching processes, etc. In short, the annual results obtained are not up to the financial investments made by successive governments, supported by development partners. The Beninese education system still displays high repeat rates, despite the automatic transition policies initiated between primary school sub-cycles. This research therefore focuses on the issue of transforming education financial resources into results and, therefore, on the efficiency of public education spending given that Benin, a country registered with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, has very limited financial resources. It aims to contribute to resolving an issue that is currently agitating the Beninese education community.

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INTRODUCTION

While it is accepted that repeating a grade is indeed intended to ensure competition or create a culture of excellence among students, its educational effectiveness is controversial between, on the one hand, the proponents of repeating a grade who cite its educational benefit, even if only in the short term, and on the other, the supporters of its abolition for whom, far from being a panacea for students with learning difficulties, repeating a grade is an ineffective measure with devastating psychological and social consequences. In Benin, repeating a grade in primary school costs an average of 7.5 billion CFA francs per year, or 11% of the resources (excluding investment expenditure) committed each year by the government. Amoussou, (2014; p.3). The issue of repeating a grade is therefore a real thorny issue in primary education in Benin. Despite the many reforms undertaken by political leaders and which led in 2004, like other French-speaking African countries, to the implementation of the policy of sub-cycles in primary education within which repeating is only authorized in exceptional cases.

Educational statistics reveal a high level of repeating each year. Repeating therefore establishes an unsatisfactory internal efficiency with a high probability of leading to school dropout. This research therefore focuses on the issue of transforming financial resources for education into results and therefore on the efficiency of public education spending given that Benin, a country registered with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, has very limited financial resources. It aims to contribute to resolving an issue that is currently agitating the Beninese educational community.

State of the problem: The issue of repeating a grade is a major concern for primary education in Benin; a subject that is all the more crucial since the Pôle de Dakar had already pointed out the high level of repeating in Benin in its diagnosis of the Beninese education system (2012). It noted that for the entire primary education system (including the private sector), Benin had hardly any better results compared to other French-speaking countries with the same level of economic development (GDP per capita between US\$500 and US\$1,050) such as Togo, Chad or the Comoros, with, on the other hand, a

cost of educational services 20% higher than the regional average. Indeed, repeating is defined by the Larousse Illustrated Dictionary 2006 as "the act of completing a second year of study in the same class". For the Petit Robert, "it is completing a new school year in the same class". For Langevin L, Dubé F, (1997), a repeater is "a student who, due to various difficulties, starts an additional year in his or her school or primary education". Repeating a year occurs when a student does not meet the educational achievement level requirements set by a country's education system. Repeating a year is specific to Third World countries, mainly French-speaking African countries. School failure therefore results from delays caused by repeating a year, from students leaving the education system without qualifications and from the poor results obtained in the various assessments. They are a source of discouragement, demotivation and parents' refusal to send their children to school. (Garba, 2018). Eisemon (1997) states that high/low repeat rates have systemic causes. Thus, for the latter, none of the 12 African countries with the highest repeat rates are English-speaking. He concludes that the high repetition rate has become a main characteristic of African countries. This analysis is confirmed by Mingat (2000) for whom the frequency of repetition is a structural characteristic of the school system of each country. The author continues that, despite variations within the regions considered, the French-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa are generally characterized by repetition rates that are much higher than those observed in other regions.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) also recognizes in the 2012 Global Education Digest that "sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of repeaters in primary education: there were 11.4 million in 2010. Their absolute number has increased by 16% over the last decade, mainly due to a spectacular increase in primary school enrollment: 53% over the same period." The issue of repeating is therefore of crucial importance for French-speaking African countries south of the Sahara, including Benin of course. Repeating is seen as an indicator of the quality of the education system, a performance indicator. However, its usefulness and pedagogical relevance are not unanimous; quite the contrary. For Mingat (2000), based on the conclusions of research carried out on the decision at the end of the year to keep or transfer more than 25,000 students in more than 1,000 classes (2nd year and 5th year of primary school), in Togo by Jarousse and Mingat, (1993) in Gabon, by Mvono-Mengue (1998) and Mingat, Rakotomalala and Suchaut (1999), as well as in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal by Behagel, Coustère and Leppla (2000), the argument that repeating a class is justified as a means of acquiring a higher quality of education has "limited empirical value". This study in fact combined individual data from each of the countries studied and international comparisons. Holmes and Matthews (1984), following the work carried out by Jackson (1975), using a meta-analysis of eight hundred and fifty international studies, will state that: "repeating a year is detrimental to the students who are subject to it". For their part, the French Claude Seibel and Jacqueline Levasseur (1983) had already established in a study referring to France and which covered more than 1000 students in the Cours Préparatoire in 1979 that repeating a year did not seem to produce more favorable effects for repeaters than for weak students who were promoted. "In short, for a weak student, it is not necessary to repeat a year to continue to progress". This study by Claude Seibel and Jacqueline Levasseur will be confirmed by Thierry Troncin (2004).

For the latter, repeating a year has a "demobilizing" effect on children forced to repeat their preparatory course and an "energizing" effect on those who are poorly promoted. This analysis therefore takes on a psychological dimension by pointing out the devastating effect of repeating a year. Repeating a year would cause a feeling of shame not only for the repeating student but also for his or her parents, sadness and the development of a feeling described by psychologists as an "acquired feeling of incompetence". With regard to Benin, the Pôle de Dakar (2003) establishes that repeating a year does not have the expected effect since between two schools, one of which has 30% repeaters and the other 10%, there is a five-point achievement gap in favor of the school where there are fewer repeaters. Further on, repeating a year is considered a very plausible explanatory variable for early school leaving. In the results of longitudinal studies on data conducted by CONFEMEN, Behagel *et al* (2000) over a period of three consecutive school years in Senegal and Ivory Coast reveal that repeating alone leads to an 11% increase in the proportion of dropouts. Repeating therefore has a negative effect on school retention. Mingat *et al* (1999) will further establish that a 1% increase in the repeat rate implies a 0.77% reduction in the retention rate. In short, repeating weakens the internal efficiency of the system. These analyses, although scientifically explanatory of the counter-productivity of repeating, do not meet with the approval of many other researchers whose studies present divergences of analysis. For them, repeating a grade in primary school would be less negative in the short term than the conclusions of the work of the first researchers mentioned above assert. Among these defenders of the positive effects of repeating a grade in the short term is Ying Ying Dong (2010) who concludes that repeating a grade proves in some cases to be more productive in the first or two following years; an opinion shared by Robert Gary-Bobo and Jean-Marc Robin (2012) who also attribute positive effects to repeating a grade, but in the short term. Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber (1994) also found that repeating a grade sometimes led to better academic results among disadvantaged children in urban areas. In Africa, in Burundi, it was demonstrated on the basis of a sample of 1,800 sixth grade students that repeating a grade improves students' academic performance (Schwille *et al*, 1991).

Repeating a grade is considered by several teachers in PASEC participating countries as "a very important way to give the least gifted students a second chance to acquire the basic knowledge they need to be able to continue their education" (ADEA, 2003). Repeating a grade is therefore a school filter whose goal is to create an incentive to work; eliminating it would amount to encouraging laziness. For Crahay (2003), it is "proof of the immaturity of children to succeed in the next class". For Marc Le Bris (2008), a former teacher and school principal, although repeating a grade is bad news, it "is economical, sometimes necessary and often useful because it constitutes a structure for progress". For the latter, the immediate interest of the student does not correspond to his long-term interest. In short, for the proponents of this line of thought, the desire to eliminate repeating a grade in primary school is a propensity to make savings to the detriment of quality. Despite a deep divergence on the usefulness or educational relevance of repeating a year, research agrees that repeating a year produces harmful consequences in the long term, particularly with regard to delayed access to employment and the loss of a year of pay for both the individual and the State. Eisemon (1997) explains that: "the fact that students can

derive some educational benefit from repeating a year does not obviously imply that the limited resources available to education are used effectively here". This reflection indeed raises the thorny question of the rational transformation of resources into results. It then becomes clear that repeating a year has a financial cost. The repeater consumes an additional unit of resources for only one validated year of study. Pôle de Dakar (2011) even adds that "due to budgetary constraints, repeaters occupy places that overcrowd classes and/or prevent other children from accessing school". For a given level of education, repeating a year implies a waste of resources. Clearly, this observation therefore supports the thesis of an inefficiency of public education resources when high levels of repeating appear, even if this analysis is not shared by all (Coleman 166) for the United States or Raseria (2005).

If this analysis of the financial consequences of repeating for public finances concerns the short term, it also seems useful to look at the long term. Thus, Thomas Brodaty, Robert Gary-Bobo and Ana Prieto (2010) basing their research on a CEREQ survey called "Generation 92" will arrive at the conclusion that repeating increases unemployment and reduces the salaries of young employees. This is an economic approach to the phenomenon. The importance of the repeating rate therefore pushes us to the obligation to question ourselves on the internal efficiency of the Beninese education system and therefore, on the inefficient transformation of the budgetary resources allocated in view of the high number of students in a situation of academic failure. Finding a solution to school repeating in primary school is therefore a sine qua non condition for improving internal efficiency and, by ricochet, that of school retention. It is a guarantee of improving the efficiency of public education spending in an environment where public resources are not infinitely expandable and where the main donors of education in Benin such as Denmark or USAID are withdrawing. In view of the available data, this research which covers the period from 2014 to 2018 will make it possible to answer the question: what is the impact of school repetition on education spending in Benin?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodological approach: This research fundamentally required secondary data. Also, the approach envisaged to achieve the research objectives was structured around the following points: documentary research, data collection, data analysis and writing of this article. The data on the variables necessary for this research are collected from official documents and interviews.

The various indicators are calculated mainly from data from national statistical yearbooks and the Integrated Public Finance Management System (SIGFiP). Table 1 summarizes the main data sources used. In a descriptive approach, it will be a question of using secondary data that constitute the statistical yearbooks 2014 to 2018 to analyze the problem of repeating but also to assess its cost on the basis of primary education budgets.

Data analysis: The data analysis focused on the expected results of this research. The software support that was used is STATA 10 and Excel. The different indicators of the research were calculated and their distribution also presented.

Research results and discussion

RESULTS

Benin among countries with a high rate of repeating primary school: During the study period, we note a relatively stable rate of repeating primary school over the period 2014-2018, with the exception of 2017, but still among the highest in ECOWAS. The primary school repetition rate is fairly stable over the period, with a peak in 2017. It went from 11.44% in 2014 to 10.82% in 2018, an average annual variation of -0.16 percentage points over the period 2014-2018. The average annual repetition rate is 11.79% over the period. This rate remains below the PSE target of 10%. The primary school repetition rate (all grades) in Benin is the second highest in ECOWAS after that of Côte d'Ivoire. This result raises to some extent the problem of the quality of primary education in Benin, characterized by overcrowded classes and other problems that prevent students from learning effectively.

Overall education expenditure on the decline in the nursery and primary education sub-sector: There is a downward trend in expenditure on nursery and primary education, below the PSE target. In fact, expenditure by the Ministry of Nursery and Primary Education (MEMP) fell overall over the period 2014-2018. It fell from 115.05 billion CFA francs in 2014 to 105.82 billion CFA francs in 2018, an average annual growth rate of -2.07% over the period. Actual expenditure averaged 111.49 billion CFA francs over the period 2014-2018.

These actual annual MEMP expenditures are generally below the 128.22 billion CFA francs deemed necessary per year to carry out all the reforms relating to nursery and primary education within the framework of the PSE, post 2015. As for the share of actual MEMP expenditures in the overall State budget, it is generally down over the period 2014-2018. It went from 12.52% in 2014 to 8.15% in 2018, that is to say an annual average of 9.68% over the period. In addition, actual MEMP expenditures as a percentage of GDP are generally down over the period 2014-2018. They went from 2.40% in 2014 to 1.84% in 2018, i.e. an annual average of 2.17%.

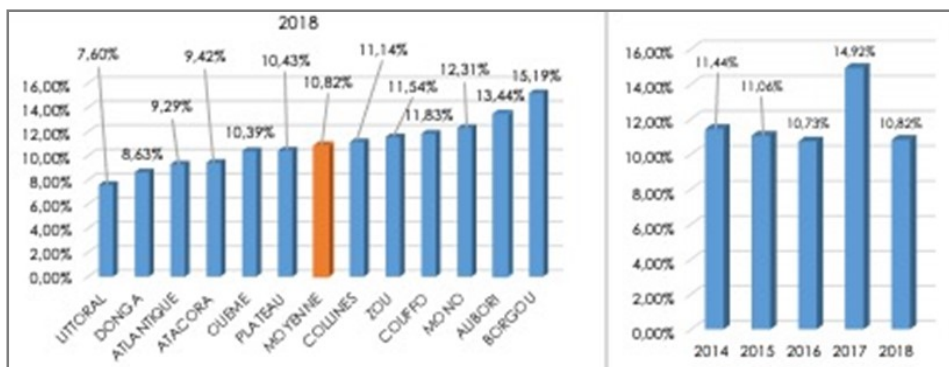
A share of investment expenditure for nursery and primary education in decline with amounts below the PSE targets and an increase in the very large share of personnel expenditure in the MEMP budget. MEMP resources are mainly absorbed by personnel expenditure. The share of personnel expenditure in the MEMP budget increased slightly over the period 2014-2018, with the exception of 2015. It rose from 70.59% in 2014 to 72.24% in 2018. On average, personnel expenditure represents 68.10% of actual MEMP expenditure over the period 2014-2018.

The second largest expenditure item is transfers (14.03% on average), followed by expenditure on goods and services (9.77% on average) and investments (8.10% on average). The share of investment expenditure in the MEMP budget fell between 2014 and 2018. It went from 7.11% in 2014 to 5.75% in 2018. The amounts of this investment expenditure are also below the estimates established in the PSE. Per year, investment expenditure was to be set at 10.6 billion CFA francs compared to 123.7 billion CFA francs for current expenditure.

Table 1. Indicators and data collection sources

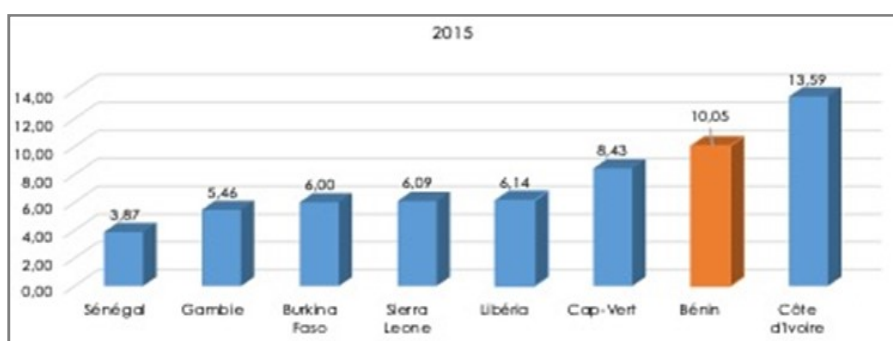
Indicators	Sources
Access indicators and performance of the Beninese education system	• MEMP statistical directories
Overall budget of the Beninese State	• Finance laws
MEMP budget allocations	• SIGFiP (2014-2018)
Country comparison indicators on the education sector	• UNESCO Institute for Statistics
State revenues and expenditures Fiscal pressure of WAEMU countries	• TOFE, Ministry of Economy and Finance • ECOWAS
GDP growth rate of ECOWAS countries and share of contribution to the creation of added value in Benin	• World Bank (World Development Indicator (WDI))
Budget deficit and public debt	• African Economic Outlook Report (AfDB, 2016 to 2019) • Review of public expenditure 2019 • Report on public debt management for the years 2016 and 2017

Source, our research, 2024



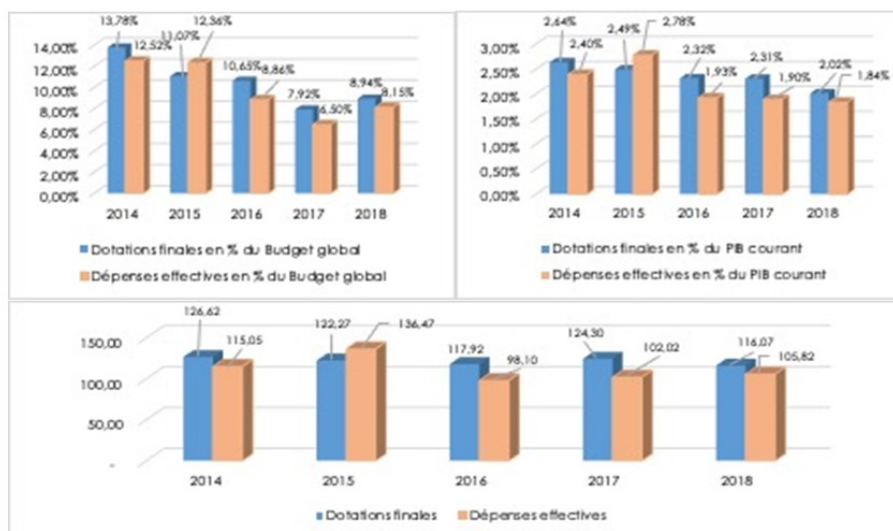
Source: From MEMP statistical yearbooks, 2014-2018

Graph 1. Primary school repetition rate



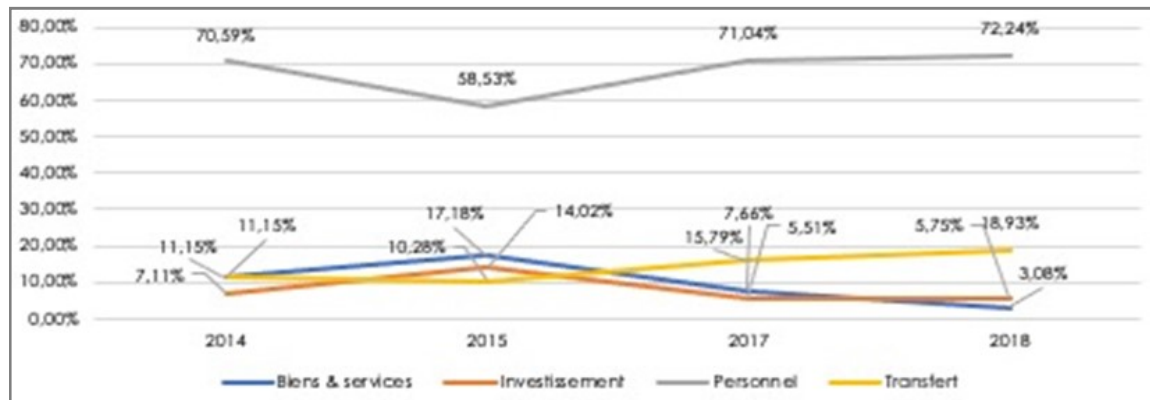
Source: RDP, 2019, based on UNESCO data

Graph 2. Primary school repetition rate in Benin compared to other ECOWAS countries



Source: RDP, 2019, based on SIGFiP, 2016 MEMP execution data, Finance Laws and World Bank data (WDI)

Graph 3. Total actual allocations and expenditure on nursery and primary education in billions of CFA francs, percentage of the total budget and GDP



Source: RDP, 2019, from SIGFIP

Graph 5. Share of actual expenditure on nursery and primary education by level

Table 3. Allocations and actual expenditures for primary education by source of financing (in billions of CFA francs)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Final allocations					
PTF	18,43	21,30	13,23	21,23	11,45
State	100,95	93,75	96,48	94,63	96,50
Actual expenditure					
PTF	9,08	26,51		7,29	3,36
State	98,93	101,69		87,52	94,97

Source: RDP, 2019, from SIGFIP

Table 4. Cost of repeating for public finances (2014-2018) in thousands of CFA francs

Years	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total actual expenditure (DEF)	108 100 000 000	128 210 000 000		94 810 000 000	98 330 000 000
Actual expenditure per student (DEE)	50, 630	51,404	54,457	42,196	44,213
% Goods & services in the DEE	11,17%	17,20%		7,66%	3,09%
% of investment expenditure in the DEE	7,25%	14,12%		5,52%	5,76%
% of Personnel Expenditure in the DEE	70,42%	58,47%		71,08%	72,26%
% of Transfers in the DEE	11,15%	10,21%		15,75%	18,89%
% of current expenditure in the DEE	81,59%	75,67%	0,00%	78,74%	75,35%
Current expenditure per student (DCE) in current costs	41 309	38 897	-	33 225	33 314
Inflation rate	-0,55%	0	-	1,77%	0,80%
Current expenditure per student (DCE) at constant costs	41 537	38 812	-	32 647	33 050
Number of repeaters	188 008	257 384	179 639	251 071	245 895
Cost of repeating (constant costs)	7 809 366 182	9 989 605 591	-	8 196 779 008	8 126 839 641
Cost of repeating a year in % Current expenses	7,22%	7,79%		8,65%	8,26%

Source: our research. 2024

The low share of investment expenditure in education expenditure, and what is more, its downward trend, constitute an unfortunate trend, because the Beninese education system needs to increase its investments in education in order to expand its education service offering and its quality, to face the strong population growth and the challenges of the structural transformation of its economy. Table 2: Share of different types of economic expenditure in overall allocations and actual expenditure on nursery and primary education

A slight shift in resources allocated to nursery and primary education from 2016 from the central level to the decentralized level: Actual expenditure on nursery and primary education is absorbed more than half by the central level between 2014 and 2015 and by the decentralized level from 2016 to 2018. The average share of actual expenditure is 53.17% at the central level compared to 46.83% at the decentralized level.

Primary education financed mainly from budgetary resources: Primary education is financed mainly by the State. Actual expenditures average 95.78 billion CFA francs for the State and 11.56 billion CFA francs for TFPs

(excluding budgetary support). The table below shows the annual evolution of allocations and actual expenditures for primary education by source of financing. Overall, nursery and primary education is characterized by funding levels that are stagnant and below national targets, a share in the overall education budget that is crumbling, a strong predominance of personnel expenditure, to the detriment of investment expenditure that is tending to decline. Finally, we can note a trend towards the predominance of expenditure at the decentralized level, against the central level.

Determinants of school repetition as varied: The determinants of repetition imply the explanatory factors of the latter. Indeed, these factors can be analyzed from two angles: intra-school factors (controllable by the public authorities) and extra-school factors (more or less beyond the control of the State).

Extra-school factors: Extra-school factors include conditions, causes or variables that are not controllable by the public authorities and that produce significant effects in the high level of repeats.

These factors can be classified into two groups: causes intrinsic to the child and those resulting from his socio-economic background (parents, economic conditions, etc.)

- **At the student level:** the student's intellectual deficiency can lead him to a situation of academic failure resulting in repeated repeats. Similarly, absenteeism (irregularity in classes) coupled with or derived from poor nutritional status and lack of attendance can be factors that negatively affect the student's academic performance. Khan and Berstecher (1988).
- **The socio-economic environment:** characterized by illiteracy and the poor socio-economic conditions of the parents constitute a significant cause of repeats. Eisemon T.O. (1997) will show for example that in Honduras, the families of repeaters had more modest incomes and expenses than those of promoted children.

School factors of repeating: Intra-school factors are elements that contribute to the existence of repeating in the education system. These factors are of several types: school strikes, unsuitability of training curricula, lack of educational resources, under-qualification of teachers, poor functioning, teacher absenteeism, inappropriate method of assessing academic achievement or even insufficient school infrastructure. Clearly, repeating is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather the result of the conjunction of several dysfunctions. School strikes: they have a negative impact on the cognitive achievements of students and consequently contribute in public schools to an increase in repeating rates. The hypothesis of a negative impact of school strikes on repeating in primary education in Benin is confirmed in the evaluation report of the updated Ten-Year Plan for the Development of the Education Sector (2012), which noted the gaps observed between students in private schools (not affected by the strikes) and those in public schools.

- **Teacher qualifications:** Under-qualification of teachers negatively affects students' academic achievement, although it is not exclusively the only explanatory variable for this situation. In Benin, notwithstanding the policies implemented for the qualification of teachers in primary education since 2007, a no less negligible stock of teachers were still unqualified in public primary education.
- **School textbooks:** they constitute a determining factor whose absence affects the acquisition of knowledge. Lockheed and Vespoor (1991) and Mingat (2003) admit the positive influence of textbooks on academic achievement. The textbook-student ratio initially of 0.93 in 2007 for French and mathematics textbooks increased to 1.02 for French textbooks and 1.05 for mathematics textbooks. However, their existence in sufficient numbers despite the hazards of distribution leads us to consider the hypothesis that the availability of textbooks in sufficient numbers is a positive factor in reducing repeats.
- **Insufficient school infrastructure classes:** this results in overcrowded classes, which results in a deterioration in students' learning conditions.
- **Malfunctioning of the inspection system:** the poor functioning of the educational inspection system (educational support and assessment) leads to poor teaching practices and even teacher absenteeism and is also an explanatory variable for high repeat rates. In addition, teacher absenteeism was singled out in the PDDSE evaluation report (2012) as "a major factor contributing to

the low level of academic achievement", and therefore an explanatory factor for repeat rates. The issue of teacher absenteeism had been addressed by PASEC in 2004-2005 and by PAGE-DEP in 2005-2006 in studies on the teaching issue in Benin.

- **The inadequacy of training curricula:** Since their introduction in 1994 and their gradual generalization in the early 2000s, the New Study Programs (NPE) have been the subject of lively controversy fueled by teachers' unions and parents of students who criticize its content and its unsuitability to the Beninese context.
- **The languages of instruction as well as inappropriate assessment methods** are all factors whose effect on repeating, although possible, is not observable in the context of our study focused on primary education in Benin.

The cost of repeating on public finances: Before any financial analysis of the cost of repeating, it is necessary to determine the actual expenditure per student in primary school. It should be noted that this expenditure is made up of purchases of goods and services, investments, personnel expenses and transfers to local authorities within the framework of FADeC funds. Indeed, "public expenditure on education is expenditure incurred by "the central or federal government, state governments, provincial authorities or regional governments, when these exist as well as expenditure borne by municipal authorities and other local authorities" Gérard Lassibille (1994).

Thus, actual expenditure per student can be aggregated into three masses: current expenditure according to its recurrence or economic nature (purchases of goods and services, personnel expenditure); investment expenditure; transfers; For the purposes of this article, data from the review of public expenditure in the education sector in Benin (September 2019) were used. However, these data calculated on the basis of information collected in the Integrated Public Finance Management System (SIGFIP) could not be determined for the year 2016. In order to refine the analysis, it seems important to take into consideration only current expenditure, ignoring investment expenditure and transfers, the purpose of which is essentially intended to take into account expenditure on rehabilitation, construction and equipment in furniture for school infrastructure, etc. Thus, to calculate current expenditure, the following formula was used:

$$\text{Current expenses} = \text{Goods and services} + \text{staff}$$

Source: our research, 2024

We have therefore decided to work in constant costs (without consideration of inflation) in order to better appreciate the efforts of the public authorities in terms of primary education in Benin. Reading the table, we can observe the financial cost of repeating on public finances in Benin. Repeating remains quite high despite the many measures put in place and its ever-increasing financial impact (more than 8.5 billion CFA francs over the 4 years for which data are available, or 7.85% of actual current education expenditure over the same period). For example, repeating cost more than 7.8 billion in 2014 compared to 9.9 billion in 2015, an increase of 27.92%. However, between 2017 and 2018, we observe a stability in the cost of repeating around 8.1 billion CFA francs.

DISCUSSION

A close correlation between school repetition and education expenditure: A significant correlation has been identified between school repetition and educational costs in Benin. These figures show that repetition, beyond the educational, social and psycho-affective consequences it generates, has a significant impact on Benin's public finances. In a context of scarcity of public financial resources, they allow us to appreciate what these resources could have been used for in improving the conditions of access and study of students, all things contributing to improving the quality of the education system without taking sides in the eternal debate between supporters of the elimination of repetition because of its supposed educational uselessness and defenders of its maintenance who support its educational relevance and present it as a very important means of giving the least gifted students a second chance to acquire the basic knowledge they need to be able to continue their schooling" (ADEA, 2003). From the various analyses carried out previously, it appears that repeating a year is a subject whose educational relevance arouses enough controversy. However, proponents or opponents of repeating a year hardly deny its financial impact on public finances, particularly for poor countries in a context marked by budgetary difficulties, consequences of the global economic and financial crisis.

If the aim of the State is not to make a profit, since it has the function of formulating and financing public policies such as ensuring education for all, as mentioned in Article 1 of the framework law on education in the Republic of Benin, which establishes education as the first priority task of the State, the exercise of this obligation should be accompanied by efficient management of limited public resources. Clearly, we must not lose sight of the cost-benefit analysis that constitutes education sanctioned by Article 6 of the same law which stipulates that "the School must train intellectually and morally balanced citizens, animated by a patriotic spirit and ready to participate in the economic, social and cultural development of their country". It therefore seems clear that repeating a year, whether pedagogically relevant or not, increases the cost of education and therefore differs over time, the profitability expected by the State. Controlling repeating a year therefore appears to be a lever on which the State can act not only for the effects that it would induce in the short term on public finances, but also in the long term on growth and development. Beyond the State, households with children repeating a year bear heavier financial burdens than those whose children have not repeated a year. These additional costs include not only direct education-related expenses, such as tuition fees and school supplies, but also indirect expenses, such as the time and energy spent by parents to support their children's additional learning. (Boly & Lange, 2022). It is therefore essential to take this correlation into account when formulating educational policies aimed at reducing educational costs for Beninese families.

The limits of current educational strategies to curb primary school repetition: Repeating is not an isolated phenomenon; it is the result of several causes. Reducing repetition should not, therefore, be part of a series of scattered actions. On the contrary, controlling repetition requires the combination of several integrated strategies. While it is true that controlling repetition can generate significant savings for

public finances, it is also important to take into consideration the costs that will be generated by the measures or strategies aimed at reducing repetition. It seems useful, in a logic of methodological clarity, to proceed with a synthesis of the different causes observed before proposing strategies aimed at resolving the observed problem.

Appropriate strategies proposed to curb the phenomenon: The strategies proposed here are those relating to the possible causes identified as contributing to the inefficiency of public education spending in primary education.

Establishment of a permanent framework for consultation and dialogue: The negative impact of school strikes on teaching activities on the one hand and academic results on the other hand leads us to recommend updating the framework for consultation with social partners in order to anticipate disagreements likely to hinder the smooth running of the school calendar and the learning process. Since teachers' demands are generally of a financial nature, it is therefore appropriate, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, to define a remuneration policy as part of a global policy to revalue the teaching profession.

Strengthening the inspection and educational support system: Inspection and educational support must be strengthened in order to better ensure the supervision and educational evaluation of teachers. Strengthening the inspection involves recruiting an additional number of inspectors and educational advisors, granting them the material and financial resources necessary to carry out their tasks. These measures will improve the teaching skills of teachers in running and managing classes. On the other hand, the managerial capacities of school principals must also be strengthened. Also, teacher absenteeism, which affects the quality of learning and influences repeat rates, must be controlled. School principals, supported by school districts, must be made responsible for the management and monitoring of teaching staff. The various actions recommended here must be part of a multilateral framework involving local authorities but also School Management Committees.

Strengthening the availability of textbooks: School textbooks are recognized as a determining factor in the acquisition of the required knowledge and skills. To this end, Bilhaj (2016, p.2) states that "the school textbook in its primary form of "book" remains the most used and most effective tool, as confirmed by Gerard (2009) who, in the introduction to his book entitled *Des manuels scolaires pour apprendre concevoir, évaluer, utiliser*, states that "the school textbook remains the most widespread and undoubtedly most effective learning support". It will then be necessary to provide schools with this important input in the quality of education. This allocation strategy will have to be accompanied by a study of the costs of manufacturing, transporting and distributing school textbooks.

Teacher training: Although the correlation between teacher qualifications and the levels of grade repetition recorded is low (-0.25), meaning that academic achievements are not very dependent on teacher qualifications, Amoussou (2014), the fact that there are still teachers without qualifications to this day should not be overlooked. Thus, it seems logical to provide this group of teachers with the necessary qualifications in order to make the Beninese education system more credible.

End-of-year catch-up: Almost all European countries, with the exception of three including France, offer students for whom a repeat diagnosis has been established the possibility of taking additional tests at the end of the school year (in particular written tests) or at the beginning of the following year in order to catch up on grades deemed too low by the teaching team. This practice makes it possible to drastically limit repeats. In general, the number of subjects that can be caught up is limited to one or two. The exceptions are Greece and Spain, where students can retake all subjects. In Luxembourg, additional homework is given to students to improve their assessment results. In Finland, the form that this catch-up take is decided at school level. It generally combines written tests and oral interviews with teachers. The use of catch-ups is often limited to certain non-qualifying levels.

Conditional promotion: Less widespread than end-of-year catch-ups, conditional promotion allows a student to move up to the next grade in return for following a catch-up program in the subject for which their results were considered insufficient. Germany, Spain, Austria and Poland have implemented this organization. For example, in Spain, students who have not received more than two grades considered insufficient progress in the following year but must follow a specific program in the failed subjects and take a final exam for these disciplines.

The possibility of conditional promotion is rarely implemented in diploma classes. This hybrid solution gives students a second chance and can help fill in the gaps accumulated in the failed subjects. But like catch-up exams, it does not provide a solution for students in difficulty. The effectiveness of this system actually depends on the quality of the catch-up courses, which are the real remedial mechanisms in these systems. Summer schools allow students with some weaknesses to fill in their gaps during the summer holidays and retake an exam in September in order to be promoted. The scientific literature measuring the effects of this type of intervention is unanimous on its average effects (Cooper *et al.* (2000); Borman and Dowling (2006); Kim and Quinn (2013)): summer schools are beneficial to students, especially when they take place early in school. In Italy, for example, this type of program has become mandatory since 2007 for students with poor results (Battistin and Schizzerotto, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This research has highlighted the negative impact of school repetition on education expenditure in Benin. The direct and indirect costs associated with repetition have been clearly demonstrated, thus highlighting the need to find solutions to mitigate these financial burdens. Ensuring the efficiency of public education spending by controlling the determinants of grade repetition is not a sinecure. On the contrary, it requires, on the one hand, additional efforts from the State in implementing new strategies in a difficult economic context and, on the other hand, from all stakeholders in the school system (the State, local authorities, the teaching community, teachers' unions, non-governmental organizations and parents) and an awareness of the annual loss of financial resources that grade repetition causes for public finances.

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