

# Impact of Governance System of Local School Boards on Pupils' Academic Performance in RD Congo Pilot Primary Schools

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**Abstract** In many developing countries such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the school reforms are often initiated and implemented though few of them have been evaluated. In the context where the parents are the main source of financing of school operations, the Local School Board (LSB) reform is not only important because of participating management of stakeholders in the school operations but also ensuring that school resources enhances pupils outcomes. It is also important to evaluate the effectiveness of this reform. This sequential exploratory mixed methods study aims to test possible effect of the governance system of LSB of 16 Pilot primary schools on 960 pupils' academic performance in the *National Test of End of Primary School* (TENAFEP) of 2008 and 2015 in DR Congo. The findings demonstrated that among the components of governance system of LSB, the competences of LSB have more impact on student academic performance, following by LSB leadership and control power and characteristics of LSB.

**Keywords** Pilot School, School Board, Local School Board, School governance, Governance system of School Board governance

## 1. Introduction

In the many educational systems where the school administration is implemented following democratic tenets, the school board is an important governance system of the school. The school board should operate for the purposes of improving student academic performances. In the analysis context of the relationship between school administration in democratic approaches and other school variables, the school board is consequence of a brief review of the centralization-decentralization cycle in U.S. educational history. School board as school-based management is the result of current school decentralization movement (Kathleen, 1992). According to Caldwell (2005) the school board is the decentralization of authority from the central government to the school level. In another words Malen; Ogawa and Kranz (1990b) state that School-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identify the school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of

decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained.

In developing countries such as the DRC the institution of Local School Board is consequence of "hybrid sources of contributions for school operations" between three stakeholders (Parents by different school fees paid annually or termly: 77%, State by annual educational budget: 19% and International Partners by humanitarian aids: 4%). Their financings provide materials (for construction of schools and classroom equipment), financial and human resources (expenditures of schools network offices operation, school district services operation and school employees remuneration) in national schools (DRC-RESEN, 2015).

From period between 1960 and 2007, schools in DRC were led by "authoritarian school administration" from colonial school system. School principals assisted by management staff managed and led schools without parents and pupils participation. The parents have claimed their management participation rights in school financial resources management. With introduction of democratic in DRC, the school governance reform initiated and implemented since 2008. It is the period of democratic school administration where school governance is exercised by School-based Management Committee (SBMC) (DRC-MEPS-INC, 2011; DRC-RESEN, 2015). In regard to the DRC context, the school management team works with

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the pressure from the directives, policies and administrative controls of State, the influences of school networks offices of religious organizations, the pressure of parents (requirement of teaching quality and pupils' performance in school and national examinations), the pressure of educational partners, of local community or environment (competitiveness between schools) and the pressure of industries (job market).

In several developing countries such as the DRC the school reforms are often initiated and implemented but few of them are evaluated. However, the effectiveness of reform must be evaluated in order to maintain them, adjust them or to proceed by way of a new reforms. The research estimate that in the context where the parents of pupils are principal financing source for school operations, the LSB reform is important as it ushers in participatory management or governance of school resources. It is also extremely important to evaluate the effectiveness of this reform. The longitudinal statistics indicate that the completion rate is either stagnant or declining (45 and 65%) during the period under LSB reform (2007 and 2016). But some schools differ significantly through their performance (80 or 100%) in TENAFEP. Most of these are mainly Pilot Primary Schools of Bandundu; Kongo Central and Kinshasa provinces (DRC-RESEN, 2015).

The purpose of this sequential exploratory mixed methods study is to test possible effects of the governance system of LSB on pupils' academic performance in TENAFEP from 2008 and 2015. It also identifies and explains the indicators of LSB which have possible relation with pupils' academic performance of Pilot Primary Schools. This study will answer the following questions:

What components of governance system of LSB affect positively the pupils' academic performances? What are the possible variations of the pupils' scores in TENAFEP between the period before and under LSB reform? How do the components of the governance system of LSB explain these variations? How do the components of the governance system of LSB affect pupils' academic achievements?

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

In the theoretical Framework, the study defines the terms school board, local school board and the Governance system. The study further describes the theoretical models of LSB.

### Pilot School in DRC

In the context of the DRC educational system, the Pilot Schools are officially accepted as excellent schools. They are also called "experimental or application schools". They are all public schools and receive state financing irregularly for their operations. The Pilot Schools are classified among the best schools. They are national standards in regard to their constancy of school performance competitiveness to internal school and national examinations. They have higher quality of teaching; the best organizational environments, the sustainable infrastructure and pedagogical equipment. They

respect national school laws and policies and implement educational reforms.

These schools are often used by the technical services of the Ministry of Education in experimentation of teaching innovations and educational reforms. In line with pilot schools outcomes (in school and national school examinations and school management inspection), Luboya (2016) classified: (i) Pilot Schools that have achieved high or excellent performance (from 100 to 81%); (ii) Pilot Schools that have achieved ordinary or normal or satisfactory or acceptable performance (from 80 to 70%) and (iii) Pilot Schools that have achieved low performance (below to 69%).

### From School Board to Local School Board

The school board consists of delegated powers and duties by the state for the purposes of ensuring quality in school operations and management. Despite the prerogatives of school boards are limited by the State, school boards have assumed significant decision-making and school accountability. In USA, some States leave curriculum development and student policy under the responsibility of the school board, but others, by law, impose specific requirements (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2009; 2012). In general, the school board must conform to the state regulations. It works to meet the State's standards as well as conforms to the federal guidelines in USA. Methods of selecting board members are prescribed by the state law. Thus, two basic methods are considered: election and appointment. Election is thought to make for greater accountability to the public, but some scholars argue that appointment leads to greater competence and less politics. Election is the most common practice. Hess (2002) reported that of the approximately 100,000 school board members in USA, 90 percent of them are elected and 10 percent are appointed. Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) stated that "in many European countries (OECD), 50% of school boards members are elected". In USA or others developed countries school board is governance system of school district. In many African countries such as in DRC, the LSB is a local governance body of school. Only the teachers, parents and student representatives are elected. The school management committee is appointed by the school law. LSB has been in charge of school resources management and is assuring the direct and indirect control of school operation. Data from a survey conducted in 2011 and 2012 highlighted the presence of a LSB (as School-based Management Committee) in 96% of schools. In schools where a LSB existed, 83% of those had approved the budget (DRC-RESEN, 2014).

### Governance System of Local School Boards

According to the any sector or context, the term governance has different meanings. Kokouvi (2012) stated that "the school governance is referred to a system of decentralized management where the joint regulation takes seat between the structures of the various levels, including national, provincial and the local". It, therefore, allows a

balance between the effectiveness and participation in management system. School governance system allows for the sharing of power and accountability of all local school actors involved. It directs the school in accordance with the ethics of management, participation of the community, to equity and the transparency, to innovation as well as sustainable development (Lalancette, 2014).

The school governance makes possible the achievement of school goals as a basis of common mission related to the system of education in order to meet the needs of the pupils according to the specifics of the school environment. Thus, governance system of School board is that which the school supports on the evaluation, encourages the innovation, transparency, democratic participation of stakeholders, and increases the performance of the schools and its students. It supposes that the various and motivated actors, put themselves in link in a collective project in school. In this perspective, the effectiveness of governance system of LSB is relating to the capacity of initiative of all school actors, to their competences and the effective attitude which they have in definition and in achievement of their objectives (Bouvier, 2007; Kokouvi, 2012; Lachmann, 2001).

### **Theoretical Model of LSB Governance System**

Most of school board reforms in many countries are initiated in order to improve the effectiveness of school through students' performance. Smyth (2005) reported that two-thirds of school board members indicate that school board made either a "moderate" contribution to supporting and caring of the students and to providing relevant and challenging learning. Indeed, the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools manage available resources (Jossey-Bass, 1994). It has also been shown that the capacity of school boards to improve teaching and learning is strongly mediated or facilitated. This impact is influenced through the quality of the leadership provided by the school principal (Ford 2013; Murphy & Beck, 1995). The study of governance system of LSB in the African context should analyze the characteristics of LSB, leadership and control power of LSB and competences of LSB.

### **Characteristics of LSBs**

The conclusion of Deckman (2007) supported the gender issues of school board. It finds the basic differences in the arguments men and women engage in as school board members. It is, by the way, important to emphasize that the presence of independent external members is particularly important, because they are primarily guided by the protection of the interests of the recipients. In theory, it is possible to distinguish two groups from the board school members: (i) the dependent internal members. These are functional or operational persons in charge of the school, regarded as affiliated with the school leaders and (ii) in addition, the independent external members. These affiliated members are, either in business connection with the school, or of the leaders of committees of parents who sit in the council (Baysinger and Butler, 1985; Fama and Jensen,

1983). Hess (2002) estimated that the average school board has five to eight members in USA. They are, for the most part, lay people who have no experience as professional educators. In the studies of Pont *et al.*, (2008), the school boards of the many European countries are generally composed of the parents of pupils, the school professionals (school principal and teacher) possibly the pupils, the representatives of the community and sometimes the representatives of public authorities.

In most of the African countries, generally, the LSB is composed of the parents, teaching staff, the school management committee (school principal and deputy school principal) and the representatives of the local community. In Senegal for example, the LSB is composed of two pupils' representatives, two parents of pupils, the teachers, and the principal who hold the position as the secretariat and finally the chief of district who takes the presidency of the council (Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2006).

In DR. Congo, the LSB (SBMC) is composed of the school director, the assistant school director, a teachers' representative, three representatives of parents (including the president of parent committee and at least one woman) and one representative of the students (with no voting right). Even in the normal context, the school director also tends to dominate the deliberations of the LSB, whether due to his connection to the system or simply by being typically more educated than his peers (DRC-MEPS-INC, 2011). This SBMC is a governance body which is assumed the control of school resources management and school operation.

### **Leadership and Control Power of LSBs**

The more specific tasks of board members relate to their day-to-day work of serving on the local government board. This includes meeting with constituents, attending board meetings and committee meetings, and voting on district policies. Hill (2004) listed a multitude of oversight tasks of school boards. It is about: (i) learning conditions or school infrastructures; (ii) professional support to school staff and learning guide to pupils; (iii) adaptation of curriculum; (iv) transportation of pupils; (v) school attendance; resolution of conflicts (vi); implementation of state and federal curriculum (vii); federal civil rights laws and vendor contracts (viii)".

In addition, Leithwood and Menzies, (1998) estimate that four models would be sufficient to define who is invested with decision-making power in any school board reform: (i) Administrative Control (devolves authority to the school principal); (ii) Professional Control (devolves the main decision-making authority to teachers), (iii) Community Control (devolves their main decision-making authority to parents or the community) and (iv) Balanced Control SBM (balances decision-making authority between parents and teachers).

Ranson; Arnott; McKeown; Martin and P. Smith (2005b) study's also devoted to the governance of school Boards in the United Kingdom, listed four models distinct from governance, according to their finality and their responsibilities, the power struggle between principal and

the school board, and professional level which the school board show in their deliberations and their decision-making. They describe: (i) the governance as an enclosure of deliberation; (ii) the governance as a resonance chamber of consultation; (iii) the governance as an executive committee and (iv) the Governance as a management. In DRC, leadership mode during LSB meeting is administrative control regarding to legal dispositions. By regulation the school director is the president of LSB while the teachers' representative is its secretary. There is also a treasurer named among the LSB members. In absence case, he is replaced by Deputy School Principal or the Supernumerary. In absence case, the representatives of the parents and the representatives of the teachers are replaced by their respective assistants (DRC-MEPS-INC, 2011, articles 3, 4, 5 and 6).

In fact, the missions assigned to school boards are dependent to each country, geographical zone, and a continent. In 1959, Eliot states that school board has for role to hire and support a competent professional as superintendent, defend the schools against public criticism, and persuade the people to open their pocketbooks (Eliot, 1959).

Pont et al, (2008) indicated that in many European countries, the school governance bodies are setting in place. One is a democratic mode of participatory management and introduces the links between school and community. Generally, these school boards have four missions: (i) to mobilize parents of pupils, communities, teacher-staff and other partners for the development of education; (ii) to develop and implement the planning activities related to improvement of education access, teaching quality and school management; (iii) to control activities of teaching, financial, patrimonial and socio-cultural management of school and (iv) to be used as body of prevention, mediation and regulation of the conflicts between the various actors of school.

Several dimensions are consisted of responsibilities of a governing board. It is about mission, policy, administration, management and control of LSB activities.

The first three dimensions are the responsibility of a governing board. Ford, (2013, p.49) estimates that "the fourth dimension, management, is influenced by the governing board but is not their direct responsibility". The control of school operations is not only depending of LSB total responsibility. It is influenced also by the educational inspectors' missions. Accordingly, governance can be described as the process by which a governing board determines an organization's mission, policies, and administration activities (Smoley, 1999). The control has the most capital dimension. In theory, various control mechanisms limit the opportunist behavior of the leaders (Shleifer & Vishny, 1997).

In particular, the LSB as a legal authority charged to ratify and control the decisions of the School leaders, plays a significant role in the resolution of these conflicts of interests (Fama and Jensen, 1983). It constitutes an internal

governance mechanism, whose effectiveness is probably not without incidence on the creation of value and, consequently, on the satisfaction of the recipients. Ford (2013) divides more specific school board activities into three categories: (i) the activities which are directly controlled; (ii) the activities that are indirectly controlled (iii) and those which are not controlled.

In many African countries such as Mali and Senegal, the research on the partnership school-parents show that the role of LSB consists of participation in school budget development, of school operation, of dimension of school infrastructure maintenance, of the pupils and the teachers recruitment (Lugaz & De Grauwe, 2006).

Ranson; Farrell; Peim and Smith (2005a) stated that the roles and mission of school boards are such as the reduction of the accounts, giving advices, orientations, support or mediation, the renouncement or the adversity, the club of school supporters, sponsors or partnership. In DR Congo, The responsibilities of LSB (SBMC) include providing guidance and control relative to school operations, monitoring pedagogical activities, assessing the management of students' disciplinary files and active engagement in financial and infrastructure management. The LSB prepares and approves the school budget in consultation with the Parent Committee. It is specifically responsible for approving the financial reports of the school, that need to include a statement of school fees, grants received and other financial support the school benefits from. It also has the role to directly control school operations; to follow the teaching activities in the school and classroom; to examine the framing and the disciplinary files relating to the pupils and to imply themselves actively with the school financial management and school infrastructures (RDC-MEPS-INC, 2011).

In DRC, despite the control made by LSB members during meeting, the General Assembly of parent committee designates a "couple or sponsoring parent of class or school". It is appointed among the men and women of proven morality or integrity. The couple parent is chosen among willing parents (volunteers). They visit academic activities in classroom or school. They are under the supervision of school principal, the teachers and the parents Committee. The activity of the parent couple consists of: (i) Ensuring the supervision of learning tasks of pupils at school and home; and (ii) help the student to understand and adopt the school mentality, the emulation, the competitiveness and the culture of excellence; Respect for the family, hygiene of the school environment, respect in using of school infrastructure and equipment (importance of teaching materials in training) and the relationship between students in school (DRC-MINESP, 2011).

In DR Congo, the parents are the main source of school financing about 77% (DRC-RESEN, 2015). The LSB is extremely important. It allows the parents to control their school financing and teaching quality. This control of school operation by parents is a source of many conflict cases between school principal and committee of parents in DRC.

In his study in DRC, Mrsic - Garac, (2010) also conclude that “the financial resources’ management constitutes one of the main problems of LSB and sources of conflicts between the schools boards’ members especially in the countries where the parents contribute financially to the schooling of their children”. The schools principals often have a tendency of monopolizing all powers of LSB. Some of them oppose any sharing responsibilities with parents or LSB members. Sometime they limit or bloc the LSB controls power. This misconduct of school principals regarding to LSB legal missions causes conflicts between school management committee and local community. In DRC, some Chiefs of villages or president of parents committee isolated from management of school resources mobilize their population to against the school principal which they describe as “robber or thief”, “usurper” and “dictator” (Flinspach and Ryan, 1992; O’Donoghue and Dimmock, 1996; Mrsic - Garac, 2010; Dutercq, 2001).

### Competences of LSBs

Some researches describe in detail the eight essential components of LSB governance. It is about vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate, collaboration, community engagement and continuous improvement of National School Boards Association of US. These keys have the possible relation with student academic performance or achievement (Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2000; Ford, 2012).

The studies conducted in Ontario and Alberta provides a rich description of the nine characteristics of school board of trustees performing. It is about (1) a shared mission, vision and objectives based on raised expectations of the profile of an educated person; (2) a coherent teaching orientation; (3) the use of conscious and systematic data coming from multiple sources to direct the decisions; (4) organizational

processes centered on the improvement of the pupils learning (5); the offered occasions of learning of school employees and all members of the school board; (6) the budgets, the structures, the policies and the procedures staff use of the times harmonized with the mission, the vision and the objectives of the school board; (7) a comprehensive approach as regards to development of the leadership; (8) an approach of school board governance centered on the school policies; (9) productive working relations with school staff and stakeholders (Leithwood, 2010; Bédard and Mombourquette, 2013).

### Towards the construction of a theoretical LSB Model

Ford (2013, p.56) notes that school boards can help in establishing the processes that create conditions for productive change, which in turn impact the teaching and learning environment throughout the school district, and, in turn, impact the learning of students in schools. In other words, the way in which school boards govern can impact student outcomes. Ford (2013, p.57) illustrates a model of the linkages between school board governance and academic performance. The model of Ford consists of five components, notably (i) background of boards’ members, (ii) black box of governance, (iii) zones of discretion, (iv) hygienic factors and (v) academic outcomes. Several studies support these five components (Marschall, 2005; Deckman, 2007; Delagardele, 2008; Hess and Meeks, 2010). This model used to evaluate the governance system of School districts boards in USA. Based on RDC legal framework of LSB and referring to the theoretical model of Ford (2012), we adapted one reference model of governance system LSB. One is consisted of three components: (i) Characteristics of members and LSB, (ii) LSB Leadership and control power and (iii) LSB competences. This model (figure 1) supposes three components of LSB impact one outcomes of students.

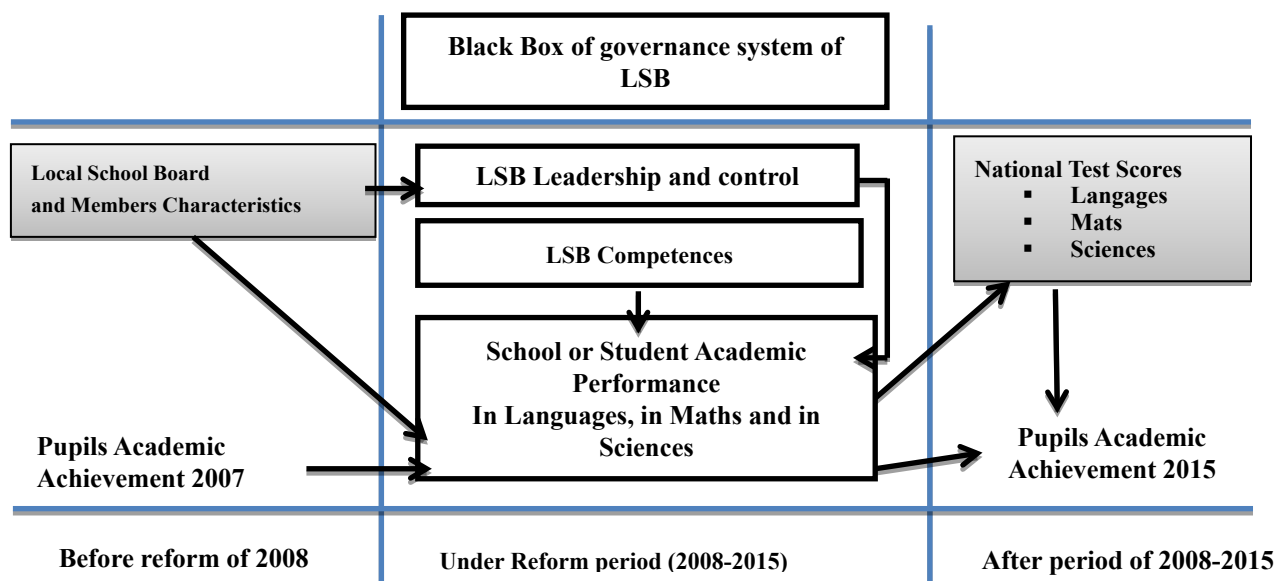


Figure 1. The Local school boards model

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design

This study is classified in epistemological paradigm positivism. Referring to the research classification system in science of the education (Ellis and Fouts, 1993; Grossen, 1998a; Grossen, 1998b), this study is classified among the second level studies (testing of the theoretical model). The study used a sequential exploratory mixed methods design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data by survey method, analyzes them separately and to interpret them in order to validate our theoretical model (Figure 1). Here, the structure of research designs which is used in this study.

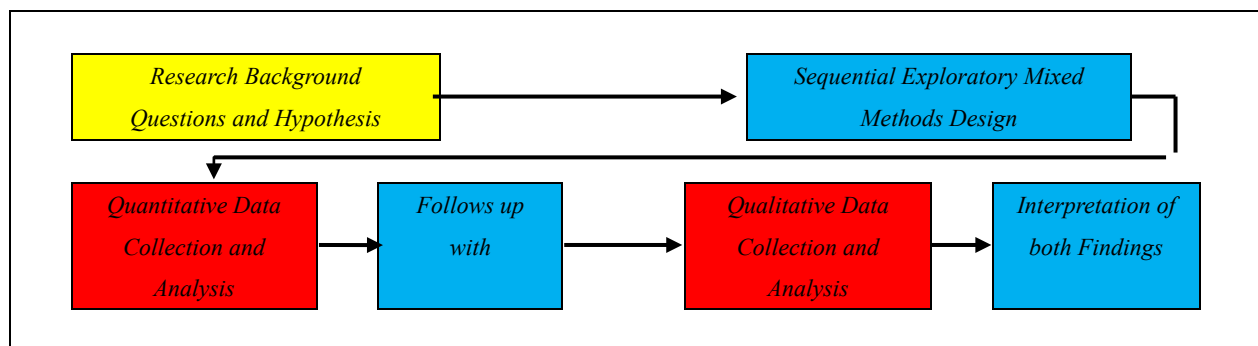
#### Demographic characteristic of participants

The population sample of this study consists of the public pilot schools whose teaching inspectors advised the study according to the results and annual reports of their inspections. The research used non-probability sampling taking into account the nature of this study. From the annual reports of inspection of the schools, the study, in the first level, extracted a sample from judgmental and purposeful intention. In the second level, the study exploited the reports of school boards of these schools in order to constitute a typical random sampling. It is about 224 participants from the LSB of the 16 pilot primary schools in the three provinces of the DRC (Kinshasa, Bandundu and

Kongo-Central). For each primary school, we sampled a School principal, a Deputy School principal, a Superintendent, six teachers, and five parent's members of the parents committee.

Concerning the demographic characteristics (figure 3), the school boards are composed by the school Principals (7.1%), Deputy School Principals (7.1%), Superintendents (7.1%), Teachers (43%) and Parents (35.7%). There is substantive difference between LSB members about gender: males (65.6%) and females (34.4%). The Age mean of members is about 44.85 old (with 8,792 SD).

The LSB members are working in several professions. (65.6% of members are working in Education sector; 7.6% are Farmers (agricultures); 6.7% work in Government/Public administration; 5.8% relatively in the Professional Services and Transportation (personnel or companies); 4.9% are working in the Business/Commerce activities and 3.6% in the Construction sector. The average of LSB members about length of service is 3-4 years with mean of 3.55. About educational level, 52.2% of LSB members have High School Diploma (essentially the teachers and school principals). The Under Graduate (20.5%); Bachelor's Degree (18.3%) and 4.5% are relatively to LSB members (parents) who have the Less than High School and Advanced Degree (school principal and parents).



Source: Hesse-Biber and Nagy (2010) and Creswell (2014) adapted by authors

Figure 2. Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Design

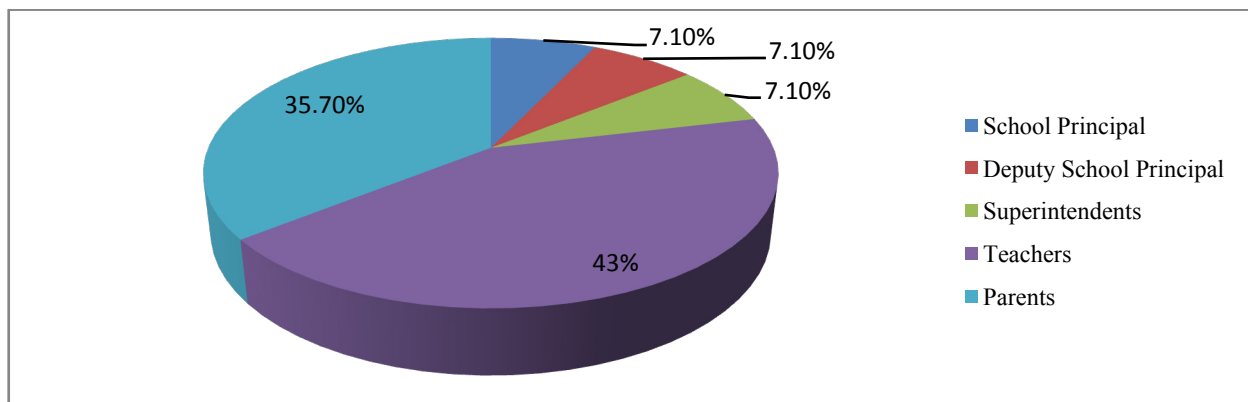


Figure 3. LSB Members functions

### Instruments of Data Collection and Variables

Two types of data were collected. The quantitative data is primary and was used to test our theoretical model of governance system of LSB (Figure 2).

The qualitative data is used in the service of the quantitative in that it "tests out" ideas generated from the quantitative component. The findings are compared to the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other (Hesse-Biber and Nagy 2010; Creswell J.W, 2012 and 2014).

#### *Quantitative data*

The independent variables were the practices of the LSB. We considered the LSB Characteristics such as the control of knowledge of the legal dispositions, missions, roles and talks of members of the boards of trustees; work conditions, frequencies of meetings, the composition of advices, matters treated. The LSB Leadership and Power Control are consisted of leadership mode, types of control and problems and the LSB Competences with its nine key-works). To start from these selected variables and theoretical model, we adapted the questionnaire of Ford (2013) and Traoré (2015). The questionnaire used in this study refers to two scales. It is the ordinal scale of Likert in five points (Strong agreement, Agreement, Neutral, Disagreement, Strong disagreement) and the binary scale (Yes or No). Of which here the extract of some items on the modes of the governance of the local school boards:

"My school board members frequently and consistently engage in board development activities.

My school board has adopted a performance budgeting process.

My school board sets and tweaks school academic standards in response to student needs".

To check the validity and fidelity of the questionnaire, the first analysis related to the correlations between items pertaining to each one of these dependent variables. It indicates that the items (questions) of all the variables selected of our questionnaire comprise satisfactory levels of homogeneity. Because, the index of internal coherence relating to alpha of Cronbach varies for the under-scales between .72 and .80, with an average equalizes to .80, and reaches .89 for the total factor. It comes out from the scale comprising an adequate temporal stability, since the correlation test-retest goes from .70 to .80 for the under-scales, with an average of .77, and is of .83 for the total factor. The second analysis shows a fidelity slightly lower for the items of dimension knowledge of legal missions (Alpha = 0.67; Mean = 4, 12; OR = 0, 59). Lastly, concerning dimension matters treated at the meeting time of LSB, the fidelity of the items is low (Alpha = 0.68; Mean = 6, 25; OR = 0, 60). The overall results show that the questionnaire is proven to be reliable and consistency.

The dependent variables selected are the scores obtained by the 960 pupils finalists of the schools sampled in TENAFEP in 2008 and 2015. The results exploited are those

obtained by pupils in the national examinations before the deliberations in languages, in mathematics and in sciences.

#### *Qualitative data*

The study referred to the internal documents such as official reports resulting from meetings of LSBs, the reports of the open and end of year school activity reports and other types of correspondences dispatched with under-educational raising the problems of LSBs. The researchers also interviewed the LSB members available. With regard to the data collection techniques during these talks, the researchers proceeded, on the one hand, by taking notes, on the other hand, by recording to an already prefabricated grid. Although it is difficult to determine the number of participants, the researchers worked with the principle of saturation which requires that groups be made up until the discussions bring nothing again compared to the previous interview. In this study, three types of saturation were observed as recommended by Pires (1997) and De Sardan, (2008). The first, of empirical type, is that by which the researchers judged that the last documents, interviews or observations do not bring any more sufficiently new or different data related to the governance system of LSB. The second, of a theoretical nature, asserted successive analyses and document retrievals, the data do not add any new property to the conceptual and theoretical framework already built; the researchers judged the concepts and theories were saturated. The third and the last, it is the redundancy or repetition of information and lack of innovation in the points of view of the local school boards members (from 20 to 35 participants with same information).

#### *Procedure of Data Collection, Management and Analysis*

The questionnaires were duplicated, codified and distributed to the place in the schools. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to 224 LSB members of 16 primary Pilot Schools. The operation of administration took approximately three months, more precisely from September 02<sup>nd</sup> to October 06<sup>th</sup>, 2016 for the first phase of pre-investigation then from October 15<sup>th</sup> to December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 for the investigation phase. The researchers meet the representatives of committees of parents in schools by appointments. The quantitative data were managed and analyzed by Using Statistical IBM SPSS (Version 22). The researchers proceeded to the Cronbach's alpha, the ANOVA and Test Student (for 960 pupils' academic performance of 16 primary schools), Correlation, analysis of multiple components of school board governance, and OLS regression (logistics and binary). The alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05 ( $p < .05$  or 5%) was retained.

#### *Ethnic and Confidential issues of Study*

Several exchanges were made with the competent authorities around the month of July 2016. Then many official documents were acquired from the Ministry of Primary education and administration office of educational provinces and under provinces. With the researchers' request, the under-provincial chiefs put to the researchers in liaison

with school principal of 16 primary schools. The researchers took measures of ethics aiming at privileging the climate of trust between the participants. The researchers putted the participants in confidence; we guaranteed the anonymity of them in the administration of questionnaire, during the interviews and in data analysis and processing. All the participants had freedom of choice to take part into the investigation.

## 4. Results

After survey, management and analyses of data, the results are presented according to our research questions as follows:

### Quantitative explanation of relationship between governance system of LSB and Pupils Academic Performance

*What components of governance system of LSB affect positively the pupils' academic performances?*

The table 1 shows the relationship between LSB Characteristic and pupils' academic performance.

In exception of two LSB Characteristics (affectation mode

and priority activities), most of LSB characteristics retained are associated positively with the pupils' performances. They are working conditions (.260); legal documents available (.284); legal Missions knowledgeable (.167); participation mode (.270); participation Size (.189); ordinary Meeting (.296); extraordinary meeting (.194) and meeting duration (.140).

The table 2 shows the relationship between LSB leadership and control power and pupils' academic performance.

As demonstrated in table 2, four on eight variables of LSB leadership and control power do not have correlation with the pupils' performances. Among them, we have Meeting Leadership Mode (.094), Indirect Control Activities (-.059) and Non Control Activities (-.006). Secondly, there are four indicators which are associated significantly and positively with the pupils' academic performances notably Decision-Making Procedure (.150), Control Activities Frequencies (.279), Direct Control Activities (.153) and Problem types (.146).

The table 3 shows the relationship between LSB competences and pupils' academic performance.

**Table 1.** Relationship between LSB Characteristic and pupils' academic performance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pupils outcomes in TENAFEP	1										
Affectation Mode	-.006	1									
Working Conditions	.260**	.321**	1								
Legal documents available	.284**	.324**	.744**	1							
Legal Missions knowledgeable	.167*	.299**	.794**	.658**	1						
Participation Mode	.270**	.117	.375**	.331**	.387**	1					
Participation Size	.189**	.063	.288**	.103	.220**	.258**	1				
Ordinary Meeting	.296**	.249**	.530**	.355**	.451**	.500**	.479**	1			
Extraordinary Meeting	.194**	.154*	.306**	.213**	.250**	.195**	.407**	.541**	1		
Meeting Duration	.140*	.180**	.168*	.139*	.148*	.129	.277**	.282*	.838**	1	
Priority activities	-.058	.077	.019	.051	.037	-.030	-.006	.017	.052	.024	1

\* $p \leq 0.05$  and \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

**Table 2.** Relationship between LSB leadership and control power and pupils academic performance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Pupils outcomes in TENAFEP	1								
Meeting Leadership Mode	.094	1							
Decision-Making Procedure	.150*	-.029	1						
Control Activities Frequencies	.279**	.008	.093	1					
Direct Control Activities	-.153*	.075	.076	.055	1				
Indirect Control Activities	-.059	.036	.114	.064	.625**	1			
Non Control Activities	-.006	.158*	.085	.160*	.672**	.769**	1		
Problem types	.146*	-.061	.067	-.023	-.039	-.031	-.063	1	
Problem Frequencies	.015	-.014	.052	.245**	.068	-.042	.033	-.110	1

\* $p \leq 0.05$  and \*\* $p \leq 0.01$



**Table 3.** Relationship between LSB competences and pupils' academic performance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pupils outcomes in TENAFEP	1									
LSB Vision	-.018	1								
LSB Standards	.451*	-.094	1							
LSB Continuous Improvement	-.120,	1.000**	-.094	1						
LSB Accountability	.292*	.007	.827**	.007	1					
LSB Alignment	.025	1.000**	-.094	1.000**	.007	1				
LSB Climate	.370**	-.054	.886**	-.054	.898**	-.054	1			
LSB Collaboration	.266*	-.040	.837**	-.040	.868**	-.040	.962**	1		
LSB Assessment	.245*	-.106	.450**	-.106	.459**	-.106	.563**	.524*	1	
LSB Engagement	.314**	-.094	1.000**	-.094	.827**	-.094	.886**	.837**	.450**	1

\* $p \leq 0.05$  and \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ 

Firstly, three of nine Key-works do not have positive correlation with the pupils' performances. It is about Vision (-.018), Continuous improvement (-.018) and Alignment (.025). Secondly, there are significant and positive relations between the pupils' performances and LSB competences notably Standards (.451), Accountability (.292), Climate (.370); Collaboration (.266), Assessment (.245) and the Engagement (.314).

#### Variation of the pupils' scores in national examinations during the period before and under LSB reform

*What are the possible variations of the pupils' scores in TENAFEP between the period before and under LSB reform?*

Table 4 shows that the general means of success scores of 960 pupils of the 16 schools in TENAFEP passed relatively from 38.64 (in languages), 52.80 (in mathematics) and 62.80 (in sciences) before period of LSB reform to 53.36, 60.43 and 72.74 respectively after or under the period implementation of reform. The standard deviation indicates more discrepancy between the results of period before and under school governance reform. A positive and strongly

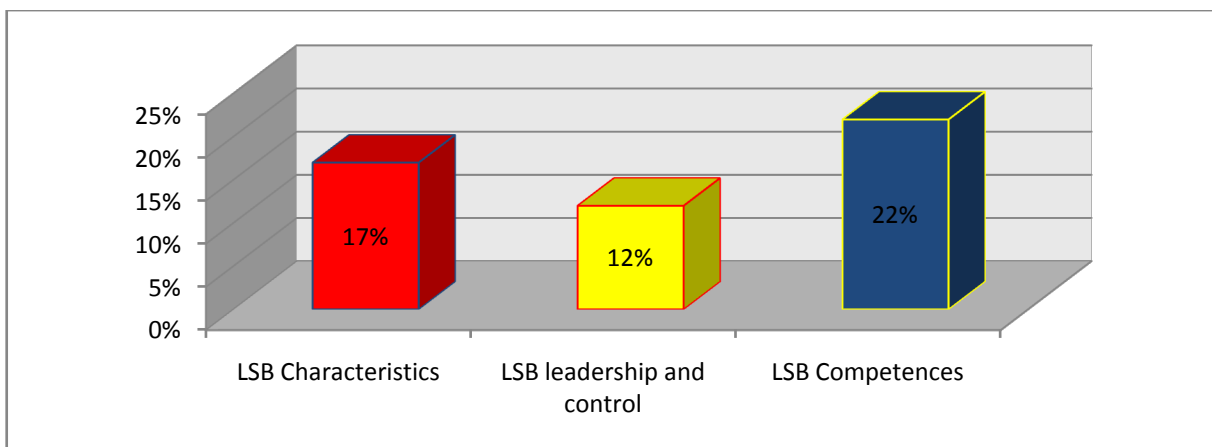
high correlation between two periods results, 2008 and 2015 (.965 in languages, .979 in mathematics and .999 in sciences) and a significant correlation then that  $p=0.0001$  lower than 0.05 threshold of reference. In other words, more the pilot schools implement the LSB reform; more of their pupils significantly improve their results in languages, mathematics and sciences. The probability that the results of the pupils in languages, mathematics and sciences remain constant between two periods is of less than .0001. It, therefore, seems that the pupils of the 16 pilot schools succeed with higher academic performance significantly after and during implementation of LSB reform.

*How do the components of the governance system of LSB explain these variations?*

The analysis of three components of governance system of LSB (in line with the pupils score in TENAFEP in two periods: 2007 and 2015) shows the variation of academic achievement of students (figure 4). The component LSB Characteristics increases about 17% of variation of pupils' academic performance; LSB leadership and control, 12% of variation and LSB Competences 22 % of variation (figure 4).

**Table 4.** Global evaluation of the schools performances evolution between the period before and under LSB reform

	Différences appariées					Correl.	t	ddl	Sig.
	Mean	SD	OR	IR (95 %)					
				Infer.	Sup.				
<b>Scores Languages</b>	(14.722)	(4.554)	(0.147)						
2008	38.64	17.209	0.555	14.433	15.010	0.965	100.172	959	0.0001
2015	53.36	17.215	0.556			(0.0001)			
<b>Scores Mathematics</b>	(7.634)	(3.546)	(0.114)						
2008	52.80	17.35417.2	0.560	7.410	7.859	0.979	66.712	959	0.0001
2015	60.43	79	0.558			(0.0001)			
<b>Scores Sciences</b>	(9.938)	(0.786)	(0.025)						
2008	62.80	17.35417.3	0.560	9.888	9.987	0.999	391,805	959	0.0001
2015	72.74	31	0.559			(0.0001)			



**Figure 4.** LSB Governance and variation of pupils' academic performance

**Table 5.** Local School Governance estimates Pupils' Academic Performance

Independent Variables	<i>b (CI)</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p-value</i>
<b>LSB Characteristics (17% of variation)</b>				
Availability of LSB Legal documents	.259 (.121 - .398)	.070	.248	.000**
Working Conditions during LSB Meeting	.177 (.047- .306)	.066	.257	.008**
Knowledgeable of the LSB Legal Missions	.173 (.076 - .269)	.049	.270	.001**
LSB Ordinary Meeting	.303 (.277 - .328)	.013	.844	.000**
LSB Extraordinary Meeting	.156 (.113 - .199)	.022	.434	.000**
LSB Meeting Duration	.269 (.200 - .339)	.035	.456	.000**
LSB Participation Mode	.229 (.181 - .277)	.024	.535	.000**
Participation Size of LSB Meetings	.483 (.368 - .599)	.059	.484	.000**
<b>LSB leadership and control (12% of variation)</b>				
LSB Decision-Making	.073 (.011 - .135)	.031	.155	.021*
LSB control Activities	.370 (.313 - .427)	.029	.649	.000**
LSB Direct Control of Activities	.330 (.199 - .461)	.067	.316	.000**
LSB Problems	-.268 (-.338 - .198)	.036	-.451	.000**
<b>LSB Competences (22 % of variation)</b>				
Assessment	.106 (.050 - .161)	.028	.245	.000**
Standards	.028 (.154 - .263)	.031	.461	.005**
Accountability	.129 (.073, .184)	.028	.292	.000**
Climate	.208 (.154, .263)	.028	.451	.003**
Collaboration	.118 (.061, .175)	.029	.266	.000**
Engagement	.134 (.081, .188)	.027	.314	.000**

OLS Regression Predicting School or pupils' academic performance (using three components of LSB and Pupils Scores in TENAFEP respectively as independent and dependent variables).

\* $p \leq 0.05$  and \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

Table 5 shows the OLS regression results predicting of pupils' performance in TENAFEP. Firstly, none of the LSB member's demographic characteristic has a positive relationship with two group's school performance. Secondly, LSB Characteristics predict the pupils' outcomes. Thirdly, six one nine LSB competences indicators predict the pupils academic performance. Otherwise, the some variables of governance system LSB predict the school outcomes.

#### Qualitative explanation of the relationship between governance system of LSB and Pupils Academic Performance

*How do the components of the governance system of LSB affect pupils' academic achievements?*

In the majority of the participants interviewed (28 participants, 80%) attested the relation between LSB and

teacher practices in their schools. According to their experiences about LBS characteristics, leadership and control power, they (anonymity) pointed out some practices related to teachers motivation factors. They testified that: *"The LSB voted an additional salary budget allocation to the teachers whose pupils are more successful in the national tests... All the teachers are motivated and work hard in order to improve the pupils' performance...they work to win additional salaries and bonus..."* In the majority, the teachers and parents (anonymity) declared that: *"Because of pressure and requirements of parents and teaching inspectors, most of the school principals are rigorous in their schools... make regular the classes visits. He regularly controls the teachers and the pupils performances and convenes frequent meeting with the parents at the school to solve the leaning difficulties of the pupils... he insists more on academic success"*. In the same way, most of participants (87%) affirm that *"higher performance of pupil in national examinations is result of reel sacrifices of commitment of parent committee (...) frequent presence of couple parent in school influence teacher and school principal practices and put the pressure to them in order to improve teaching quantity and quality, monitoring of pupils daring classroom and homework"*. This declaration confirmed relation Between LSB and Student Academic Achievement. In additional, majority of LSB members interviewed (78.6%) justified the higher performance of their schools or pupils. Some of them (anonymity) mention that: *"during LSB meeting or anytime when the parents come to school, they put too much pressure to school principals and require the success of each pupil in school or national examinations ... our school engages all school employees (teachers and school management staff) in the objective of quantity and quality of the pupils' success to examinations (test) in school and the national level, State level..."*

The LSB members interviewed pointed out some problems of LSB meeting, notably the conflict of financial control (transparency); the conflict of power, responsibility and authority (Usurpation by school principal or president of parent committee); interpersonal conflict and Intergroup (interest) and mobilization of resources and lack training schools Boards Members. 10 participants of 2 LSB declared that *"We were confronted to financial and power conflict with last School principal....Since we have had the new school principal, the financial conflict and power finished... we work all to harmonizes or make school climate better for improving student leaning conditions. We work all for the wellness or wellbeing of our pupils at the school... these last year's our pupils improved their outcomes at the national tests"*, remarks collected by some teachers (anonymity) members of LSB. These situations are common challenges of the governance system of school boards in around world (Flinspach and Ryan, 1992; O'Donoghue and Dimmock, 1996; Mrsic - Garac, 2010; Dutercq, 2001).

In majority (81.7%), the participants of affirmed the relation between LSB governance and School Climate (bad

or good). In this subject, certain LSB members, for example, say that bad climate of LSB meeting *"as conflicts prevent us from reflecting on what we have to solve (...). We leave true problems of the school and learning of children (...) sometimes we focus with the financial conflict and the other problems than the teaching or pedagogy affair and the academic success of our children"*, declared by LSB members. Another LSB member (anonymity) has declares that: *"During the LSB, our school makes the working conditions better. We work in the very good condition (...) the meeting rooms aired well and equipped bales of papers, pens and a report or official reports of the pass meetings are given to the members... during the working sessions, school principals welcome of the parents and explain kindly the school problem and difficulties..."* This means that LBS has contributed to higher performance and good working conditions. The members also are working in the good conditions.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### Research findings compared to other studies

In RDC, many school reforms are often implemented but the educational system authorities do not evaluate the effectiveness of these reforms. However, the effectiveness of reforms must be evaluated in order to maintain them, adjust them or to initiate a new reform. This study's main objective is to evaluate school governance reform (LSB) in DRC. In the context where the parents are main source of funding for school operations, study estimates that LSB reform is important because of participating management of stakeholders in school operation and its resources in order to improve pupils' outcomes. It is also extremely important to evaluate the effectiveness of this reform.

Three components of LSB can explain the higher performance of pilot schools and its pupils (80-100%) in TENAFEP. About the first component, none LSB characteristic of members impact on pupils outcomes. Ford (2013) state that there is very limited evidence about a general relationship between demographics characteristic or backgrounds of district school board members and students outcomes. For example, a connection between gender and higher level outcomes identified in his previous study in Wisconsin, does not appear in Wisconsin study results and in five other states in USA. The composition of LSB in DRC consisted of the members with several occupations. As Deckman (2007) state, in DRC LSB, there are also Women and men. Pont *et al.*, (2008, p.97) state many European school boards are generally composed of the parents, the school professionals (director and teacher) possibly the pupils. Composition size and education depend to one country than other (Baysinger and Butler, 1985; Fama and Jensen, 1983; Hess, 2002; Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2006).

In regard to LSB characteristics in DRC, except affectation mode and priority activities variables, most of

LSB characteristics retained are associated positively with the pupils' performances.

In LSB leadership and control power, decision-making procedure (following practices such as analysis of problems, collection of membership opinions, deliberating and voting time then decision making); control activities frequencies (privilege more control of the teaching quantity and quality activities and control of learning and the disciplinary files relating to the pupils that elaborate and operational control of school budget implementation and frequent control of financial patrimonial management and control of school operation); direct control activities (presence of sponsoring or couple parents) and problem types (focus more on mobilization of resources to achieve school budget) are most significant indicators of pupils' academic performances. While, LSB competences indicators such as standards (sets and tweaks school academic in answer to student needs), accountability (by taking responsibility face of decisions-making and control its implementation), climate (resolving and avoid conflicting situations); collaboration (sharing the educational and goals and willing in participation of school governance issues), assessment (work to solve leaning difficulties of pupil) and the engagement (regularly involve to the school organizational culture of school governance with appropriate actions) are associated significantly and positively with pupils' performances. Ford (2012; 2013) found also that accountability, collaboration and commitment, standards, Assessment and climate are associated positively with school outcomes.

Delagardele (2008) stated that after many years of intensive work in Iowa school boards in US, all district schools had an upsurge in state examinations scores and board members displayed has far greater understanding of how schools positively impact achievements students. In the present study, the component of LSB competences is most effective. It explains 22 % of variation of pupils' academic performance; following by LSB Characteristics (17%) and LSB leadership and control power (12%).

The predicting results estimated the pupils' performance in TENAFEP by some indicators of three components of the governance system of LSB. However, these results do not allow answering the qualitative aspect that deals with the "how", "how often", "which", "which or what" and "why" of impact of LSB governance in DRC schools context. The qualitative explanation made explicit this aspect. It is the pressure of parents who are members of LSB in order to solve pupils leaning difficulties and improve pupils' performance in school and national examinations.

In the DRC context, the committee of parents has a mechanism of direct control as supervision and leadership of pedagogy by the control of sponsoring or couple parents. One works to assure quality and quantity of pupils learning and teachers leaching in classroom and school (DRC-MINESP, 2011). This is a possible qualitative explanation of quantitative result of LSB competences such as standards, accountability; collaboration, assessment and engagement.

### **Research findings and significance**

This study has the double contributions. In theoretical contributions perspective, firstly, this study provided a theoretical model applicable to LSB and its validation by the empirical results and outlined an impact of component of governance system of LSB. This study defines and test different variables related to three components of LSB.

The findings emphasize LSB Competences component explain more of variation of pupils' academic performance than LSB Characteristics and LSB leadership and control. More attention could focus on these aspects when the stakeholders of educational system could like to invest to school board reforms. And the findings show the impact of governance practices of the LSB systems in developing African countries including DRC and define its measurement variables in details. It is about the Characteristics of LSB and its members; LSB leadership and control power and LSB competences.

In practical and socio-political perspective, these findings could be considered as a possible reference for lower performance schools and stakeholders. The significant practices of LSB could help to improve the schools outcomes or pupils academic performances in lower performance schools. This study give objective indicators which could be used to evaluate last school governance reform implemented in DRC context in large perspectives.

### **Limitations of the Study and Research Perspectives**

This study surveyed 224 school boards members of 16 primary schools in three province of DR Congo and 960 pupils' academic achievement in TENAFEP. The results of this study cannot be generalized for all schools in DR Congo. The possibility to generalize the results of this research is restricted by methodological limits. Any attempt to generalize the results should be considered more carefully given the nature of our sample. National longitudinal studies on the effects of governance system of LSB on the pupils' outcomes deserve to be carried out transversal (others provinces of DRC) and longitudinal perspectives.

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