PROBLEMATIC OF LARGE GROUPS AND TEACHING/LEARNING IN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA

ARGUMENTS
The issue of pedagogy of large groups was first raised by the Association of French Teachers in Africa (APFA) in March 1984 at a meeting in Khartoum. Since that time, in most African countries, seminars, symposia and workshops on this subject have been organized, notably the Brazzaville (Congo) seminars in November 1986 in Thiès (Senegal) in November-December 1988, from N'Djamena (Chad) in 1991, the meeting of Mauritius in February 1987, the days of Dakar in July 1995, etc. (Ngamassu, 2005). The frequency of holding these various meetings devoted to the investigation on the pedagogy of large groups testifies to the growing importance given to this question. The publication of the Methodological Directory on Organization and Teaching Technics in Bloated Classrooms by the Conference of Ministers of Education of Countries with French in Common (CONFEMEN) in July 1991 also marks a turning point in the reflection on the pedagogy of large groups.

From our point of view, it is difficult to define exactly what a “large group” is. A consensual definition sets at forty-five or at most fifty, the average above which one is in a high class situation. It must be said, however, that this is only a relative threshold, because in most African countries, classes are rare, even in rural areas with less than fifty pupils. In large cities, the average is usually between one hundred and one hundred and fifty with peaks to more than two hundred students in some populous schools establishments. According to some authors, such as Ngamassu (2005), if we limit ourselves to the expressions used to designate large groups: “overcrowded classes”, “high-classes”, we can say that the number of students is the main definitional criterion used. Yet other elements must be taken into account, particularly material resources, infrastructure, teacher training, student motivation, the adequacy of methodological tools, etc. (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

In most African countries (central, eastern, western), the question of pedagogy of large groups seems to turn a deaf ear on several levels and confirms the emergence of its problem. It is observed that, more and more, among the problems facing certain schools and universities, prominent is the growth in the population of pupils and students, the corollary of which is the steady increase in demands for education (CONFEMEN, 1991).

At school level, in recent decades in Africa, the growth of the number of students enrolled in the various institutions is a headache for those in charge of educational issues. The classes planned to accommodate fifty students twenty years ago now host a hundred or even two or three times more (Ngamassu, 2005; Durand, 1996). The first consequence of this overpopulation in Cameroon, for example, of students is formally the low school performance observed in high schools and colleges (MINESEC, 2015). According to a study published in Chad in 2011 by CONFEMEN, 27.2% of students dropped out of school by the end of the fourth year, while 31% repeated while only 34% passed the BEPC. About sixty years after independence, neither the number of pupils per grade nor the primary and secondary school returns in the vast majority of African countries experienced a subsequent qualitative improvement (CONFEMEN, 2011). Aline Cook notes that in some countries like Chad, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, the pupil-teacher ratio is far from ideal, because in 1990 "the official standard provides for 40 pupils per teacher".

On the other hand, higher education in Africa in general is not spared from this question of large groups. One of the present challenges, to which higher education is invited, concerns that of the adequate pedagogical supervision of students. Long perceived as poor parents of higher
education, large groups are now hoisted on the list of major challenges facing universities. As mentioned by De Peretti (1987b), one of the first challenges to teacher professionalism may lie in the fact that the majority of higher education teachers have not given themselves, in their initial training, the necessary didactic and pedagogical skills. It is essentially on the basis of their disciplinary skills that they have been engaged in universities (Adangnikou and Paul, 2008). For Erdlich (1998), the pedagogical activity is a professional practice that has its requirements and, as such, has a place in the university and echoes the changes that are taking place in institutions. It is a real sweep of the sky that runs through the university. According to Bireaud (1990), the pedagogy of large groups has become a full-fledged subject in university politics, a question that is currently in the air and is being taken over by all actors. Teaching at universities in Africa is currently the subject of questioning in which the notion of pedagogy of higher education appears in most countries (Bedard and Viau, 2001).

Increasingly, universities and grandes écoles (France and French speaking countries) receive every year the highest number of young graduates wishing to continue their studies. The findings highlight the packed amphitheatres, with student numbers between two hundred and six hundred. Amphitheatres are becoming increasingly rare in universities, those built since the creation of some universities since the independence of African countries have become cramped. A few years ago, reflections and debates of any form related to the credibility of pedagogical practices in these conditions animate the academic educational environment (UNESCO, 2011). It is unveiled in some countries, various insinuations against the educational practices of large groups among university teachers considered unorthodox discrediting the entire university education system in Africa.

These different observations illustrate one of the sad realities facing teaching and learning in schools and universities in Africa. These orders are experiencing a vertiginous growth in terms of "permeability" and the fluidity of manpower: hence the problem of overcrowding that, coupled with other thorny problems, including insufficient human, financial and infrastructural resources, the inadequacy of programs, educational tools, etc. make teaching and learning in schools and universities ineffective. On another level, the whole educational world agrees that beyond a certain threshold, the teacher’s action in class is no longer effective (Dioum, 1995). Several decades have passed since independence, and today we can see that the context of teaching and learning in primary schools, high schools, colleges and universities in Africa has not evolved very positively in relation to workforce management, despite the many interventions proposed by the States and development partners. For Mbiah et al. (2010), the effects of pedagogical practices due to large groups, rarely addressed in the scientific literature of African countries, would actually be a real gray area.

To put it mildly, the question concerning the large groups poses in the first half of the 21st century some rather pertinent questions: in the age of globalization, what practices should be put in place among teachers of high schools and colleges in African countries, in order to ensure future generations effective education? What pedagogical and didactic strategies have been adopted to enable elementary and secondary schools and universities to offer quality education and learning to a growing student and student body? In the era of information and communication technologies, what place do large groups occupy in the teaching and learning of pupils and students? What are the measures taken for a rational assessment of teaching/earning? Do the current political norms of African countries make it possible to appreciate the large groups in the different educational environments? What are the psychopedagogical conditions in which students are involved? These are some of the questions raised by this call for papers, the purpose of which is not to exhaust the methodological questioning of didactics and pedagogy of
large groups in schools and universities, but to reflect on the ways and means of a refoundation of the pedagogy of large groups in schools and universities in Africa.

This call is intended to a lesser extent to question the place of large groups in teaching and learning among students at primary, secondary and university levels in Africa. The aim is to contribute to critical debates around teaching and learning in large groups and to identify observable gaps between the expected effects and the actual changes in teaching and learning in schools and universities. It therefore seems opportune for us as academics to bring together and compare research in the fields of educational sciences and many other relevant fields in a heuristic perspective that refers to explicit contexts relating to the major sciences groups in schools and universities.

THEMATIC AREAS
Some lines of non-exhaustive reflections will guide us in this call. These are the following concepts and themes:

- Pedagogy of large groups and teacher training;
- Pedagogy of large groups and continuing education of teachers;
- Pedagogy of large groups and teachers’ skills;
- Pedagogy of large groups and psychopedagogical conditions;
- Pedagogy of large groups and teaching practices;
- Pedagogy of large groups and ICT;
- Pedagogy of large groups and quality of learning;
- Pedagogy of large groups and evaluation;
- Pedagogy of large groups and educational standards;
- Pedagogy of large groups and educational policies;
- Pedagogy of large groups and local actors (educational community, mayors, parents, secondary school leaders, etc.);
- Pedagogy of large groups and comparative reflections (at the level of other regions, countries, etc.);
- Pedagogy of large groups and quality of education systems;
- Pedagogy of large groups and teaching materials;
- Pedagogy of large groups and pedagogical supervision.

Proposals for contributions may fit into these different thematic areas. This invitation to a reflection is of interest not only to teachers in the sciences of education, but also to researchers, research professors of all stripes, professionals in teaching and learning, and so on who are able to enlighten and feed, through their scientific work, their reflections on the question of the problematic of large groups in schools and universities in Africa.

PRACTICAL MODALITIES FOR SENDING PROPOSALS
Proposals for abstracts relating to a quantitative or qualitative analysis in relation to the chosen axis, not to exceed one page are expected by March 30, 2018. Contributors will indicate their name and surname, their e-mail address as well as their home institution or their professions. They are to be sent by email to the following addresses: beche@beche-emmanuel.com; mahamatalh@yahoo.fr and mobassalar@yahoo.fr

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IMPORTANT DATES
❖ February 2018: dissemination of the call and proposal of contributions
❖ March 2018: deadline for receipt of abstracts
❖ April 2018: selection of the abstracts and notification of acceptance or rejection of the selected abstracts and return to the authors / Sending of the drafting protocol
❖ June 2018: deadline for receipt of complete texts
❖ August 2018: return of the first corrections, remarks and comments
❖ August-September 2018: return of the definitive texts
❖ December 2018: publication of the book

Bibliographical references
URL : http://corela.revues.org/503
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