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The Teaching of Latin in Bandundu-Ville

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the teaching of Latin in Bandundu-Ville, located in the west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The teaching of Latin in this town is linked to evangelisation and the work of Catholic missionaries. Although considered a dead language, Latin remains a fundamental tool for linguistic, intellectual and cultural education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, aimed at preparing pupils for higher and university education, and for various professional careers. A survey of 15 teachers reveals

a contradiction, if not a paradox: whilst today's teachers are better qualified than those of the 1980s and early 1990s (thanks, of course, to the establishment of the ISP Bandundu in the 1990s), the standard and performance of learners in Latin have declined considerably. The study outlines some of the causes of this underperformance.

Keywords: Teaching of Latin, Bandundu-Ville, decline in pupils' standards, usefulness of Latin, documentation.

1. Introduction

When was Latin first introduced into secondary schools in Zaire (DRC)? The answer to this question seems unclear. What is evident is that the adoption of Latin as a school subject is linked to evangelisation, particularly the work of Catholic missionaries.

Indeed, the Catholic missions, faithful to the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, encouraged the spiritual formation of young Congolese people through the use of classical sources: the spread of Christianity prompted the use of Latin in the curricula of minor and major seminaries and secondary schools. According to Bouet et al. (1975), this is justified by the fact that ‘it is the Church that carefully preserves Rome’s secular and sacred heritage and shapes the new intellectual elite’. However, it should be noted that the 1948 reform was the most decisive moment, from which point onwards the presence of Latin in the Congolese education system is documented. The objective assigned to the literary stream was the same as that of the scientific stream: to prepare young Congolese for the higher and university education envisaged for the future.

In Bandundu-Ville, it was the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word, who administered St Paul’s parish, who had introduced the literary stream specifically at Kivuvu College, which subsequently changed its name to St Paul’s College. Apart from Kivuvu College, one had to travel several kilometres to find a school offering the literary stream (Bokoro in the Mai Ndombe district, a few schools in the town of Kikwit, Kiniati College very close to Bonga Yassa, and the minor seminary in Katende).

In the mid-1990s, Bandundu-Ville had three schools offering the literary stream with Latin and philosophy as optional subjects. These were Kivuvu College, Nto Mambote Sixth Form College and the Papa Movoto Institute, which was expanding. Latin was taught by under-qualified teachers, except at Kivuvu College, where a priest from the Society of the Divine Word taught Latin in the fifth and sixth years (now the third and fourth years). The establishment of the ISP Bandundu in the 1990s resolved the quantitative issue of teacher qualifications. Over time, the problem became one of quality (socio-economic conditions, a lack of textbooks, and a decline in pupils’ standard of French, which is the *lingua franca* for learning Latin). Even with these under-qualified teachers, pupils were able to analyse and translate a Latin text. Today, Bandundu-Ville has more than ten schools offering the literary stream, and in all these schools, it is qualified teachers – that is, those with a graduate or bachelor’s degree – who teach Latin. However, a question arises: why were the under-

qualified teachers of the past more successful in teaching Latin? Was it due to stricter discipline, more motivated pupils, or more rigorous textbooks of the time? This study seeks to identify the causes of pupils’ underperformance in learning Latin.

From the above, it is worth noting that the decline in pupils’ performance in Latin lessons, particularly in analysis and translation, is due to several factors, including: a lack of teacher training, a lack of teaching resources, educational policy, and the proliferation of schools, which means that pupils no longer return to class.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Definitions of key concepts

Latin Didactics

In simple and clear terms, the didactics of Latin is the discipline that studies and teaches the standards, objectives and learning processes involved in the study of Latin culture and language.

Academic achievement

Levine and Lezotte define educational attainment as ‘the production of a result or a desired outcome’ (1990). In its report ‘Priorities and Strategies for Education’, the World Bank (1995) highlights the ambiguity inherent in this concept. The World Bank’s definition emphasises the importance of outcomes as indicators of performance, specifying that an adequate definition must include pupils’ outcomes.

As for us, we argue that academic achievement is the result of a pupil’s performance following a learning process.

Qualification vs competence

Qualifications and competences differ mainly in terms of their official status and practical application. A qualification is a recognised title, such as a certificate or diploma, whilst a competence is the ability to act effectively in a work context.

2.2. The usefulness of Latin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Congolese education system, Latin was regarded as a language of Christian and humanist culture, to the extent that it has since come to be seen as the language of education par excellence. Mudimbe, Mambwini and De Meester have expressed this view on numerous occasions in their writings. The first debate, raised by Mudimbe in his 1978 article

‘Classical Studies in Zaire’, sought to demonstrate the validity of Latin studies in Africa in general, and in Zaire in particular. He emphasised that Latin should not be excluded from the Congolese education system for historical, cultural and practical reasons. In 1984, Mambwini took up Mudimbe’s cause by contextualising and reviving certain values associated with Latin studies. He argued that:

- ✓ Latin, though considered a dead language, actually lives on in other languages and is a source of linguistic knowledge;
- ✓ The values conveyed by the study of Latin are a source of linguistic enrichment, a source of intellectual and cultural enrichment, a source of moral and socio-political enrichment and, finally, a source of universal humanism’ (Mambwini 1984).

Long before Mambwini, Paul De Meester echoed this now-classic conception of Latin teaching. For him, the three fundamental objectives underpinning all teaching by a Latin teacher are their firm intention to ensure that their lessons contribute to the refinement of French, to the intellectual development of the learner, and to the acquisition of universal civilising values. (De Meester 1982).

In short, such a view is consistent with the logic of cultural universalism; it makes Latin a language of human culture and of the universal.

Years later, Khonde analysed the institutional objectives of the Latin curriculum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and pupils’ actual skills. To this end, he examined the relevance of the methods and textbooks used by teachers in various schools (Khonde Mbanga 2024). We do not examine the textbooks or the objectives; instead, we focus on the decline in standards, particularly in Bandundu-Ville, which has ten schools offering the literary humanities stream.

In a recent article, Ilunga Wadishota, F., & Kamoyi Kawanga, P., describe the factors contributing to the decline in the teaching of Latin in Mwene-Ditu (2026). In their analysis, they note the inadequacy of educational guidance, the growing emphasis on technical and vocational streams, the massification of education, economic constraints, and the perception of Latin as a difficult subject with little professional value. Our study goes beyond their analysis in that our focus is on the decline in learners’ standards.

‘Decline in the level of written expression among learners at the Congolese School Centre in Kigoma, Tanzania’ is the title of the article written by Kiseni, Nduwingoma and Nimboma. These three researchers identify the factors hindering the

learning of French; among these factors we note: inadequate teacher training, a lack of resources and limited exposure to French outside the classroom (2025). These three authors analyse the factors behind the decline in French at the Kigoma Centre, whilst our research focuses on Latin and Bandundu-Ville.

Bakhouché and Duthoit (2013) emphasise methods for learning Latin at university. In their view, an innovative approach is needed for online learning. They propose the constructivist approach, which prioritises the learner’s active participation in the construction and acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Finally, we should mention Ekanga who, in an article published at a time when free education was being introduced, provides a macro-economic perspective on under-resourcing, the lack of libraries and up-to-date textbooks, and the deterioration of working conditions (2019). Our study aligns, to some extent, with Ekanga’s, as we also address the lack of learning resources.

In light of the above, it is worth noting that our study goes beyond the work of our predecessors.

2.3. Objectives of Latin teaching

Redefining the pedagogical objectives of Latin at secondary level requires reaching a consensus on the current organisation of the Latin course, whilst bearing in mind the new needs arising from Congolese society. Referring to the national curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 1987), three main sub-areas of Latin are identified: texts, grammar, and Latin civilisation and authors. Each sub-area has its own clearly defined objectives:

Texts

The text is the foundation upon which all language learning rests, and the teaching of Latin is based on the study of the language; the study of Latin civilisation is carried out through texts. These can be of two types: authentic texts, that is, texts by Latin authors, and ‘constructed’ or ‘adapted’ texts – such as epitaphs, epigraphs or other examples of Latin culture.

In the first year of the literature stream, the texts serve to introduce pupils to the language. They consist either of corpora or simple texts; they often form a coherent whole and allow for systematic analysis. In the second year, a wide range of easy and varied texts are read. The use of these texts is justified by the aim of familiarising pupils with the diversity of morphology. In the third and fourth years, engagement with

authors is the most effective way of perfecting knowledge of the language. The authors studied are prose writers or poets.

Grammar

In the first year, the course focuses on declensions, conjugations and pronouns. In the second year, however, in addition to a revision of declensions, conjugations and pronouns, the emphasis will be on case and mood syntax. In the third and fourth years, grammar is no longer studied systematically, but is covered on an ad hoc basis.

Latin civilisation and authors

Just as the Latin language is learnt through texts, so too is Roman civilisation explored through texts. In the first and second years, beginners in Latin are gradually introduced to Roman life, the legends and history of Rome, and the Roman Empire. In the third and fourth years, learners are given a broad overview of Latin literature and an in-depth understanding of a few key works.

From the above, it follows that, in accordance with the general objectives, the teaching of Latin aims to refine pupils' command of French, develop their intellectual culture, instil universal civilising values, enable them to grasp the message of a text and build up their vocabulary progressively.

However, based on real-life, observed socio-professional situations, it appears that, upon completion of their literary studies, learners should be able to successfully undertake university studies (law, medicine, arts and humanities, social sciences, political and administrative sciences, information sciences and technology, etc.), to pursue a career, particularly in journalism, printing, publishing, information services and teaching.

According to the specific objectives (objectives for each year):

By the end of their first year of the literary stream, pupils will be able to analyse a text and draw their own conclusions from their observations regarding the structure of words and clauses, identify the components of a grammatical unit, and summarise these components in summary tables or in the form of model sentences.

In the second year of the literature stream, pupils will be able to read simple texts fluently, observe linguistic features across a wide range of texts, identify all common word forms and, without hesitation, grasp the relationship between a word's form and its function, and, where possible, identify morphological irregularities in the texts studied.

In the third and fourth years, pupils must be able to apply, in the texts to be analysed, all the basic grammatical concepts learnt in the first and second years, and to analyse and translate texts in prose or verse.

Finally, it is worth noting that formulating the learning objectives for Latin at secondary level is a technical exercise that needs to be carried out; the teaching of Latin would benefit from greater clarity and precision as a result.

3. Methodology

3.1. Geographical and educational context of the study

This study was carried out in Bandundu-Ville, located in Kwilu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This town is the provincial capital of Kwilu Province and forms part of the Kwilu I educational province. The town has several secondary schools, ten of which offer the literary stream with Latin and philosophy as optional subjects.

3.2. Study population

Quivy and Van Campenhoudt define the study population as the set of statistical units relevant to the research and capable of providing the information necessary for analysing the phenomenon under study (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt 2017).

For the purposes of this study, the population consists of ten schools offering the literary stream in Bandundu-Ville.

3.3. Sampling

Sampling technique and selected schools

Given the population and the operational rationale of the study, a sampling approach was employed. The ten schools offering the literary stream with Latin and philosophy as optional subjects were selected on the basis of the study's purpose and significance. These schools are:

1. Saint Paul Secondary School
2. Nto Mambote High School
3. Papa Movoto Institute
4. Kikesa Institute
5. Ebecha School Complex
6. Kwango Institute
7. Edap
8. Saint Joseph's Secondary School
9. La Borne School Complex
10. Santa Rosa School Complex

3.4. Participants

The survey involved fifteen Latin teachers who teach the subject in Bandundu-Ville. This choice was motivated by their direct involvement in the teaching and learning of Latin. During our research, we found that some teachers work simultaneously at two different schools.

3.5. Methods, data collection tools and interviews

We collected the data using a structured questionnaire administered to the various categories of respondents. Individual interviews were conducted with the teachers concerned in order to gather the necessary information on the causes of the decline in pupils' performance in Latin.

3.6. Literature review

The research drew on a number of administrative, academic and educational documents:

- The official Latin syllabus;
- The school calendar;
- Regulatory texts;
- Scientific works relating to the teaching of Latin.

3.7. Data processing and analysis

The data collected were analysed manually and then grouped according to the different categories of responses. We have presented the results following each table.

Survey results

To gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding the teaching of Latin in secondary schools in this city, we deemed it appropriate to conduct a mini-survey in the ten schools offering Latin, across all categories (those regarded as good, average and poor) and all school networks (state schools, state-subsidised private schools and private schools). This categorisation of schools was of paramount importance for the conduct, understanding and interpretation of the results of the survey, given that the teachers working in these different schools and school networks were trained at Congolese higher education institutions and all possess the academic qualifications required to teach there. However, it is the specific realities and social conditions of each school to which they are assigned that will determine, both professionally and morally, which teachers are 'good', which are 'average', and which are 'poor'.

It should be noted that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there is a shortage of Latin teachers because many people prefer the modern sciences to the classical sciences, and they do not enjoy teaching; as a result, in many schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under-qualified staff teach Latin. This is not the case in Bandundu-Ville, where the fifteen teachers surveyed are qualified graduates of higher teacher-training institutions. There are even qualified women teaching Latin.

Below are the questions put to the teachers and their responses.

Table 1. Breakdown of respondents by gender

Gender	Neither	%
Male	10	66.6
Female	5	33.4
Total	15	100

The table above shows that men predominate among Latin teachers in Bandundu-Ville, with 10 out of 15 being men, or 66.6 per cent. Women account for 33.4 per cent. It is encouraging that even women are willing to teach Latin in this city, which is not the case in other cities such as Kinshasa, where there are over a thousand schools offering the literary stream and only three women teach Latin in the Lukunga educational province.

Table 2. Breakdown of subjects by qualification

Qualification	None	%
D6	0	0%
G3	10	66.7%
L2	5	33.3%
Total	15	100

Let us say that the majority of Latin teachers in Bandundu town are qualified. There are no under-qualified teachers. Graduates are in the majority: 10 out of 15 surveyed, or 66.7 per cent, whilst 5 out of 15, or 33.3 per cent, hold a bachelor's degree. This influx of qualified teachers can be attributed to the establishment of the Higher Institute of Education in the town in the 1990s. Prior to this, however, it was under-qualified teachers who taught Latin up to Year 6 (now Year 4).

Table 3. Breakdown of respondents by length of service

Years of service	None	%
1–5 years	2	13.3%
5–10 years	5	33.4%
10–15 years	6	40%
15 years and over	2	13.3%
Total	15	100

The information in this table shows that 6 respondents, or 40 per cent, have been teaching Latin for more than 10 years, whilst 5 respondents, or 33.3 per cent, have been teaching for more than 5 years. Two teachers are novices, with less than 5 years' experience, whilst 2 others are seasoned teachers with more than 15 years' experience.

Table 4. Do you have a Latin syllabus?

Responses	Neither	%
Yes	11	73.3
No	4	26.7
Total	15	100

In response to the question of whether Latin teachers have a curriculum for planning subject content and lessons, it is observed that 11 teachers, or 73.3 per cent, do have one, whilst 4 teachers, or 26.7 per cent, do not. However, as some are

aware, the school curriculum is political in nature: indeed, it is a law enacted by the educational authorities with a view to shaping a type of person as defined by them. And within this curriculum lie the subjects to be covered by the teacher at the various levels (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and 4th year literature streams). This is why the curriculum serves as a timetable, a compass or, better still, a roadmap that enables teachers to carry out their work with pride: that of shaping the kind of person defined by the educational authorities.

Table 5. Do you have the Latin textbooks?

Textbooks	Neither	%
Yes	10	66.6
No	5	33.4
Total	15	100

An analysis of this table shows that the majority of teachers have Latin textbooks, despite their dilapidated condition – 10, or 66.6 per cent. The five teachers who do not have textbooks use old notes from their own teachers or rely on notes from other colleagues. They attribute this shortcoming to the bad faith and negligence of the school authorities, who fail to purchase textbooks despite the operating funds they receive.

Do you teach all the subjects scheduled for each week?

No. Of the three components of Latin teaching, most teachers only teach text and grammar. Latin civilisation and authors is a component that is rarely taught, as they lack suitable textbooks for this subject.

Table 6. Do you teach prosody and metre in Year 9 Literature?

Prosody and Metrics	Neither	%
Yes	0	0
No	15	100
Total	15	100

In light of this picture, the situation is alarming. Prosody and metre are never taught in Bandundu-Ville. The reason is simple: during their school and university education, they never learnt these two sub-disciplines. As a result, they cannot bring themselves to teach them. They have been encouraged to teach themselves these subjects, which are very important, firstly because the ^{third year of} the literary stream focuses on poetry, and secondly because poetry is often included as a subject in the state examination. Most of them have requested a training session so that they can teach these subjects properly.

Table 7. After your lessons, do you set homework for the pupils?

Assignments/homework	Neither	%
Yes	2	13.3%
No	10	66.7%
Times	3	20%
Totals	15	100

The data in this table show that the majority of respondents (10, or 66.7 per cent) do not set homework for their pupils; 2 respondents (13.3 per cent) do set homework for their pupils; and 3 respondents (20 per cent) set homework occasionally. According to the national curriculum, homework is intended to aid pupils' understanding and enable them to grasp concepts more effectively. The fact that the majority do not set homework could be one of the reasons for the decline in pupils' standard of Latin. The two teachers who frequently set homework have stated that this approach works because pupils adapt better and are able to solve the same exercises in class in front of their classmates.

Table 8. How do you assess the pupils' adaptation to Latin lessons?

Reaction	Neither	%
Easily	4	26.7%
With difficulty	8	53.3%
Undecided	3	20%
Total	15	100

In view of the results shown in the table above, it can be seen that 4 respondents, or 26.7 per cent, adapt easily to Latin lessons, 8 respondents, or 53.3 per cent, find it difficult to adapt, and 3 respondents, or 20 per cent, are undecided.

Indeed, teachers acknowledge that the majority of learners find it difficult to adapt to Latin lessons, particularly the teaching of texts, which forms the basis of language teaching in general and Latin in particular. In fact, teachers must draw on these texts to teach grammar, civilisation and authors. Learners regard analysis and translation as their bane, despite the teachers' explanations. It has become apparent that these difficulties stem from a lack of mastery of declension and conjugation. It is clear that in the first year of the literary stream, as we mentioned at the outset, pupils learn and master the five Latin declensions and the five or four Latin conjugations. It is this mastery that enables a minority – 26.7 per cent of learners – to adapt easily to the analysis and translation of Latin texts.

The undecided group, numbering 3 pupils and representing 20 per cent, make no effort whatsoever to learn Latin. It appears that they previously studied in other streams in the first and second years of the literary stream and have chosen the literary stream this year because there is a high success rate in this stream in this town.

What difficulties do you encounter when preparing your lessons and teaching Latin?

Below are the teachers' responses:

- ✓ Lack of teaching materials;
- ✓ Distraction caused by having to prepare several lessons for different year groups and other subjects imposed on us by the school authorities;
- ✓ Lack of interest in the profession;
- ✓ Insufficient teaching materials;
- ✓ Poor economic and social conditions;
- ✓ Low academic standards and lack of interest among learners;
- ✓ Outdated teaching materials;
- ✓ Contradictions found in various textbooks (particularly regarding text analysis and translation);
- ✓ Lack of exchange with other Latin teachers;
- ✓ No visits from inspectors; as there are only a handful of them;
- ✓ No textbooks for pupils.

When asked about the causes of disengagement, the majority cited the Congolese education system, the '100 per cent' phenomenon, and the proliferation of schools. This last factor means that pupils no longer repeat a year: if they fail at School X, the following year they enrol at School Y, with the blessing of their parents and the school authorities. It is worth noting that the culture of 100 per cent success – whether dictated by schools' marketing objectives or by systemic leniency during assessments – profoundly alters pupils' relationship with learning. When success is guaranteed and greatly facilitated, pupils no longer put in the sustained effort required by Latin. Latin morphology (declensions, conjugations) and syntax do not allow for approximation; they demand rigour. The 'one hundred per cent' phenomenon leads learners to believe that a superficial level of knowledge is sufficient to pass. For their part, in order to be well-regarded, teachers are compelled – consciously or unconsciously – to revise their assessment criteria and award extra marks to pupils in the event of failure.

Another obvious factor that might explain this lack of interest is the proliferation of schools and the end of repeating a year.

Before the turn of the millennium, repeating a year served a regulatory function: it allowed a pupil who had not grasped the basics of Latin grammar to consolidate their knowledge before tackling complex concepts such as the transition from case syntax to the translation of texts by authors. This is no longer the case today; if a school decides to make a child repeat a year due to poor performance, the parents or the pupil themselves will withdraw their application and the pupil will enrol at another school that accepts them into the next year group. Latin is a language in which knowledge builds upon itself. If a pupil were to progress to higher years without having mastered the third declension and the perfect indicative, for example, they would be completely lost for the rest of their Latin studies. The inability to make pupils repeat a year result in mixed-ability classes, leading to a very low standard amongst pupils. This makes it difficult for the teacher to progress effectively and forces them to rely on the lecture-style method.

Table 9. What motivated you to teach Latin?

Reactions	Neither	%
Passion, vocation, advice from adults	8	53.3%
Poor guidance	3	20
Undecided	4	26.7
Total	15	100

When asked what motivated them to choose to teach Latin, it was found that 8 respondents, or 53.3 per cent, took up the profession of Latin teacher out of love for the subject, a sense of vocation, and on the advice of adults. These adults played a key role in convincing young people that teaching is a vocation that requires daily commitment, given that children are born every day. This is particularly true in the field of French and Latin, which is in greatest need of teachers due to a shortage of staff. Those who chose the profession out of love and a sense of vocation were unwilling to accept the idea that this subject might disappear.

The three teachers, representing 20 per cent, admit to having taken up the profession following poor career guidance, which can be explained by the lack of options and faculties of their choice. It is worth noting here that in Bandundu-Ville, the ISP was the first higher education institution to open its doors,

offering the following courses: French and Latin, French and African Linguistics, Mathematics and Physics, Biology and Chemistry, and History.

The third category comprises the undecided: 4 students, or 26.7 per cent, who, having found nothing better elsewhere, entered the profession without any prior preparation. For them, therefore, teaching is a waiting room or a stepping stone that they would leave as soon as an opportunity arose, without any regrets.

How important do you think the teaching of Latin is?

The majority of teachers recognised that learning Latin offers many advantages to pupils, as it will enable them to successfully pursue various options at university. For example, communication, medicine (with the roots of certain medicines in Latin), political science, law, and so on. As a well-known adage in the academic world goes: ‘there are no better lawyers than Latin scholars’.

How do you go about teaching (for lessons on texts, grammar, as well as civilisation and authors)?

For the text lesson, ideally each child should have their own text so they can prepare at home to ensure the lesson runs smoothly. As the learners do not have texts, the teachers write the text on the board; we then read through it, identify the conjugated verbs, look for other verb forms and subordinating conjunctions, and finally break the sentence down into clauses. This allows for small groups to be formed and analysed one after the other. It is worth noting that for this lesson, the teachers carry out the analysis themselves, given the level of the pupils, the vast majority of whom are unable to analyse and translate the text.

As regards grammar lessons, the majority of teachers use only *De Givè's Latin Grammar*. They do not go beyond the examples provided in this grammar book. Here again, they teach them in a lecture-style manner, without involving the learners. The learners are reduced to the role of copyist monks.

As for lessons on civilisation and the lives of authors – which are rarely taught – the teachers deliver them like historians, that is to say, by recounting the author's life and works themselves.

From the above, it is reasonable to say that in Bandundu-Ville, teachers tend to do the work for the children, whilst those who do set pupils work fail to make progress due to the aforementioned lack of interest.

4. Discussion of the results

This discussion focuses on the main reasons highlighted by the survey, notably the ‘one hundred per cent’ phenomenon, the absence of pupils repeating a year, the large number of schools, the lack of teacher training and the lack of textbooks.

In the 1990s, the town of Bandundu had three schools offering the arts stream. One would have to travel several kilometres to find a school with the arts stream, which meant that pupils took their studies seriously in order to pass and avoid having to repeat a year, or else face having to move to a village on the outskirts of the town where living conditions were very difficult. Results from various sessions of the state examinations show that in the 1980s and early 1990s, instances of a 100 per cent pass rate were few and far between; in other words, the pass rate was low. Not everyone was passing. Today, the same records prove the opposite (minesp.gouv.cd). The majority of students now pass. The pass rate can reach 80 per cent, something that was impossible in the 1980s or earlier. The aim of humanities studies is to obtain a state diploma; as everyone passes, pupils have become complacent because they know they will get their diploma. A pupil might fail at the first school, then enrol at a second one with the blessing of their parents and the school authorities, and in the end they graduate.

Added to this is the lack of teacher training. After completing their higher education and university training, teachers do not undertake any further professional development, as there is only one Latin inspector in the city. Finally, the lack of textbooks makes it difficult for teachers to prepare their lessons properly; they have to make do with old notes. This situation is due to the scarcity of libraries in the schools surveyed and in Bandundu-Ville.

In light of the above, teachers believe that training sessions and knowledge-sharing initiatives should be organised so that those who are stronger in one area can assist those who are weaker in another.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to identify the causes of the decline in pupils' performance in Latin. We began by examining the history of Latin teaching in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Bandundu-Ville. We then distributed a questionnaire to 15 teachers from ten schools offering the literary stream in Bandundu-Ville.

It transpired that the teaching of Latin was initially the work of Catholic missionaries during the spread of Christianity, before being incorporated into the Congolese education

system in 1948. The results of our investigations have shown that the decline in pupils' standards is due to:

- ✓ A lack of interest on the part of pupils;
- ✓ A lack of homework set for pupils;
- ✓ The '100 per cent' phenomenon;
- ✓ The proliferation of schools;
- ✓ Pupils no longer repeat a year;
- ✓ Lack of interest in the profession;
- ✓ Insufficient documentation;
- ✓ Poor economic and social conditions.

To improve teachers' working conditions, it is imperative that schools provide teachers with the books needed to prepare lessons for the three branches of Latin, as no branch is any less important than the others. The Congolese government, through the Ministry of , Primary and Secondary Education, must organise inspectorate competitive examinations in order to recruit a sufficient number of inspectors who will provide regular training for teachers. With the integration of digital technology, teachers should update their teaching methods by placing greater emphasis on active learning, as advocated by Bakhouché and Duthoit (2013).

It must be acknowledged that we did not interview the pupils to find out their views, nor did we conduct classroom observations during the teachers' various lessons. We intend in future to write a more comprehensive paper on the teaching of Latin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Changes, paradoxes and didactic perspectives in Bandundu-Ville.

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