

## The Contribution of Religious Instruction to the Contemporary Challenges of Central African Republic Youth: A case study of FATEB Secondary School

<sup>1</sup>Romarc Didacien Dongobada

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student in Theology; Africa International University  
Corresponding Email: Email: dongobadar@yahoo.fr

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### Abstract

This article explores the contribution of the teaching of religious instruction in the lives of students at the FATEB Evangelical Secondary School in the face of the challenges that young people are going through today. Data were collected through interviews with teachers and students, and from unpublished sources. The FATEB secondary school was created to allow student pastors and their wives to follow classes well while their children are taken care of in the classrooms. With the military-political crises that have shaken the country, parents of students have preferred to enroll their children in FATEB schools. This is what has driven the FATEB schools to grow. Very early on, the religious instruction course was included in the curriculum of the student's training in addition to the official curriculum developed by the Ministry of National Education. However, the pastors who teach the religious instruction course have an aptitude for the pastoral side. The data showed that they lack professionalism on the pedagogical side. The ministry of these teachers has contributed spiritually as some conversions to Christ are recorded and also some students have changed their behavior. However, much remains to be done to improve the contribution of the teaching of the Religious Instruction course in the lives of these students. Some suggestions and recommendations were made towards the end of the article to achieve these results.

**Keywords:** *Conversion, Discipleship, Evangelical Secondary School, FATEB, Religious Instruction, Youth*

### INTRODUCTION

The context of the African continent today presents many changes, partially, because of its contact with the West. Ibrahim S. Bitrus in his writing has shown the influences of modernity on Africans and important areas of human life such as social, cultural, and religious traditions and institutions.<sup>1</sup> The announcement of God's word to Secondary School Students is not done in a vacuum. One should understand the different challenges that young people are exposed to daily to teach God's word in a relevant way. Klaus Nürnberger reports that the redemptive

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim S. Bitrus, "Globalizing Impact of Modernity in Africa." *Journal of Globalization Studies*, Vol. 8 N°. 2, (Nov 2017): 68-83.

message of the Christian faith must be the response of God to every person in every situation of life. Thus, one must take into account the different challenges for a relevant message.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of this work lies in the fulfillment of the Great Commission at all levels of human life. Pohlmann states in the context of the Australian youth that:

If there is a desire to engage with young people, there is no better place than a local school. While perhaps 5% of Australian young people are part of Christian faith communities, the remaining 95% are gathered together in school, with the majority in state schools. Chaplaincy Services provides a means of making a connection, providing Christian ministry and service to students, staff, and their families.<sup>3</sup>

The African youth in general and the youth of the Central Africa Republic (CAR) in particular must be taken with great consideration. M'jid notes about African youth: "With 200 million people between the ages of 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world ... this figure is expected to double by 2045... This demographic is indicative of the importance of its needs and rights in education and training".<sup>4</sup>

Through this work, I would like to present the contribution of Religious Instruction in the training of FATEB (Bangui Evangelical School of Theology) Secondary School students in the face of the challenges faced by Central African youth. To achieve this, I will first make a brief presentation of the FATEB Secondary School which represents the context of the study. Then I will present the different challenges of the Central African youth before addressing the central part of the contribution of religious instruction within this school. The fourth part will be dedicated to the impact of religious instruction in the school and some suggestions will be made at the end of the work.

## **I. PRESENTATION OF FATEB SECONDARY SCHOOL**

The Evangelical Secondary School of FATEB is the upper level of the FATEB schooling. It embodies the Nursery School, Primary and Secondary schools, which are the social work of the FATEB.

### **A. FATEB Seminary**

#### **1. Background**

FATEB seminary is a work of the Alliance of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). According to Moloby, we cannot talk about the history of FATEB without referring to Byang Kato. He was the first African General Secretary of AEAM and at the same time President of the theological commission of this Association. It was his vision to begin evangelical theological training at the university level in Africa for the training of God's servants in the African context.<sup>5</sup> Moloby explains that, on Kato's suggestion, the second AEAM General

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<sup>2</sup> Klaus Nürnberger, "The neglected context: The growing impact of modernity on the South African population and its spiritual, economic and ecological consequences." *Verbum and Ecclesia* 33 (2), Art. # 733, 11 pages.

<sup>3</sup> David Pohlmann, "Queensland State School Chaplaincy: a brave new paradigm of youth ministry". *Journal of Christian Education*, vol. 48, No. 1, (May 2005): 41.

<sup>4</sup> Najat Maalla M'jid, « La jeunesse avenir du continent africain » (Jan 2015): 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Remy Williams Emery Moloby, « La contribution de la FATEB a la mission de l'Eglise en RCA, au Tchad, en RDC et en République du Congo (1977-2013) » (Doctoral Thesis in Theology in Mission: FATEB, 2017), 63.

Assembly held in Limuru, Kenya in February 1973, decided that at least one of the internationally recognized higher education seminaries should be established in Africa. One for French-speaking countries and one for English-speaking countries. Since Anglophone Africa possessed theological institutions, seminaries, and Bible schools, priority was given to the establishment of the seminary in Francophone Africa. Finally, Bangui, the capital of the CAR, was selected for the creation of FATEB.<sup>6</sup> In October 1977, FATEB opened its doors for the first time and thus became the first evangelical seminary in Africa to offer the degree of Master in Theology.<sup>7</sup>

The motivations that led to the creation of FATEB were, firstly the dissemination of evangelical theology, a strategy of evangelicals to move forward in the academic field. Secondly, it was a question of facing the multiple challenges related to the theological tendencies that were present on the African soil and required a theological formation on the part of the African Christians. Finally, the third motivation was related to contextual training.<sup>8</sup> Indigenous evangelism is a biblical idea because it promotes the contextualization of the word of God to the fullest. Often when the Apostle Paul created a new church, he prepared the natives to minister after him. Otherwise, it adapted its context to better convey the message of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9: 20, 22). This idea is topical, according to Gehman, the evangelization of Africa can be better done by the Africans themselves.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Mission and Vision

The vision and the mission are explained in the FATEB principles of community life of 2010.<sup>10</sup> Its vision is to: “Train for transformation”. This mission is based on the commission of Jesus in John 20:21: *As the Father sent me, I am sending you*. Its vision is to see all Francophone Africa living evangelical values.

### B. The FATEB Pedagogical Institution

#### 1. Background

The Central African education system has been experiencing crises for years. These crises are expressed in these terms: “Education knows various problems: overstaffing of classes, high school dropout, especially for girls, lower level of training, inadequate training”.<sup>11</sup> This problem affects all levels of education namely nursery, primary, secondary, higher, and technical. Another fact is that the document, *Pôle de Dakar* notes that “one of four children has never been to school and only three out of ten children complete the primary cycle”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 67-71.

<sup>9</sup> Richard J. Gehman, “The Africa Inland Mission: Aspects of its Early History”. *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, vol. 23/2 (2004): 131.

<sup>10</sup> Faculte de Theologie Evangelique de Bangui, “The community and its life” (September 2010), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Central African Government, « Les premières assises nationales de l'économie et des finances », 108.

<sup>12</sup> Laure Pasquier Doumer, « *La République Centrafricaine: un système éducatif à reconstruire* » (Pôle de Dakar, septembre 2007 », (Accessed, Sep 11, 2019) : [http://www.poledakar.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=115%3Anotpole&catid=42%3Anotes&Itemid=45&lang=fr](http://www.poledakar.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=115%3Anotpole&catid=42%3Anotes&Itemid=45&lang=fr)

The Government is facing economic crises that force it to liberalize the education sector, encouraging partners to explore the sector. From these partners, I report this declaration from the Department of Education: “The religious confessions whose role was important in the work of schooling: they must be again associated with the educational activity”.<sup>13</sup> This is how churches can get into this area as well.

On my part, I think that Evangelical churches in CAR can seize this opportunity to use schooling as a tool of evangelization, because, not only Christians send their children who are sometimes immature or unbelievers but also Muslims and other target groups are attracted. To this end, Koulagna writes that: More than other works, schools and colleges are forming generations of Christians, men and women, for society, and have given them the gospel through religious education and school chaplaincy programs. They have been important centers for recruiting members and supporters of churches.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the direction can include in their curriculum a subject which transmits teachings on God and which also favors the spiritual growth of the immatures.

The creation of the FATEB Pedagogical Institution dates back to 1977. It began from the interest of finding a space to take care of children who were not at school age while their parents were having classes at the seminary or Biblical Ladies School. Gradually, the need was felt and the nursery school was created. Subsequently, it was the turn of the primary school on November 26, 1991, to be founded. It was at the time of the socio-political crisis in Central Africa and the training of children in public schools was troubled. At that moment, the students themselves asked the FATEB Administration for a primary school. And it was done. This primary school was initially run by a group of FATEB students. And it was in 1994 that the FATEB Administration took over the management of that primary school. And finally, FATEB secondary school was created in 2009.<sup>15</sup>

As noted above, the FATEB Pedagogical Institution consists of three levels namely: nursery, primary and high schools. At the Bilingual Nursery school, two languages: French and English are used for teaching. It is structured in several sections: The Daycare for children from 2 to 3 years, the Small Section for children from 3 to 4 years, the Middle section for children from 4 to 5 years old, and the Large Section for children from 5 to 6 years old.<sup>16</sup> In primary school, children enter at 6 years old. They spend 6 successful years before moving to secondary school.

## **2. Vision and Mission**

The FATEB Pedagogical Institution is an entity that aims at the same objective of the institution, which is to train the whole family pedagogically and spiritually. It provides basic training in various forms: intellectual, socio-cultural, and religious to lead children to accept Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior.<sup>17</sup>

### **C. The FATEB Secondary School**

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<sup>13</sup> Department of National Education, Coordination, Research and Technology, « Etats Généraux de l'Éducation et de la Formation » (Bangui, May 30 to Jun 8, 1994), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Koulagna, *Le christianisme dans l'histoire de l'Afrique* (Yaoundé: Clé, 2007), 180.

<sup>15</sup> Mokotemapa, Theodor. The Coordinator of the FATEB Pedagogical Institution interviewed on 10/09/2019.

<sup>16</sup> « Cahiers d'information et de réflexions théologiques de la FATEB ». Special issue (2015) : 74.

<sup>17</sup> « Cahiers d'information et de réflexions théologiques de la FATEB » no 1 (2008): 105.

As my paperwork is about FATEB Secondary School, I wish to keep the details about it so that I may develop them later. Yet, I just note that FATEB Secondary School started in 2009 and secondary school was added in 2014.

The vision and mission of the FATEB Pedagogical Institution as mentioned above are the same for the secondary school. The achievement of its goals has made the FATEB Pedagogical Institution win parents' trust. Entrance applications have increased and the structure is set up to increase the institution.

In the program of FATEB Secondary School education, Religious Instruction is taught in addition to the official subjects recommended by the Department of National Education. This program, provided by trained pastors, enables the Secondary School to achieve the goal of the spiritual training of students that the FATEB Pedagogical Institution has set for itself. Full details of the Religious Instruction course will be given in the presentation section of this course. The contemporary challenges of the youth of the Central African Republic are important at this level.

## **II. THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CENTRAL AFRICAN YOUTH**

The evaluation of the contribution of religious instruction in the FATEB Secondary School could be better done if we understand the different challenges faced by the Central African youth on the one hand and the other hand how they behave after taking the religious instruction course.

The challenges of African youth in general, including that of Central Africa, are without exception, presented by Abbink as follows:

They face huge obstacles and do not seem to have the future in their hands. Although progress has been made in some respects - for example in the areas of education, migration, and employment in the urban world - exponential population growth and fierce competition for resources in contexts of Failing states have resulted in a relative decline in the population, well-being and social advancement of young people in Africa. They grow up in conditions of mass unemployment and face exclusion, health problems, a family crisis due to poverty and the AIDS pandemic, as well as a lack of education and skills. They are also marginalized in national policies and have a weak legal position. Young Africans are overrepresented in armed rebel and insurgent rebel movements, as well as in the criminal activities to which they are so easily recruited.<sup>18</sup>

To summarize Abbink, I can say that the challenges are gradual and almost the same as in the whole of Africa, starting with the nature of children, the socio-political contexts of African states, the contact of Africa with the other continents, and socio-cultural norms discriminatory towards girls.

### **A. The nature of youth**

I can say that these are the innate defects of all children, around the years of puberty. The age ranges from 13 to 19 years old, for some of this time of turbulence can go beyond 22 years old.

#### **1. Adventure and dream**

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<sup>18</sup> Jon Abbink, "Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal" 1.

The youth, at the age of adolescence, has the taste of adventure. Young people want to try everything they see others do. And most importantly, they do not measure the consequences on their lives in the present or the future. They think that what they want to do is good. They minimize the advice of parents and sometimes the Word of God, too. This is how they often try out parental bans.

## **2. Enclosed to the life of independence**

Hadfield notes that: “The child wants to act at his pleasure. If he wants to go somewhere, he has to go. If he wants to do something, nothing should stop him. He is the oriental potentate who cannot bear the slightest annoyance”.<sup>19</sup> During their teenage, children want to live a life of freedom from their parents. They are sometimes rebellious to their parents, not wanting to submit to their parents’ principles. Some children at this stage do not want to live with moral principles. Either they dress in Western fashion, even if contrary to local norms. In the presence of parents, they show themselves as well-educated children, but when they find themselves away from their parents they do everything they want.

## **3. Followership and moral depravity**

Following the others, is the experience of many young people in general, and young Africans in particular. The psychologist Hadfield says that “imitation is an innate tendency. It is not taught to the child: it comes naturally to him”.<sup>20</sup> However, the Bible states that “*Bad company corrupts good character*” (1Co 15:33). This idea of extended corruption is shared by Africans but is expressed in other words. In the CAR, it is said “*tonga na le ti keke oko na ya ti sakpa ni afou, fade lo yeke bouba atanga ni koue, ayeke ti zi fou ngo ni so ti bi ni*”. The explanation is that one rotten fruit in a basket should be removed as soon as possible, otherwise it will surely spoil the other fruits.

Many young Africans who have received their education in their families are being diverted from the right track. It is a reality experimented on by either girls or boys. Following others can develop a life of alcohol drinking, truancy, rudeness, theft, and attendance to immoral places. The consequences of bad companies are immeasurable. They can cause early sexuality and unwanted pregnancies for girls, leading to school dropouts. For boys, bad companies can lead to the acquisition of antisocial ways that generate a rebellious, irresponsible, and unrelated generation of citizens in African societies.

Some parents do not know their children well. Some children have a dual nature. In the presence of parents, they hide the bad behaviors learned from friends and the world. As soon as they find themselves away from their parents, they expose the second nature that they have acquired. Someone who finds his child showing this kind of latent life may not even recognize the child.

Humphrey M. Waweru<sup>21</sup> who has researched in the Secondary School of Insiaya country in Kenya has found many moral depravities within schools even though the school chaplaincy

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<sup>19</sup> J. A. Hadfield, *L'enfance et l'adolescence. Psychologie normale et pathologique* (Paris : Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1966), 84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>21</sup> Humphrey M. Waweru, “Chaplaincy and Behavior Change of Students in Church Sponsored Public Secondary Schools Insiaya County, Kenya” *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 23, Issue 6, Ver. 5 (Jun 2018): 47-56.

exists there. The case here is similar to that of the children of the Secondary School of FATEB who are of different backgrounds. The entrance of children does not take into account their religious affiliation. The worldview of African youth is shaped by the idea of their aspiration for emancipation. This leads to the negative influence of the socio-political life on African youth.

## **B. The socio-political context of African States**

After the different periods experienced by the African continent such as slavery, negritude, colonization, and neocolonialism, the mentalities of African leaders have undergone many changes. They are dominated by materialism, selfishness, individualism, and greed copied from the Westerners. The behavior of African leaders has implications for young Africans thinking. I am taking into account two aspects of the shady management of African leaders acting on the youth perspective.

### **1. Social context**

African states, especially those of Sub-Saharan Africa, are far behind the Western and American states in terms of economic and development. Following the untimely exploitation and industrial quantity of African resources. This is at their profit and that of accomplice African leaders. The gap between the rich and the poor is very deep. Leaders do not create enough jobs for the youth. Most of the young people are supported by their parents even when they are already at full age. Youth, which was at the center of the traditional African societies, is no longer at the central place in Africa.

The bad side of these findings is that the youth has no occupation and lives in deplorable social conditions. Young people will be tempted to lead antisocial life. Sometimes African youth are wrongly accused of being lazy and destructive. Whereas they are at the age of being responsible, they do have not a job and cannot meet their needs and desires; they are tempted to make use of any opportunity to remedy their situation.

### **2. Political context**

The policy of the African States in most cases is at the service of Leaders and not Nations. Nowadays, what is common in most African countries is that leaders promise to give work, training, and change of any kind to the people. But practically it is not the case. This sad reality is noted by Abbink: “When we look more closely at African politics in the postcolonial era, we see that it was marked by the immobility and the monopolizing behavior of the ruling elites, supported by intimidation often surrealistic and ruthless”.<sup>22</sup>

The worst case is that political parties have a violent reaction to certain situations. In many situations, political opponents also manipulate young people in popular uprisings. Young people are the first people to break down and destroy some public and community assets.

I can give the example of the military-political crisis in the CAR between 2012 and 2016 that has left irreparable consequences until today. The rebellion Seleka<sup>23</sup> The coalition reached the political power with a great deal of violence and exactions, prompting the anti-balaka<sup>24</sup> response. These armed groups were composed of the majority of young people. The policy of

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<sup>22</sup> Abbink, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Seleka is the alliance of Muslim rebellion factions that had fought since 2012 civilians and democratic power.

<sup>24</sup> Anti machete, which is the Central African people's uprising against the Seleka rebellion coalition.

most African states is the exploitation of young people for the interest of Leaders but not for the promotion of young people. The political worldview of youth is that young people think they can easily succeed in life by being friends and obeying political leaders.

These examples show that recourse to conflict is one of the most frequent responses to a situation of stagnation and a lack of prospects. There is also an element of revenge involved. The rebels of the younger generation, through looting and violence, consciously take back what they consider to have been monopolized by the older generation, often even by their leaders and close relatives.<sup>25</sup> The last challenge that is worth mentioning is globalization, an ideology comparable to neocolonialism that sneaks everything in its path.

### **C. Globalization**

Regarding the challenges of globalization, I quote this relevant statement from Abbink saying:

Globalization and the hegemonic processes emanating from the contemporary global system also affect African societies - politically and economically, but also socially and culturally. The strengths of the continent (minerals, raw materials, wildlife, art objects, etc.) are siphoned in a predatory and uncontrolled way, its production capacity slowed down and taken in relations of persistent inequality in capitalism resuscitated capitalism, and African norms and values are declared irrelevant or harmful, according to a long tradition of discourse alienating Africa, both from the Islamic world and from the Western world. These processes are often actively supported by the existing African political elites.<sup>26</sup>

Globalization is understood as the ideology according to which Westerners think that all cultural barriers and segregations are falling down and that they are witnessing free trade at all levels.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the world is considered as a village. In my opinion, this change is much more beneficial to Westerners than to Africans. European ideologies are quickly conveyed to every nook and cranny of African states. African culture is discouraged as old-fashioned and traditional. However, Western ideologies move without major obstacles in Africa. Youths are also won by this illusion.

Traditional African values for the education and moralization of youth are abandoned while Westerners' ways are adopted. The African youth is left without a reference and he does not know which model to follow. He or she lives in a mixture of cultures that sometimes do not correspond to African realities. The tools for Western globalization are the Internet, the iPad iPhone, and Television. I am aware of the positive aspects of these tools, but they should be used with precaution.

Homosexuality, crime, sexual immorality, individualism, and other vices that Africa knows today are freely conveyed through these tools. Since the youth of the world is one of the misdeeds of globalization, and with its taste for the future and imitation, it will embrace all the products of globalization without reservation. I can say that one of the visions of the world of

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<sup>25</sup> Abbink, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> Obioha Uwaezuoke Precious, "Globalization and the future of African Culture". *Philosophical Papers and Reviews* Vol. 2 (Apr 2010): 1-8.



African youth is to be European in all its practices. By doing this, African youth neglect African values and lead to life in two phases.

#### **D. Cultural norms**

African cultural norms, especially in Central Africa bereave especially girls and women to the detriment of boys and men. M'jid looked at the question of the gender concept to identify some dysfunctions in Africa on the treatment of women. He states that:

The unequal power relations between men and women, both public and private, and patriarchal norms persist in many countries and regions and within a single country. The patriarchal structures of these societies mean that women play a subordinate role concerning men and do not always enjoy the same rights as men, even if they are legally entitled to them. Girls in these societies are simply considered to be less valuable than boys, who are privileged in terms of education and heritage. Despite the laws and awareness-raising, traditional practices harmful to girls persist in many African countries, such as early marriages, and female genital mutilation. The enrollment of poor and/or rural girls, especially in secondary education, remains relatively low. The 2013-2014 Global Monitoring Report on Education for All predicts that the next century will require all girls in the poorest families in sub-Saharan Africa to complete lower secondary education.<sup>28</sup>

This quotation shows how ladies and girls in some African areas are not valued. In the next part, it is important to address the education strategy of African youth in the light of the Word of God, taking into account contemporary challenges and the African context.

### **III. THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION**

The education of a child has great importance to Africans in general because of his worldview. This will inevitably jeopardize the future of our states. God's recommendation in Proverbs 22: 6 deserves to be welcomed for a better future in Africa.

Religious instruction can be seen as a bridge between the church and school or society. On Sundays, the children meet at the church and are guided by the Bible messages of the servants of God and the Sunday School Masters. On working days they meet with Religious Instructors to help them remember Bible teachings from the church. Besides, students constitute a unique target group with easily identifiable ambitions and characteristics, which will enable sharp teaching for their category.

#### **A. The task of the Religious Instructors**

According to Norman, the Chaplain "holds a mandate that is both educational and religious. On the other hand, the Chaplain is also mandated ... to be the hands and face of Jesus who came so that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10)."<sup>29</sup> In comparison to FATEB Secondary School, the Religious Instructors do not work full time.

#### **1. The profile of the Religious Instructors**

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<sup>28</sup> Najat Maalla M'jid, « La jeunesse, avenir du continent africain » (Jan 2015), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> James E. Norman, "Personal difficulties and educational underachievement: The contribution of pastoral care and school Chaplaincy". *Irish Educational Studies*, 21:1 (2002), 33-46.

Since the creation of the FATEB Secondary School, this ministry has been provided by Pastors who have received biblical or theological training. In addition to training, the character of the Pastor is also indispensable because he is supposed to transmit the teaching to children in a theoretical and practical way based on his person.

The history of the Religious Instructors could be summarized. At the very beginning, the secondary school had benefited from the support of Christian teachers, who played the role of Religious Instructors. It means the first Religious Instructors were committed Christians. Then, it was Pastors of Post Graduate Diploma in Theology that have assumed this responsibility. But now they are Pastors of Bachelor Degrees, Master of divinity, and currently a Doctorate of Ministry Instructors.

## **2. The role of the Religious Instructors**

The role played by pastors in the FATEB Secondary School is not school chaplaincy as such, but it is the dispensation of the religious instruction course. They are sometimes assisted by the Chaplain of FATEB Seminary, the one in charge of the University levels. Sometimes, some teachers who have some Christian witnesses pray with the students during their teachings and give them advice.

### **B. The course of Religious Instruction**

The course content is not Religious Instruction<sup>30</sup> as indicated by the title. I think it is a good thing to avoid religious discussions. At this level, Religious Instructors introduce the interreligious dialogue, which requires wisdom not to discourage followers of other religions. The course taught is Biblical Instruction. The administration gives two hours of religious instruction per session and week. The coefficient is two.

The religious instruction activities took place in two levels within the FATEB Secondary School during the academic year 2018-2019. The first level included worship by the Chaplain of the FATEB Seminary is a weekly meeting. This worship is held every Tuesday at 6:30 am before school hours. This worship is intended for all students of the FATEB Secondary School. The Seminary Chaplain is the leader of the service. He always delivers the Gospel to the students. Sometimes the Chaplain appointed a Secondary School Chaplain who can substitute him for the Gospel. During these times of worship, participation is encouraged by directing students to pray or direct hymns. During this time, the Seminary Chaplain can exchange with some students on different subjects and he prays with some of them on various subjects.

The second level consists of the course in classrooms like other courses that are officially recommended by the Department of National Education. As soon as the Religious Instructor enters the classroom, he is greeted by students like other teachers. He begins his teaching with prayer, revises, and discusses the lesson of the day, all in two hours. Student participation is encouraged. They are sometimes asked to pray, memorize Bible verses, and answer some Biblical questions.

Sometimes students raise questions of all kinds that the Religious Instructor is supposed to answer. They may request maintenance or prayer opportunities outside of class time. Some

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<sup>30</sup> I understand by Religious Instruction, a course that generally addresses the majority of world religions. The teaching of such a course will be of no use for the FATEB Secondary School. Biblical Instruction, on the other hand, focuses specifically on the Bible. This allows Pastors to achieve the goal of the creation of FATEB by AEAM which is to transmit the Gospel teachings across Francophone Africa.

students talk about their family problems that require Religious Instructor mediation in the families.

There are times when demoniac manifestations arise in some children in Secondary School, in which case the Religious Instructor's prayer is automatically solicited to help the children who are victims.

If I compare it with other Secondary Schools where there are Chaplains, I realize that their task is more than what is described in FATEB Secondary School. Norman observes that: "the pastoral care offered by schools in these schools is of pastoral care and practice in the field of personal education and training."<sup>31</sup> Norman has listed 7 key elements of their role:

1. Counselling
2. Support for staff
3. Liturgy
4. Bereavement support
5. Intervening in discipline problems
6. Meeting & visiting parents
7. Hospital visits (Norman, 2002a)<sup>32</sup>

This is what FATEB's students are missing when the Religious Instructors' work is limited in the teaching in the classrooms.

### **C. The Contents of Biblical Instruction**

The content of spiritual formation is biblical. The observation of the annual program shows three parts. The first part exclusively doctrinal deals with the study of the sixty-six books of the Bible, angelology, the fall of human beings, redemption, eternal life, and eschatology. The second part deals with Christian life, new birth, sanctification, discipline, spiritual growth, sexuality, and walking with Christ. The third part is the biographical study of biblical characters such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Daniel, Joseph, Paul, Timothy, Sara, Esther, Mary, and so forth. The Biblical Instruction course is based on the biblical worldview. This last part is important because the Religious Instructor is obliged to answer the different questions raised by science courses about the origin of human beings and philosophy about the existence of God. According to the Seminary Chaplain, the content of the students' training targets biblical piety and academic excellence as well. He says: I urge the Administrators and teachers to help us because Christian schools like Catholic School Associate in the CAR that I know offer a regular education on honesty for children to succeed without fraud.<sup>33</sup>

In the interview that the Chaplain gave, he suggested two more things that the FATEB Administration should do. He requests that "the service delivered by the Religious Instructor, he wishes the Religious Instructors not to be part-time but full-time servants in the Secondary

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<sup>31</sup> Norman

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Information provided by the Pastor Christopher Rabarioelina, FATEB University Chaplain in Bangui, 11/09/2019.

School. He says that the work of School Chaplaincy can be done beyond the hours of the course through interviews and prayers with the children according to the situation”.

I note that this observation is consistent with Jesus’ training methodology which was not in a freeze, but also with practical lessons on the ground. Tangara<sup>34</sup> states that the Gospels teach the importance that Jesus gave to children in his earthly ministry. At a time when the child had no place in the religious and sacred things reserved for elders and adults, which explains better the reluctance of the disciples in front of those who wanted to present their children to Jesus. The master opposes his indignation as if to say that the children also needed his affection, his love, and that he came for them (Luke 18: 15-16).

From the foregoing, I can recap that in addition to the classical training at FATEB Secondary School, contact with students outside of class hours is essential for balanced training.

#### **D. Difficulties**

The major difficulty faced by the Religious Instructors of the FATEB Secondary School is technical. In other disciplines such as science, literature, and other courses teachers are trained at the Normal Teacher’s Training School. They receive all the techniques to teach their subjects. The Pedagogical Advisers elaborate the detailed plan by discipline. Teachers learn how to teach the lesson, how to introduce the lesson, how to assess students, etc. On the other hand, the Pastors recruited by the Secondary School to teach the Religious Instruction Course are trained to feed the flocks of God and lead the church. However, the School Administration expects from the Pastors, and teachers of Religious Instruction the application of a methodology like the other teachers. This sometimes leads to disagreements between the Pastor Instructors of Religious Instruction and the Administration of the FATEB Secondary School.

At this level, Bosch's mutation theory is encouraging. In his theory of paradigm mutations, Bosch applies the theories of Hans Küng who considers that the entire history of Christianity can be organized into six main paradigms. He explains that during each period, Christians of the time have their particular understanding of Christian faith and Bosch adds that their understanding of the Christian mission is specific.<sup>35</sup> Küng expresses that: Science does not progress cumulatively, but rather by revolution. Indeed, he says, problem-solving is not found in the accumulation of knowledge and research. On the contrary, it is due to the revolutions that occur when a few individuals begin to foresee reality in a qualitatively different way from those of their predecessors or contemporaries in the field of the natural sciences.<sup>36</sup>

As a result, improving the efficiency of School Chaplaincy in FATEB Secondary School could occur “when at first some theologians perceive the modern reality differently from their predecessors or contemporaries. Then they start searching for a new structure that can replace the old model or the old paradigm”.<sup>37</sup>

In the following subsection, the impact of chaplaincy in FATEB Secondary School will be dealt with. To achieve this goal, data was collected primarily through interviews with staff

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel Tangara, “L’éducation des enfants de familles chrétiennes en milieu Bamanan” (Master thesis in theology, defended at FATEB in 1990), 29.

<sup>35</sup> David J. Bosch, *Dynamique de la mission chrétienne* (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 242.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 245.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

members, teachers, and students using an interview guide. More data were also collected through observation and document review.

#### **IV. THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE FATEB SECONDARY SCHOOL**

The impact of religious instruction in the FATEB Secondary School is positive, according to the coordinator of the FATEB Pedagogical Institution. Since the Secondary School enrollment is not based on the criterion of religion or conduct, the Coordinator notes that children from other schools behave positively a little time after registration. From interviews I have had, the impact of religious instruction can be presented in three parts: Spiritual, Moral, and Social.

##### **A. The spiritual impact**

The first impact noted is on the spiritual aspect. It is about conversion to the Christian faith, commitment to Christian life, and prayer.

##### **1. The conversion**

The conversion is explained by the fact that during the course in a classroom, some students call upon the Religious Instructors to show what they can do to truly become children of God. In that case, the children are led by prayer to personally invite Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior. Another testimony to confirm that the religious instruction course is not in a vacuum is a Muslim's request to have his own Bible, which was given to him by the Religious Instructor. Some children also feel the need to have their own Bible for a personal relationship with God.

##### **2. Commitment to Christian life**

The commitment to Christian life is noted by the interviewees. They report that some children have God's fear. A parent of a student testifies that his son passed the entrance test to the Catholic boarding school. At the end of the test, the father asked his opinion about it. The child confirmed that his education in religious instruction at the school helped him a lot during the exam. The change in mentality and behavior is also noted in the lives of these students.

##### **3. The commitment to the prayer life**

The commitment to prayer life is the testimony of students' parents. Some confirm the change in their children's lives after enrollment in Secondary school. These children pray before eating, before sleeping, and sometimes for parents who are in need. These children believe that prayer to God can change things positively.

##### **B. The moral impact**

On a moral level, the teaching of religious instruction in FATEB Secondary School answers some of the questions raised in other disciplines on sexuality, freedom, behavior, ethics, aesthetics, and others. An 18-year-old girl, according to a Religious Instructor's testimony, claims to be a virgin. According to Bitrus, this girl's conduct is an ideal that is rare nowadays due to the impacts of modernity in Africa.<sup>38</sup> This student then received additional instructions from the Religious Instructor to lead a life of abstinence until her marriage. During the course, some boys and girls pray to respect the word of God by keeping their virginity. Those who are sexually active ask God's forgiveness and repent.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibrahim S. Bitrus, "Globalizing Impact of Modernity in Africa." *Journal of Globalization Studies*, Vol. 8 N<sup>o</sup>. 2, (Nov 2017): 68–83.

Others testified how they fell into the drug life by drinking and committing sexual immorality. Most of those who have testified to these sins have promised to abandon it. When the Religious Instructor was wondering if the teaching was understood, he asked the children if they understood it. One child gave the example of good action from his father to show that they understood the Religious Instructor's intent. The child explains that his father is employed as a driver in a service. A few days after starting work, he went out for shopping with his boss. This later to leave a lot of money in the car. His father saw this and he kept it without touching anything. He handed all the money back to his boss. This behavior has marked his boss. From this day, the boss would send his driver shopping at the bank, and shopping without worry, because the boss recognizes the loyalty of his driver. The child concludes by saying that this is what the Religious Instructor expects to see in the lives of children in their working lives.

### **C. The social impact**

The Central African youth is without a reference because it has been diverted by the behavior of the politicians and the workers of the State. The course focuses on the future life of children as contributors to the reconstruction of the Central African nation and Africa in general.

The FATEB Pedagogical Institution is still a new one, so there are not many children with enough information about the implications of children's lives in social life. If not, the change of mentality emphasized in the moral impact goes hand in hand with the social impact. The Coordinator of the FATEB Pedagogic Institution has even stressed that children must leave spiritually mature to help the Central African society.

It is at this level that FATEB Secondary School students are expected to put into practice the Lord Jesus' recommendations to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5: 13-16). Their activities in social life will lead to conversions of their fellows and their lives will serve as a showcase for Central African society. I would like to end this work with some suggestions to improve the contribution of religious instruction at the FATEB Secondary School.

### **V. SUGGESTIONS**

The study of the Contribution of Religious Instruction to the Contemporary Challenges of Central African Youth: A Case Study of FATEB Secondary School has allowed me to see that the Central African youth faces many challenges. The impact of religious instruction in the lives of FATEB Secondary School students is to be encouraged. But much remains to be done by all the actors involved in the holistic evangelization and training of these children.

Indeed, the future of the nation and the church depends largely on the quality of the ministry accomplished in the lives of these children. A former President of the Central African Republic, Andre Kolingba said: "Youth is the future of the country and we should not turn our back to the future of our country. A country without a dynamic, conscious, and responsible youth is condemned to its withering away".<sup>39</sup>

By analyzing this quotation, I find out that the ministry of Religious Instructors among Central African youth needs to be considered seriously. This task is the responsibility of the Seminary's Administration, the FATEB Secondary School Administration, and the School Religious Instructors. To each entity, I present the responsibilities and recommendations.

#### **A. The Seminary's Administration**

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<sup>39</sup> Andre Kolingba, A former President of the Central African Republic *Citations*, (Paris: Hatier, 1988), 80.

## 1. Responsibilities

Mwambazambi illustrates the Mission of the Church as a bird with two wings: one represents the spiritual wing and the other the social wing.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the work done by AEAM through the creation of FATEB for the training of African Servants of God to evangelize Africa is a good thing. Besides, the Administration at FATEB has done well to accompany the evangelical work with the social component which consists of the creation of the Secondary School. However, the Administration should not be content with only the financial income provided by the school. The evangelization of students and their formation as disciples of Jesus should be the concern of the Seminary's Administration.

## 2. Recommendations

I recommend that the FATEB Administration include in the criteria for recruiting administrative and teaching staff in Secondary Schools the "Christian testimony". The Secondary School Administrators should be committed evangelicals. Teachers should present a good Christian testimony. This is how the staff will contribute to the Religious Instructor's actions for the conversion and discipleship of the students.

The FATEB Administration should hold a meeting with the Administrative and Teaching staff at the beginning of the school year to show them the vision and mission of FATEB. Also, showing the expectations of the FATEB towards the staff.

The FATEB Administration, through the University Chaplain, should work in symbiosis to evangelize the children of the FATEB Secondary School. To do this, FATEB Secondary School Religious Instructors should work full-time like the FATEB staff. Also the financial support of Religious Instructors should be reviewed by the FATEB Administration. Lastly, the Administration should provide Religious Instructors with a room that serves as an office. This office will allow Religious Instructors to receive children, listen to them confidently, and pray for them.

## B. The FATEB Secondary School Administration

### 1. Responsibilities

The FATEB Secondary School Administration should present the FATEB ideologies represented in its mandate. Through the life of the administration staff, should seek to achieve this goal, knowing that training is not only intellectual but also spiritual and moral.

### 2. Recommendations

Since administration staff members and the Religious Instructors work for the cause of one Master, there should be cohesion among them. The administrative and teaching staff should combine their efforts with those of the Religious Instructors for the application of the discipline within the FATEB Secondary School.

The biblical conception of education shows that instruction and correction in love are indispensable for a good education. Love and discipline go hand in hand. If one of them is missing, the education of a child suffers unbalance. True discipline is not simply about

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<sup>40</sup> Kalembe Mwambazambi, "Mission and Theology of Prosperity", Interdisciplinary Symposium held at FATEB, Bangui in 2011.

punishing disobedience or temporarily regulating the situations of the moment, but it is about making the child a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus.

### **C. Religious Instructors**

#### **1. Responsibilities**

The biggest task is that of the Religious Instructors of the FATEB Secondary School. Their responsibilities can be combined in two parts: the proclamation of the Gospel for the conversion of children and the training of children as disciples of Jesus Christ (Mat.28. 19-20). Teaching Religious Instruction takes place in the school setting, Religious Instructors should be up to this task. So, they should be well prepared spiritually and professionally.

#### **2. Recommendations**

The recommendations made to Religious Instructors can be categorized into two parts. First of all, the educational programs that are used should aim at the conversion of children to have faith in Jesus afterward, the edification and sanctification of these children. Secondly, all contemporary challenges of Central African youth should find a response in teachings. These are issues related to the nature of youth, the issues raised by the socio-political context, the impact of globalization, and the gender issue. The teaching should be transformative not only intellectual.

Finally, the integration of manual or Christian service activities in the program should be useful for the education of children at FATEB Secondary School. This is to be considered in their view of the notion of service to the world, which is part of the responsibilities of the Christian.

### **CONCLUSION**

FATEB is an institution created by AEAM to promote evangelical theology. Having found that the education of children should accompany that of their parents at the faculty and ladies' school, the FATEB Pedagogical Institution was created for an integral training of the families of the servants of God. The FATEB Pedagogical Institution is made up of three levels: Nursery, Primary and Secondary School. About the FATEB Secondary School, religious instruction is integrated to help the Secondary School reach the vision and mission of the AEAM. However, Central African youth trained by FATEB Secondary School face many challenges that Religious Instructors should address. After the assessment of the ministry of Religious Instructors in the FATEB Secondary School, I see that much remains to be done. It is the responsibility of the FATEB Administration, the FATEB Secondary School Administration, and the FATEB Secondary School Religious Instructors.

My concern in writing this work is to encourage the FATEB Administration, the FATEB Secondary School Administration to take to heart the ministry of gospel communication in the FATEB Secondary School as a recommendation of the Lord Jesus to his disciples that must not be neglected. Schooling is a way FATEB can use to respond to the Mission of the Church (Matthew 28: 19-20). This task, as described above, is heavy. Through the prayer, discipline, and exemplary life of all involved in the process, the expectations will be a success by God's grace.

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