

## **Impact of School Massification on the Professional Commitment of Teachers of Public Primary Schools in Kara, Togo**

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Article History: Received on 13 November 2023, Revised on 30 December 2023,  
Published on 31 January 2024

**Abstract:** In its efforts to provide a constant response to the various international education meetings and the requirements of Technical and Financial partners, Togo has adopted new educational policies. Preschool and primary education have now been free since 2008. This free education leads to school massification which influences the professional commitment of teachers. This article starts from the postulate according to which school massification negatively influences the professional commitment of teachers. The aim is therefore to analyze the influence of school massification on the social commitment of teachers in public primary schools in the town of Kara. To do this, a survey was carried out among 129 teachers chosen at random from 11 schools in the city. The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The results show that the sample is predominantly male (59%), the average age is 35 years old. The population surveyed (n=129) is mainly a BAC II graduate (n=61) and young (n=73). Teachers believe that free primary school is a source of their unease. Their professional disengagement, which is a consequence of school massification, emanates from this new policy. On the one hand, it creates insufficient infrastructure and a lack of teachers and on the other hand, it has a negative impact on the quality of academic performance.

**Keywords:** Incidence, Professional Commitment, Public Primary Schools, School Massification, Teachers

### **A. Introduction**

The latest international meetings on Education for All (Jomtien 1990, Dakar 2000, EPT 2014, Incheon 2015) including the new political, social, demographic, economic and cultural realities of African countries have forced their decision-makers to think about school, its mission and its organization. In this perspective, the majority of African states have made preschool free; primary and even upper secondary education. This is the case of Togo which wants to allow all children of school age. Following these reforms, classes experienced demographic growth with an average of 53 students per

teacher in primary schools, whereas in the past the average number was only 40 students (Mukankunzi, 2006).

Following the education reform promulgated by Ordinance No. 16 of May 6, 1975, Togo affirmed its desire to make education and training one of its priorities. The objectives of this reform were to achieve a truly democratic school, offering equal opportunities to all citizens (in order to make them more efficient, more profitable) and adapted to the realities of the country. It is in 2008 that this aspect of the reform will become effective. From now on, free preschool and primary education is a reality in Togo. However, it triggers school massification with an enrollment rate increasing from 98% in 2008 to 126.8% in 2018, i.e. 10 years later (MEPSFP, 2013). School massification, already a consequence of this new policy, will in turn generate several consequences including unsuitable infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, classroom disorder, noise, etc. which are factors in the internal inefficiency of educational systems in developing countries (Sedzro, 2009). The "internal inefficiency of the African school system is probably worse than anywhere else" (Njaman, 1972). The insufficiency and unsuitability of reception structures due to overstaffing constitute headaches for managers of African education systems. We note, in fact, the capacities of the reception infrastructures of establishments which do not increase proportionally with the increase in the number of students. This situation poses a particular problem in schools where there are overcrowded rooms with more than 50 students (Nakpakpere, 2018). This situation creates enormous difficulties for educational actors, particularly teachers, in carrying out their duties, thereby causing disengagement.

This article starts from the hypothesis that school massification negatively influences the professional commitment of teachers. In this work, it is a question of analyzing the impact of school massification on the professional commitment of teachers in the city of Kara.

## **B. Methods**

This study took place in the town of Kara. Data were collected from teachers of public primary schools (EPP) of Tchaloudè, Agnaram, Tomdè, Tchintchinda, Kara Centrale, Dongoyo, Yéouda, Kpéda, Lama-Feing, Landja and the demonstration school using questionnaires, semi-structured and a semi-directive interview guide. The questionnaire on teachers' professional commitment covered the following sections: socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, their knowledge of school massification, their opinion regarding rigorous practices and their experience in classrooms with students.

To carry out this study, we initially focused on collecting student numbers in order to measure the teacher/student ratio; and secondly, the administration of the

questionnaires. It was then necessary to conduct interviews with teachers in order to complete the quantitative results in order to better explain the observed trends.

This study involved 129 teachers working in public primary schools in Kara Town. This sample is made up of 59% men and 41% women. Sixty-five other teachers were interviewed using the interview guide in order to collect information relating to school massification and teacher/student interactions in the context of overcrowded classes. This qualitative method thus made it possible to complete the data collected during the survey with the questionnaire from the 129 teachers. A specific documentary analysis of reports, articles, dissertations and theses on school massification and commitment was carried out in order to assess the scientific value of the statements made by the respondents.

This research takes an empirical approach following an explanatory and comprehensive logic of the phenomenon of school massification in Togo. After collecting the data in the field, we processed the responses using Excel. The data was analyzed through PSS and AMOS. With a view to testing the initial hypothesis against the facts. Some tables and graphs are retained for analysis on the basis of percentages in a commentary following the results they present. For the qualitative analysis, the main ideas were grouped into similar themes.

Regarding the analysis of empirical data, we rely on the constructivism of Piaget (1923) and the socio-constructivism of Vygotsky (1934) which respectively considers equilibration as a main factor in the development of intelligence and attributes a role central to the child's sociocultural interactions and experiences in the formation of thought. In a social constructivist context, the construction of new human capacities takes place first on the intersychic level; adult-child collaboration, along with the transmission of knowledge, constitutes the central element of the educational process (Gauthier & Tardif, 2005). So, from this perspective, knowledge comes neither from the subject alone nor from the object alone, but results from their constructive interaction. This is the case of teaching where student/teacher interaction should be promoted to the detriment of the social distance that is created in order to promote teaching.

Before presenting the results that have been achieved, it is essential to know the characteristics of the population studied. The target population consists only of teachers from public primary schools in the town of Kara. To construct our sample, we opted for the probabilistic choice of respondents and, out of one hundred and twenty-nine (129) teachers, we have 76 men and 53 women. The sample is made up of 59% men and 41% women. Teachers aged between 21 and 30 make up 18% of the sample, or 22 teachers. Those between 31 and 40 years old represent 27%, or a total of 35. Those aged 41 to 50 years old constitute 29%. Note that this age group is the dominant one in our sample; those aged 51 and over include 34 teachers, or 26%. They have variously acquired certificates and diplomas giving rise to teaching. Of this

sample, 33% have the BEPC level; 12% BAC 1 level; 44% BAC 2 level; 7% bachelor level; 2% master's level and 2% who have passed the Professional Aptitude Certificate (CAP). These teachers essentially come together in two distinct statuses. On the one hand, 9% of teachers are volunteers and 91% others are state civil servant teachers. According to experience, 26% of the teachers interviewed have 5 years of service, then 22% of this sample have experience between 6 and 10 years. 52%, or the majority of the workforce (68 teachers) have more than 10 years of experience. This research, with a statistical perspective, is also part of the logic of understanding and explanation. To do this, the mixed use of qualitative and quantitative methods was favored. After collecting the data in the field, the SPSS data processing software was used to carry out the processing and analysis and interpretation of the statistical tables. The processing of the collected data made it possible to obtain the results which are presented in the following section.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results of this research devoted to the study of the impact of school massification on the professional commitment of teachers.

#### **School massification in the town of Kara**

In the town of Kara we see that for most classes, the number is greater than 50 students per teacher (Nakpakpere, 2018) "Free public primary education has greatly contributed to maintaining this development. The number of students/teacher ratio still remains very high in the public sector compared to other levels of education. It is 57 in the public, 31 in denominational establishments (Catholic and Protestant) and only 27 in the secular private sector. » (DRE Kara, 2016). The table below presented explicitly shows the teacher/student ratio in schools in the city of Kara. From this table we can conclude whether there is massification or not in primary education.

**Table 1. Student Numbers in Some Public Primary Schools in the Town of Kara By Class**

| Schools           | Classes |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                   | CP1     | CP2 | CE1 | CE2 | CM1 | CM2 |
| EPP Tchaloudè     | 83      | 98  | 62  | 80  | 60  | 61  |
| EPP Agnaram       | 69      | 56  | 58  | 56  | 47  | 50  |
| EPP Tomdè         | 64      | 58  | 55  | 70  | 55  | 47  |
| EPP Tchintchinda  | 65      | 41  | 43  | 52  | 51  | 52  |
| EPP Kara Centrale | 64      | 56  | 54  | 53  | 65  | 58  |
| EPP Dongoyo       | 65      | 58  | 78  | 59  | 43  | 42  |

This table above demonstrates that the enrollment of the schools presented far exceeds the ratio planned by UNESCO (2010) for which the size of a class should not exceed 30 students.

### **Impacts of School Massification on the Professional Commitment of Teachers**

Teachers encounter difficulties in their professional engagement processes and these difficulties are influenced by school massification.

**Table 2. Effect of School Massification on Teacher Commitment**

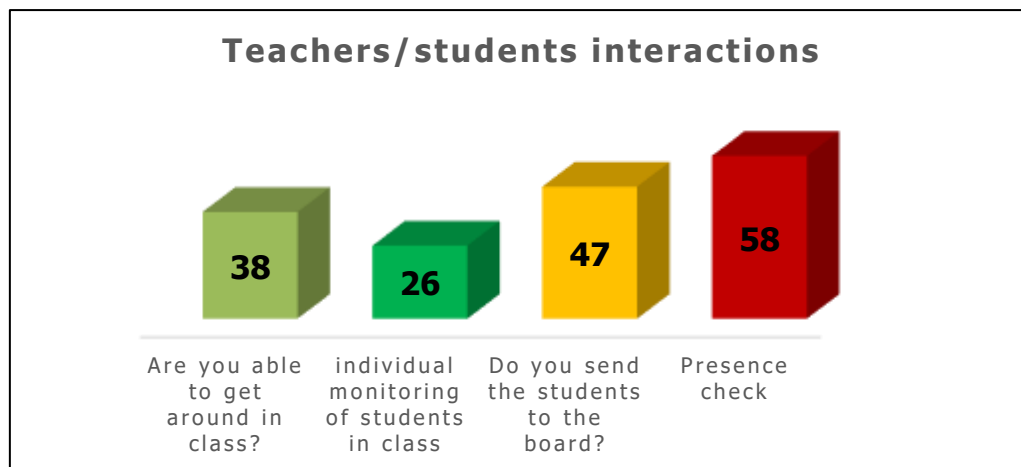
|              | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|
| Fatigue      | 27        | 41.5       | 41.5                  |
| Demotivation | 32        | 49.2       | 90.8                  |
| Stress       | 5         | 7.7        | 98.5                  |
| Other (s)    | 1         | 1.5        | 100.0                 |
| Total        | 65        | 100.0      |                       |

Analysis of the data in table no. 2. 27, or 41.5%, affirm that the excess number of students makes them tired; 32 others, the majority, attest that this phenomenon is demotivating. 5 respondents, or 7.7%, specified that this phenomenon was stressful. The analysis of these results shows that school massification has a negative effect on the professional commitment of teachers in different aspects as evidenced by the comments of this CM1 teacher: Overstaffing prevents us from being more successful in the APC. For example, the technical arrangement of the table-benches prevents teachers from moving freely through the rows to see what the students are doing; look at yourself, how can you imagine that a teacher could pass between these rows? We spend all our time demanding silence. Here it's even better. Go to CE and you will see how teachers suffer. And especially since the stick is banned it has become rubbish. While you are lecturing students are fighting in class, you drop what you are doing to handle these cases first. It's really difficult.

These difficulties encountered by teachers affect the climate of relationships between them and their students. Interactions between teachers and students define the professional engagement discussed in this study.

### **Teacher/student interaction**

Professional commitment arises on the one hand from interactions between teachers and students. These interactions are presented in the following figure.



**Figure 1. Interaction between Students and Teachers**

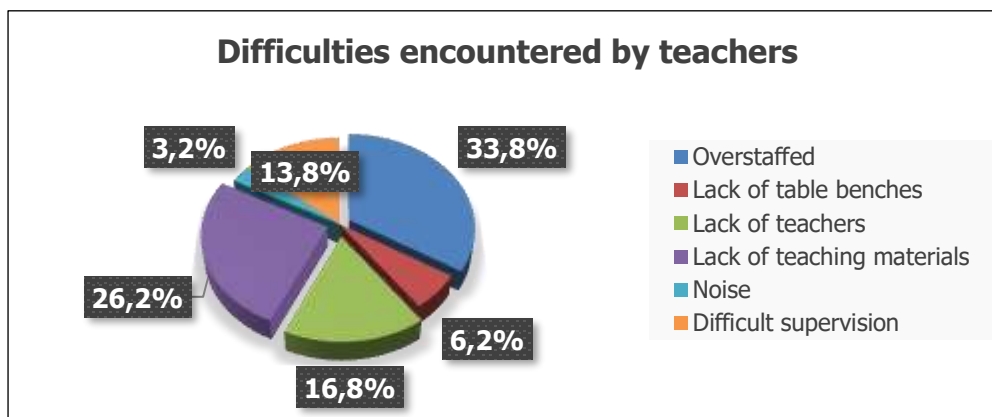
Looking at this graph presented below, it should be said that interactions between students and teachers are not favorable and tend to disappear due to overcrowding. More than half of the students surveyed say that they are unable to move between the benches in class, nor are they able to follow the students individually. Apart from the fact that students are not regularly sent to the board to do the exercises because of their numbers, attendance checks are not also carried out, say all the respondents who answered “yes” to this question. Teacher/student interactions are almost absent. The teachers race to keep up with the program and the students are abandoned to their fate (whatever they can). A fourth-grade teacher made these comments regarding the correction of homework and homework exercises: homework there if you have to do it every time hmmm! Often, we do not correct because there are a lot of notebooks to correct and the schedule is also busy, we have to do everything to finish the programs, we will prepare the sheets so our workload is multiple. It's not like in college where there is only one teacher for one subject. Sometimes we go to training on return to apply it, it's difficult. What we learned at ENI is not possible to all apply here because of the numbers there. Even a simple attendance check can take you 30 minutes.

Another CP1 teacher states that: The teacher is not a god; he cannot do magic to make all his students understand the lesson... I have 109 students; you can't even go around the aisles to see what the child is writing...

These comments collected from teachers teach us that their experiences with students every day are a lot of difficulties to overcome.

### **Difficulties caused by school massification**

With new reforms introduced into the school system, school today presents enormous difficulties. Many of these difficulties emanating from the plethora of students are presented below.



**Figure 2. Difficulties Encountered by Teachers**

According to the data contained in this graph, 33.8% of teachers identify overcrowding as their primary difficulty and 26.2%, the lack of teaching materials. For 6.2%, it is the lack of tables and benches for students, and according to 3.2% it is the noise. On the other hand, 16.9% encounter a lack of teachers as a difficulty and 13.8% find supervision very difficult. The sum of the difficulties presented constitutes an obstacle to the professional commitment of teachers. This is what the teachers themselves highlight through table 03. School massification has a negative impact on the professional commitment of teachers.

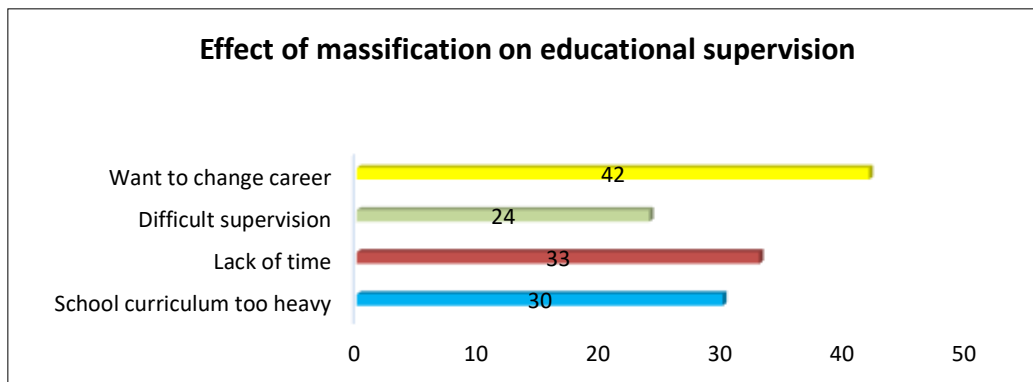
**Table 3. Effect of Massification on the Professional Commitment of Teachers**

|              | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Fatigue      | 27        | 41.5       | 41.5             | 41.5                  |
| Demotivation | 32        | 49.2       | 49.2             | 90.8                  |
| Stress       | 5         | 7.7        | 7.7              | 98.5                  |
| Other (s)    | 1         | 1.5        | 1.5              | 100.0                 |
| Total        | 65        | 100.0      | 100.0            |                       |

It appears from this table that 41.5% teachers attest that the excess number of students causes fatigue; 49.2%, or the majority, attest that this phenomenon is demotivating. 7.7% of respondents specified that this phenomenon stresses and develops an unconscious categorization of students. The positive emotions and complicity that exist between students and teachers in the classroom are the main factor linked to professional commitment.

### **Educational supervision with overflowing numbers**

The overcrowded numbers demonstrated above do not promote good educational supervision.



**Figure 3. Effect of Massification on Educational Supervision**

Out of 129 subjects surveyed, 42 believe they want to change profession or sector of activity under the impetus of mass education; for 24 subjects this phenomenon leads to difficult supervision, 33 others say they do not have the time to accomplish all the educational tasks and 30 other subjects surveyed admit that the programs are too heavy. Understanding all of the results presented requires analysis. These analyzes are presented as follows.

**Factor analyzes of professional commitment**

The analyzes are carried out according to the results obtained. And for a better understanding of the results, we used Robert Klassen's commitment measurement scale (2013).

**Table 4. Factorization Coefficient of the Scale Items**

| KMO and Bartlett's Test                             |                        |          |
|---|------------------------|----------|
| Measurement of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Accuracy |                        | .883     |
|   | Approximate chi-square | 1393.243 |
| Bartlett's Sphericity Test                          | Ddf                    | 70       |
|   | Meaning of the test.   | .000     |

This table attests to the results of the Bartlett tests and that of the KMO carried out on all the items which measure the professional commitment variable. The results appear satisfactory. Indeed, the analysis reveals an index of the KMO test which displays a value greater than 0.5 (KMO=0.883), and the Bartlett test displays a satisfactory chi-square index (chi-square=0.000).

The regression analysis drawn up in the following table presents the indices of simple linear regression, characteristic of the link between school massification and the social commitment of teachers. Since  $t(1.790) = 17.49$  with  $p < .001$ , we can affirm that school



massification is associated with social engagement. Any variation in school massification would therefore have negative effects on social engagement.

**Table 5. Link Between Educational Massification and Professional Commitment**

| Model   | Sum of squares | ddl            | Average of squares | D.     | Sign. |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
| Regression  | 42010.054      | 1              | 42010.054          | 305.87 | .000a |
| Residue   | 108461.901     | 790            |                    |        |       |
| Total   | 150471.955     | 791            |                    |        |       |
| a. Independent Variable: (constancy) School Massification, b. Dependent Variable: Social engagement |                |                |                    |        |       |
|   | HAS            | Standard error | Beta               | t      | Sign. |
| (Constance)   | 19,757         | 1,265          |                    | 15,614 | .000  |
| Effective   | .817           | .047           | .528               | 17,492 | .000  |
| a. Dependent Variable: 1. Social engagement, **   |                |                |                    |        |       |

Table 5 shows that school massification and social engagement have statistically significant relationships. This relationship is confirmed by linear regression analysis. This confirms the hypothesis according to which school massification influences the social commitment of teachers.

At the end of the study, the results obtained reveal that the professional commitment of teachers is influenced in part by school massification. In some public schools still, students are seated three, four, or even five per bench, taking into account their build and, in others, on the floor (Nakpakpere, 2018). There are some for whom the bricks serve as benches and their legs the table on which they place their notebooks to write (Sedzro, 2009). This situation demotivates the teacher. He is no longer happy once in class because of the routine every day. A social distance is established between him and his students. Finishing the program and resting becomes his only goal. Student achievement and teaching quality are minor concerns, especially when it hardly affects one's salary. The work environment is now hostile to him to the point where the teacher is regularly absent. The lack of commitment of teachers is seen in their attitudes and particularly in their classroom activities with students.

To show that school massification has an impact on their professional commitment, teachers demonstrate behaviors which denote the absence of an emotional feeling. Thus, when faced with actions that meet with the approval of teachers, the latter grant few rewards and offer almost no congratulations to the students. These extracts from the speeches explain better: *"like any good dad, sometimes we want to give gifts to students who react well during the lesson but given their numbers this is not possible. Even moving around the rows to see what the students are doing remains a current difficulty* » (Interview with a CE1 teacher, EPP Tchaloudè (2018).

A head of establishment who was outraged by the behavior of some of his colleagues expressed himself in these terms: in the face of certain actions which dissatisfy

teachers, particularly linked to academic difficulties, instead of the advice and guidance that the teacher should, as a good parent, provide to students in order to encourage them to redouble their effort and above all to avoid the same errors. In the future, some of our colleagues, especially young people coming out of teachers' schools, will not move a finger under the pretext that they don't have that to do. At each meeting with teachers, they present complaints. I wonder what they do as parents with these students? It's a shame.

A young CP1 teacher at EPP Tchintchinida adds that: "it often happens that I myself get discouraged when faced with certain students in difficulty, because you have done everything so much that they don't understand anything! If we could find better elsewhere hmmm! Really, teaching is not a profession in which you have to do more than 15 years."

*Students lack stimulus from their teacher; teachers show little interest in their students. Because, the Written application exercises are rare, knowledge assessments that relate to the lessons received are almost non-existent. Homework is often not corrected due to the high number of notebooks to correct. These results are comparable to those found by Enereoa (2011:127). Some students develop irregularity and chronic absenteeism. The class functions as a system of repression even for the student and for the teacher who find themselves unable to accomplish their homework. These results are similar to those of Dogbe (1979) who states that "the student then feels bullied, excluded, foreign; a distance is therefore established between the student and his teacher, which can only be detrimental to any effort" (p.73). Individual differences in child intelligence and maturity are not always taken into account in daily practice; distortions then set in between students, where the weakest and slowest are abandoned or give up on their own (Weleke, 2009) because of the defeatist attitude adopted by the teacher (Sedzro, 2009:146). In these overcrowded classes, teaching becomes an arduous task as we can understand with this CM2 teacher for whom: "it is not easy to teach in this situation with students seated 4 per bench where the noise goes on all the time of the day." It is in this dynamic that Mukankunzi (2006); Sedzro (2009) and Costa, (2014) argue that overstaffing calls into question the quality of the education provided. In short, the quality of teaching is negatively associated with school massification because it is not easy in this situation to deploy the active method; this result corroborates that of Ilboudo (2019), Tchable (2020). As a result, "the student is swallowed up in the crowd which leads to his failure" (Sedzro, 2009, p.63).*

Education presupposes the transmission of knowledge from an elder to a novice Durkheim (1975) hence the much-desired interaction for advanced social engagement. Dewey (1916:460) to this effect states that "by basing education on personal

experience, it is possible that we will multiply, more than ever, the contacts between adults and children, that we will make them more effective, more intimate.

Regarding the teaching/learning process, the role of the teacher is to teach, guide and encourage students by leading them to love, understand, and finally provide moral education. The relationship that the teacher maintains with his students can act to support or demotivate students in the interest they take in school activities (Dauber & Epstein, 1991; Deslandes 2001; Paquin & Drolet, 2005). The teacher plays a vital role in determining student practices. He is a model and therefore the engine or centerpiece of the class. The level of motivation and participation of students in the course depends entirely on him. *“Unfortunately, overstaffing prevents teachers from playing this role well. Not everything we are taught at teacher's school is applicable in the field. Since I took office, I have not yet had a class where the number is below 60. It is not easy with sometimes the insufficiency of tables, benches and even classrooms»* affirm this young CM1 EPP Adabawéré teacher.

Regarding the assistance provided to each student in the class, whether strong or weak, the teachers interviewed affirm that it is impossible for the teacher to take care of each student in the teaching process/ learning especially in the context of overcrowded classes. This is evidenced by the opinion of this teacher: *“the teacher clearly sees the child's weakness, he knows very well that there are many of his students who need special help, but time is limited...”*. This situation could be explained by the cumbersomeness of school programs and the demands linked to the teaching profession. Some teachers do not finish the programs until the end of the school year given the specifications to be completed. A teacher for several subjects is also the difficulties faced by these actors.

This research shows us that student/teacher interaction is not promoted, leaving the student in total passiveness. It is important to emphasize that student/teacher interactions and everything related to the social dimension in class are practiced at a very low level. Without this being the only factor explaining these poor student/teacher relationships, *“the number of students in classes contributes strongly to it”* Sedzro (2009).

Teachers are not sufficiently motivated to support and teach students. This result reaffirms that of Brault-Labbé and Dubé (2010) who considers that motivation constitutes the trigger of the commitment process. For these authors and Audas, & Willms, (2001), commitment would imply for a teacher to invest himself, to develop relationships with students linked to his success. Therefore, Markwell, (2007) believes that engagement takes place in a context where the teacher manages to get learners to actively participate and be involved in their own learning. However, commitment

would therefore have a qualifying attribute that motivation does not have, namely active participation.

Regarding motivation, it concerns intrinsic motivations and perpetual interactions or contacts with students, which is consistent with Galant & Gillet (2004). The results indicate that motivation pushes the learner to take the first step towards action, while commitment is the one that propels, leads to take the second and subsequent steps. The engaged teacher is one who provides a certain amount of effort with a certain intensity (Pintrich, Conley, & Kempler, 2003). Unfortunately, the context does not lend itself to this in the public primary schools of Kara.

As school massification does not promote a climate of much-desired interaction between teacher and student, reducing class sizes would constitute a measure which could have positive effects on the learning, motivation and professional commitment of teachers.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This research made it possible to analyze, in general, the link between school massification and the professional commitment of teachers. To verify the hypothesis and answer our research question, we used the work of Da Costa, 2014; De Ketele, 2011; Klassen, 2013 etc. The results obtained revealed that school massification negatively influences teacher/student interactions; Klassen's (2013) commitment measurement scale also shows that school massification is negatively associated with teachers' professional commitment. In view of the almost non-existence of interactions between teachers/students; this could have an influence on the academic performance of students. Indeed, by means of regression analysis, we noticed a negative and strong relationship between the bloated number of students and the professional commitment of teachers. The increase in the number of students in a class would have an inverse relationship with the academic performance of the students, which would also explain the disengagement of teachers in the face of overcrowding. These analyzes made it possible to identify some of the problems (insufficient teaching materials, lack of teaching staff, noise, lack of motivation, etc.) of teachers in overcrowded classes which affect their performance. These negatively influence student performance and also the professional commitment of teachers in public primary schools in the town of Kara.

In order to improve the academic performance of students in public primary schools in the town of Kara in Togo, it is very important that teachers are truly engaged alongside students and that they give the best of themselves. To do this, it is essential

to stimulate the attitudes of teachers by improving study conditions for the development of Togolese youth.

## **E. Acknowledgment**

The authors thank the Research Laboratory in Linguistics, Psychology and Society and the Regional Directorate of Education as well as the teachers for facilitating data collection.

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