

# When Congo Wants To Go To School - The Short Term: Reactions



*Effects on the colonists: initiation of an African science of education?*

In 1957 Albert Gille, Director of Education at the Ministry for Colonies, wrote that the biggest problem of education at that time remained the lack of well-trained teachers. He claimed that the quality of the teaching staff remained low and that there would be no improvement over the next few years.[i]

There was not much opportunity to climb the social ladder. There were very few signs that the educational principles had changed under the impulse of Buisserets policy, which indeed ‘broke open’ the educational system. In fact, education in the Congo then became ‘metropolised’,[ii] but the changes in the curriculum were not accompanied by a significantly different composition of the body of teachers. The impact of the changes was quantitatively too limited to be able to bring about a general change in the short term. Until after independence, education would still remain almost completely in the hands of the mission congregations.

The early Congolese universities did produce some scientific research on education, but this research did not break out of the familiar straightjacket either. At the University of Lovanium research results and opinions in the field of education were published in the *Revue pédagogique*, which has already been mentioned. At the Official University Paul Georis was particularly active in the area of educationalism, but the results of his investigations only appeared after independence.[iii] Georis was the head of a so-called “interracial” high school in Stanleyville for four years and studied the possibilities of developing educational theory adapted to African circumstances there. His colleagues did the same in Luluaburg and Lodja. The most important elements that came to the fore in the research on such new educational theories, which he published in 1962 (but had written before independence), were the community life of the Congolese, the uniqueness of Congolese culture and respect for foreign cultures. In addition, the

importance of an improvement of the level of education was also emphasised. Georis also referred to the splitting of education into mass- and elite-education. That it was necessary to point out, even in this publication, which was written in rather 'progressive' milieus, that "*the qualitative equality of the intelligence of the Black and the White can be proven*" is telling of the zeitgeist. In that respect the author also argued for a uniformity and equivalence in the primary education system for all levels of the population.

However, there were a number of obstacles in the way of the development towards a balanced educational system. Besides the vast size of the country and – here too – the poor quality of the teaching body, Georis mentioned the Congolese attachment to their ancestral traditions and the influence of magic as primary elements. Generally speaking, he seemed to argue for blending the traditional African values with imported Western ideas, which naturally did not prevent him from arguing within a progressive or developmental paradigm. Despite all his good intentions, he regularly remained bogged down in the model of 'civilisation versus primitivism'. The "black", he concluded in his study, could free himself from his neuroses and his complexes. Apparently that was still necessary.

On the other hand, an 1958 editorial contribution in the *Revue Pédagogique* about the "*programmes métropolitains*" and the adaptation of education, stated that: "*In the Congo, we have for a long time attempted clumsy and timid adaptations, which proved inoperative. Now we are turning away from this path and are increasingly adopting the metropolitan curricula from Belgium, following the example of France, which has applied the French curricula for a long time.*" Consequently, at that time, there was some hard thinking going on in both university milieus concerning the direction of education. In both cases questions were being asked aloud about the manner in which things had been done in the past. It is not illogical that in university circles at that time more discerning and detailed analyses were being made. There was a great deal of political activism at that time: in 1956 the manifestos of *Conscience Africaine* and the ABAKO had already been published and in 1958 the MNC of Lumumba and Ilebo was formed; local council elections were also organised in 1958. The predominant attitude, also applicable to the educationalists, was still very expectant, cautious and doubtful.[iv] Even the contribution mentioned above, after initially pleading pro *métropolisation*, stated that it was very unclear what the Africans really wanted. They longed for Western education, to be able to get Western diplomas, because

that was the only way to be recognised as an equal. But at the same time they also wanted something else and the next step would then have to be recovering their own cultural identity. The periodical's attitude was summed up well in the last sentence of the contribution: *"These are the general and imprecise assertions that must nevertheless be taken into account."*

### *Effects on the colonised: the needle in the haystack*

#### *2.1. At a university level*

If we want to judge the effects of education, we must necessarily search for the voices of the people involved and those are primarily the Congolese. In the case of the universities and the science of education itself, this voice did not ring out very loudly. The reasons for this are not hard to find: it was too late and there were too few of them. At the University of Lovanium the first seven Congolese students graduated in June 1955 from the first year of a bachelor in Educational Science. Of these only two graduated three years later in June 1958 with a master's (these were two priests, Michel Karikunzura and Ildephonse Kamiya).[v] In Elisabethville, where the 'Official' University operated from 1956, a 'School for Educational Sciences' was set up from the beginning. During the academic year 1957-1958 five African students were enrolled in the first year of the bachelor's degree at the school (there were a total of 17 African students enrolled at the University at that time). In Lovanium there were 110 African students, of which 18 studied educational sciences.[vi]

Congolese writing only seldom found its way into scientific publications published in the academic milieu. In 1957 a contribution by the Congolese Kimba, a journalist with the newspaper *L'Essor du Congo*, appeared in the *Revue Pédagogique*. He wrote about *"What the Congolese expect from the teaching of French"*. [vii] His contribution was only four pages long and was even then introduced with a few strong considerations from the editors. The introduction indicates that it was still very uncommon at that time for a Congolese to be able to vent his opinion in a scientific publication or make a contribution at all. It stated: *"It is interesting to hear the opinion of a Congolese on the matter"*. In his contribution Kimba briefly stated the reasons why the Congolese wanted to learn to speak French: it was the only way to create a *"trait d'union"* between all Congolese population groups, and to achieve a common language. Above all French was the only means that would help them to gain access to higher civilisation.

However, the article also contained a very subtle example of the manner in which colonial relations worked. The author summed up everyday situations from which it appeared that Congolese learning French was still not considered as an obvious matter. He stated that differences still existed in the manner in which the Congolese and the Europeans interpreted some situations. By way of illustration he gave the following example: *“One expression has an odd interpretation with the Congolese: this is the common expression ‘Il n’y a personne?’ [tr.-Is anybody in?] which some Europeans use to ask after the person in charge. The Congolese translate this phrase literally and in this way the Europeans disregard their human nature by considering them beings that do not have the right to be called ‘personne = être humain’ [tr-a person or human being]. This is certainly an error of interpretation on the part of the Congolese. The sense the European gives to this phrase is different to that of the Congolese. We know that responsible jobs are still held by the Europeans, from which stems the frequent use of the expression ‘Il n’y a personne!’, i.e. ‘European’ in the current situation.”* However, much the author tried to make this appear as a special or divergent meaning that had to be given to the cited words, the true meaning and scope of this anecdote are still clearly apparent here. It is difficult to decide whether this was very deep naivety or supreme irony, as the rest of the article does not display any critical attitude at all towards the colonists. Kimba did not give the impression of wanting to wake sleeping dogs. On the contrary his approach tried to be as conciliatory as possible.

The vast majority of the contributions published in the *Revue Pédagogique* were written by white people, of which the majority were members of religious congregations. In the last year the journal was published, two other contributions by Congolese authors appeared. A F. Lumpungu, *teaching assistant*, wrote a piece on the educational value of games.[viii] Antoine Kimponto, *head teaching assistant*, made a brief contribution on the influence the teaching assistant must exercise on the children in an urban environment. His article described the city as a place of ruination. The people had to live so close to each other in the *Centres Extra Coutumiers* that it seemed almost impossible to lead a hygienic and moral life. The teacher was then a man with a mission, and that mission was clearly an extension of the work of ‘real’ missionaries. He must work as a spiritual guide through the darkness and lead by example of his own lifestyle. That a number of *teaching assistants* did not correspond to that picture was also a true scandal. The opinion put forward in the contribution was overly-simplified and above all

showed the religious workers in a good light. “*Undoubtedly, teaching assistants know well that priests are also people with all their failings. But they also know that the priests have a divine mission to fulfil.*”[ix] According to the author, cooperation with the parents and with the priest was one of the most important tasks of the teacher.



## 2.2. In the media

The content of these Congolese contributions was not especially shocking or innovative, and above all too modest to be able to exert any influence. A similar

conclusion could have been drawn concerning the media that reached a broader public (i.e. the daily newspapers). Here again, it was precisely the voice of the Congolese which was seldom to be heard. Van Bol, who wrote a short book on the press in Congo in 1959, stated that it was certainly not originally intended to inform the Congolese, let alone to educate them. On the other hand it cannot be denied that the creation of a Congolese voice in the colonial press must be considered one of the effects of education. Also according to Van Bol several of these newspapers decided to make space available for reactions from the Congolese themselves after the War. All in all it was not a great success: only the largest newspapers did so effectively. *Le Courrier d’Afrique*, despite being the press organ of the church and the missions in the Congo, had launched a supplement ‘by and for the Congolese’, which would become a separate publication from 1957 (*Présence Congolaise*, a name derived from *Présence Africaine*). *L’Avenir*, from Leopoldville had also recruited a number of Congolese editors by the early 1950s.[x] Kimba was the only Congolese editor at that time at the *Essor du Congo*. It was not until the end of the 1950s that there was any sign of publications completely in the hands of Congolese editorial staff. The only exception, which can be mentioned, is the publication of *La Voix du Congolais*.

As late as 1959 the following opinions could be read in a scientific contribution on Congolese literature and authors. The fact that the Belgians had taught the Congolese little to no French before the Second World War could not be criticised. The author referred to arguments from people like the Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop, who was the first to blame the colonial powers in his country for only teaching the Africans French and, in this way, denying them any chance of a form of cultural autonomy.[xi] The Belgians, in contrast, had not done

anything wrong in this respect: “*We did nothing, from 1885 to 1921, to systematically detribalise the Congolese.*” Even so, the same author concluded that they had not done anything to prevent the Congolese from shifting from an oral culture to the written counterpart either. After all, education had been a primary factor in the development of literacy among the Congolese and as a consequence in the transition to a written culture. These ideas are also present in the testimonies of the Congolese today. The ancestors had understood that they could make progress by learning to read and write, or at least make advantageous use of it in their relationships with the colonists.

In the same article the first traces of an early Congolese literature (meaning literature written by the Congolese) were discussed. The author gave the periodical *Brousse* as the first interesting publication, published by a society that called itself *Amis de l’Art Indigène*, which stood under the patronage of a whole series of personalities from the colonial establishment (including the governor-general, important industrialists and the Catholic bishops). *Brousse* was the first periodical to publish stories written by the Congolese, from the end of the 1930s. These publications were within the aims of the periodical, the ‘preservation of the oral culture’. In most cases it related to the publication of fables, adaptations of local stories or works of fiction.[xii] A number of stories by Antoine Bolamba, who would later become the editor-in-chief of *La Voix du Congolais*, were published even before the war. However, there are no traces of non-fiction or opinions published in the press or other publications before 1945, at least not in French. Considering the situation of education, that cannot be considered a great surprise. Naturally it is harder to make observations on the formation of the opinions of the Congolese for publications in local languages.

### 2.3. Regional

Similar trends may also be observed at a regional level, for example in the mission area of the MSC. In his overview of the local press Vinck reported a whole series of publications, in which the Congolese only rarely voiced critical opinions. Besides the periodicals that were published by the missionaries, there were also a few initiatives by the administration, although it is probably more accurate to state that these were taken by a few specific officials. That was also the case in Coquilhatville. In 1947 the periodical *Mbandaka* was formed, originally intended for reporting sports news. The publication was in the hands of a colonial official, Victor Brébant, the local *chef du bureau d’information*. After a while the content

of the publication was broadened to general news. The editorial staff and the editor in chief were made up of the Congolese clerks at the information service, including Justin Bomboko.[xiii] According to his successor, Albert Bolela, it was under his initiative that the periodical applied itself to social, economic and political topics. All, he added, *"conforming to the general policy of the Government"*. That this was probably realised under strong censorship from the administration is apparent from the latter: he described Bomboko's position as *"handicapped by the department of Native Affairs"*. [xiv] Bolela wrote that Mbandaka enjoyed immediate success, particularly with the *"class of the population who were insufficiently educated"*, by which he probably meant those who knew no French.

Most 'Congolese' periodicals that started before independence in the mission area of the MSC, were in fact founded at the initiative of the Catholic (and sometimes the Protestant) missionaries. The publications concerned were mostly those in which the missionaries themselves wrote articles and only allowed a few contributions by the Congolese. Only one of them began, in the course of time, to comment on the news and allowed the Congolese to express their views in their own language. Paul Ngoi declared in 1955 in the periodical *Lokole*: *"In other regions of the Colony, the natives already have their own press in their own language. Do the Nkundo-Mongo who inhabit a vast territory not deserve their own newspaper? It is not enough to always rely on our civiliser. We are responsible for our country's progress. (...) consequently we have judged it useful to publish a periodical ourselves under our management."* [xv] The great problems of colonial society were discussed in the paper according to Vinck: *"In the beginning they were still considered from a traditionalist point of view but these questions were quickly asked with a view to the interpretation of events and development in current affairs: fundamental ownership, the use of African languages in public life and education, the fall in the birth rate with the mongo, the organisation of justice, the development of the colony and when nearing independence opinions were expressed relatively freely on major political topics and the formation of political parties."* [xvi] This therefore only applies to the last five years of colonisation. We cannot, in any case, state with any certainty that the impact of these publications was very important. The circulations were fairly limited (e.g. 1500 copies of *Lokole* were published in 1956; after a few years Mbandaka managed to reach something over 2000 copies).

## *The voice of the Congolese*

### *3.1. The universe of the évolué*

It may be deduced from the above that it was the *évolués*, who emphatically wished to become the equals of the whites and therefore also sought and demanded their channels of opinion from the coloniser. *Evolués*, were defined in the first instance by the fact that they had integrated a certain level of western values in their lifestyle. The medium in which they developed emancipation and the best-known and studied example of this question is the publication of *La Voix du Congolais*. The periodical was set up in 1945 and was published until 1959. In the beginning it was published every two months and from July 1946 it became a monthly periodical.[xvii] The precise history of its foundation is rather difficult to reconstruct, but from the different sources reporting on it the following story can be distilled. The initiative for the publication came from the colonial administration. An official in the colonial administration, Jean Paul Quix, is usually indicated. In 1943 he was charged by the governor-general with organising a new department in the colonial administration, the *Service de l'Information pour indigènes*. The original requirement for setting up such a publication would probably have come from *évolués*, who had been admitted to a number of associations of Europeans (e.g. Antoine Bolamba, through *Brousse*).

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of *La Voix* in 1955, one of the editors of the periodical, Joseph Davier, wrote an overview in which he revealed the role of Quix. He described his task as “finding a *soupape de sûreté*”, and indicated the existing unrest of a large number of Congolese as one of the incentives for the initiative that was taken. In very moderate phrases he related the unrest that was the basis of the periodical, and the ambivalent attitude that was held by many people towards the initiative: “*I will always remember those stormy sessions in which each of us poured out our excessively ulcerated spleen to Mr Quix, as though he were responsible. I also remember the calm serenity with which he faced our complaints and calmed our poor nerves. Nobody could understand that an official could bear these bitter torrents and criticisms of the Belgian policy without turning a hair; they accused him of ‘l’Oeil de la Sûreté’ (the Secret Service) that would soon come and cause hardship on the foolhardy people that had confided him all the sorrows of their heart.*”[xviii] The author of the contribution was not excessively critical: the earlier problematic circumstances had improved long ago, and interracial relations had become “(...) *in general (...) excellent*”. This indicates that the references to these relations, made very



cautiously and well wrapped up at the time, probably have to be taken seriously. Davier wrote for example about the attitude of the Congolese towards the Belgians: *"It goes without saying that in our Congolese milieu, the Belgians received a bad press."* It also concedes that the tone of the *évolués* was still not very radicalised in 1955 and that no real open opposition to the coloniser existed or could exist there. Kadima-Tshimanga, who looked at what happened from a very different perspective (and *a posteriori*), stated that the formation of the periodical *"(...) appears an opportunistic political measure. It served, before the official installation of the status of the évolués with the civic and registration certificate of merit, to channel forces which had no outlet."*[xix]

There is no doubt that the Belgian colonists at first carefully inspected the contents of *La Voix*. The control certainly always continued to exist, the periodical was always under the supervision of an information official, but there is not much more information on that available. It is also impossible to describe in any detail the exact development of the ideas and standpoints and, above all, the degree of freedom of the editorial staff. On the other hand, the periodical does seem to be a good indicator of the post-war development of Congolese society. In the initial period some articles raised very negative reactions from the establishment. They regularly had to defend themselves, as happened with the article *"Nos écrits et leur but"* by Joseph Tamba: *"On reading our writing, some people appear to have the impression that the blacks and more particularly the 'évolués', are excessively critical and even have a tendency to deny the benefits of civilisation. The proof is that in reply to our articles, we are told again and again who the black people were before the whites arrived and who we would still be today, without the presence of the Europeans in the Congo."*[xx] Thirteen years later, in 1959, Van Bol wrote about *La Voix* (and about another publication of the colonial administration, *Nos Images*): *"These two publications which exactly filled the desires of the indigenous population in their time, today only reflect the more moderate and official opinions of these."*[xxi] Bolamba admitted that: *"(...) we must confess that our periodical is currently no longer able to fulfil its role as the mouthpiece of the Congolese with very great effectiveness."*[xxii] That primarily shows that in the post-war years an enormous increase in consciousness had occurred in the Congolese population, but this does not completely solve the mystery of the exact attitude and ideas of the contributors of the periodical. No matter how well-behaved it was, *La Voix* was an important publication and it probably fulfilled a symbolic function for many Congolese.

Because it was written by Congolese *évolués*, and considered topics that interested them, *La Voix* is a very interesting object of study. In the past decades there have already been a number of academic studies of the periodical, especially by Congolese authors. In his study on *La Voix du Congolais*, Pius Ngandu mentioned a number of criteria that the *évolués* used to define themselves. The contents of these make it embarrassingly clear how contradictory the creation of this category of 'evolved person' was. According to Ngandu a first criterion was the distance to the traditional way of life, to "*coutume*". The 'evolved' made that clear in their reactions themselves, including those printed in *La Voix*. They loaded the concept of 'primitivism' with a pejorative connotation. Ngandu correctly remarked that in Congo "*the assimilation movement arose, not from the coloniser but the colonised*". He also stated that neither the missionaries nor the administration had made any attempt to assimilate the Congolese (and, for example, for the MSC that was very definitely not the case). Still there were a number of political choices, or really administrative creations from the colonisers that the Congolese could use as aids to help them to realise their longing for assimilation. For example, the creation of urban areas (the C.E.C.'s), in which a way of life different from that in the countryside came into existence and where the social control that accompanied the traditional way of life was much less tangible.

Besides this, other even more important factors played a part in this self-definition. There was for instance the general level of education that was reached. The boundary is difficult to define exactly but it was generally accepted that the *évolué* should at least have completed primary school. Knowledge of French seems to have been a clearer evaluation criterion. Whoever spoke French, could always communicate with the whites. The most important element could simply be described as 'lifestyle' but interpreted according to western norms. Of course, these included the moral values inculcated at school, but also the material lifestyle had to be sufficiently similar to that of the West. To fulfil this last condition required sufficient financial means. As a result Ngandu eventually, ten years after independence, regretted that it was precisely this requirement that ensured that the Congolese always strove with inexhaustible eagerness for the highest functions and the best paid jobs: "*Later, it was always in order to achieve a higher salary that the Evolués abandoned the offices to throw themselves onto ministerial positions. The model children of the Belgians sought to impose their will on the masses, in their turn to become exploiters, the oppressors of their*

brothers.” Ngabu further claimed that *La Voix du Congolais* had cooperated particularly actively by publishing all manner of articles, contributions, interviews about and with the people who ‘succeeded’ and who had received formal recognition of their evolved status (the *carte de mérite civique* or the *carte d’immatriculation*). Naturally, the question is whether this occurred only at the initiative of the *évolués* in the editorial staff. It is possible that there was a certain pressure from above to do this, but it would be very difficult to find out.

In any event, from earlier research it seems that *La Voix* offers an interesting universe for the interpretation of the complex relationships between colonists and *évolués*, *évolués* and non-*évolués*, and among *évolués*. The abovementioned criteria were not at all watertight. They leaned on one main foundation: in the last instance the colonial administration decided whether a statute was recognised or not. That was the case *de iure* in the context of the handing out of the *carte de mérite civique* and was, as has already been said, laid down in a very vague legal definition. It is more than likely that this was also the case in daily life. There was a sort of deliberate lack of certainty about what being civilised meant which also made it possible for there to be different categories of *évolués*. Naturally, the differences among *évolués* were important, to the extent that people were eager to be as ‘real’ as possible. It was about being as evolved as possible. Whoever was only considered so because he was recognized as such by the Belgians for some obscure reason or another, could be sure to arouse the disdain of the others. They therefore appealed to other ‘objective’ criteria to distinguish themselves and to position themselves better in society. Merely a normal social phenomenon, one could say.

A consequence of this was that the *évolués* themselves began to consider their land as a land without a culture and they began to take on the role of ‘civiliser’ towards their non-evolved fellow countrymen. The initiative of Buisseret to generalise the European curriculum in the Congolese schools was very well received as a result. Independent of the motives that formed the foundations of this decision, they represented an end to the fundamental and double frustration that the educational system in the Congo brought with it. Up to this time there had always been Congolese schools and European schools and the curriculum of both had always been different in principle. Bringing the two together not only ensured that the *évolués* were brought to an equal level with the Europeans in an important domain, it also ensured that they were especially distinguished among

the other Congolese. The ability to make the distinctions was picked up during education, completely integrated by the *évolués* and illustrated in *La Voix*. In this context the remark made by Kadima-Tshimanga must be quoted: *La Voix du Congolais* was really “*La Voix de l’Evolué*”.[xxiii] Naturally, that was the case because the criteria of the concept *évolué* were exactly attuned to this. A person only had a voice when it fitted precisely within the lines of that concept.

### 3.2. Antoine Roger Bolamba: la voix du Congolais.



Antoine Roger Bolamba was a perfect example of this. He was the editor-in-chief of *La Voix du Congolais*. [xxiv] The predominance of the influence of Bolamba in *La Voix*, is apparent from several elements. He wrote the editorial opinions at the beginning of each issue. Of all the journalists of *La Voix* he also wrote the most contributions. In addition he wrote a large proportion of the ‘general’ sections, such as the *Chroniques* or the *Ephémérides*, in which interesting occurrences and news events were often reported. Above all he did not recoil from taking standpoints or publishing the

contributions by other authors under his own name or that of the editor. In 1975 a study appeared in the *cahiers du CEDAF* in which the content of the articles that appeared in the last full year of publication of the periodical (1959) were analysed linguistically.[xxv] Although it was limited in scope, this study showed among other things that the use of language in the opinion pieces and the politically inspired articles of the editors was rather poor. The difference between the editor-in-chief and the rest of the contributors was very marked, since Bolamba possessed a much more graphic and subtle use of language than his colleagues. Besides this the author also remarked that there were repeated references to the programmes of the *Radio Congo Belge*, which were “better directed than many articles in *La Voix*”. The conclusion of the general evaluation of the writing style was: “*If we put aside the articles by Antoine Roger Bolamba and the broadcasts by Belgian Congo Radio, it may be concluded that the writing in La Voix du Congolais is close to zero, i.e. a naïve and unaffected discourse, denuded of any innuendo, which calls ‘a spade, a spade’*”. These are certainly interpretations that are based on a relatively limited number of sources and come from a study, that was rather technical and used a qualitative linguistic approach. Nonetheless, it

seems to me that these pronouncements, which do not concern the essentials of the cited study, are still significant enough for the interpretation of the opinions and contributions of the authors.

This all goes to show, not so much that the periodical was a vehicle for Bolamba, but that his influence was certainly very important and, to consider it from another angle, that he was representative of the ideas and standpoints of *La Voix*. In the last issue of *La Voix* he wrote in a concluding assessment of the periodical: *"All its attention was paid to the realisation of a fraternal community between Blacks and Whites; it dedicated itself to removing the discrimination which made contact between the two groups of man present here difficult; it stigmatised the abuses of those who made a public display of excessive racism; it always talked in the language of truth and reason, without being afraid of the criticism which evil intentioned men threw at it."*[xxvi] Bolamba probably represented a sort of moderate striving for emancipation on the basis of his own convictions. This meant above all that he did so without being forced by the colonial administration. The fact that he became a cabinet assistant of Buisseret in 1956 indicates that he was on very good terms with the Belgians and that he was a perfectly acceptable character to them. In any event it is certain that he was a very good pupil of the colonial discourse.

In his first editorials Bolamba was undoubtedly the humble servant of his masters. His pen sometimes seemed to be sugar coated. The superiority of the whites over the blacks was certain beyond doubt, and could not have been otherwise considering the long history of western culture. His own people's culture and history was obviously not something that concerned him. This remark should not be understood cynically, it was clearly really the case: *"A large gap actually exists between our civilisers and ourselves. From what does this arise? Very simply from the fact that the Whites have a very superior personality to our own, as a result of slow and profound work over more than two thousand years."*[xxvii] Bolamba was not at all satisfied with the term *colour bar* used by some. He defined the *colour bar* as a form of racial discrimination, either at a political level or at an administrative level. In this he referred to the examples of legal segregation in the United States, South America and South Africa. He claimed that similar forms did not exist in the Belgian colony. However, he would not be so categorical with regard to the administration. It was hard to avoid the concrete examples: segregated shops, station platforms, etc. *"But all this is not intended in a bad*

way, as we realise that it is not done with a desire to keep us in a position of inferiority and that it is not the result of a rigid political line.” Bolamba had clearly absorbed the colonial discourse very well: “We can sense in all our civilisers’ deeds that they consider the humanity within us and not our ebony skin.”[xxviii]

In 1949 Bolamba published a book (at that time that was an unheard of achievement for a Congolese in itself) on one of the most important social problems confronting the *évolués*: “*Les problèmes de l’évolution de la femme noire*”.[xxix] Bolamba’s premises were clearly set out in the introduction to his book: Congolese women could not take part in the development of the land, because they were not sufficiently educated. The contrast between education for boys and that for girls, which at that time was also recognised by the administration (it could not be denied) were listed by Bolamba. The concept of *évolution* was prevalent throughout his argument. “*If educated men have taken a leap of ten centuries on the road to civilisation, this is not the same for our women who remain stuck at the initial point of our development.*”[xxx] The problems caused by marriages contracted between educated men and lesser or completely uneducated women would be the subject of the book, he claimed. “*I have shown the abuses which are the main cause for the instability of our households.*”

The book described the marital problem in six chapters: “*On the reflection before marriage*”, “*The serious nature of marriage*”, “*On the harmony and peace within the household*”, “*Practical advice*”, “*Family and morality*” and “*Instruction and education of children*”. It was written completely in agreement with the missionary moral codes and was really just as conservative as the Catholic church itself with regard to women. Its approach was not particularly subtle. The “*caractère sérieux*” of marriage implied for example that marriage with a person of a sickly constitution must be avoided: “*It is necessary to avoid marrying a person from a family where there is hereditary illness, for example, tuberculosis. Some illnesses occasionally have long-term causes. Do not forget, you are called to have children.*”[xxxi] That also implied, in fact, that potential marriage partners should best find out in advance whether they were fertile and this was said in so many words. Marriage should happen as quickly as possible (and that could be at a younger age than in Europe, which was brought in as a reference) and waiting a long time was a bad thing in any event. Once married, it was important to try to

be a model family. The woman must be “*matinale*”: she must get up early to do the housework. Naturally, she must take good care of the children. The man had to ensure the woman was well dressed but she must not make unreasonable demands concerning her wardrobe.

There was clearly an attempt to bring about a change in a number of areas in traditional customs and usages of the Congolese. For example with regard to food: “*The housewife should prepare the food in the kitchen itself and not outside, close to the house, in view of passers-by and visitors.*”[xxxii] In fact, the culture of eating posed a number of problems because there seem to have been big differences in that area: Bolamba strongly emphasised that a man should eat at the table together with his wife (which contrasted with the usual custom).[xxxiii] Here, too, the missionary approach was heard in Bolamba’s words: “*Discipline is nowhere more apparent than at the table...*” The text was a long list of what was considered exemplary behaviour and was quite without complexes in its prescriptiveness. The woman must be graceful and submissive; the man patient, amiable and understanding: “*Before becoming angry at the vexations of their spouses the men must try to explain their errors to them.*” This chapter also practically emphasised that alcoholic drink was the greatest enemy of woman. Drink was also bad for men, but even more so for women. Enough sleep was also important and consequently going out late was not a good idea. Care must also be taken with food, so that the digestion would not hinder sleep. In very guarded and modest terms, warning was also given about sexual excesses or ‘abnormalities’. The children, finally, should learn to be obedient and must be disciplined, particularly and above all during their adolescence, which must be considered the period in which a person was the most exposed to all sorts of bad influences and passions.

Throughout this, Bolamba referred to the ‘good old times’ that he himself had experienced as a young adolescent. It was a time in which it had been much safer and simpler to be an adolescent: “*I often dream of that time when the children of my age steered clear of the dances called ‘Maringa’, where they would not accept that a man would order them to find loose women at his place, where we would find pleasure in studying, singing, praying, telling stories or when walks in the mountains, excursions in the countryside accompanied by a teacher, a hunter of wild animals, constituted real treats for us. I dream of that time when life was not a dangerous peril for young people as it is today.*”[xxxiv] In these places his

testimony seems to have a lot in common with what was advocated by the MSC. At the conclusion of his book he finally switched over to an even stronger patriotism and attachment to the colonists: *"We love the Belgians because they are our benefactors, we love them even more because they are our saviours. Let us gather together in the shade of the blue flag with its golden stars, let us search there for the courage and will needed for the development of our fatherland. We entrust our life and our peace to them. Let us give thanks and sing praises as never before for the Belgian Royal Dynasty to which we owe our current tranquillity. The Belgian African Empire will only become a large, strong, beautiful and prosperous country if it respects the following three words: GOD, FAMILY, FATHERLAND."*[xxxv]

#### 4. *La Voix du Congolais: the évolués' voice*

##### 4.1. *Views about society and education*

*La Voix* paid regular attention to education or related subjects. Most of the articles that had education as a subject were reports about specific schools. The representation that dominated in these contributions was that of optimism, of progress. True to the name they used for themselves, they used phrases like *"jalons de notre progrès"*, *"développement au pas accéléré"*, or *"envisager l'avenir avec confiance"*. Education reached a great proportion of the population, education penetrated to the farthest corners of the primeval jungle, the Congolese themselves gave lessons in very many schools: all of these pronouncements were evidence of an indomitable belief in progress.[xxxvi] This is especially true, because it was just as possible to consider each of these observations from another, less positive side – something that now and again gave rise to more critical approaches. In particular, the demand for more schools was regularly recurring.

In spite of the often conciliatory and sometimes even submissive language used by the people who wrote contributions in *La Voix* there were real problems behind the articles. The problems which came to the fore about the educational system, were part of the broader context of problems linked with the changes taking place in Congolese society now that a large part of its members increasingly adopted the customs and (at least) the vocabulary of European society. Very often more personal problems, that the confrontation of cultures brought about in the relationship between parents and children, were referred to. Mobé wrote about the education of the masses that fell under the responsibility of



different groups in society. Besides the missionaries, the colonists and the administration this also included the *évolués*. An exemplary function was reserved for them.[xxxvii] This exemplary function was exercised in the contributions that were published in the periodical. A subject that seemed to be perfectly suitable was that of education in the broad sense and the role of the parents therein. Other important and frequently published themes were the use of language at school, the position of the woman, the development of the educational system and dissatisfaction with the emancipation of the Congolese. That last theme was almost never present as a subject per se but was often prominent in the background when other subjects were discussed.

#### *4.1.1. Society and educational problems*

There was a great deal of emphasis placed on the fact that the school should be on the same wavelength as the family. With the regularity of a clock articles or letters were published in which it was stated that education began at home. Obviously, it regularly happened that the parents did not want to cooperate or did not take any account of the fact that the children had certain obligations at school or were not at all interested in school attendance. As early as 1948 a certain Ngandu was very concerned about the deep moral crisis that Congolese society was going through. Dazzled by money, the population only wanted more and more education. This desire for knowledge was certainly positive in itself, but there must be something else to keep the knowledge in check and give it direction. In the moral education of youth the parents had an important responsibility, of which they had to become aware most urgently.[xxxviii] These important social problems in connection with Congolese youth were reported quite regularly. These were usually discussed with great concern by the editors-in-chief: drinking by the young (Colin, 1954), the condition of the youth in the towns (Bolamba, 1956), wholesome literature (Colin, 1956).

In general the contributors often wrote very negatively about their fellow Congolese. In 1948 one contribution stated the following: the blacks had an education without scruples, without shame, and gave way early to their sexual desires. Intellectual degeneration was the consequence. With respect to the European child, *"The latter lives in a more wholesome and less degenerate world. Their parents watch over and follow the development of their senses, they discipline them and arm them against all abuses."* According to the writer, the *évolués* tried to do the same, but once the child left the family circle it only saw

bad examples. The only solution was radical: simply shut the children away from the bad environment, by bringing them up in boarding schools. The author compared the blacks with animals and took a Eurocentric point of view, in which the behaviour of his countrymen was talked about in rather pedantic terms: *"Il s'abandonna à sa nature et au déchaînement de ses passions."* It is obvious that a number of people at that time had utterly and completely adopted the European way of doing things and showed no resistance at all to the new way of life, let alone thought about criticising it.[xxxix] Justin Mabanza addressed parents some years later with a plea that they should educate their own children. He criticised heavily the matriarchate that determined social relations in a number of regions. It was rather common there that children were brought up by other family members than their biological parents. The author described that bluntly as a *"véritable fléau"* and he developed an extended argument to show that this was particularly bad. [xl]

Michel Landu particularly indicated the responsibility of the teachers themselves in an article from 1952. Rather traditionally minded and exaggeratedly law-abiding, his premise was the principle *"The class is only as good as the teacher"*, by analogy with classical proverbs such as *"The earth is only as good as man"* or *"We will always end up resembling those we often see"*. He followed with a real exhortation: *"That work, politeness, patriotism, Christian virtues stand at the forefront in our classrooms and impose themselves on the public's attention. With patient tenacity and a savoir-faire worthy of high class educators, let us create a climate that forces admiration among our pupils. Indeed, the worth of the class is as good as that of the master."*[xli] Dominique Iloo, who himself was a teacher, reacted to that article by stating that it was somewhat naive only to look at the teacher. In very many cases the parents' attitude formed a millstone around the teacher's neck. The latter could be as good an example as possible but if the parents did not change their behaviour according to his directions and instruction, it was a lost cause: *"Consider, in passing, the Christian obligation of attending Sunday mass. In the classroom, the teacher talks and helps his children fulfil this obligation. At home the father or mother advise the child against it. (...) Their recurring absences confirm their words and convince their children. In numerous cases the parents are responsible for the misbehaviour of their children."*

Another important aspect of education did not escape the attention of Iloo. Almost

triumphantly he remarked that the level of the pupils was not necessarily improved in comparison to those ten years before: *"What is the reason for this? Is it the books used that are at fault as maintained in n° 73 of the 'Voix du Congolais' (...) ? No! Particularly in the large centres where we live with this modernisation – and unfortunately it is also being felt in the interior – the pupils give way too much to pleasure. The bars and nightclubs they visit make them dreamers at their school desks. The teacher is often mistaken in their looks and their apparent application. They barely remember a few notions which they forget the following day."*[xlii] The observations of another author, Gabriël NgbongboIn, took the same tone. His opinion was that the pupils no longer showed respect any more for the teachers and that the parents agreed with them, rather than standing on the side of the teachers. He begged the parents to do as follows: *"Correct your children if you learn that they have written disgraceful words on the walls. Nor should you allow your children to be members of bands playing in bars. And you parents, do not insult or hit the teachers. They are not insane and would not punish your children without good cause. Allow them to do their work."*[xliii]

Iloo argued, just as others before him, to make the boarding school regime general. Bolamba himself had written an article about it a year earlier. In it he quoted among other things the beliefs of eminent Jesuits, whom he called "specialists in the matter of the black soul". Boarding schools protected the morals of the young black. Youth needed to be confronted with discipline and compulsion: *"If boarding schools, armies, hierarchical associations of young people are maintained everywhere that is because it is considered important for young people to be confined by discipline, a constraint that makes their will more supple and will mould their character."* In many cases these blessings could not come from the parents: *"Certainly, the parents also have an important role to play in their children's education but everyone knows too well that Congolese parents are currently unable to fulfil that role satisfactorily."*[xliv]

According to the editorial staff of *La Voix*, the moral situation of the population did not really seem to improve in the course of the 1950's. Contributions regularly appeared in which authors either regretted the lamentable morals of the young or their parents, or gave tips on 'how it ought to be done'. In 1957 Nkonga wrote: *"Today the time has come that families desire, even make sacrifices for their children's education."* Many parents did not spur their children on with a desire

to work, and left that to the upbringing by the school. They agreed with their children too much. According to the author, it did not contribute to a good teaching environment.[xlv] In 1958 a certain Luvuvuma wrote a number of recommendations for the maintenance of a good relationship between the family and the school in *“Quand l’école et la famille formeront-ils une unité au Congo?”* The author observed that very many children were sent away from school. On the part of the school not much effort was made to take account of the character of the children, or simply to find out about it. That caused rancour and regrettable reactions from the parents. The teachers must remember that they were not employees, they had a vocation. The parents for their part must realise that the child needed good care. Often there were parents who knew nothing about the education and the studies of their children, they were not concerned about them at all: *“But they will be the first to be surprised or even to become angry if their children fail an exam.”*[xlvi]

Bolamba also put his penny’s worth in here. He found it necessary to regularly cite articles from other periodicals which were considered to have sufficient educational worth for Congolese parents. In 1958 he cited an article from *“L’Afrique Nouvelle”*, a periodical of the White Fathers in the French colonies, in which a list was given of matters that should be avoided in the education of children. In 1959 again, he reacted in a somewhat remarkable manner to an article that told the story of a group of Congolese girls who were asked by Belgian colonists to let themselves be photographed while were performing traditional dances round a campfire, topless. The author of the article reacted indignantly and found such behaviour by the Belgians and the Congolese completely inappropriate. The Belgians should not make the Congolese a source of ridicule. The Congolese parents should take care of their children and give them moral support to avoid such excesses. Bolamba reacted to this in a note from the editor. In the light of his previously cited statements, his position can seem a bit unusual: *“Certainly the parents have an imperative obligation to be concerned with their children, especially young girls; but there is a margin between that and taking exception to folk dances. Male and female dancers in the villages adopt the clothing that fits perfectly with the customs they inherited from their ancestors in their performances. (...) So what?”*[xlvii]

#### 4.1.2. The position of women

We have already referred to the articles that appeared in *La Voix* about women

who took up positions in social life, worked outside the house, earned money and made a career. The views of the *évolués* in their own contributions only agreed with this in part. The well-known story of the need for the *évolués* to have wives who could understand them, but at the same time run a household, was never very far away. Someone wrote: *"If the domestic work is not carried out orderly and properly, the man will not stay at home. He will seek distraction elsewhere, which will ruin the harmony of the household."* The author of this article clearly emphasised two requirements: the woman must be a good mother and a skilled housewife. A girl's education must therefore be developed in this direction. A list of the tasks that were most neglected by women, indicates the importance the author gives to them: washing up, the kitchen, the daily cleaning of the bedroom and the bedclothes, the household expenses (*"The reader will not be surprised at me writing that black women are improvident by nature and that they are unable to order their household expenses"*), the vegetable garden, the chicken run, and finally, care for the children.[xlvi]

In an article from 1957, criticism of girls' education in Boma was hardly veiled: *"Nevertheless we consider it useful to bring it to their (the Sisters, JB) attention that they seem to have missed out on certain points relating to the development of Congolese women, although this certainly is an important problem."* The lack of development of the education was indicated as the immediate origin of its low output. It was not the fault of the girls themselves, but their enthusiasm was simply being destroyed: *"And yet, you should not be mistaken: black women are avid to learn, to perfect themselves. In our opinion the overly rudimentary curriculum is the main cause for the lack of diligence established amongst the school-going population. A lot of girls realise the lack of intellectual and domestic training they will receive if they continue such studies. They are consequently forced to conclude that the final result does not justify such long attendance at the institution."*[xli] This certainly elicited a reaction from the missionaries, who did not like criticism of their educational approach. They also tried to refute the problem of absenteeism. That was solved for the major part through discussions with the parents of the girls concerned. The staff was also of more than decent quality. If there were complaints in that area, they were caused by the fact that so many female teaching assistants resigned when they started a family. The Sisters also had a difficult task as they continually had to start training new staff.[1]

The positions taken concerning the development of women, were often very

traditional and, in many cases, confirmed the existing state of affairs. Like, for example, Evariste Iyolo, from Monkoto who claimed the school must speed up the intellectual formation of women. He refused to comment on the leadership of the administration but certainly did criticise the behaviour of a number of girls, who were showing too little interest. He did not go much further than repeating the statement that a woman should get an education to be able to keep up with the man. That remained the goal to strive for: she should be able to understand her husband better.[li] Dominique Iloo, himself a teacher, called on evolved parents to show understanding and respect for the teaching staff. He also called on men to help their women in bringing up the children, revealing then a very paternalistic standpoint towards the woman: *"We cannot ignore that as long as black women are not any better educated than they are today, the education of our children will always leave much to be desired. But our companions do not have to be the only ones to fulfil this position of education. We are obliged to support them, or even to take their place if they are incapable. We should help our women. We should induce them to work better for our children. We are supposed to know things, let us show our abilities through examples that will unquestionably convince our still ignorant women."*[lii]

#### 4.1.3. Language use in education.

As early as 1947 Bolamba wrote a commentary on an article that had appeared in the *Courrier de l'Afrique* about examinations in the Scheutist schools. Apparently, a system was applied there whereby several languages were chosen, and there was mention of Dutch and English. Because, unlike the Belgian pupils, the Congolese really had no mother tongue that they had a good grasp of: *"Here our pupils do not have a native language as the native languages or dialects cannot be considered languages."* He asked whether it would not be better to restrict them to French as people already laughed at the Congolese because they could not even speak that language decently.[liii]

Everybody seemed to agree with that. There should be more French at school. This was still being heavily discussed in the second half of the 1950s. Lundulla called for teaching French from kindergarten. He strongly opposed the use of native languages in primary education. These languages were too primitive and could not master the concepts of technology and science. He used a special argument from authority to close his argument: *"According to our information, the teaching of French was developed in Belgium, on the accession of King*

*Leopold I who married Queen Marie-Louise of France soon after. We are proud to say that the latter has a special place in our hearts.”[liv] Iyeki, also regularly exerted himself in his articles to promote French. In 1956 he wrote: “Our aim is to emphasise – for the umpteenth time –the language to be used in the schools.” He opposed the argument that children who learnt French at school would lose the other languages. Furthermore, he referred to the fact that a child that knew no French would be threatened with isolation: “French is a language that will facilitate the meeting of new flows of ideas.”[lv]*

The lack of knowledge of French in certain schools was also regularly mentioned in contributions.[lvi] A commentary by Okoka on the school for teaching assistants in Tshumbe Ste-Marie seemed to point out situations that were also reported in the mission area of the MSC: *“I established that the teaching was not at the same level as elsewhere. With regard to the French language, the courses were only 30 minutes a week and this was given in a monotonous or even unpleasant tone. On the other hand, those who tried to speak French were immediately singled out and considered a revolutionary element. Indisputably French is a language which is linked to literary and scientific culture in Congo as elsewhere. I maintain that at the moment, French is neglected in the classrooms in our region.”[lvii]* The girls’ school in Boma, also criticised by Vumuka, had the same problems. *“If the education given in Boma merits consideration and acknowledgement, it no less remains true that it could gain a lot by being improved. A good number of pupils are not even able to stammer the slightest bit in French, or write a letter in Kikongo, their maternal language.”*

Still, this language question also exposed a number of ambiguities. Bolamba again voiced his opinion concerning the use of language at school in 1956. He conceded that much had changed in the meantime: educational reforms had taken place, there was education by lay people, university education had started, and *metropolisation* was in full swing. Still, it was necessary to argue for French at school. According to him cultural formation in French should begin at kindergarten, although that did not mean that he wanted to turn away from the traditional usages and customs: *“Nobody will throw the first stone at us, if we dare to confirm and maintain the incomparable superiority of French language to those languages of our native Africa. The teaching of tribal languages is a necessity for our general education but it should not be the object of exaggerated fanaticism. The natives of the Belgian Congo have unanimously opted for the*

*study of French. They understand that prolonged education in a primitive language would hinder the cultural aim they envisage. It should be pointed out that the well wishing European support our theory.*"[lviii] The arguments used by Bolamba make it clear that the promotion of the superiority of European civilisation was still intact in these circles.

#### *4.1.4. Level of education*

The question of French was only part of a broader movement. Léon Ilunga made it clear in 1945: *"The instruction we receive in general makes us simple auxiliaries. It does not allow us to progress and to complete this development."* In his contribution he asked for the creation of higher education and trade education 'for our children'. Primary education must be reorganised and must become a springboard that would allow these children to reach higher than was now the case. The administration must seriously reform the curriculum (which at that time had not yet happened), make French instruction available to all and ensure that the children who finished school must be capable of tackling further studies. At present one was hardly able to understand French after finishing primary school. The vocational schools must also reach a level that was much higher than that of 'dumb assistants' who could not work independently. To sum up: *"The door to European civilisation having been opened to us, it is a human obligation to allow us and our children to enter."* Ilunga expressed himself somewhat sceptically about the level of the Congolese elite, to which he belonged: *"The knowledge we have is truly very elementary. We talk of a black elite; where can that be sought? (...) Perhaps in the groups of those who claim they know about the affairs of the whites because they can speak French more or less correctly? No, one thousand times, no."*[lix]

In 1950 the question of pre-university education for Congolese was still formulated in a very well-behaved and respectful manner: *"Certainly, we are only children..."*[lx] Bolamba also remained friendly to the Belgians for a long time, but stated in 1953 that the further extension of education should occur as soon as possible, though he was in agreement with the position that it would be a long time before the Congolese would reach the right level and be of equal merit to the whites.[lxi] In 1954, on the occasion of the opening of the University in Kimwenza he then wrote a few remarkable editorials. In contrast to what might have been expected, Bolamba was not brimming with enthusiasm. He observed that everything had been organised a little hastily. He urged speedy arrangements for



Congolese students who wanted to go and study in Belgium.[lxii] Towards Buisseret he was again very positive. He defended the views the minister had taken in his first policy statement. Bolamba particularly defended the creation of lay education on the grounds of democratic principles, which “were introduced by the Belgians into the Congo”. Furthermore the editor-in-chief mentioned that university education was naturally very welcome, but that above all there was a demand for adequate preparation for that education and that there was a need for good primary and secondary education. He was pleased to say that the scholarships for the Congolese in Belgium had become a fact by that time.[lxiii]

The quality of education or the lack of education in certain regions were recurring themes in *La Voix*. [lxiv] A contribution from 1957 looked a little further. The introduction of education at all possible levels had indeed not seemed to be a solution for all problems, the author understood: “*Nevertheless our civilisers that appreciate our intellectual and professional abilities leave us perplexed before the hesitation that they show in granting us our total confidence.*” That lack of trust was indeed expressed in other areas. The development of consciousness by the *évolués* took another step forward: “*We cannot accept to see our graduates subordinate both in relation to wage and respect to white women who work in offices and factories who do not have the equivalent diplomas to these graduates. Acting in this way would be to commit a grave offence.*” In the same article the author also argued for more “*increasingly skilled labour*”. [lxv]

The call for emancipation became increasingly louder: “*One cannot deny the value of the studies done by those who finished secondary school. In earlier times it were the middle schools that trained excellent black employees. Despite their average education numerous of them have managed to take on the work as yet only entrusted to the white race. We think it illogical in the current situation of the development in the Congo that young men leaving secondary school become typists in the same sense as those leaving middle school. Why can they not immediately take on the position of editor?*” [lxvi] Another author, Ntamba, remarked that there was a great lack of respect from the white bosses for Congolese having secondary diplomas. The only solution was systematically making all types of education equivalent: “*The era of curricula specifically adapted to the native population has passed.*” [lxvii] On the other hand, Bolamba himself stated in 1958 that a university level of knowledge did not offer sufficient guarantees on its own. Everything depended, after all, on what exactly was being

taught. And in the case of Congo, the knowledge being passed on was obviously still too theoretical. He thought that the new graduates should really be able to travel to Europe. The reason: "*We do not doubt their intellectual ability but, let's face it, their knowledge is theoretical.*"[lxviii]

#### 4.1.5. Dialogue about education

A very detailed article on education that is doubly interesting in this context was published in 1952. The article, written by Bolamba, was the result of a thought exercise, in which thirty or so *évolués* from all over the country had taken part. The discussions, the article reported, were held in the presence of "*a top civil servant from the Department of Education of the General Government*", who was thanked extensively by Bolamba and described approvingly as "*an impartial guide and informed of schooling issues*".[lxix] The article summarised a number of criticisms made about the existing educational system. The form of the article and the manner in which the criticism was formulated and subsequently evaluated, revealed much about the colonial relationships at that moment and also reflected the distorted position of the *évolués*. After every point of criticism, an 'answer' to the criticism was set down. That was not only a rather paternalistic approach to the readers of *La Voix* (but that was generally the case), it also perfectly allowed any possibly embarrassing points to be neutralised immediately and almost unnoticed.

Most attention at the level of elementary education was paid to language problems. The *évolués* obviously pushed forward the point that French should be generally adopted as the language of education. The list of claims began with the statement that French should be adopted as the national language in the whole colony. At school, education in local languages still played far too great a role. The question was also posed as to whether too much was going wrong because of the excessively free application of the school curriculum. In the answers given to the different points, it was apparent that native languages were indeed no longer a priority at school. In fact, the school curriculum still stipulated at that time (1952) that the language of education had to be a native language. In the remarks that were formulated in this article it was finally stated that the native languages could not be pushed aside completely.

Again, the residency issue for the children in the towns came up during the meeting. The Congolese advocated the introduction of compulsory school attendance but the administration continued to defend that it would be more

efficient to systematically send the children back to their village of origin, if they had no family in the town able to accommodate them and they could not find a place in a boarding school. For the first time, the article also formulated a claim, unheard of at that time: a serious and well-organized secondary education must exist for women as well as for men, so that they could also go to work and earn money. Here the *évolués* were confronted with complete incomprehension. The administration evidently saw no need to develop this education. It was still too early for it. All the efforts must be directed to the formation of good housewives and dedicated mothers. The parallels between this answer and the views in Bolamba's book are striking. The only point of criticism to which those responsible could really formulate no answer was evidently the level of the teachers. People who were employed had often progressed no further than the third or fourth school year with regard to intellectual skills. It is apparent from the reaction that a diploma was still not required for a subsidy.

The laconic reply to the request for university level education was: "it will come, when it comes". The Congolese then asked to be able to send students to Belgian universities. University level education was one of the topics that the editorial staff was very concerned about. Articles were not published on it very often but the editorial staff clearly followed the question carefully. At the end of the first academic year they were ready and waiting to report the scores of the Congolese students in the paper. At that time this still related to a preparatory year, because the Congolese students were not considered ready to go straight to the university level. Of the 31 candidates who began the year, only 11 passed but the editorial staff spoke of a great success.[lxx] When a person could leave for Belgium to go to study there, or if somebody came back with good results, this was also reported.[lxxi] In 1956 the speech Buisseret gave at the opening of the second University in the Congo (the 'state' University) was published in extenso as a supplement in *La Voix*. [lxxii]

The last part of 'the great educational article' included yet another variety of questions and remarks that arose, of which one was about religious education. Again, here the *évolués* and administration were involved in a dialogue of the deaf. The *évolués* had noticed that there was too much religious education in the schools and that less time should be spent on it. In reply it was stated: "*Religious education in schools is not exaggerated at all. This education is necessary for the pupil's moral education. It does not take any more place than that reserved in the*

*curriculum.*”[lxxiii] The attitude of the editorial staff seemed in any case to be ambiguous on this topic. In general the missionaries were treated protectively. *“We must ensure not to find ourselves in the wake of those who denigrate religious education.”*[lxxiv] Rather exceptionally, the missionaries were the subject of criticism from the editorial staff. That normally happened in veiled terms, as here.

However this may be, these contributions, often still dominated by colonial discourse, did not voice critical attacks so much as rather desperate questions on their own fate, their own future. On the other hand sharp analyses were made about the exodus from the countryside. One author remarked that even if all *imposed works, chiefdoms and native districts* were immediately abolished, people would still continue to leave for the town. The true reason was not to be sought in repugnance for traditional village life (an analysis that was made regularly by well intentioned whites), but was caused by the complete dislocation of these traditions: *“The day the young black boy enters the school, the time he starts to touch the mystery of the alphabet, the key to all knowledge, at that time, he buried his ancestral customs.”* The author of this contribution went much further than this observation. Confronted with contradictory expectations, a feeling of confusion overcame many Congolese, he stated: *“And it is the summit of his disappointment to establish that after having initiated him in their pleasures and life, after having him inculcated with European ideas and principles over the years, he is reproached for not having kept his black soul, not having preserved the good things in his ancestral customs, of wanting to abandon his native lifestyle, etc...”*[lxxv] That feeling even led to distrust: *“The increasingly numerous natives are wondering with our friend Tshibamba Paul if they haven’t knowingly placed us outside the path that has to lead man to his social destiny.”* In an 1956 article about education in Luozi, the author referred to a teacher who stood in front of an apathetic class at the beginning of the school year and spoke to them threateningly: *“This is going to be serious for you.”* At which the children answered: *“Those who studied before us are still in the village, why should we do our best?”*[lxxvi]

## 4.2. Local contributions and insights

### 4.2.1. The state in the region.

*La Voix* circulated throughout the entire colony and therefore certainly did not focus exclusively on news from the Equatorial Province. In 1950 Bolamba wrote a

travel report on his visit to the Equator and Coquilhatville. He was moderately positive about Coquilhatville: he found people there very pleasant and hospitable, but observed that the material state of the native neighbourhood left much to be desired, in contrast to the European town. Most dwellings were still not built in durable material. Again, four years later he wrote: *"The visitor who leaves for Coquilhatville for the first time, cannot fail to suffer from some deception. While Léopoldville, Matadi, Elisabethville, Bukavu and Stanleyville (only to cite these towns) make giant leaps in the fields of economics and urbanisation, the progress of the capital of the Equator province is slower."* According to Bolamba, much work was also to be done in the black areas and new expansions ("Coq II") looked like camps. In another contribution an article from *Mbandaka* was quoted in which there was a complaint about the lamentable state of the houses in the C.E.C.[lxxvii] The villages in the surrounding area were not much better. People there lived in very uncomfortable circumstances. Bolamba was very critical towards the *évolués*: they did not behave as he expected of them. The *Cercle Léopold II*, which had been set up some years earlier, as in other towns as a means for social uplift was already disbanded. Bolamba remarked cynically: *"This association has the inevitable bar and an official library that is little used, except by the pupils from the school."*[lxxviii] The relations between the evolved Congolese and the rest of the population were not positively assessed at all, the attitude of the *évolués* was very disparaging and belittling. *"This is very serious. If such a situation should become more generalised, a fatal blow would inevitably be given to Congolese society."*

Bolamba went still further and reported the existence of a number of 'associations' of a very dubious nature at the same time. Again, in a contribution from 1955 he seemed to be especially fixated on the lamentable moral state of the educated Congolese of the area. He referred repeatedly to the high consumption of alcohol among the *évolués*, and moral degeneracy. The tone was clear: *"The civilised men of Coquilhatville must unite and get along. They must blow life into their Leopold II association. They must read numerous books made available to them by the State. They must avoid mutual criticism, the malicious mind of disparagement and the tendency they have to disgrace their fellows with their European chiefs, in the aim of destroying their reputation or career."* The club life did not represent that much, it appears. The *Cercle Léopold II* functioned more as a café than club house. Bolamba described the people responsible and in doing so described also the prevailing atmosphere: they were, according to him,

*“indifférents, moqueurs et insouciantes.”* From time to time a Belgian passed by to chat, but in general there was very little contact between white and black. In fact, Bolamba called these contacts *“presque inexistants à Coquilhatville”*. Despite some attempts to get cultural life going again, he said people remained in a deep lethargy.

The news about the *Cercles* in the Equatorial Province and, more specifically, in the Tshuapa was, for that matter, seldom very encouraging. The *Cercles* were initially intended to be a Congolese version of association life after the Western model and sprouted like mushrooms after the Second World War. However, they had great difficulty freeing themselves from the influence of the Belgians. *La Voix* reported in 1946 that people in Coquilhatville had, for the present, decided not to start their own publication for *évolués*. Louis Ilonga, a clerk with the colonial administration, obediently wrote about *“nos éducateurs”*, and reported only that this postponement was justified by the lack of resources of the authorities responsible for ‘*évolué-affaires*’. In 1949 the existence of a circle of *évolués* in Ingende was reported, but evidently after a few years this had been totally non-existent.[lxxix] In 1950 Bolamba showed his approval for the reader’s remark that in the association in Boende people only talked and complained but that no initiatives were taken. From the text of the letter it seemed that the *évolués* mostly argued among themselves.[lxxx] From the report of a general meeting of the same association, which was also reported in *La Voix*, it did indeed seem that few initiatives were taken: *“Healthy distractions are periodically organised. Evening courses are given to residents who ask for them once the circle has the necessary materials available.”*[lxxxi] In 1951 it was reported that in Bongandanga, again in the Equatorial Province, the local *Cercle* was really led by a Belgian, who was described as *“animateur”*. This ‘animateur’ himself arranged the lectures for the association.[lxxxii]

Fundamental contradictions in discussions between the *évolués* also came to light in the reporting on the Equatorial Province, as well as contradictions between discourse and reality. On the one hand there was a powerful, incorrigible optimism, belief in the future and joy in what the Congolese experienced as emancipation. In a section entitled *“Au tableau d’honneur de l’élite congolaise”* Bolamba reported the people who announced that they had received a *Carte du mérite civique*. [lxxxiii] In 1952, *La Voix* also reported with some pride on the opening of the first African restaurant in Coquilhatville.[lxxxiv] In a majestically

optimistic style the periodical invariably carried such contributions as this about the appointment of a new chief in the C.E.C., in which the new representative was introduced as “very dynamic” and “very suitable for the job”. Criticism was not often seen in such contributions and that remained the case to the end. On the other hand, in articles and reports very often information trickled through that showed that reality was very different. In 1957 Iyeki wrote in an *“appel aux amis de Coquilhatville”* on the relations between the *évolués* in Coquilhatville. He spoke of *misunderstandings, a lack of community spirit*, and revealed dubious practices therein: *“But also how unhappy we feel to hear them say: ‘Here you cannot do anything. Everything is reported to the authorities by anonymous letters and the people keeping black lists are very numerous.’ What? ... Do anonymous letters still exist where you are? ... But isn’t that an outdated process for the African elite?”* The local administration evidently still had a sturdy grasp on the Congolese elite in this region.[lxxxv]

#### 4.2.2. *The position of the évolués in society*

In the first few years editorial staff evidently did not adopt a very assertive attitude towards the colonists. Reports of particular incidents were certainly made. In 1947 the editorial staff gave some commentary on a case in the medical inspection service in Coquilhatville. One of the Congolese officials was found in an obvious state of drunkenness during working hours. In response to this the responsible doctor had announced a general ban, for coloured staff in the medical service, from entering bars. In Flandria one of the editors had been to interview the Congolese employees of the HCB and was on that occasion a witness to how one of the European managers himself misbehaved towards the Congolese: *“(...) a European came to “question” a clerk from the accounting department in a rather ...coarse manner, throwing his hat in the air, under the pretext of him having abandoned his work. This took place at the H.C.B. beach in the presence of a relatively large number of witnesses.”*[lxxxvi] The editorial staff, and particularly Bolamba, clearly condemned this event. It was reported along with another incident, in Jadotstad, in which a European had abused a Congolese man in government service, calling him a *maquette*. When this man had answered that his job could not be done by an ape, he had attacked him. All in all the reactions from the editorial staff remained relatively ‘well behaved’, but the tone that was used, indicated that this was only the tip of the iceberg.

This same editorial staff compromised pretty well between complaining about,

contradicting and agreeing with the coloniser, which regularly led to moralising contributions. At one time the Brothers of the Christian Schools decided to exclude from their school the children whose parents did not live in the town itself. When a complaint was made against this decision in a reader's letter, the editorial staff made some excuses for it, with the argument that there were probably practical reasons for it. Besides, the editorial staff argued, Brother Director applied the ruling with some flexibility in practice.[lxxxvii] When a report appeared in 1957 on a change to the curfew that had applied for a long time in the *Centre Extra Coutumier* of Coquilhatville, it was accompanied by suitable approval but at the same time with a number of warnings. After all, now the curfew had been relaxed, cafés and bars could stay open longer. The editorial staff wagged a finger: *"If we applaud this new decree, it is not without reserve. Everything depends on the way in which it will be used. The authorities wanted to satisfy the wishes of the population. We should benefit from this new favour and act as men who may be trusted and relied upon."* At the same time there were warnings about the formation of gangs of young people

This ambiguity was also illustrated by a number of other examples. Dominique Iloo described in 1950 how a common church service was organised as the result of an accident in an army barracks in Bikoro, whereby a Belgian captain and three Congolese soldiers had died: *"Ce jour-là, Blancs et Noirs se sentirent frères."* He wrote that there had never been such an event at which whites and blacks had taken part together since the foundation of Coquilhatville.[lxxxviii] The remarks were made in passing in a report that further attributed heroic qualities to the unfortunate victims of the accident and as a consequence was not free of an exaggerated use of language. However, it does indicate that there was a very great divide between blacks and whites in daily life.

The commentary that Bolamba wrote on the visit of King Boudewijn to Coquilhatville in 1955 is just as typical. In contradiction to his strong views a few years earlier, he now showed no trace of criticism any more in his description of the town. The new black neighbourhoods here were suddenly *"une jolie agglomération en croissance"*, Coquilhatville as a whole was *"une des villes les plus exubérantes du Congo Belge"*. The editor-in-chief of *La Voix* had followed and reported on the whole royal progress. He was obviously gripped by the general enthusiasm, brought about by the propaganda around the monarch's visit, and that seemed to have infected his reporting.



Finally, Bolamba's reaction to an article by Joseph Lomboto, on the materialism to which some women (the wives of *évolués*) were subject was typical of the values held by the paper. The author reported the existence of a number of associations of Congolese women, which kept themselves busy with the cultivation of a certain material living standard: *"I have learnt from a trustworthy source that there is an association of women and young girls called 'pourries de sous' (the 'filthy' rich), who boast of wearing new clothes every Sunday. Yet, by what means can they pay for a new piece of such expensive cotton each week, if not by surrendering to that debase trade that is prostitution?"* Bolamba also added in his commentary: *"For Coquilhatville I would notably refer to the association 'Misses Millionaires', newly established, that is made up solely of black women, who are the housekeepers for the Europeans. The latter do not want any contact with other women from the city and seek to establish a perfectly homogenous group in which the members share the same desires and needs. All these women dress in identical clothes, have bicycles of the same make and colour, etc. In short they do everything in their power to be distinguished from the masses. Yet is this distinction necessary or even desirable? Is the fact that it is sought not in itself prejudicial to the most elementary morals? And the spirit that pervades this association and the showy luxury of the members constitute sufficient elements to justify its suppression."*[lxxxix]

On the one hand, this text forms another illustration of the fact that Bolamba had obviously assimilated certain Western values very well. It definitely shows that he had the tendency to take strongly moralising standpoints. On the other hand the example given perfectly illustrates the mechanism the *évolués* were also susceptible to: the formation of groups and the tendency to cut themselves off and set themselves above other groups of theoretical equals. What Bolamba here almost contemptuously defined as the enthusiasms of a group of housekeepers, who wanted to feel they were better than other Congolese women, obviously applied equally well to himself. All the attempts, displayed here, to describe, evaluate, analyse and consequently control the situation of others, were equally a means of winning a position in colonial society for himself. Because of their strongly opinionated content it seems obvious from these articles that Bolamba (and the others) did not notice that at the time.

#### 4.2.3. Observations and discussions on education

Over the course of the years, local education was also discussed a few times. In

1953 Gabriël Baelenge wrote an overview article on the education in the Equatorial Province. He remarked in it that education was distributed very unevenly across the land area of the province and that the young people who studied further afield often took account in their choice of the nearness of one or another establishment. The north of the province, the Ubangi-district, was the best provided with establishments, with one junior seminary, two teacher training colleges and an agricultural vocational school. Coquilhatville, in the western part of the province, had a teacher training college, a secondary school and a junior seminary. In the Tshuapa area (to the east of Coquilhatville) there was nothing. It was obvious to the author that this uneven spread had a negative influence on the employment market.[xc] Especially for people who went to work for the state, and sometimes had to move house, it was not easy to find good schooling for their children. Baelenge referred to the fact, obviously generally true in the colony, that children were not allowed to go to school in a place where they had no family living. More had to be done with boarding schools and he considered the argument that the Congolese were not prepared to pay for them as being incorrect.

A contribution such as this makes it clear that the educated Congolese were primarily concerned with the question of how they could fit in with their 'new' community (that of the colonists). They had been to school, had an education and a diploma in demand with the Europeans. They also wanted to make their contribution to the community, but then they were faced with practical problems such as these. The question is naturally whether something like this was possible in any case at that time. The financial argument was not really a problem there. During the 1940s, the MSC had themselves toyed with the idea of charging school fees, but at that time it was obviously not appropriate. The school regulations did not mention anything about *droits de scolarité*. The 1948 school programme included the application of a rather broad subsidy arrangement. It also seems logical to assume that in this context there was no room for alternative financing. However, from inspection reports from the early 1950s it certainly seems that school fees were in fact sometimes charged. The inspector made no fuss about it, which indicates that it was acceptable practice.[xci] However, even if the parents were able to pay for the education of their children and also wanted to do so, there were other obstacles. The organisation and structure of the Belgian Congo with its very large area did not permit education to be organised in the short term in a way that allowed all wishes to be fulfilled.

In fact, Bolamba hardly mentioned education in his travel report for 1950. He mainly discussed the schools of the Brothers, which he – not surprisingly, considering his own educational history – called “*d’excellents pédagogues*”. The MSC were only mentioned in connection with their novitiate in Bamanya. In a contribution from 1954 he did consider some questions of content more deeply. The missionaries taught ‘a little’ too much Lonkundo to the young. Bolamba was obviously aware of the discussions on the use of language, and referred to it incidentally: “*All kinds of arguments have been put forward to explain this. Only those who forget that the Congolese do not ignore anything of their maternal language are convinced of this preference.*”[xcii] The girls were taught as good as no French. “*Even in Coquilhatville, those who complete the courses at the domestic school are unable to put a few words of French together.*” That was heavily criticised, but only because the future housewives would feel inferior to their husbands and this could threaten the proper functioning of the family. He also complained of the moral degeneracy of the young on this occasion. The odd thing is that Bolamba and others in general took on the role of the ‘elite’ and emphasised a sort of pride and a sort of identification as a group, but that they also criticised *évolués* just as strongly. On the one hand they thought that they were on the right track, that ‘evolving’ was a necessary and morally responsible employment and that this also happened, but at the same time they gave out signals that in reality things were not proceeding so perfectly. Bolamba liked to use the word *évoluant*, to show that one had not yet reached the final goal.

In the late 1950s some more critical voices could be heard in connection with education. A certain Norbert Mpako reported the problems with which the inhabitants of Monkote were confronted in education in 1956:[xciii] “*There are no school institutions in Monkoto. Young children have to travel 324 km to Wafanya where there is a primary school run by the Sacred Heart missionaries and where the courses are taught by religious missionaries. There are rural schools in our territory but their number is negligible. In addition, the lessons taught there are neither efficient nor profitable for good basic culture.*”[xciv] In addition a frustration with the rural schools became apparent here: “*The rural schools that have multiplied so happily are only a trick of the eye. The pupils who attend are of all ages and, consequently, they are not all capable of tackling the primary subjects.*” It was again pointed out that it did not make much sense to send the children to the big city, because of the “*politique de refoulement*” that was generally applied. The article clearly touched a sensitive nerve because a few

months later a reaction, signed by four people, was published. The authors accused Mpako of not having been to Monkoto for over ten years and that his article was much too negative on the attitude of the coloniser and the state of the region.

Mpako's article started a real polemic. The arguments used in this, tell a lot about the thinking of the *évolués* concerned, the attitude of the Congolese in general and the position of the editorial staff of *La Voix*. An argument against Mpako was that he did not know the current situation he was criticising. He was said not to have been in the area for a long time. The distance from Monkoto to Wafanya was also reduced to about 50 kilometres (which was correct). This does raise the suspicion that the 350 kilometres from Mpako's article was at the least a 'literary' exaggeration. Concerning the school, it was pointed out that there were at least three central schools in the immediate neighbourhood of Monkoto, of which two were Protestant, and also a whole series of rural schools. It was also remarked that the workforce in the region was large enough, something that Mpako had also denied, and that the colonists were certainly not so unfriendly and racist as it would appear from his article.

The editorial staff (Bolamba) supported the authors in this dispute and condemned Mpako because he had spouted criticism *à la légère*. Mpako reacted, and his reaction was published almost a year later. He conceded that he had not been in the area for more than ten years, but said that the criticism he made was not less valid as a result. He considered the fact that there was no secondary education in the region a particularly sore point, which his opponents did not mention. In a last article yet another writer, Jean-François Iyiky, gave his opinion. He approached the subject in a more balanced way, took a reconciliatory tone towards the missionaries and the territorial officials but still observed that there certainly was a shortage of educational facilities in the area. The remarks he added to this showed more fundamental frustrations concerning the nature of the education offered: "*And who would not want a school with 4 to 6 post-primary years in Boende, the district capital? We are against schools where the pupils are more gardeners or builders than students. And besides, not anybody who aspires to be a schoolmaster, also is one. There are experts in education. They are expensive? Nobody denies it! Nevertheless, the problem is there!*"[xcv]

Iyiky was obviously greatly concerned with this question, and could also place it in a wider perspective. In a contribution published a few months later in *La Voix*,

he returned to the problem of education (or the lack of it). In it he assumed, like the MSC, that it was necessary to keep young people in the region and to combat the exodus from the countryside. The foundation of new local schools was a first vital step in this. He did not, however, discuss the contradiction with the observations made previously concerning the nature of education.[xcvi]

### *Conclusions*

At around the time this polemic was underway, an article was published by Thomas Bessembe, who also came from the Equatorial Province.[xcvii] He reacted to an article that had previously appeared about a *chef de secteur* in another area.[xcviii] Bessembe made a strong plea for the appointment of sufficiently trained *chefs*. Really he was referring here to the problem of the exodus from the countryside. Many *évolués*, he said, were quite ready to go back to their village or area of origin, but they were put off by the lack of understanding for them in the villages and that was obvious from the attitude of the chiefs. He defined the aim of his own article as: requesting the authorities to send a well-educated and progressive chief to his area, so that all the problems could also be solved there. Then, after all, the *évolués* from the town would want to return to the countryside and help develop economic activity there. The article ended with a question directed at the colonists, who, in the best tradition, were still referred to as “*civilisateurs*” in the article. This was typical of the feeling in this group. On the one hand, the time had come according to the *évolués* themselves “*tant attendu par tous les Congolais*”: Congo was “in full development”. But on the other hand the *évolués* could still not stand on their own feet, or so they assumed. The conclusion of this development still had to come from above, from the colonists.

This message came from Bolamba and his colleagues, the editors and writers of *La Voix*, the group which must be considered as the most successful in terms of social standing. After all, they were the people the colonists had allowed to take the positions, which entailed the most risk and therefore also the greatest responsibility. Indeed being the mouthpiece for the Congolese was an immensely important task in a context in which their voice could hardly be heard. It was also obvious that no revolutionaries or idealists could be chosen for this but they had to be very moderate, docile people. They had to be the best pupils of the class, those who had been exemplary at school. Bolamba himself would keep it up to the last issue of his periodical, in his pleas for moderation and caution, but just as much in the style in which he put the message forward. The picture fitted exactly.

Undoubtedly, the *évolués* themselves were the most important result of the educational system installed in the colony. They proved this in their attitude and reactions in *La Voix*. They had made the values they had been given their own. One of the most important values was respect for (and dependence on) a higher authority. They had accepted that salvation would come from upbringing and education according to the western model, as propagated by the missionaries and once on that path it was difficult to turn back.

The contributions extensively referred to in this chapter nonetheless showed “that something was wrong”. Often subconsciously, they conceded that they had been set on a road with a dead end and that the development in this sense was a false ideal the coloniser had given them. The debate on moral values, that was fought out passionately at times gave the impression that development under the influence of the western example was in fact not so positively evaluated as it looked at first sight. In my opinion that can be interpreted in two ways. Above all it concedes that Christian morals as a background of “civilisation” were very well integrated in the world image of the *évolués*. Fulfilling this moral standard was probably one of the ways they could distinguish themselves and still be more evolved than the others. In addition it was probably also a way of venting dissatisfaction about the existing situation and these discussions functioned in many cases as a sort of lightning rod for the real problems.

Demands were formulated to solve all those things that weren’t right. These demands could only go in one direction. They could never be capable of imagining that an alternative existed to the path they had taken. It would have been outrageous to imagine a return to a classical, traditional model of society. That can especially be seen in the authors’ attitudes in *La Voix*. The general tenor of the contributions evolved from an almost general gratitude towards the benefits of “civilisation”, to a steadily growing questioning of colonial society and the status of the Congolese in it. In any event this was intrinsically linked with the foundation of the periodical that precisely was meant to respond to the growing dissatisfaction about the existing social situation. Increasingly, demands were formulated and without exception these went in the direction of further emancipation, the further continuation of the process that had been started. The demands for a further development of and a higher participation in the educational system fitted within this. These two naturally had to go together. After all, education was the motor of this evolution, at least at the beginning.

Indeed, the initial reason for attending school lay in the improvement of the circumstances of one's own life that one intended to be able to bring about. That is one of the elements that comes out very clearly in the memories of former pupils of the mission schools which are central to the last chapter.

## NOTES

[i] Gille, A. (1957). L'enseignement organisé au Congo belge par les pouvoirs publics ou avec leurs concours. In *Belgique d'Outre-Mer*, XII, 273, p. 909-913.

[ii] From 1956 a new structure was accepted, consisting of three times two years, and it was announced that the curriculum must increasingly correspond with the Belgian syllabus 1936. From 1958 that became the 1958 syllabus. Kita, P. (1982). *Colonisation et enseignement*. p. 230-231.

[iii] Pol Georis was a colleague of Sylvain De Coster, Professor of Education and Educational Psychology at the Free University of Brussels. During the 1960s he published a number of works on education in the Congo/Zaire, in the context of CEMUBAC, the Centre Médicale de l'Université de Bruxelles Au Congo.

[iv] The periodical mentioned two "publishers": the CEPSI in Elisabethville, and the Institut de Pédagogie of the University of Lovanium.

[v] Bolamba, A.R. (1955). *Brillants résultats à Lovanium*. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 113, p. 678. Colin, M. (1958). *Proclamation des résultats universitaires à Lovanium*. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 150, p. 570.

[vi] Missine, L.E. (1968). *L'institut facultaire de psychologie et de pédagogie. Son organisation et ses recherches*. Kinshasa: Lovanium; *Universiteiten van Belgisch-Congo en van Ruanda Urundi*, information brochure of the administration. Brussels, 1958.

[vii] Kimba, E. (1957). Ce que les Congolais attendent de l'enseignement du Français. In *Revue Pédagogique Congolais*, n°9, September 1957, p. V-IX. *L'Essor du Congo* was published in Elisabethville and was one of the three important newspapers in the Congo (besides *L'Avenir* and *Le Courrier d'Afrique*). It was traditionally a conservatively-minded newspaper, although after the war some space was given to different opinions about the social situation in the Congo. The newspaper was described as follows in a study of the press in the Congo from 1957: "L'Essor du Congo, conservative, may be classed to the right, perhaps to the extreme right." See Van Bol, J.M. (1957). *La presse quotidienne au Congo Belge*. Bruxelles: La pensée catholique. p. 81.

[viii] Lumpungu, F. (1958). La valeur pédagogique du jeu. In *Revue pédagogique congolaise*, n°12, July 1958, p. XXVI-XXX.

- [ix] Kimponto, A. (1958). La fonction du moniteur de la ville et l'influence qu'il doit exercer. In *Revue pédagogique congolaise*, n°11, March 1958, p. XIX-XXII.
- [x] One of these was the later general and president José Désiré Mobutu.
- [xi] **Sheikh Anta Diop** (1923-1986). A Senagalese scientist (he studied mathematics, nuclear physics and philosophy and was also known as an archaeologist and historian). Diop was one of the African intellectuals who went to study in Paris in the context of the French assimilationist educational ideas. From 1946 to 1960 he studied and worked primarily in Paris, where he defended a doctorate in literature with the theme "L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire". At that time he also published a number of articles on African history and its perception in Europe. Diop was also one of the advocates of African independence, but was excluded from politics for the greatest part of his life. Zorgbibe, C. (2004). Senghor and Sheik Anta Diop or the restoration of African conscience. At [www.african-geopolitics.org](http://www.african-geopolitics.org)
- [xii] Jadot, J.M. (1959). *Les écrivains africains du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi. Une histoire - Un bilan - Des problèmes*. Académie royale des Sciences coloniales. Classe des sciences morales et politiques. Mémoires In-8°. Nouvelle Série, 17, 2. Bruxelles: ARSOM. Remarkably enough, a text by a Mongo-teacher from Boende on land laws among the Mongo is also in the same publication. The text, which was sent to the Academie by Boelaert and translated by him into French, won the annual prize awarded by the Academie.
- [xiii] Justin Bomboko (°1928) studied political science at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. He founded the Unimo (Union des Mongo) in 1960 in Coquilhatville. In the 1960s he was twice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and now is vice-president of the senate (October 2003). Ganshof Van der Meersch, W. (1960). *Congo mai-juin 1960. Rapport du ministre chargé des affaires générales en Afrique*. Bruxelles, s.n.; Ferrand, I. (2001). *Congo 1955-1960. De aanloop naar de onafhankelijkheid. Een analyse van de berichtgeving in drie Vlaamse kranten*. Masters' thesis Universiteit Gent. On [www.ethesis.net](http://www.ethesis.net)
- [xiv] Bolela, A. (1971). Un aperçu de la presse congolaise écrite par les noirs de 1885 à 1960. In *Congo-Afrique*, XII, 1, p. 12.
- [xv] Vinck, H. (2000). Périodiques coloniaux en langues africaines dans les archives Aequatoria. On [www.aequatoria.be/archives\\_project](http://www.aequatoria.be/archives_project). Edited version of the article "La presse à Mbandaka", appeared in Vinck, H. (ed.) (1990). *Mbandaka, hier et aujourd'hui. Eléments d'historiographie locale*. Etudes Aequatoria 10. Bamanya: Centre Aequatoria. p. 227-234. [original in French]
- [xvi] Ibidem.



[xvii] In total 170 issues were published.

[xviii] Davier, J. (1955). Souvenirs d'anniversaire. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 106, p. 6-16.

[xix]< Kadima-Tshimanga, B.D. (1983). *L'univers socio-politique de l'évolué congolais entre 1955 et 1959. Une étude du vocabulaire de "La Voix du Congolais"*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Paris, Nouvelle Sorbonne. p. 26.

[xx] Tamba, J. (1946). Nos écrits et leur but. In *La Voix du Congolais*, II, 10, p. 416-418. [original in French]

[xxi] This other publication is described as follows by Van Bol: "*un illustré, qui poursuit avec bonheur sa mission d'éducation populaire.*" [original quotation in French]

[xxii] Bolamba, A.R. (1959). In *La Voix du Congolais*, XV, 163, p. 575-576. [original quotation in French]

[xxiii] Kadima-Tshimanga, B.D. (1983). *L'univers socio-politique de l'évolué congolais entre 1955 et 1959*. p. 76.

[xxiv] Bolamba, Antoine Roger (1913-2002). Born in Boma but a Mongo by origin. He attended school with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, continued his studies at the Ecole pour Assistants Médicaux in Kintambo (near Kinshasa), and worked for a number of years as a clerk for Foréami (*Fonds Reine Elisabeth pour l'Assistance Médicale aux Indigènes*). He became editor-in-chief of *La Voix* in 1946. In 1956 he was a cabinet assistant of Buisseret for a year. The obituaries written on the occasion of his death on 9 July 2002 emphasised his literary qualities, although mainly one work was referred to, his bundle of poems "Esanzo", with which in 1955 he became the first Congolese to receive international recognition for his literary work. After this Bolamba had a short political career. He was appointed to the post of Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs by Patrice Lumumba and later he was Minister of Information in the administration of Cyrille Adula (1960-1964) for a short time. Subsequently, he fulfilled all sorts of positions in the entourage of Mobutu. After zairisation, Bolamba adopted the name "Lokolé" to replace his baptismal name. See MMC (2002). Obituary: La Rdc orpheline du doyen de ses écrivains: A-R. Bolamba disparaît à 89 ans! On <http://64.224.66.88/public/congo/pages/nouvellet.asp?nid=274>. Concerning Bolamba's literary work see above all Gérard, A. (1977). *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone*. Dakar/Abidjan: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, p. 97-114.

[xxv] Eloko a Nongo Otshudiema (1975). *Les structures inconscientes de "La Voix*

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[xxviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1948). Editorial: Colour Bar? In *La Voix du Congolais*, 24, p. 101-103.

[xxix] Bolamba, A.R. (1949). *Les problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire*. Léopoldville: Editions de l'Essor du Congo.

[xxx] Ibidem, p. 12.

[xxxi] Ibidem, p. 33-34.

[xxxii] Ibidem, p. 48-49.

[xxxiii] See on this matter Ceuppens, B. (2003). *Onze Congo? Congolezen over de kolonisatie*. Leuven: Davidsfonds. p. 46-55. She claims that this not necessarily meant that men did not want to eat with their wives or families but that according to the traditions they were expected to eat in public.

[xxxiv] Ibidem, p. 148-149. [original quotation in French]

[xxxv] Ibidem, p. 167.

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[xlii] Iloo, D. (1952). A propos de l'article "Conseils aux éducateurs". In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 79, p. 594-596.

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- [xlix] Vumuka, J.J.W. (1957). A propos de l'école des filles à Boma. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 140, p. 904-905.
- [l] Delanaye, [Père] (1958). A propos de l'école des filles de Boma. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, p. 168-169.
- [li] Iyolo, E. (1957). L'école doit favoriser la culture intellectuelle de la femme congolaise. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 140, p. 846-847.
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- [lxiii] Bolamba, A.R. (1954). Après les déclarations ministérielles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 100, p. 513.

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- [lxvii] Ntamba, L. (1958). A côté des universités, il faut multiplier les écoles secondaires et normales. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 152, p. 678-679.
- [lxviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1958). Les étudiants africains devraient effectuer des voyages dans les pays de l'Europe. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 148, p. 486.
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- [lxxxi] Bolamba, A.R. (1947). Activités des Cercles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, III, 21, p. 934.
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66, p. 526.

[lxxxiii] For example a certain Mr Mosikwa from Boende, reported during 1952. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 70, p. 56. See also number 73, p. 245.

[lxxxiv] Bolamba, A.R. (1952). Ephémérides. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 80, p. 703.

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[xc] Baelenge, G. (1953). L'enseignement dans la province de l'Equateur. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IX, 82, p. 41-42.

[xci] Africa Archive Brussels, electronic inventory, no. 12.452, Commentaire rédigé à la suite de l'inspection d'écoles du Vicariat de Coq de février à juin 1951 par l'inspecteur-assistant, ff., C. Eloye.

[xcii] Bolamba, A.R. (1955). Coquilhatville en 1954. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 106, p. 88-105.

[xciii] Monkoto is to the south east of Wafanya and consequently to the very south of the mission region of the MSC.

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[xcv] Iyeki, J.F. (1957). Vers l'éveil de Monkoto. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 141, p. 941-943.

[xcvi]< Iyeki, J.F. (1958). La Tshuapa, mon district. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 143, p. 122-124.

[xcvii] Bessembe, T.C. (1957). Tous les chefs de secteurs doivent au moins être des intellectuels. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 137, p. 590-591.

[xcviii] The Congolese filled these positions in the context of the indirect administration that was introduced even before the war. The *secteur* was essentially the lowest administrative level, above the *chefferies* (villages).