

Migration and Schooling during Childhood in Sub-Saharan Africa: Contributions and Limits of Quantitative Approaches

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In Sub-Saharan Africa, child mobility is an old phenomenon. It is primarily known through anthropological studies on fosterage -which is an integral part of family dynamics in Africa- and considered by demographers to its relations with fertility behavior. The increase in the number of HIV-orphaned children, as well as the refugee phenomenon related to armed conflicts but also the question of child labor (through its forms of exploitation and trafficking) have led to address the issue of migration in childhood, but each time under a very specific angle.

Today it is clear that migration is still an insufficiently explored field of research. Its measure remains even more very fragmented, so much that we can talk about a statistical invisibility of residential mobility in childhood. Children are at best considered as "passive accompanying persons" in case of family migration or as victims of trafficking without no statistics produced on them. In addition, the measure of migration, whether performed from censuses or national standard surveys, mainly and recurrently refers to the analysis and measurement of labor migration.

Moreover, because of a recent interest in studying the factors of schooling in Africa, the links between migration and schooling during childhood remain largely undeveloped. These ties are almost unknown as far as family migration is concerned, and turn out ambivalent in case of fostering or of independent child migration. Indeed, on the one hand, child migration can lead children to stay away from school. On the other hand the goal of access to school or continuing schooling is directly linked to residential child mobility.

In the first part, a literature review highlights the contributions and limits of quantitative approaches: first the study of child mobility, then the links between migration and schooling. What are the sources of existing data? What are the results produced? What do they really measure? The second part illustrates all these issues through a case study, focusing on Burkina Faso. This is a critical synthesis of data and results available on child migrations and their links with schooling. The conclusion will seek to identify key lessons, particularly about methodology and in terms of research perspectives.