

**Increasing Access of Female Students to Vocational
Education**

A Study of the Agricultural School LAMS, Benin

A Research Project Submitted to:

Van Hall Larenstein, University of Applied Science

**In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Development**

**Specialization: Social Inclusion, Gender And rural Livelihood
(SIGAL)**

By

Orou Guéma Jean Pierre BIO YARA

September 2008

**Wageningen
The Netherlands**

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DEDICATION

To

The memory of my father who died during my study in the Netherlands

and

My beloved daughter Royal Gratias and heir mother Rachidatou

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I thank God for giving me strength, courage, and grace during my study in the Netherlands.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background information.....	1
1.1.1 Background of the study.....	1
1.1.2 Overview of the Lycée Agricole Mèdji of Sékou (LAMS.....	3
1.1.3 Agricultural education in Benin.....	4
1.2 Problem definition.....	4
1.3 Interests of the study.....	4
1.3.1 Study objectives.....	4
1.3.2 Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Conceptual framework and key concepts.....	5
1.4.1 Key concepts of the study.....	5
1.4.2 Conceptual framework of the study.....	6
1.4 Structure of the Report.....	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Gender Inequality in Education.....	10
2.3 Factors influencing access to TVE.....	11
2.4 Technical and vocational education in Benin.....	14
2.5 Conclusion.....	16
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	17
3.1 Research Area.....	17
3.1.1 Reasons of choice of the Research area.....	17
3.1.2 Description of the study area.....	17
3.2 Research Process.....	19
3.2.1 Preliminary Process.....	19
3.2.2 Sampling Strategy.....	20
3.2.3 Data Sources.....	21
3.4 Research Limitations.....	22
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....	24
4.1 Introduction.....	24
4.2 Profiles of the selected respondents.....	24
4.3 Policies factors.....	25
4.4 Parents- related factors according to the students.....	28
4.5 Factors Depending on Students Behaviors and Attitudes.....	30
4.6 Factors related to the school system.....	32
4.6.1 Institutional factors influencing the increase of female access to LAMS.....	32
4.4.2 Infrastructure factors affecting access of female students to LAMS.....	35
4.4.3 Contextual Factors influencing access of female students to LAMS.....	36
4.5 Conclusion.....	37

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS	38
5.1 Introduction.....	38
5.2 External factors influencing female access to LAMS	38
5.2.1 Policy Actions.....	38
5.2.2 Parental- related Factors	39
5.2.3 Students- related Factors.....	41
5.3 Internal Factors influencing increasing female access to LAMS	41
5.3.1 Institutional Factors	41
5.3.2 Infrastructure Factors	42
5.3.3 Contextual factors	42
5.5 Conclusion	42
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	43
6.1 Conclusion	43
6.2 Recommendations.....	44
REFERENCES.....	45

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of students sponsored by the state per year of study and per sex-2008..	3
Table 2 Categories of factors affecting female access to TVE in Mozambique....	13
Table 3: Student enrolment in public TVE fields by sex and by option- 2007/2008.	14
Table 4 Teachers' sample.....	21
Table 5 Number of interviewees per category and sex.....	25
Table 6 Amounts of school fees in LAMS	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study	7
Figure 2:Location of the village of Sékou	18
Figure 3: evolution of enrollment in LAMS from 2000 to 2008	26
Figure 4: Policies factors influencing positively or negatively access for girls and boys to LAMS.	28
Figure 5: Factors favoring students' attitudes to enroll in LAMS	31
Figure 6: Negative factors affecting students' attitudes to access to LAMS	32
Figure 7: Positive school factors influencing female access to LAMS according to the students interviewed.....	35
Figure 8: Negative school factors influencing female access to LAMS according to the students interviewed.....	36

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEPC	Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle
DEAT	Diplome d'Etudes Agricoles Tropicales
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

This research sets out to identify the factors that are enforcing gender inequality and influencing the increase of access of female students to vocational education. The study specifically sought to explore the external and internal factors influencing access of girls to agricultural education in LAMS, an agricultural senior secondary school.

Concerning the external factors, the study focused on the responsibilities of the ministry, the parents and their children before and after they are schooling at LAMS. Five officers of the ministry of technical and vocational education, the five managers of LAMS, eleven female students and eleven male students formed a sub-sample of interviewees. Parents did not belong to the sub-sample because the quasi-totality of them is not living in the study area. However, the research leaned on the students to get the part of responsibility of the parents in increasing female access to LAMS.

The internal factors include the institutional factors, the infrastructure factors and the contextual factors related to the school system itself. LAMS' managers, two female teachers, thirteen male teachers and the female and male students above were the interviewees of this second sub-sample.

Interviews and desk study were the two main tools used for data collection.

The study's findings were that:

Several texts, decrees and laws promoting gender equality in technical and vocational education exist in Benin. Unfortunately, according to eight female and six male students, policy implementation by the ministry of technical and vocational education on students' recruitment and scholarship allocation are not yet adapted to increase access of female students to LAMS;

Parental-related factors found to influence access of female students to LAMS are income and earnings, educational attainment, household size and location of residence have negative effects on access of female students to LAMS. According to seven of the female students interviewed, there still exist parents who deny girls' rights to agricultural education. Eight female and six male students revealed the existence of gender and age preference by parents. But, this is related to the parental earnings. The findings revealed children from family with small size have more access to agricultural education than those from the largest family. In addition, origin of parents constitutes one factor influencing access of female students to agricultural education. Parents native from rural areas are more in good mood to include their daughters in LAMS than those native of urban areas.

The children-related factors found to influence access to agricultural education are the difficulties met in general secondary education and the actual job opportunity in agricultural sector in Benin. The need to leave the parents in order to end or avoid conflicts has been also revealed as children-related factors influencing access to LAMS. All the children-related factors influence positively their enrollment in the school.

The internal factors are related to the institutional organization, infrastructure and contextual. The infrastructure factors are influencing negatively girls' access to LAMS. It is related to the limited number of classed and places at the boarding school for girls.

A number of recommendations have been formulated to:

To LAMS management

1. The finding of this report should be used as an entry point to carry out a specific gender sensitive plan in LAMS aimed at enhancing the gender awareness of managers and female and male teachers. This could lead to the creation of gender and HIV/ AIDS focal point.
2. The school should develop a plan of communication in order to spread the training opportunities offered in the senior agricultural school. This could eventually participate to sensitize the parents about access of girls in LAMS.

To the Ministry of Education

1. Policy on recruitment and scholarship scheme should be reviewed in order to encourage female access to TVE. Differential criteria could be helpful when refining the texts on these issues.
2. Diffusion of the main texts guiding the reduction of gender disparities is essential. This could create awareness on the issue because most of the time, even the managers at all level get confused when specific cases appears.
3. Finally, to reduce gender disparities in access to agricultural education is essential that the government multiply the creation of agricultural education in each province as planned in the ten-year strategic plan of education in Benin.

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This thesis is carried out for the fulfillment of a Professional Masters in Social Inclusion, Gender And rural Livelihood (SIGAL) program at Van Hall Larenstein, University of Applied Science in Wageningen. The study examines the factors influencing the access of girls to LAMS (Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou), an secondary agricultural senior school in Benin.

1.1 Background information

1.1.1 Background of the study

The trend in Benin's educational sector is that schools have to prepare learners for future jobs, and technical and vocational education has an important role to play in this process. This is also true for agriculture as it is the second most important sector in the country's economy. The sector accounted for about 39 percent of the GDP in 2002, employing about 70 percent of the workforce (INSAE, 2002).

With the crisis of employment, technical and vocational education is seen by many as a passport to job attainment and the possibility of social advancement. Technical and vocational education is considered as essential because a country cannot achieve economic and social development without a skilled productive labor force that can meet the dynamic requirements of its environment. However, technical and vocational education is actually facing challenges to prepare a sufficient number of girls with the relevant skills to integrate the national socioeconomic realities and to meet labor market demands. Matching skills, knowledge and attitudes to the needs of female formal employment are challenged in the actual context of globalization. Indeed, according to INSAE (2002), in Benin, women constitute 70 percent of the informal work force, especially in agricultural sector. The informal work requires few or no skills. As result, it is not profitable and maintains people in poverty. Technical and vocational education could provide the required skills by formal labor market. Unfortunately, there are a lot of disparities between male and female in education and girls represent less than 40 percent of the students undertaking technical and vocational education. For instance, girls in agricultural education represent only 1.3 percent of the total students in the subsector (DPP/MESTFP, 2008). Various factors explain this under representation of girls in technical and vocational education. There are :

- economic: direct and indirect costs,
- socio-cultural: gender ideologies confining girls at home for the domestic works are still thriving in Benin, resulting in female discrimination,
- parents-related preference for boys in the domain of techniques, etc.

The Republic of Benin has signed the International Declaration on Education for All and has ratified various conventions related to discrimination against women. Girls' education has subsequently become one of policy makers' concerns. The government designed a national policy for access and equity in education in 2000, with a particular focus on reducing disparities between boys and girls access to and opportunities in education. This led since 2002, to the withdrawal of tuition fees for primary girls pupils.

Subsequently, the number of female students in technical and vocational education increased from 22 percent in 2001 to 40 percent in 2007. But despite significant progress in the country's education system in the past ten years, inequalities still exist at all levels in the access rate of girls as compared to boys. Gender inequalities in education are considered across the entire education system in the country, including formal and non-formal provision (Gaba-Afouda, 2003).

Based on international conventions signed by the Republic of Benin, the government defined a new national policy of education in 2005. One of the objectives of this policy is to reach sex parity by promoting equitable access to primary and secondary schools including technical and vocational education by 2010. By the way, the government placed technical and vocational education as second priority in education after primary education. Several measures have been taken by the government such as free charge of fees in primary schools, reinforcement of boarding for girls in the agricultural schools (forms 1 and 2), etc. These measures led girls' enrollment in the LAMS from 10.83 percent in 2000 to 20.54 percent in 2007 (DET, 2007), still far from the expectations.

LAMS is the unique school of senior level in agricultural education in Benin. The school was founded in 1970 and its primarily mandate was to train students who will be able to meet the needs of farmers, coaching and strengthening their productive capacities. At its inception, the school did not enroll girls because of the customary beliefs influencing gender ideology that technical education is not meant for girls. In 1989, in the aftermath of the long socio-political crisis, mainly in the education system where all the actors observed a long strike, the first group of women was admitted to LAMS. Up to now, the rate of enrollment of girls in LAMS does not exceed 20 percent. This shift has directly impacted the presence of female qualified employees in agricultural extension services. In 2002, women represented 7 percent of the national extension workers, (Legonou-Fanou, 2002) while about 70 percent of the female populations live in rural areas, carrying out 60-80 percent of the agricultural work. Women are responsible for all household tasks, including water fetching, firewood gathering, food processing. In agricultural production, women work with men in the family field : planting, weeding and harvesting. They also play a key role in post-harvest operations for both domestic consumption and market where they are the main actors, mainly in the marketing of agricultural products. However, agricultural extension services still do not attach much attention to women on the farm. They rather focused on providing men with training, information, and access to inputs and services. The small number of women extension agents also contributes to hamper women's access to extension, as custom makes it difficult for women to have contact with male extension workers.

Most of modern farmers and agricultural extension workers trained in LAMS are currently in the service and work with farmers. However, the results are not particularly favorable to women due to the national policy of extension in agriculture and the limited number of female extension workers. Increase number of female extension workers could help increasing female farmers' access to extension services. It is therefore necessary to determine the mechanisms that will encourage and motivate girls to enroll in LAMS for training and dissemination of agricultural technologies in order to acquire the minimum knowledge and skills in reducing gender inequalities in the country.

1.1.2 Overview of the Lycée Agricole Mèdji of Sékou (LAMS)

Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou (LAMS) is a secondary senior agricultural school in Benin. Located in the village of Sékou (Allada Commune), at about 47 km north of Cotonou (see Annex 1), the LAMS is a public educational institution, under the Ministry of secondary education. It is The training courses last four years. The first two years are devoted to general learning in agriculture. From the third year, the students choose a special topic in which their deepen their knowledge and skills. Six specialties have been defined according the need of work market : plant production, livestock production, forestry and nature conservation, food processing, rural engineering and fisheries.

The teaching methods use the competency-based approach. The academic year, established to adjust teaching practices to the national agricultural calendar, runs from February 15th to December15th. The degree achieved upon the 4 years studies at LAMS is named Diploma of Tropical Agricultural Studies (DEAT). It offers three opportunities to students: access to paid employment, self-employment, or continuing studies at the university.

From its inception to 2008, the number of LAMS students has increased from 120 students (1970) without any girl to 1552 (2008) comprising of 273 girls and 1279 boys. Entrance to LAMS is open to male and female aged 14 to 25 years holding a BEAT or BEPC. There is two ways for the entrance. The first concerns the scholarship programme in which the student is sponsored by the state after a competitive test. These students are exempted to pay tuition fees. For the academic year 2008, the number of students sponsored by the state comprises of 4 girls and 119 boys. Table 1 presents the number of students sponsored by the state per year of study and per sex for the school year 2008. This category of students lives in the boarding school. The second way of entrance in LAMS gives the possibility to increase the number of students. After the students are accepted, their parents have to pay the tuition fees before their they are definitively included in LAMS. The amount of schools fees are presented in table ???, p . Based on parents financial capacity, the students of this group can live in boarding school or in Sékou village, outside the school.

Table 1: Number of students sponsored by the state per year of study and per sex-2008.

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	total
Female	0	0	2	2	4
Male	35	30	30	24	119
total	35	30	32	26	123

Source: generated from LAMS mid-term report, 2008.

1.1.3 Agricultural education in Benin

Benin educational system was inherited from France when the country achieved independence in August 1, 1960. Educational system is mostly public, and consists of two years of preprimary education, six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and a university. There are also three or four-year technical or vocational schools to attend in place of secondary schools. TVE system comprises of six main options. These options are agriculture, mechanics, management and secretarial, health, hotel and home economics. Among the options, agricultural education occupies an important place. There are four schools of agricultural education. Three of them train junior students. Only LAMS trains the senior students. Related to their specificities, all the agricultural schools are located in rural areas.

1.2 Problem definition

Despite several measures taken by the government to enhance girls' access to vocational training and those specifically offered by LAMS, there is no improvement in girls' enrollment in LAMS. Currently, girls represent less than 20 percent of the students from LAMS and this rate is stable since the school year 2000. Managers of LAMS are concerned to improve girls' access to the school by identifying the factors influencing access to agricultural education.

1.3 Interests of the study

1.3.1 Study objectives

The objective of this work is to recommend strategies to LAMS' management and to ministry of technical and vocational education to increase female access to LAMS with the view to reduce gender inequality by identifying the factors influencing access of female students to LAMS that will be measured by the enrollment rate.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The above stated objective leads to the formulation of the main research question: What are the factors that enforce gender inequality and influence increasing female access to LAMS?

The sub questions in solving the main research question are:

1. What are the policies and strategies to reduce gender inequality in order to increase access of female student to LAMS by the ministry of technical and vocational education?
2. What are the external (positive and negative) factors influencing access of female student to LAMS?
3. What are the internal (positive and negative) factors influencing access of female student to LAMS?

1.4 Conceptual framework and key concepts

1.4.1 Key concepts of the study

Core concepts to the research are gender inequality, access to and enrollment.

Gender inequality

According to Wilson (2004), gender is a social construct, not a biological one, and discrimination on this basis is consequently difficult to assess and address. Distinctions based on biological sex can be measured statistically, whereas gender differentials entail more subtle distinctions on male and female roles. Gender roles are socially determined and can be affected by factors such as education or economics, stated Moser (2003). Based on numerous reports made by specialists, Wilson (2004) affirmed that gender inequality means a lack of equality or fair treatment in the sharing of wealth or opportunities between men and women in society. In Benin society, gender inequality denies girls and women access to and control over the capital (human, social, financial, natural and physical). Because of this, many parents deny rights of their daughters to attend to agricultural education. This has negative impact on women living conditions. In Benin, the gender relations are maintained through cultural and institutional practices. Indeed, institutions such as schools perpetuate stereotypes on female societal roles that are human made. Therefore, Female and male have different roles and behave differently. Men have most important power and female behave as a subordinate inside the household. This orientation extends to social arrangement outside of household. At school, relation between teachers and students, and between female and male student are influenced by gendered social values, Agarwal (2004) cited by Kakuru (2007).

In the case of education, gender inequality denies girls equal's participation in sharing knowledge and skills and remains them as home caretakers. In Benin, equality of access to education is translated into legal provision, but quite often not applied in practice, as the figures above show. Almost Republic of Benin has legal provisions for the equal participation of women and girls into education and in employment. However, there is a need of special promotional measures to ensure the authentic gender equality of sexes. According to the constitution, laws and decrees, there should be no discrimination against girls and women with regard to their access to education in general, and to technical and vocational education in particular.

Access to

Glick and Sahn (2000) studying the schooling of girls and boys in West Africa defined the term access as the ability or rights of the children to approach or enter the schools. In education, access analysis combines both possibility and right of girls and boys to attend the school. Several factors influence access and constitute barriers to access of girls to education: socioeconomic, financial, cultural, social and political. The school system itself plays a significant role in creating and maintaining gender differences. These factors could be classified into external and internal factors. Almost in Benin, girls' access to agricultural education is considerably lower than that of boys. Indeed many

parents think that only secretarial and health studies are adapted to girls. They do not believe agricultural education is also adapted for girls. Wilson (2004) argued that access to education requires removing both directly discriminatory barriers to the enrolment of boys and girls from all levels and types of education and barriers such as cost, which may have indirect gender significance. This statement explains the existence of barriers at diverse levels. In the case of most parents in Benin, costs are limiting access of girls to agricultural education.

Enrollment is the fact to put yourself or someone else onto the official list of members of a course, college or group. Enrollment characterizes the level of access to education in an entire area. Then, it considers responsibilities of policies, parents and the school itself. According to UNESCO (2004), enrollment rate is an indicator of access to school. It serves to measure the attendance of students (female and male or both together) to school. Enrollment and access to education are closely linked.

1.4.2 Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework presented in figure 1 constitutes the rationale of the study. It highlights the linkage between the key concepts related to LAMS' realities and factors influencing female access to LAMS. There are two categories of factors:

- The external factors are related to the responsibilities of the ministry, to the parents and their children before and after they are schooling at LAMS.
- The internal factors, which are related to the school system itself through the teaching methods, the cultural attitudes, behaviors, the curriculum and the infrastructure.

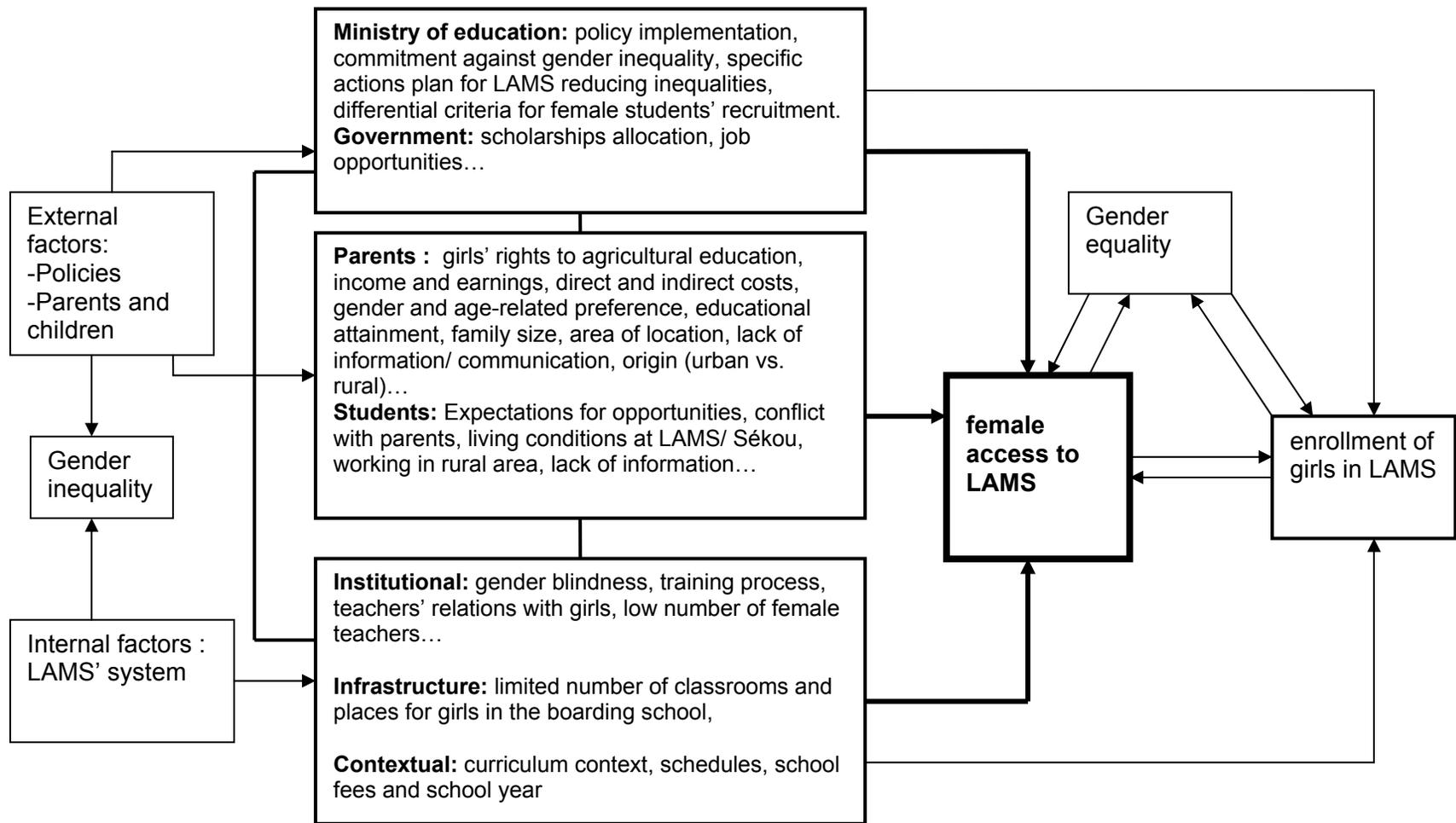


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study
 (Source: author, August 2008)

This conceptual framework identifies the problem owners of the limited access of girls to LAMS. They are the ministry, LAMS' managers, finally the students, and their parents. The main issues emphasized by the conceptual framework are:

-At ministry level: Limited policy implementation because there are many laws and decrees that are promoting gender equality in education but not implemented in the case of LAMS; the others factors at this level are inexistence of specific actions plan for LAMS and inappropriate strategy for students' recruitment. Indeed, the ministry influences much LAMS' daily management without focusing on specific issues to draw definitive solutions. In addition, it is the ministry, which recruits the students for LAMS with yearly changing criteria for both girls and boys.

-At the school level: the school system itself ensures and maintains gender biases unconsciously through teaching processes and teachers' attitudes and behaviors; these constitute the institutional factors. For example, the insufficiency of places noted in the boarding school and the limited number of classrooms constitute the infrastructure factors. Based on the statistics data available at the directorate of technical education, these insufficiencies hamper female access to LAMS because the ministry could not recruit more than 70 female students versus more than 300 male students per year but they register more female candidates than 70. However, the limited number of female students recruited is also related to the strategy of recruitment by the ministry. This strategy prioritizes academic results based on mathematics. Mathematics constitutes an area where girls do not perform as well as boys do. Finally, the curriculum, the school fees and the different period of school year compared to that of secondary general education are the factors grouped as contextual factors. The curriculum defines twenty courses per week. The timetables are intensive and inflexible, favoring boys over girls due to the practices where girls are expected to do large amounts of work in the home. These could alarm girls from secondary general education where there are only eight courses per week.

- Household level: Socio-cultural barriers have been identified as being among the greatest impediment to women's access to scientific and technological education, often due to unconscious influences in the home from parental/family opinions, cultural and social norms and lack of positive role models. Concerning the parents, the conceptual framework focuses on their perception on girls' right to agricultural education, parents' income and their gender and age-related preferences. Direct and indirect costs such as school fees, students' furniture, feeding and health at LAMS and transport, are include in parental income consideration. There are parents who still think the agricultural education is exclusively for boys and deny to their daughters right to include in LAMS. Parents' income is determinant in girls' access to LAMS as if the income is limited; they give preference to boys because according to customs in Benin, many parents refuse to invest much for their daughters. They say, "*She will get married and enrich another family.*" The problem owner of the children is related to their attitudes and expectations for opportunities. They choose to enroll in technical and vocational education according to what they need in the future. Parental attitudes and perception influence girls' choice.

1.4 Structure of the Report

Six chapters form the report. Chapter 1 constitutes an introductory chapter of the topic. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical issues covered in the study. The third chapter presents in the methodology the area of the study and then examines what was the process designed to realize the research. In chapter 4, the report presents the findings and interpretations of the field research. Chapter 5 uses the results and interpretations to

analyze and discuss the issues of the case study. The final chapter contains the recommendations to increase female access to LAMS and the report's overall conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to relate an overview of gender inequality in the education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and factors of access to education. Considering the place of the Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in the study, it presents an overview of it in Benin.

2.2 Gender Inequality in Education

Justifying the importance of education, Ojo and Vincent (2000) stated that education is many things to (hu)man, a visa to success, a passport to the unknown, a catalyst to great heights. Education affects people's ability to make informed decisions, it empowers them to participate in the public and political life, and it enables people to develop skills. The potential benefits of education are always present, but female education often has a stronger and more significant impact than male education, UNESCO EFA/GMR (2004 and 2008).

The benefits from girls' education are widely acknowledged and well documented, see Rihani et Al. (2006), UNESCO EFA/GMR, (2004 and 2008). Female education affects the way household decisions are made and have also great effects on subjects like fertility, children's health, and children's (especially girls') school attendance. Moser (2003) identified practical and strategic gender needs. Practical gender needs relates to the needs that women identify in their socially accepted roles in society, while strategic gender needs are the needs that women identify because of their subordinate position to men in society. Strategic gender needs help women to achieve greater equality, thereby changing existing roles and challenging women's subordinate position. According to this understanding, education is a way to fulfill the strategic gender needs. In that, it contributes to the emancipation of women. Education is seen as the key to transforming women's attitudes and values from traditional to more modern, and their behaviour from constrained to emancipated (Rihani et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, inequalities still exist in education based on sex, urban and rural areas. Several barriers such as social and cultural attitudes in society often deny girls' rights to education. The schools constitute also on instrument reinforcing gender disparities. Teaching methods, teachers' attitudes and sometimes curriculum content serve the schools to maintain gender inequality. Gender inequality in education concerns not only access to school but also participation in the learning process. In Benin, what is particularly apparent is that the gender gap in enrollments between boys and girls becomes progressively more pronounced from the end of primary up to university. In TVE system, the situation is greater pronounced; girls represent actually only 25 percent of the total number of students in Benin TVE system. To address gender inequality, there is a need of leadership that could become the veritable problem owner. Existence of gender inequality in education is generally agreed upon. In developing countries, it is often addressed broadly with expectations that donors could be involved. Due to this, is not playing its real role. Education might be an instrument in fighting inequalities in society in order to allow access to and control over the existing resources.

2.3 Factors influencing access to TVE

The generic term used in this document is Technical and Vocational Education (TVE). It is used to describe the various forms of initial education and training provided to equip youth with knowledge and employable skills. The focus is on secondary education level courses. TVE indicates education aimed at preparing the student for work in commercial or technical fields such as agriculture, mechanics, health, computer use, etc. The course content is practical and enables the students to enter the labour market. The difference with general education is that it prepares students for the next higher level of education; the courses are mainly theoretical. Diverse factors influence access for both boys and girls to TVE. In 1999, Hoffmann-Barthes et al. identified three distinct categories of factors influencing children access to education:

- 1) policy factors, comprising objectives and organization of education;
- 2) academic factors, such as the quality of education, curricula, teachers involvement, text books; and
- 3) socio-economic, cultural and social factors with reference to parental and students' attitudes.

Based on the several literatures available, Hoffmann-Barthes et al (1999), UNESCO (2004 and 2008), Okojie (2001), the policy factors constitute opportunities to ensure equal access for both girls and boys to TVE. However, current trend in policy that is favoring TVE privatization could constitute a barrier to access for both girls and boys to the system. Indeed, the privatization increases school costs and then parents could give up enrolling their children.

The most important category of factors affecting access to TVE is the last one. Social and cultural factors authorize more opportunities to boys than girls do to access to more options of TVE. At the same time, due to parental attitudes, boys have less access to options like secretarial, home economics and hotel because these options are qualified as "feminine area". On the over hand, socio-cultural attitudes tend to deny to girls having access to specific options of TVE such as industrial and agricultural education. These are qualified as "male options".

Girls and women are mostly negatively affected by the two last categories due to stereotypes prevailing in most areas in Benin. TVE in Benin appears to be expensive in Benin context. In addition, Benin society is characterized by gender stratification and patriarchy (Debourou, 1995). Parents do not always perceive the importance of girls' participation to TVE. Then, those refuse to spend "enough" money for their daughters' education. This is so because they do not believe that girls' education could have returns in their households but in another one, that of heir husband.

The second category of factors shows that school is more likely to echo and reinforce prevailing attitudes like TVE is not meant for girls. The training methods are inflexible and lack gender considerations.

Analyzing in detail the factors of access to and completion in education in the country the USAID Benin Education Programs (2004) identified seven reasons for girls' low enrollment and completion in schools. These are:

- Constraints due to cultural, religious, social, or political norms concerning women's role in the societies. In some cases, this is aggravated by early pregnancies.
- In addition, given the cost of schooling, parents with limited means favor their son's education over those of their daughters.
- The non-enforcement of compulsory education laws acts as a barrier, along with unenforced labor laws.

- Insufficient national budgets for education and inadequate roads and transportation as barriers to girls' education, along with poor quality curriculum and teacher preparation.
- Some of the girls are abused by teachers and other school authorities.
- The community is insufficiently sensitized on the importance of girls' education.
- Most Muslim communities do not encourage female education. Muslim women are not encouraged to pursue formal education beyond the Koran (Islamic education).

These reasons unveil one of the weaknesses in increasing access of female students to TVE. Enrollment in TVE depends on that in primary and secondary general education. For example, in LAMS, 3 out of 4 female students come from secondary general education (LAMS statistics of entrance, 2008). Fewer enrollments of girls in secondary education influence increase access of girls in TVE as the diploma is an important criterion to access to TVE.

Sutherland-Addy, 2006 cited in Gaidzanwa (2008) analyzing gender issues in TVE and training in Mozambique identified two main categories of factors affecting female access to TVE in Mozambique. The author related the factors to the demand and supply of TVE. The table 2.1 presents the details of these factors. The factors highlight the responsibilities of all the actors involved in the process of access to education. In addition, they could be considered to the internal and external factors influencing access of both boys and girls to education. The first category of the factors in table 2.1 confirms the responsibilities of the parents and their children. However, it classifies the policy as supplier of TVE. This is consistent to the fact that policy concerns the organization of the supply of education. In accordance with the conceptual framework related to the research, the second category of factors distinguishes three factors related to the school system.

Table 2 Categories of factors affecting female access to TVE in Mozambique.

<p>Demand Side</p> <p>. <i>Social and cultural factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - behavior and choices of parents and pupils affected by traditional values - girls' education seen as incompatible with religious and/or traditional values - boys' education favored over girls' education <p>. <i>Economic factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poverty - direct and Indirect Costs (school fees, uniforms, textbooks, transport, etc.) - opportunity Costs v/s lower rate of return (girls are needed for household or labor tasks) <p>. <i>Family factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parents' low level of literacy and education hence low perception of the importance of girls' education - early marriages and pregnancies - orphans - girl headed households <p>. <i>Other factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIV and Aids 	<p>Supply Side</p> <p>. <i>Political Factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policy priorities which focus disproportionately on primary education and put emphasis on access and enrolment v/s retention and completion - Budget constraints and fiscal austerity programs with negative impact on the education sector - lack of incentives for girls' access to primary and secondary education - Political instability - Inconsistent educational policies <p>. <i>Bureaucratic factors :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal commitments to gender objectives become weaker as they travel down the bureaucratic chain <p>. <i>Institutional factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - school may not be gender sensitive with lack of gender awareness among teachers - lack of female teachers - safety issues (gender-based violence including sexual violence and corporal punishment) <p>. <i>Infrastructure factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long distances to schools - remote areas with no schools - lack of sex-segregated sanitary facilities <p>. <i>Contextual factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poor quality of education programs - non contextualized education systems to local learning needs
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Source: Sutherland-Addy, 2006 in Gaidzanwa (2008)

2.4 Technical and vocational education in Benin

Benin educational system was inherited from France when the country achieved independence in August 1st, 1960. Consequently, the primary language of instruction is French; English constitutes the second language, learned from the secondary junior level. The system is mostly public, and consists of two years of preprimary education, six years of primary school, four years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and a university. There are also three or four-year of technical or vocational schools to attend in place of secondary schools.

According to UNESCO (1997), technical and vocational education is the education, which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations or trades. In Benin, TVE is mainly provided by the National Directorate of Technical Education (DET) in the Ministry of Secondary and Technical Education and Vocational Training. The TVE system managers divide the system into two sub-systems: technical education and vocational training. The agricultural education is part of the vocational training. The term vocational training indicates education aimed at preparing the student for work in a specific field such as health, home economics and agriculture, (DET, 2006). The course content is practical and enables the students to enter the labor force. The focus is on secondary education.

Until 1986, technical and vocational education had never attracted more than 6% of the total students in Benin, (Legonou-Fanou, 2002). The economic and financial crisis that has struck Benin Republic since the mid-1980s has brought deep changes in TVE system. The end of guaranteed access to public-sector employment has contributed to increasing graduates unemployment and deteriorating the rate of return of investments in post-basic education, Debourou (1995). In this context, TVE system became more attractive. Today, approximately 30 percent of students in secondary education continue their education within the formal TVE public and private, DET (2006). In addition, TVE became too expensive in a context of structural adjustment programs. Unfortunately, the increased number of students in the system does not attract girls as well as boys. The table 2 below indicates the number of girls' students in public TVE by sex and by option of TVE for the school year 2007/2008.

Table 3: Student enrolment in public TVE fields by sex and by option- 2007/2008.

Type/Options	Girls	Boys	Total	Percentage of Girls (%)
STAG	938	1287	2225	42.15
STI	168	3063	3231	5.20
STA	483	2046	2529	19.10
HEALTH	355	167	492	72.15
HOME ECONOMICS	79	14	93	84.95
HOTEL	79	18	97	81.44
TOTAL	2102	6565	8667	24.25

Source: DET, 2008

STAG: Sciences et Techniques de l'Administration et de gestion

STI: Sciences et Techniques Industrielles

STA: Sciences et Techniques Agricoles

The number of students groups the total of students in junior and senior levels. Based on the table above, it appears that gender stereotypes still exist in TVE system in Benin. The girls have mostly enrolled in the options qualified as “female domain” such as secretary, health, home economics and hotel business.

The so-called privatization of TVE combined to the effects of structural adjustment programme made the costs of schooling in TVE more expensive. Indeed, in public general secondary school, the amount of school fees is around 15, 000 CFA per year. The less amount of school fees is 30, 000 FCA in TVE. .

The number of students in the table 1.2 above groups the total of students at junior and senior levels. Based on the table, it appears that gender disparities still exist in TVE system in Benin. The girls have mostly enrolled in the options qualified as “female domain” such as secretarial, health, home economics and hotel. The number of boys in the others options dominates that of boys. Specifically, industrial and agricultural educations are seen as “male options”. In addition, the table shows the existence of gender gaps in enrollment in the entire Benin TVE system.

To some extent, the actions that are currently applying are the results of the numerous international engagements that Benin had signed and donors’ involvement in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations defined in 2000 and the Dakar’s Declaration on Education For All adopted in April 2000. Box 2.1 presents the details of the MDGs related to female access to education.

BOX 2.1: UN millennium development goals targeting on education

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were developed out of eight chapters of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000. The two goals focusing on access to education are:

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

The two targets to achieve these two goals are respectively:

Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Source: UN Millennium Project: goals, targets and indicators, available at <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/gti.htm#goal1> (accessed on 30 August 2008)

2.5 Conclusion

Girls' education has evident advantage such as socioeconomic development and women empowerment. Education affects women ability to make informed decisions. It aims to fulfill the strategic gender needs.

There still exist social and cultural stereotypes that women are suitable for professions considered as "women's jobs". These gender stereotypes have a great influence on the choice of fields of study by boys and girls. Women are marginally represented in the more technical professions, which is a result of their low enrollment in secondary general education. The report pointed out that this is due to cultural and traditional practices and beliefs as well as to economic constraints. Traditions and society dictate that women stay at home and be subservient to their husbands. Poor families prefer to invest their limited resources in the education of boys rather than of girls who might eventually marry and abandon their family.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the study area and the research process that serves to design and conduct the fieldwork. The chapter ends with the presentation of the study limitations.

3.1 Research Area

The fieldwork was conducted at LAMS. However, part of the interviews concerning the policy actions, students' recruitment strategies and the scholarship scheme were discussed at ministry level.

3.1.1 Reasons of choice of the Research area

Most of the interviewees are at LAMS: managers, teachers and students.

The study aims to recommend strategies to LAMS' management and to ministry to increase female access to LAMS with the view to reduce gender inequality by identifying the factors influencing access of female students to LAMS that will be measured by the enrollment rate. Based on the aim of the research, the fieldwork could serve as an entry point to increasing female access to LAMS.

Thus, the researcher is serving in the school as teacher, so he could work closely with the management for improvement.

In addition, by choosing LAMS as study area, the researcher expects to get information that will be close to the reality.

Finally, the SIGAL courses in Van Hall Larenstein are professional; all work in the account of this programme is supposed to benefit to the organization for which the researcher works.

3.1.2 Description of the study area

LAMS is a public vocational training institution under the Ministry of general, technical and vocational secondary education in Benin. It is located in the village of Sékou, at about 47 km north of the city of Cotonou in the district of Allada. Figure 3.1 presents the location of the village of Sékou. The work market needs and employability opportunities led to define six specialties that are plants production, livestock production, forestry and nature conservation, food processing, rural equipment and fish farming and fishing.

Teaching methods use the competency-based approach. The school year runs from 15th of February to 15th of December. The school year is so established in order to adjust teaching practices to the national agricultural calendar. The diploma delivered by LAMS is the Degree of Tropical Agricultural Studies (DEAT). It offers three opportunities to students: access to paid employment, self-employment, and the possibility of continuing studies at university. The school benefits of 200 hectares on which various teaching facilities, offices and agricultural machinery are built.

The human and material resources for carrying out its activities are:

- Human resources comprise of 8 female teachers, 94 male teachers and 16 service agents,
- Thirty-one classrooms, which, normally can not accommodate more than 1240 students,
- Two laboratories overtime equipped,
- One library, poorly equipped and lacking the referential books,
- A recycling centre of 60 beds,
- Four-rooms for seminars, workshops, a conference room and a dining hall,
- Workshops poultry, rabbit breeding, processing of agricultural mechanization and crop production sites,
- Five dormitories for students, whose one of 100 places accommodates female students,

The annual financial resources come from government grants, scholarships from students and revenue from productions. A part of the financial resources serves to pay the salaries of certain categories of personnel.

The mission of LAMS has not varied, but the objectives and the goal has changed with the many socio-political and economic changes that the country has undergone since 1972.

Management organization comprises of three divisions; these are:

- The educational division that is involved in studies organization and others activities related to the training in the school. All the teachers of the school work under this division;
- The operating division that organizes practices for students and productions;
- The division of finance and boarding management.

The team of management comprises of five persons. The first one is the headmaster of the school who coordinates the overall activities of the school. The ministry nominates the entire managers among the teachers of LAMS.

3.2 Research Process

3.2.1 Preliminary Process

The methodology used for the research is mainly based on the qualitative approach. The approach serves as critical way to seek for indicators that could explain and describe factors influencing female access to LAMS. Consequently, data analysis was made by using comparisons and interpretation of facts and results with those of literature related to the topic. My field experience was characterized by social construction. However, quantitative approach has been used to confirm or justify facts or results.

For data collection, I used techniques of interview by asking questions, writing down information given by the interviewees. During this phase, personal attention on listening, observation and interpretation to support whatever I found out have been prioritized. I realized myself all the interviews.

The primary task was to discuss with the headmaster of LAMS about the objective of my research and the criteria that will be used to choose interviewees. Then I asked permission to organize interviews and take pictures in LAMS. I also asked him to furnish

to me diverse documents and reports related to the topic of the study. The study aimed at increasing female access to LAMS.

Prior to the interviews, I reviewed the criteria to choose interviewees by discussing the actual situation of the study area since October 2007. This allowed refining criteria to choose interviewees and the strategy of interviews. After this preliminary process, I proceeded to the pre-test of the different guides of interviews. The summary of the overall research process is presented in annex .

3.2.2 Sampling Strategy

The methodology to study the factors of increasing female access to LAMS is greatly influenced by the choice of appropriate interviewees to share information and time management. Due to lack of time, I did not include students' parents in the target group of the research. I made choice to use a lot of literature available on their case. The first condition of investigation chooses the gender equality, in terms of quality and quantity, in LAMS training system. Unfortunately, we could not attend parity of sex amongst the interviewees. This is so because of the unbalanced observed in number of female and male actors of the school. The sample design was made as followed

— Ministry Level

The sample comprised of five informants selected based on their involvement in LAMS issues and girls' schooling in the ministry's activities. They are two female and three male. The females deal with girls' education through national program promoting girls' access to technical and vocational education. Regarding the male, the responsible of agricultural education is part of the sample and criteria for selection of the two other male informants are based on their past and actual roles. Information and data on students' recruitment, past and on-going policy actions and the texts and laws related to the topic were subject of the interviews.

— LAMS Level

All the five managers constituted the first group of interviewees in LAMS. They all are male and they have various experiences in management and the topic. They are teachers and they are actually applying government educational measures in LAMS. Interviews with them allow identifying the academics and socioeconomics factors of access to the school and the provisions towards female students.

Teachers' sample comprised of two female teachers and thirteen male teachers. Interviews with them allowed determining how training process and teachers' attitudes are influencing female access to LAMS. The criteria used for their selection are:

- ◆Sex, currently the school has height female teachers but six of them are new comers in the organization; so, they lack experience and data to furnish. Despite this, informal discussions have been made with many of them.

- ◆Number of years working in LAMS: Preference has been given to teachers who are working in LAMS no earlier than four school years. Four years experience are indispensable because the training cycle is four years and then we supposed that teachers who finish one cycle had observed many realities and could have data for discussion. It is also supposed that they participated many times to decision-making and they have been trained in pedagogical methods so they can appreciate the training methods related to girls' access to LAMS.

◆Specialties: The school has seven groups of training courses and hundred teachers. Two teachers of each group form teachers' sample. The fifteenth interviewee is the oldest of the teachers. Due to his experience, priority was given to him. It is also important to notice that the two teachers of the course of sociology are part of this sample because of the content of their courses and the informal role that they play regarding female students advisory. Any teacher of food processing did not participate to the interviews because the only one who was concerned by the criteria defined was not available. The table 3 presents the number of teachers interviewed according to the criteria above.

Table 4 Teachers' sample

Specialties	Number of female teachers	Number of male teachers	Total
AER	0	2	2
Fisheries	0	1	1
Forest	1	1	2
General education	0	3	3
PAPN	1	1	2
PVSE	0	3	3
TTA	0	0	0
Economy and management	0	2	2
TOTAL	2	13	15

Source: author, August 2008

— Students and Former Students' level

The choice to interview students is to permit determining their part of responsibility in favoring their access to LAMS. The sample of students comprised of height female students and height male students. The criteria used to select them are the form and living or not in LAMS' boarding. The school has four forms or level. Two female and two male students per level constituted students' sample. Only 30 percent of female students and 24 percent of male students are living inside the school, so only two female and two male students of these groups participated to form students' sample.

The main criterion used to select former students was the distance. Then former students interviewed are living not farer than 45 km of the village of Sékou. The former students' sample contained three girls and three boys working in diverse areas. Former students are part to the interviewees in order to diversify information about study and to seek if the factors have changed with the time.

3.2.3 Data Sources

The main sources of data collection are the desk study and the interviews. However, some informal discussions helped in order to diversify and/or confirm certain information and data.

— Desk Study

Desk research was part of both the research project writing at Van Hall Larenstein University and the case study in Benin. The desk study is mainly related to access to education. This included studying program documents of LAMS, LAMS reports, national laws and texts related to the topic of research and educational specific literature and other publications. The library of WUR and internet search helped to realize the desk study.

— Interviews

The interviews were realized from 14 to 31 July 2008. The interviews guides are in annexes 1, 2 and 3. In order to diversify sources of information and data, I sometimes have had informal discussions related to my topic. These have been beneficial for the research because I noticed information that I did not get especially on pregnancy and female students living conditions in the village of Sékou. I organized some of the interviews in the nights and during week-end, especially with students and former students. Before I began each interview, I always presented the topic of the research and then I explain the objectives of the study to the interviewee and during the informal discussions. Interviews and informal discussions were done in French.

3.2.4 Data Management and Analysis

Data management was mainly the grouping of the factors identified by the interviewees into forces and opportunities factors and into weakness and threats factors that are influencing increasing female access to LAMS. Regarding LAMS' realities, the results have been classified into internal and external factors. This classification is the one that serves to treat the chapter 4. The internal factors are considered as forces and weaknesses and the external factors are constituted of opportunities and trends. The internal factors comprise of academics activities/ facts and capacity of the school in terms of infrastructures. The external factors group together the government dispositions, parents and students attitudes before and after they enroll in LAMS. Interpretations and comparisons serve to present the findings. Discussions on the findings are done with support of the literature to confirm or justify information and data. Nevertheless, for information that is specific to LAMS' case, only interpretations have been done to justify them.

3.4 Research Limitations

Time constraints characterized the research process. Due to this, the study sample has various limitations. It has limited to students, teachers, managers of LAMS and officials of the ministry of education. Parents were not part of the sample. This could introduce some biases on their responsibilities concerning female access to LAMS through the responses given by the students.

Other limitation during the fieldwork was the unavailability of ministry's officers due to elaboration of the ministry's budget and the organization of the national first-degree examinations during the month of July. The situation relays secondary data collection through different reports and others documents from the ministry.

Nights and weeks- end were the moments for interviews with students because of their intense schedule. This could affect the quality of their responses due to the fact they could be tired and these moments were the moments for personal studies. They could liquidate the interviews by giving responses that would allow finishing the interview after few minutes.

The fact that the researcher is teacher in the school could influence the responses of students, teachers and managers. The respondents could consider everything is evidence for the researcher. For instance, they could think the researcher knows the realities and then avoid giving some aspects of the topic.

Main characteristic of interviews is to avoid interrupt the interviewees. Sometimes at ministry level, officials liked to show their competences in the domain. Due to this, unusual data have been collected and the inconvenient was lost of time.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The first part of the chapter presents the profiles of the selected respondents. This will guide the reader when reading the findings from interviews. The second part of the chapter is related to the external factors. Hereafter, the findings regarding the internal factors are given.

4.2 Profiles of the selected respondents

The general characteristics used to select the interviewees are their involvement in LAMS' activities and their sex. These allowed identifying two groups of interviewees at ministry level and at LAMS. The seniority and the current functions of interviewees are two specific criteria used when selecting ministry officers and teachers at LAMS.

Officers of the ministry selected form a group of five persons including two women and three men. All have at least five years experience in the ministry. The two women are involved in vocational training and in the project promoting girls' access to technical and vocational education in Benin. One of the male officers is the one who is in charge of agricultural education in the ministry. They constituted one subgroup of key informants. They were interviewed about the policies to reduce gender inequality and to increase access of female students to LAMS.

The second group of interviewees includes managers, teachers (women and men) and former and current girls and boys' students of LAMS. Managers are five; there is no woman among them. They are teachers in LAMS before they had nominated by the ministry. They constituted also group of key informants. They were interviewed on policies and internal factors. The number of years teaching in LAMS served in the selection of teachers for interviews. Indeed, the cycle of training in LAMS is 4 years. Teachers who have served at least during this cycle have probably observed many facts related to girls' access to LAMS. In addition, with these years spent in the school, they have probably benefited from pedagogical training so they could discuss the effects of teaching methods on girls' access to the school. The subgroup of teachers includes 2 women and 13 men. Interviews with them focused only on the internal factors.

Finally, students are the last component of the second group. School year is the specific criterion used when selecting the actual students. 2 girls and 2 boys students represented in the sample their year of schooling. They are 3 former and 8 current girls' students, then 3 former and 8 current boys' students. For the former students, distance of their area of location from the village of Sékou was the specific criterion; 45 km is the distance chosen to attend easily them because of the transport condition in the country at that moment. The term of students will represent both former and actual students in the rest of this document. Students were interviewed on both the internal and the external factors. The table 4 presents the number of interviewees per category and sex for data collection.

Table 5 Number of interviewees per category and sex

Categories	Sex of interviewees		Total
	female	male	
Ministry's officers	2	3	5
Managers of LAMS	0	5	5
Teachers	2	13	15
Students	8	8	16
Former students	3	3	6
Total	15	31	47

Source: Author, August 2008

4.3 Policies factors

Interviews to identify the policies factors that are influencing access of female students to LAMS were made with the officers from the ministry of education, the managers of LAMS and the students.

The ministry's officers informed that there exist many laws, decrees and texts to promote girls and women access to education at national level. All the policy actions identified constitute opportunities to increase female access to education in general. Documents found in case are:

- Constitution of Benin adopted on 11 December 1990,
- Document Frame of Educative Politic and Sectoral Strategy in Benin adopted in January 1991,
- Law about sexual harassment in schools and workplaces,
- Documents edited by the ministries in charge of Education about the 2006-2015 decennial plan of educational sector of Benin
- National politic of education and formation of girls in Benin designed in 2006.
- Decree related to students recruitment in TVE in Benin.

These texts, laws and decrees are promoting gender equality in education and should constitute an entry point to design and implement policies to promote gender equality and increase access to technical and vocational education for girls and boys. They should constitute a sort of bible for responsible in charge of education at all levels.

Existing policies and projects to increase access of girls to education are across the entire system of education in Benin. The specific one related to technical and vocational education evoked by the officers interviewed is that promoting access of girls to agricultural and industrial education. It was designed in 2007. According to the responsible of the project, the main activities since its inception are "sensitization, giving prizes to girls who perform well in the national examinations and assistance to girls from poor families." Currently, the responsible of this project do not assess the impact of their activities. However, they command, in August 2008, study to define differential criteria for girls in order to improve their access to agricultural and industrial education. One male informant showed his resistance about the differential criteria in favor of girls. "The differential criteria constitute an exclusion of the girls regarding their performance during their studies in LAMS." He thought that differential criteria might allow enrolling girls in LAMS without they have been subjected on the competitive examination. According to him, the ministry therefore could recruit girls' students who will not capable to perform in

the school, and then they could give up. He concluded in these terms, *give special regards to girls means the decision-makers are considering that girls are inferior to boys and it can perpetuate gender stereotypes within the future generations.*

It is essential to note that the actual activities done by the project seem to be broad and could not have significant impact desired. These activities had ignored the specific needs of both the parents and the girls.

According to the informants, to some extent all the actions that are currently applied are the results of the numerous international engagements that the government of Benin had signed. About the past programmes regarding increasing access of female students to LAMS, anything was found specifically.

Concerning the policy on students' recruitment, the responsible in charge of agricultural education in the ministry said, "Students' recruitment follows the process defined in the decree designed in the case." *I recognize the decree is not responding to the actual policy that promotes girls' access to technical and vocational education,* he said. The figure 3 below shows evolution of students' enrollment in LAMS from 2000 to 2008. This evolution is the result of the students' recruitment strategy by the ministry.

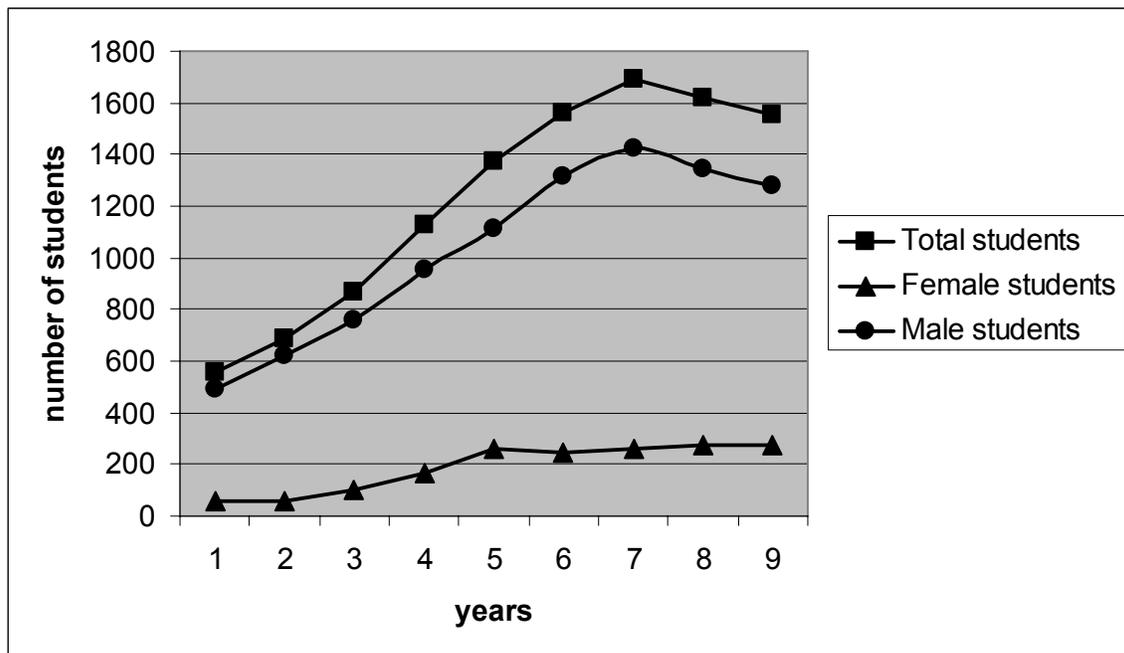


Figure 3: evolution of enrollment in LAMS from 2000 to 2008
(Source: generated from LAMS' annual reports 2000 to 2008)

The figure shows the rapid increasing of the total students of the school during the period. Thus, it shows the situation of enrollment of girls in LAMS. This is not favorable to girls. This figure shows that despite of the rapid growth of the number of students in the school, the number of girls is still behind that of boys. However, girls 'situation hides that of boys. Indeed, more than half of the male applicants could not enroll in LAMS. In 2008, the statistics of recruitment show that the number of male applicants was 763 and that of girls was 101. Among the applicants 91 girls were selected while only 300 boys got chance to enroll in LAMS. All the officials recognized also that "the decree is old and

must be reformulated.” They promised before the next school year 2009 in LAMS to come up with new decree tacking into account the concerns of girls. According to the responsible of agricultural education, “The increased number of girls recruited is the result of bargaining made by the responsible of the ministry project promoting girls’ access to industrial and agricultural education”. However, this does not significantly change the global rate of enrollment in the school; female students represent only 17.59 percent of the total students of the school. One male official showed his resistance towards the bargaining above. He said, “According to me, it is not essential to adopt specific action regarding girls’ access to LAMS because the actual situation of LAMS reflects the national situation of education.” In general secondary senior schools in Benin, girls represent less than 35 percent of the total students (Legonou- Fanou, 2002). According to the informant, the situation of LAMS is not significantly different of that in general education. In addition, most of LAMS’ female students come from the general school.

Concerning the scholarship allocation, the officials interviewed explained, *the ministry of education is not the principal responsible of the number attributed but the ministry of finance. The ministry of education is in charge to define criteria to attribute the scholarship.* The actual criteria used to allocate the scholarship to students are age (16 to 20 years), diploma (BEPC, BEAT) and results of competitive examination. The competitive examination is based on mathematics and natural sciences. Specifically, the assignment on mathematics reduces girls’ chance to benefit from the scholarship programme because most of the times, girls underestimate their capacity to perform in mathematics and they get panic during the examination. This has negative impact on their performance. However, this could not be considered as real barrier for girls to benefit from the scholarship programme. Girls are supposed to have the same knowledge like the boys.

Figure 4 presents the findings on policies factors according to the students. According to the students interviewed, the policies factors influencing access of boys and girls to LAMS are students’ recruitment, scholarship programme and the actual opportunity of work.

Eight out of eleven female students and six out of eleven male students interviewed thought that the decree used for students’ recruitment is not adapted to their realities. Boys and girls believed that the decree is not favoring anybody and it needs to be refined. One of the female students said, “We do not know what are the concrete criteria used to recruit students, they just favor their relatives and give us the few number of places that are not attributable yet.” According to the three former female students and others five actual students, *it is difficult to girls to enroll in LAMS without relationships in the ministry.* However, based on the findings related to the statistics of recruitment, the boys also are affected by the system. For example, in 2008 only 300 out of 763 male applicants were recruited. At the same moment, 91 out of 101 female applicants were recruited.

During the fieldwork, the managers revealed to be distant of the process of students recruitment and the managers added, “They just call us when the process ends to collect a list of students recruited.” “We cannot influence anything in the process as is based on text”, said the headmaster of the school.

Concerning the scholarship scheme, investigations found that for the school year 2008, they are 123 students who benefit of scholarship from the state. Unfortunately, only 4 female students belong to this group. This explains that seven of the eleven girls’

students interviewed qualified the scholarship scheme as “gender blindness programme”.

On the other hand, majority of the students interviewed and all the managers are happy with the current policy on public work. Indeed, since the year 2006, the government restarted recruitment in agricultural sector to provide to the ministry of agriculture sufficient personnel. All the eleven female and ten of the male students interviewed recognized the policy could attract students and stimulate the parents to enroll their children in LAMS. As consequence of the policy, the statistics on recruitment show that the number of applicants moved from 687 in 2007 to 763 in 2008 for the boys. For the same period, the number of female applicants moved from 83 to 101.

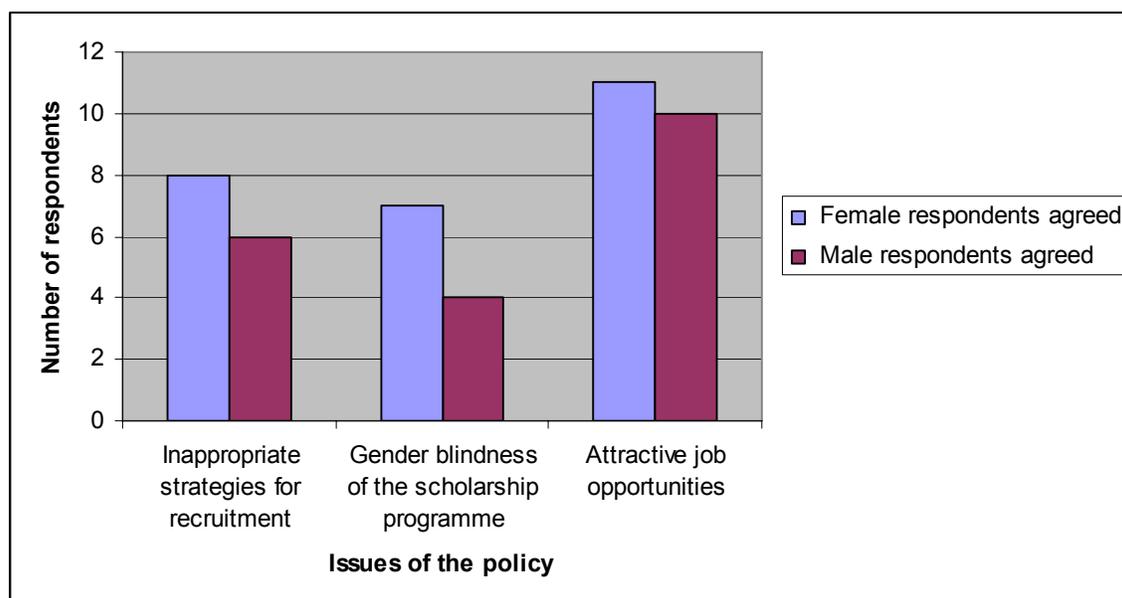


Figure 4: Policies factors influencing positively or negatively access for girls and boys to LAMS.
(Source: author, September 2008)

4.4 Parents- related factors according to the students

Responding to the question, “according to you, what factors could influenced positively or negatively your parents to accept or not you attend to LAMS?” The eleven female and the eleven male students interviewed have identified eight factors. These factors are:

1. Girls' rights to agricultural education,
2. Parental income and earnings related to the direct and indirect costs of schooling in LAMS,
3. Lack of information/ communication,
4. Household size,
5. Location of residence and origin (urban vs. Rural)
6. Education of parents
7. Gender and age- related preference
8. Sex of parent paying the school fees

Seven out of eleven female and four out of eleven male students interviewed thought that parents tend to deny girls' rights to agricultural education. According to them, there are parents who do not believe that the agricultural education is adapted also to girls. However, seven of the boys interviewed did not agree that the parents could deny girls' rights to agricultural education. The parents relate the return of agricultural education for the boys and girls mainly to agricultural extension work. Three of the girls said in that case, "My parents asked me if I could be able to run from farm to farm to realize the agricultural extension work?" However, the students showed that this fact is not so much influencing female access to LAMS as parental income/ earnings and lack of information.

Parental income and earnings determine access of boys and girls to LAMS. Indeed, the findings from the interviews with students revealed the following statements:

- Boys and girls from family with low income and earnings have less access to agricultural education. Eight out of the eleven female and four out of the eleven male students agreed this. In that case, one of the boys said, "I include in LAMS with two- year delay because my father was not able to pay the tuition fees in LAMS. I had included after two campaign of cotton production." Another one girl confirmed the fact when she said, "I should finish my study three years ago if my parents was able to pay the school fees. I included in LAMS with the support of my uncle who accepted to pay the school fees."
- Parental income seems to affect more access of girls to LAMS than that of boys. Based on the table 5, eight out of eleven girls agreed the effect while only four out of eleven boys interviewed agreed the fact. In addition, one of the girls interviewed who had studied agricultural education at junior level, revealed to have stayed one year at home because of the lack of financial support. She enrolled in LAMS because now she gets scholarship from the state.

Many parents in Benin do not know the existence of LAMS. Ten out of eleven female and seven out of eleven male students confirmed that their parents had tended to resist to their enrollment in LAMS because of their ignorance of LAMS existence. However, this factor affects both girls and boys. To demonstrate the importance of the lack of information on access to LAMS, one of the former students revealed to have enrolled in LAMS grace of heir uncle who works in Allada District. "He informed my parents about the existence of LAMS."

Students (both girls and boys) from the families with small size have more opportunity to access to LAMS than those from the largest families do. Indeed, five out of eleven male and four out of eleven female students interviewed affirmed, "when you are from a family with many children and others relatives, you have less chance to enrol in LAMS." However, the phenomenon tends to disappear because six of the actual male and eight of the actual female students thought that, "the family size could not influence access to LAMS." According to this group of students, children education is directly related to their father and mother decision. This means that decision-making about children schooling is less influenced by the relatives of the family. However, the findings revealed that boy or girl with many brothers and sisters have less opportunity to enrol in LAMS. This is particularly related to parental financial capacity to assure the costs of schooling in LAMS.

Findings about parental location of residence and origin revealed that there are parents who would not like to allow their children live far from their location of residence. Nine out of eleven female and seven out of eleven male students revealed the existence of

this factor. Based on their answers, girls are more likely to be affected by the factor. For instance, one of the boys interviewed affirmed to be enrolled in LAMS at the place of his eldest sister because their mother refused she lives far without parental control. This factor highlights the vulnerability of girls on parents' perception. Parents always think that they should protect their daughters to avoid they dropout from school because of possible early pregnancy.

The students interviewed explained that parental education affects access to LAMS for both boys and girls. Children coming from family where the parents are not educated have less opportunity to enrol in LAMS. The educated parents are more likely to enrol their children (boys and girls) in LAMS. In addition, this factor affects more the access of female students to LAMS when the parents are not educated. Three of the girls argued " I know girlfriends who would like to enrol in LAMS but could not because of the ignorance of their parents who are illiterate and do not understand the importance of this school for their daughters." On the other hand, two of the girls surveyed admitted to "having the full support of their parents who are officials of the state." One of the girls said to confirm this: *At the end of each month, my father or my mother comes to visit me and gives me my pocket money.*

One of the findings during the fieldwork is that there are parents who have sex and age preferences. The revenue of the parents and the family size influence these preferences. Indeed, one of the former girls' students recognized *to enrol in LAMS later because her father preferred heir brother to go for studies first.* In addition, one girl student said during interview, "I spent more than four months crying at home because my father did not want to spend enough money for me because I'm girl; it was finally my mother who is a housewife without any income-generated activity who has begged my father to accept enrolling me at LAMS in 2005.

The last factors related to the parents identified by the students during the field investigations, is related to the sex of the parents who pay the school fees. The investigations lead to the fact that both women and men influence access to LAMS. Four out of eleven female and two among the male students interviewed answered that they enrolled in LAMS with the exclusive support of their mother. During interview, one teacher of LAMS revealed, "in Benin, nowadays, several women are exclusively in charge of the girls pursuing secondary school, after they end at primary school."

According to eight female and five male students interviewed "the school fees limit the parents in decision making to access to LAMS." " My father who gets money once a year after selling cotton, said to not be able to pay the school fees into one tranche for me, if not I will not attend LAMS" said one of the girls.

4.5 Factors Depending on Students Behaviors and Attitudes

Based on the findings from former students and actual students' interviews, the main positive factors of access to LAMS for both girls and boys are failures in general education, job opportunities and the need to leave parents. The negative ones are participation to crop production in LAMS, unlike working in rural area during the professional life, living conditions in LAMS and lack of information about the existence of LAMS. The figures 5 and 6 present respectively the positive and negative factors influencing students' access to LAMS.

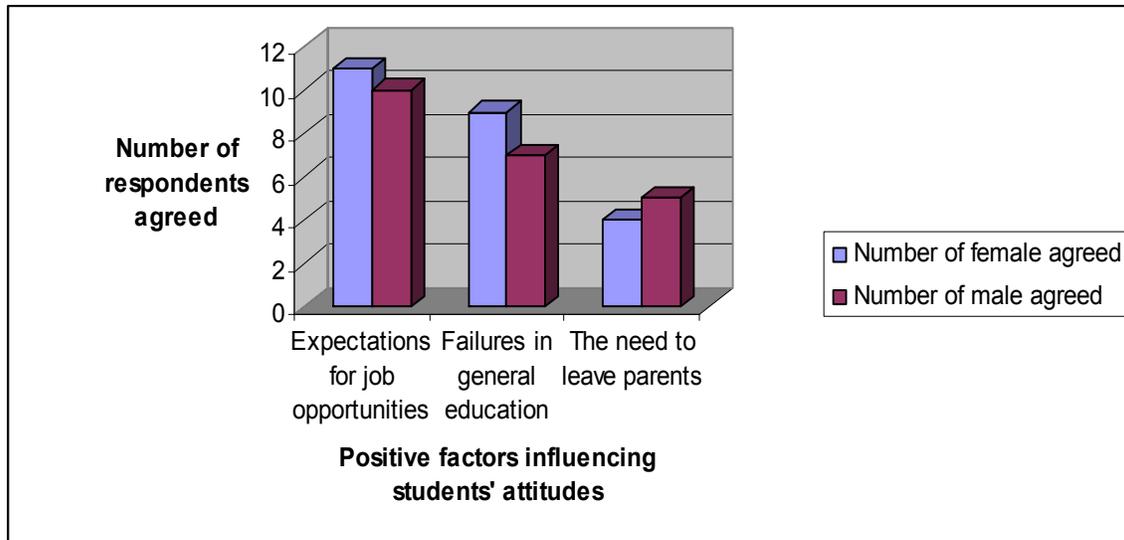


Figure 5: Factors favoring students' attitudes to enroll in LAMS
 (Source: author, September 2008)

All the female and ten of the male students interviewed admitted that their expectations of good job opportunities attracted them to enroll. They explain, "The government begins to recruit extension workers and for the year 2007, the ministry of agriculture recruits more than thousand former students. "We hope it will continue," they added.

In order to have freedom and to avoid eventual conflicts with parents, boys and girls choose to enroll in LAMS. Only three female and five male students interviewed admitted that this factor influences access of boys and girls to LAMS.

Difficulties during studies in secondary general school, specifically on sciences such as mathematics, physics and chemistry make both boys and girls to opt for TVE according to nine females and seven males students interviewed. The main difficulties met by the students are failure during the examinations to access to university. are the main

Living conditions in LAMS or in Sékou village in terms of food availability, health, transportation and living far to parents constitute one factor affecting negatively access to LAMS for both girls and boys according to seven female and five boys interviewed. One of the girls added, "My mother asked me how you can live alone far from me and your father?"

The prices for renting a room by students in the village of Sékou vary from 3000 to 10.000 FCFA. The cheaper rooms do not provide drink water and electricity. they are also far from the school. One of the boys living outside the boarding school said in that case, "My real problem in Sékou is the availability of water to cook and wash myself."

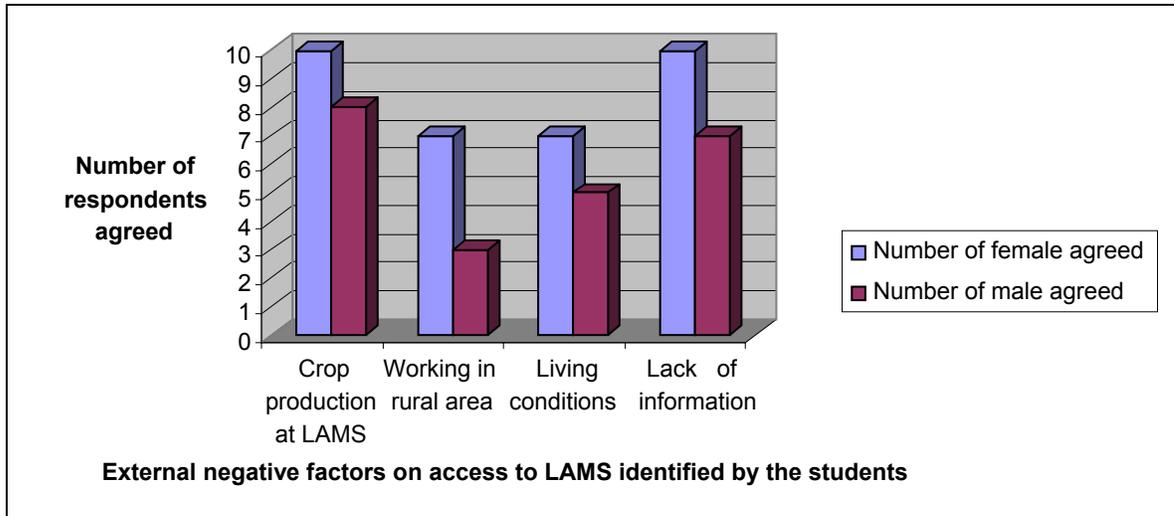


Figure 6: Negative factors affecting students' attitudes to access to LAMS
(Source: author, September 2008)

Lack of information/ communication is that many boys and girls do not know the existence of LAMS. For those girls, they did not know they could enroll in LAMS. This influences considerably female access to LAMS because each of the female students interviewed said, "I could enroll in LAMS earlier if I and my parents knew the existence of LAMS."

Investigations revealed that the area of residence during the professional activities influence boys and girls choice to enroll in LAMS. Mainly, there are boys who would not like to work in rural area. One of the girls interviewed said, "when me I was crying for access to LAMS, I have one girlfriend who refused to attend LAMS as her parents decided because she do not work in rural area in the future." This could not constitute a barrier to access to LAMS because the school does not train only for agricultural extension.

Crop production is part of the programme of training in LAMS during the two first years of study. Ten female and eight male students admitted the production is hard and could affect students' choice to include in LAMS.

4.6 Factors related to the school system

The factors related to the school system are both strengths and weaknesses. During the fieldwork, the interviews to identify these factors focused on three characteristics of the school. These are institutional, infrastructure and contextual. Managers, teachers and students constituted the subsample interviewed.

4.6.1 Institutional factors influencing the increase of female access to LAMS

Results that are grouped into institutional factors to increasing female access are both gender awareness of the school, training processes, cultural facts in LAMS through teachers and other personnel's behaviors towards girls.

→Findings from managers and teachers interviews

According to all the managers interviewed, gender considerations do not constitute specific preoccupations for the school. *However, from time to time, the ministry intervenes with actions like giving prizes to the girls who perform well*, added the headmaster of LAMS. The managers argued that *at school, all the students both girls and boys have equal chance to benefit from the training and others services of the school*. The managers focus on gender equality. But equality does not guaranty equity. This means that the school ignores the specific needs of boys and girls.

Concerning the training processes, the director of studies in LAMS answered, "We apply the competency- based approach that favors equal participation of all the participants to the courses, so I think, girls' needs are considered." The responsible in charge of production at LAMS confirmed this by saying that, "in the field, we do not consider differently female and male students." According to ten out thirteen male teachers, "The training process in LAMS is a process of learning by doing and because of this, we could not isolate girls even the task is hard because they all (female and male students) have equal chance to access to knowledge and skills." In that case, the male teacher of animal husbandry interviewed asked "during the practical training, do I isolate the female students? It is not possible; it will be interpreted as exclusion."

These answers lead to state that the training process seems to interest both girls and boys. But, as there are specific trainings that need to use force, does the training process consider the specificities of boys and girls?

The two female teachers and ten of the male teachers recognized *to give particular attention to girls during classes' activities or on the field during the practical training*. They estimated that, by giving special regards to girls, they stimulate them to participate more to the training. Unfortunately, the ten male teachers added, "this particular attention provokes delay in the work."

About the cultural facts, all the informants admitted that, "respect of youth to the oldest is essential in Benin society and this is observed in LAMS." Responding to the questions if the members of the personnel do not abuse of this respect, the managers said that they never register complaint from students or their parents. In addition, about possible sexual harassment of the teachers towards the female students, all the managers said, "Maybe, it exists, but it is not official and any girl never comes to complain." They revealed *to have given instructions on the case*. Indeed, lecture of the law about sexual harassment in schools and workplaces in Benin is always done at the beginning of each school year. At that moment, the managers provide specific recommendations to teachers. However, the two female teachers interviewed revealed "they are teachers who use their position to harass the female students." At the same time, they said, "this cannot influence access of female students. According to them, the phenomenon is not so pronounced. They also added "sometimes the girls also harass the teachers in order to get good marks", so it is vice- versa and maybe it arranges the two groups."

Despite managers and teachers focused on equality and respect, the investigations allowed knowing the continuously existence of stereotypes among the male teachers. Five of the male teachers interviewed had pronounced phrases like "agricultural education is not meant for girls"; "girls are not able to perform in mathematics that is why they do not specialized in machinery"; "specialization in food technologies is there for girls"

Others institutional factors are the low number of female teachers in the school, the lack of plan of advertising by the school and the punishment in the school. Among the hundred teachers of the organization, only eight are female. The low number of female teachers reinforces stereotyping the agricultural education in LAMS. During the presentation of the factors related to the parents, it has revealed the impact of lack of information/ communication on access to and enrollment in LAMS. The school does not have an advertising plan. This might have an implication that parents might not be aware of training opportunities offered by LAMS. However, the managers promised to draw plan in order to improve the image of the organization because “this can help to sensitize parents on agricultural education issues”, said the headmaster of the school.

Concerning the punishment at LAMS, the supervisor of discipline in the school revealed the existence of text from the ministry that is fixing the rules of games about the discipline inside all the TVE schools in Benin. Then he added, “Me or any teacher cannot punish student, boy or girl without he or she makes error based on the existing text, never”. This assertion was confirmed by the girls interviewed. Nine of them thought that punishment could not influence access to LAMS. It is essential to note that all forms of violence, corporal or sexual are forbidden in the sector of education at all level in Benin.

→Findings from students

About the institutional factors, the students focused on the vocational nature of the school and the teaching methods that encourage students to perform better than in general secondary school, according to nine female and eight male students interviewed. One of the former female students said, “I accepted to enroll in LAMS because of its vocational nature,” she added, “It is easy to get work paid after the successful training in LAMS.” Six of the boys confirmed her assertions, “Even, you could not get job from the government, you are able to employ yourself with few efforts.”

The institutional negative factors according to the students are use of stereotypes during learning process, punishment in LAMS and harassment by teachers. Indeed, six female and two male students explain, “sexual harassment could hamper female access to LAMS because sometimes it is like teachers’ rights to have sex with female students.” One of the female former students revealed *to have met much problems with sexual harassment during heir first year of schooling in LAMS*. For instance she said, “at that time I decided to discourage any girl I knew wanting to enroll in LAMS” and she finished by saying, “fortunately this phenomenon has decreased maybe or it is because the school includes more girls.”

The others five girls interviewed estimated *this could not affect female access to LAMS because sexual harassment is not so pronounced like in general education*.

Concerning the punishment in LAMS, eight of the female students did not believe it could affect access to LAMS and they confirmed what the supervisor of discipline said above. On the other hand, five of the boys’ students said, “Managers and specifically the supervisor of discipline abuse in punishment and this could affect in long term access to LAMS.

About the stereotyping towards gender during the teaching processes, none of the male students recognized it could influence female access to LAMS. Three of them said, “What the teachers discuss on gender issues are the realities of life, how could it influence negatively female enrollment in LAMS?” However, five of the girls interviewed support that, “stereotypes during courses could make the girls dropout from LAMS.”

Girls’ students and boys’ students do not have the same understanding of gender stereotypes. This is certainly the results of the general culture in Benin. Education

received at household and in society has affected the boys. All forms of gender stereotypes are seen normal by the boys.

4.4.2 Infrastructure factors affecting access of female students to LAMS

The school is unique in the country. LAMS is located in the south of Benin and the length of the country is 750 km from south to north.

Infrastructure found in the school capable to influence access for both girls and boys are:

- Thirty-one classrooms: each of these have capacity to contain 30 to 35 students, but during the field research, most of these are crowded, not less than 40 students. The limited number of classrooms in the only one senior secondary school in agriculture in Benin hampers indirectly female access to the school because the responsible of agricultural education at the ministry of education confirmed to register around thousands applicants for enrollment in LAMS and due to insufficiency of classrooms they recruit only four hundreds students (girls and boys).
- Five dormitories for students: only one of hundred places is meant for the girls. Managers and teachers both female and male recognized the existence of the boarding school as force for female access to LAMS because “many parents do not want their daughters live alone” according to them. The insufficiency of places for female students creates sometimes weakness in girls’ enrollment according to the financial manager of the school. He revealed to know *one parent who gives up for the enrollment of his daughter because of lack of place in girls’ dormitory*. However, the girl had enrolled the following year.
- More than hundred hectares of land, area of application of techniques learned in class, especially for crop production. During the first two years of schooling, each student (girls and boys) must participate to crops’ production manually. “This could affect student access of both male and female students to LAMS” according to ten female and height male students interviewed. They estimated that the work of crop production is hard. The figures 7 and 8 summarize respectively the positive and negative factors related to the school system according to the students interviewed.

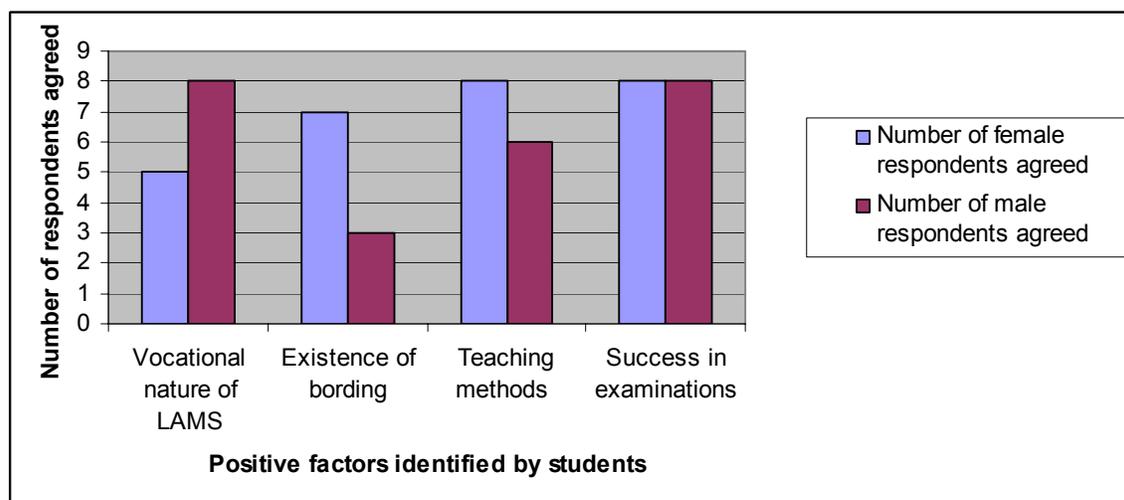


Figure 7: Positive school factors influencing female access to LAMS according to the students interviewed

(Source: author, September 2008)

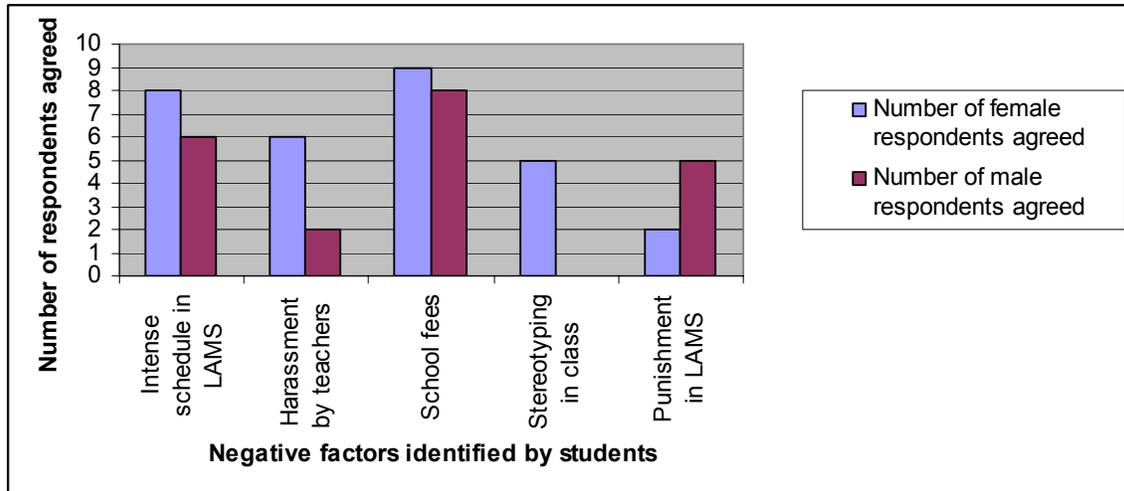


Figure 8: Negative school factors influencing female access to LAMS according to the students interviewed
(Source: author, September 2008)

4.4.3 Contextual Factors influencing access of female students to LAMS

Intensity of the courses in terms of content and number through the existing curriculum, schedules, school fees, period of the school year, the examinations and type of profile delivered by the school are the factors grouped into contextual factors influencing access to LAMS.

The director of studies in LAMS noticed that *the content of the courses are well adapted* but recognized *to deliver much number of courses*. Investigations revealed there are no less than 20 different courses per week per class. According to the director of studies and all the teachers both male and female interviewed, “the content and number of courses could not affect female access to LAMS.” because ... and do you agree with this? At the same time, all the managers and teachers interviewed translated *this into economic factors* by arguing, “The number of courses involves increased supply of training material by the parents to their children. This could hamper access to LAMS.” Training activities unroll from Monday to Saturday in LAMS. The courses begin from 8.00 AM to 12. 00 and restart in the afternoon from 3.00 to 7.00. “Sometimes, I like to give up,” said one of the actual female students interviewed. In addition, the managers recognized that “the training activities are intense, specifically for students in the first year.” Also, the school year runs from February 15 to December 15 in the agricultural education in Benin. This is so because of the rain season in the country. Two out of three of LAMS’ students come from secondary general education where the school year runs from October 1 to July 15. At the beginning of the school year in LAMS, they are in full activity in general education. At the entrance of most new students in LAMS, they seemed tired and could not perform well according to the two female teacher and five of the male teachers interviewed. According to two of the male teachers interviewed, “they could avoid to enroll their children in LAMS because of lost of time for the children and double expenditure for school fees during the same year”. This seems to affect more the access of female students in LAMS. But, seven out of eleven female and six out of eleven male students recognized that this effect is mostly observed with the uneducated parents.

Success rates for examinations in LAMS and the types of profile delivered by the school attract students to enroll in LAMS according to ten teachers and four of the managers interviewed. Eight girls and eight boys' students confirmed this, (see figure 7). Based on the findings, success rate for examinations in LAMS in 2007 was 87, 67 percent (LAMS, 2007)

The table 6 shows the amounts of school fees in LAMS.

Table 6 Amounts of school fees in LAMS

Year study	Cost of internship (FCFA)	Cost of externship (FCFA)
1st	270000	97600
2nd	245000	77600
3rd	245000	77600
Forth	92975	30725

Nota: 1€ = 655, 55 FCFA

Source: Generated from LAMS annual report 2007.

About the school fees, all the teachers, male and female, recognized *they are high considering their own income*. In addition, the managers also recognized this fact but argued that *they are obliged to fix the amount as indicated in table 6 because they must face the realities of goods' costs in the country*. According to nine female and eight male students, *the school fees are so high and they are negatively affecting boys and girls that the parents are farmers*. One male student said on that case, "my father was obliged to get credit for my first year in LAMS and he paid it during two years."

"You get prestige in your community when you finish your studies at LAMS and you have much chance to get a job everywhere it is possible," said one actual students about the profile delivered by the school. The two female teachers, five male teachers and all the managers interviewed revealed, "The profile will be better at the end of the cooperation with "NUFFIC" because with this project, profile will be refined to meet more the desires of possible employers."

4.5 Conclusion

The findings revealed the existence of several factors influencing access to LAMS for both boys and girls. Those factors like the policies actions constitute opportunity to reduce gender inequality in LAMS and increase the number of female students. The findings revealed that parental education is positively influencing female access to LAMS. On the other hand, parental low income constitutes a barrier for both boys and girls. However, girls are more affected in case of low income in large family.

The negative factors related to the students highlight the fact that boys and girls tend to have the same attitudes that determine their choice to agricultural education.

The school system presents several positive factors that attract both girls and boys. Teachers and managers mainly link the negative school factors to the socioeconomic and cultural context of the country such as school fees, harassment of girls, etc.

About the gender stereotypes, the findings revealed that many parents and the school system echo it. Households and school reinforce unconsciously the existing stereotypes. Due to this, the male students do not aware of gender stereotypes.

The finding did not find any programme for LAMS designed by the ministry in order to reduce gender disparities in the school.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the main findings based on the conceptual framework that guides the research. In the first part, the chapter discusses the external factors such as policy actions, parental responsibilities in the context of increasing female access to LAMS and students' attitudes and expectations of opportunities determining their choice to enroll in LAMS. The second part of the chapter presents the discussions on the internal factors that are related to the school system.

5.2 External factors influencing female access to LAMS

5.2.1 Policy Actions

Legislative change and reform are critical for an enabling environment for gender equality in education, (UNESCO/EFA (2004)). Legal measures to ensure that girls have equal rights as boys exist in Benin. The different texts, decrees and laws found during the field research constitute opportunities to increase access of female students to LAMS and to reduce gender inequalities in the sector of education. By example, Benin constitution in several articles promote gender equality and encourage education of boys and girls by making it compulsory for each child, girl or boy aged from 5 to 15 years. Fundamental for the integration of gender equality in TVE system is the political intervention and support of the government. The different texts, decrees and laws found during the investigations shows the existence of government support to achieve gender equality in education. Despite it is not yet functioning as planned, the design of the project promoting girls' access to agricultural and industrial education demonstrates the commitment of the authorities to reduce gender inequalities in TVE. This project aims to increase female enrollment in these two subsectors of TVE where girls represented respectively 17 percent and 7 percent of the total TVE sector in 2005, DPP/ METFP (2005).

The study notes the inefficiency of students' recruitment strategies because criteria for girls' selection change over the years. This seems to characterize a lack of expertise in gender issues among the authorities. However, the ministry will maybe come up with the differential criteria in recruitment and for scholarship through the current project promoting girls access to agricultural and industrial education in the country. Due to selection criteria that give a higher preference to academic merit, the majority of students recruited are male. The study attributes to this selection policy two consequences:

- ◆ the number of female students in LAMS will remain low because of their social roles at household level that tends to reduce their time to study as well as the boys in secondary general education that influence their performance during recruitment,
- ◆ As a consequence the number of female workers in the formal agricultural activities will remain low.

A scholarship scheme was introduced since LAMS' creation with a view to enabling students from poor households gain access to agricultural education. However, the persistently female low participation rates indicates that either the policies and initiatives

have had minimal impact on enhancing female access, or the scholarship allocation scheme lacks gender perspectives. Scholarships are award according to academic merits during students' selection. Girls do not excel well in mathematics. This could explain the low number of female students among the beneficiaries of scholarships.

5.2.2 Parental- related Factors

The study associates female education in agricultural domain with a number of indicators of parental socioeconomic success and socio-cultural behaviors and attitudes:

- Girls' rights to agricultural education,
- Parental income and earnings related to the direct and indirect costs of schooling in LAMS,
- Lack of information/ communication,
- Household size,
- Location of residence and origin (urban vs. Rural)
- Education of parents
- Gender and age- related preference
- Sex of parent paying the school fees

The study notices that parents have the primary responsibility to influence the factors of female access to LAMS. Indeed, their earnings express their ability to support the diverse costs of their children schooling. Low income decreases the parental ability to support schooling costs. In that case, girls have less opportunity to access to agricultural education in Benin context. Related to low income, boys could have preference of parents to enrol in LAMS. The results show that school fees have a negative influence on female access to LAMS. This is in agreement with the DSRP (2002) that recommended to Benin government to cancel school fees for girls from the marginalized areas by arguing that girls' enrollment is less than that of boys by 22 points in these areas. At that time, enrollment rate for boys was 86 percent while that of girls was 64 percent. Thus, the study identified that parental income affects access of both girls and boys to LAMS in the same degree. However, it is related to the parental education and family size. When the variability is associated with large family, boys get more opportunity to enroll to LAMS. Adékambi A. S. (2005) demonstrated in the study of rural farmers' attitudes in Collines Province in central Benin that the farmers who have most important off- farm activities are more likely to send their daughters to school because these off- farm activities improve their income. Increases in household income lead to greater investments in girls' schooling but have no significant impact on schooling of boys, according to Glick et al. (2000)

Poverty in many households comes in the form of lack of resources and opportunities. The overall effect of these forms of poverty is limiting the capacity of the parents to include their daughters in LAMS. Income poverty can create a number of barriers to increasing access of girls and boys to school. For instance, considering the opportunity cost of schooling in Nigeria, poorest families are likely to take their children to work while high-income households enroll their children (boys and girls) in secondary schools according to Nwagwu (2004).

More parents who are educated are likely to provide a more conducive learning environment for their children. Ngware et al. (2006) studying factors of access to secondary school in Kenya stated the parents' level of education may be positively

correlated with female and male student ability, which may in turn result into higher education attainment for the child. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school creating a virtuous cycle of education and poverty reduction (Hill and King, 1995; DFID, 1999, 2000) cited in Okojie (2001). Educational attainment associated to more earnings increase female ability to access to TVE.

Based on the findings, the study shows that children from families with small size have more access to LAMS than those from the largest families. This is consistent with Hoffmann-Barthes et al. (1999) who analyzing factors of access to TVE, stated that social barriers such as family size and number of children influence negatively accessibility to TVE in Africa. In addition, the study associates the difficult living conditions in Sékou village of several students with the family size and parental earnings. Indeed, most of LAMS students leave their parents. Socially, the parents are in charge to furnish to them all the goods needed and money for rent. With many children, there are parent who are not able to meet the needs of these students who live far from their location of residence.

The study reveals that the location of residence intervenes in female access to LAMS. Many parents do not accept their daughters live far from them. Then, there are resistant to the enrollment of their daughters in LAMS. Parents located in urban areas are more likely to enroll their children both boys and girls in LAMS than those located in rural areas. However, it is related to the origin of the parents. Rural origin of parents influences positively access for both girls and boys. These parents have met at least once time the extension workers. This allows them to favor the enrollment of their children, boys and girls to LAMS. Adegbi et al. (1999) demonstrated that rural farmers from Atacora Province in north- west Benin agree to enroll their children in agricultural education with the view it will be helpful to managing soil fertility.

The remoteness of LAMS reduces female access to the school. Indeed, there are parents who refuse to their daughters to live far from their area of residence because of safety and to avoid undesired pregnancies. They would like to control the daughters who are more vulnerable than the boys are. The situation leads to agree with USAID Benin Education Programs (2004) which identified five villages in Atacora province in north-west Benin, where parents refuse to enroll their daughters in school because the school is far from their residence. Consequences of the location of residence are less schooling for girls related to the issues of safety and high costs of transportation. In the case of LAMS, the study associates to this reality the costs of living conditions in terms of food, health, rooms and lack of control over by the parents. The students from the north Benin spend more money because of the costs of transportation for themselves and luggage of food joining the village of Sékou.

Concerning the stereotypes, it appears that being male increases the probability of agricultural education participation. Intuitively???, Who says this??, parents value the education of male children more than that of females. From a cultural perspective, the expected future returns from educating female children are less for boys as it is perceived that female children will be married and, therefore, join the marital household (Bhasin, 2000). There is a negative relationship between student age and participation in agricultural education. Parents sometimes give preference to the eldest children; even they are not studying agricultural techniques and science. This is consistent with what Okojie (2001) found out in her study on persisting inequalities in education in west Africa by showing the effects of patriarchy family systems on female access to education.

5.2.3 Students- related Factors

Adjimon et al. (2001) indicated that the expectations of opportunities and self- esteem of young girls determine their access to TVE. The study demonstrates failures in general education lead both boys and girls to enroll in LAMS. The study relates this with the wrong perception of parents and their children about technical and vocational education. Before many students, boys and girls integrate LAMS, they think that agricultural education is suitable for dropouts in school of general education. The trend is that any boy or girl fails in general secondary schools seeks to get enrolled in TVE schools.

The study demonstrates there still exist social and cultural stereotypes that women are suitable for professions considered as “women’s jobs”. These gender stereotypes have a great influence on the choice of fields of study by boys and girls. Lack of information explains partly the low enrollment of girls in LAMS. Indeed, if there is cohesive information that gives light to girls on the issue of agricultural education, they will be able to abandon the above stereotypes. Adolescents people like freedom. This influences their choice to include in LAMS. However, parental control is essential to guide the desires of the children.

Nowadays, young people do not want to make effort before gain professional place. Both boys and girls get fear of manual crop production, if so, how can they assist farmers during their professional life?

5.3 Internal Factors influencing increasing female access to LAMS

5.3.1 Institutional Factors

The results states that teachers and managers of the school think about equality but not equity. For them, female student is supposed to realize the same work in terms of quantity and quality anywhere, included during the activities of production in the field. Despite they focus on equality, they still maintain negative socio- cultural facts that reinforce stereotypes running in the national society. This characterizes the insensitivity of the school towards gender considerations.

The competency- based approach used to teach students in the school is conducive for students learning. This explains the appreciated results the school registers during final examinations. Unfortunately, teachers’ behaviors, due to socio- cultural realities in the country, are not conducive to female studies in the school. The study agrees this reduces female access to LAMS. It is consistent with Touré et al. (2001) who stated in their study on gender inequality in schooling in West Africa that school is more likely to echo and reinforce prevailing attitudes.

Two critical factors negatively influencing female access to LAMS are that there are few female teachers to serve roles models and the uniqueness of LAMS in the country. This lack of lodging facilities makes parents reluctant to send their daughters away from home. The limited female access to LAMS is an important factor, which prevent increasing the number of female workers in agricultural service.

Because the school is unique in the country, the study shows the necessity of information / communication for the school. Communication is important to reveal the existence of the school and it helps to sensitize parents who still believe agricultural education is not meant for girls.

5.3.2 Infrastructure Factors

Pedagogical materials and infrastructure are two physical characteristics of schools. Their lack means the school is not existent. For instance, the insufficiency of classrooms decreases LAMS' capacity to increase the number of students male and female in the school. However, the existence of boarding constitutes positive factors influencing female access to agricultural education because it attracts some parents to enroll their daughters in LAMS. Policy of building boarding schools for girls increase significantly female enrollment rate in secondary school in southwest Niger, UNESCO/ EFA (2008). If adequate physical infrastructure exists at LAMS, the school will increase access for students.

5.3.3 Contextual factors

Further, descriptive results on parental factors and contextual factors for not attending LAMS show that lack of school fees was one of the main reasons contributing to female low participation in agricultural education at LAMS, accounting for 9 of the 11 female responses. The high cost of teaching and learning materials, fees, living conditions, and other charges paid by parents constitute the overall cost burden of access to LAMS for both girls and boys.

The existing curriculum designed since 1997 plans the content and the number of the courses for each class in the school. The ins and outs of the curriculum lead to revise it with the view to reorganize the training content. However, the curriculum itself does not constitute negative factor of access for female children to LAMS. It is its' implementation by the teachers which negatively affect female access. In addition, due to the vocational nature of the school, practices are valuable and must be maintained in order to deliver qualified and well skilled boys and girls in the work market. For instance, the school year is well adapted for the training activities of the school.

5.5 Conclusion

Parents- related factors are determinant in increasing female access to LAMS. However, policy actions exist to regulate access to agricultural education with the view to reduce gender disparities. The school presents both negative and positive factors to increase female access. There is the need to refine TVE system and expand agricultural education to achieve national objectives for agricultural development including women issues.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

LAMS is the unique medium secondary agricultural school in Benin. The study seeks to identify the main factors influencing female access to LAMS. These are external and internal regarding the school. The external factors group the policy actions, the parental responsibilities in girls' rights to agricultural education and the factors related to the children themselves concerning their expectations for opportunities and their attitudes and behaviors acquired in household and society. The internal factors include the institutional organization, the infrastructure impact and contextual factors.

The study shows the policy actions constitute opportunity to reduce gender disparities in education and increase female access to TVE. It highlights government actions through the existing texts, decrees and laws. Despite that the national constitution is not superior to the international convention signed by the Benin Republic; it constitutes the basis of all actions when dealing with the reduction of gender inequality in education. Analysis of the policies required to achieve gender equality makes it clear that while major changes can be made within education systems, many fundamental changes lie outside the mandate and competence of education ministries and institutions. Broader political and social measures have to be taken if the promise of better social services is to be realized.

Parents-related factors are both opportunities and threats. Parental educational, parental earnings, location of residence, origin of the parents (urban vs. rural) and lack of information constitute the important factors related to parents identified during the study. However, the persistence of gender stereotypes still influences parents' decision concerning girls' access to education. These stereotypes give more chance to boys in TVE than girls. The study attributes the low enrollment of girls in LAMS partly to the gender stereotypes manifested by the parents and teachers. Indeed, the school maintains consciously or not stereotypes such as "agriculture education is difficult for girls because of the practices characterizing the training in LAMS, machinery specialization is not meant for girls or specialization of food processing is appropriate for girls." It reinforces gender inequalities and perpetuates social cultural behaviors and attitudes with the students. Girls are marginally represented in TVE in Benin, which is a result of their low enrolment in secondary general education. All the reports pointed out that this is due to cultural and traditional practices and beliefs as well as to economic constraints. Traditions and society dictate that women stay at home and be subservient to their husbands.

Among the internal factors, infrastructure appears to be the most affecting female access to LAMS.

The document presents various strategies for increasing female access to LAMS. The most important strategy is to expand the number of classrooms in LAMS. Other strategy is to reduce the persistence of gender stereotypes in Benin society. For instance, involvement of civil society, leaders at all level and of course policy and decision-makers is essential to reducing gender stereotypes and changing behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

6.2 Recommendations

To LAMS management

1. The finding of this report should be used as an entry point to carry out a specific gender sensitive plan in LAMS aimed at enhancing the gender awareness of managers and female and male teachers. This could lead to the creation of gender and HIV/ AIDS focal point.
2. The school should develop a plan of communication in order to spread the training opportunities offered in the senior agricultural school. This could eventually participate to sensitize the parents about access of girls in LAMS.
3. In order to reduce the gender stereotypes in the school, the managers should sensitize the teachers on their real mandate.
4. In order to solve temporary the problem of distance, the school could establish one telephone place where the parents could get information about their children both boys and girls.

To the Ministry of Education

1. Policy on recruitment and scholarship scheme should be reviewed in order to encourage female access to TVE. Differential criteria could be helpful when refining the texts on these issues.
2. Diffusion of the main texts guiding the reduction of gender disparities is essential. This could create awareness on the issue because most of the time, even the managers at all level get confused when specific cases appears.
3. Finally, to reduce gender disparities in access to agricultural education is essential that the government multiply the creation of agricultural education in each province as planned in the ten-year strategic plan of education in Benin, MoE (2006).

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ANNEXES

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

What are the on-going policy and actions to reduce gender inequalities in LAMS?
What are the criteria and process used to recruit LAMS' students?
What does the ministry do to increase female access to LAMS?
What are the approaches used by the ministry to address girls' access to LAMS?
What are the barriers and favouring factors to female students' access to LAMS?
What are the short-term and long term actions plan by the ministry to reduce gender disparities in access to LAMS?
How the actual curriculum is affecting female access to LAMS?
What are the actions planned to reduce gender stereotypes and bias in LAMS' curriculum?

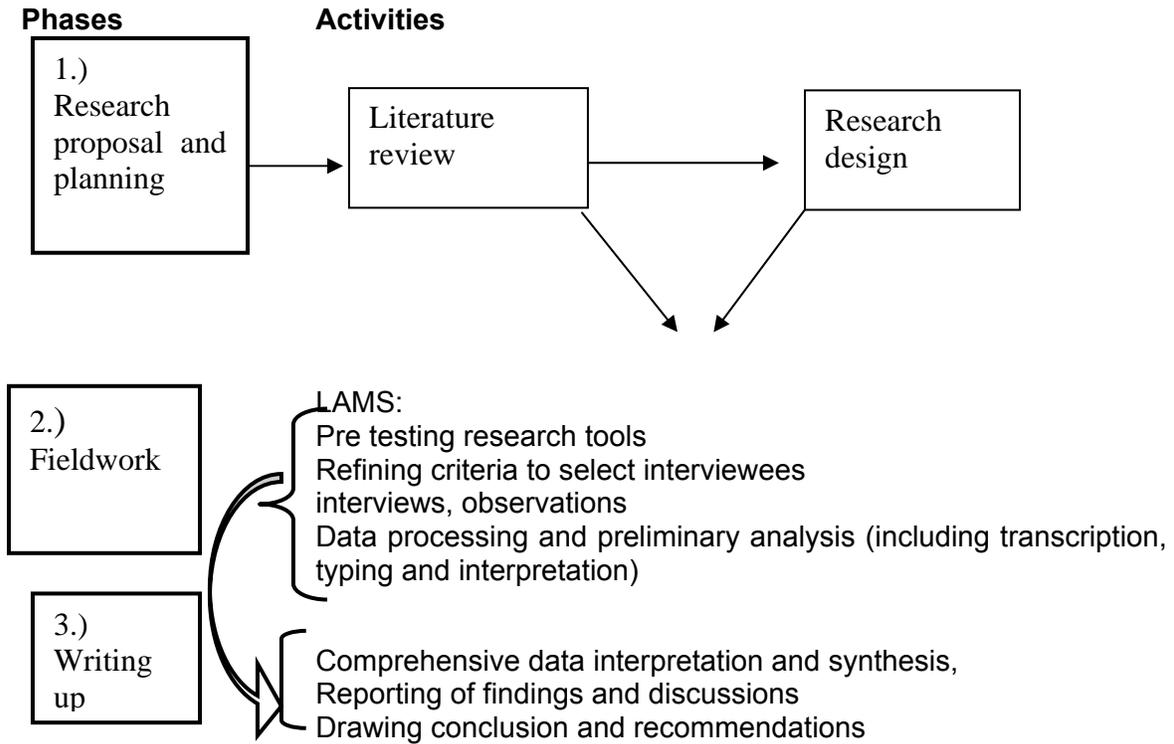
What are and/or have been the social, economic and cultural factors related to yourself and your parents that are influencing access to LAMS?
What the socio economic and cultural factors related to LAMS that can influence girls access to LAMS?
What are the academic factors influencing female access to LAMS

Please indicate the existing laws or decrees aiming to eliminate any discrimination, and providing equal access of women and girls at various levels of technical and vocational education.

Summary of the Research Process

The study was carried out in three major phases as reflected in figure below. Phase 1 was mainly designed to plan and prepare the Implementation of the phases 2 and 3.

Figure : Phases of the study



Source: Author, August 2008