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# TRADITIONAL VALUES AND LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SENEGAL: A YEAR AS A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN THIES

Maguette Diame

**TRADITIONAL VALUES AND LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SENEGAL: A YEAR AS A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN THIES**

A Dissertation Presented

by

MAGUETTE DIAME

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## DEDICATION

To my mom for her endurance, resilience and hard work, to my wife and my son for their patience, support, and love

And To all those who have contributed to my education in general.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**ABSTRACT**

**TRADITIONAL VALUES AND LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SENEGAL: A YEAR AS A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN THIES**

MAY 2020

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The dissertation explores the discourses of traditional values, local practices, and community engagement within a selected community in Thies, Senegal and its high school environment. The study investigates the ways in which these cultural elements are present in the daily life of the community as well as how they are or could be integrated in formal teaching. In particular, I studied the concepts of *Jom* (hard work, pride, dignity), *Kersa* (decency), *Suturë* (discretion), *Muñ* (endurance), *Teranga* (hospitality), *Maslaa* (negotiation), *Kal* (kinship), and *Suture* (Protection) in particular. My own experience as a language teacher who has lived and studied in the United States was also used to complement this critical ethnography study, using a critical auto-ethnography lens. These discourses illustrate power dynamics, controversies, difference in perceptions, and implications regarding these socio-cultural concepts.

The study shows that discourses around traditional values describe the positive nature of most of them and positive effects they have had on Senegalese communities and could have on formal schooling. However, many comments reveal negative perceptions

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and misuse of some traditional values (particularly *Maslaa and Suturë*), referred many times as traditional moral principles because of the controversial perceptions. The data findings depict a double-edge nature of the concepts under study. The analysis also reveals that people in the community and at school refer frequently to the aforementioned concepts, the Wolof language, and to some historical figures as embodiments of such values or moral principles.

As for presence of values at formal schools, the findings show that there is no formal part of the curriculum on traditional values including moral principles, local practices, or local languages in the middle/high schools in Senegal. However, teachers, students, parents, and school administration use or refer to traditional values informally, consciously or unconsciously, within the school premises. Therefore, there is an existing Third Space in the community and the school, but it is not explored for a more culturally relevant education and to perpetuate positive local values. The investigation also provides interesting findings on local community's involvement and reveals that besides the APE members, few parents participate in the school activities.

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMER          Association des Mères d'Élèves (Students' Mothers' Association)

ANDS          Agence Nationale de la Démographie et Statistiques

ANCTP         Agence National de la Case des Touts- Petits (National Agency for

Children's Hut)

APE           Association des Parents d'Élèves (Students' Parents Association)

APTE          Amélioration des Performances de Travail et d'Entrepreneuriat

(Improving Working Performances and Entrepreneurship)

BEPC          Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle

BFEM          Brevet de Fin d'Études Moyennes

CDVM          Comité de Défense des Valeurs Morales (Committee for the Defense of

Moral Values)

CFEE          Certificat de Fin d'Études Élémentaire

CIDA          Canadian International Development Agency

DFEM          Diplôme de Fin d'Études Moyennes

DPRE          Direction de la Planification et de la Réforme de l'Éducation

EFA           Education for All

ECCE          Early Childhood Care Education

FAPE          Fédération des Associations des Parents d'Élèves (Federation of

Students' Parents' Associations)

GDP           Gross Domestic Product

GMP           Grand Mothers' Project

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|---|---|
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| HIPC | Highly Indebted Poor Countries |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PDEF | Programme Décennal de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| RETRO | Renouveau des Traditions Originelles du Sénégal (Reestablishing Senegalese traditional culture) |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| DWP | Department of Work and Pensions |
| WB | World Bank |
| HRW | Human Right Watch |

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

In Senegal, curriculum, textbooks, and educational practices are part of an educational system inherited from the colonial times, which systematically excluded local knowledge, experience, communities, and practices within the formal school premises. The current formal education as it is designed and implemented does not incorporate much of the Senegalese traditional culture (Diallo, 2003; Diame, 2011; GMP, 2015). However, if appropriately blended with aspects of the Senegalese traditional values and supported by the local community, formal education could be a great source of motivation, both for students and communities, and could increase enrollment, decrease retention and dropouts and lead to better school performances.

Within the context of Education for All (EFA) and recently Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), like most countries in the world, Senegal made universal primary education a priority for 2015 (Niane, 2007; PDEF, 2007). The political authorities invested approximately over 25% of the national budget in education since 2001 (25.74% in 2013 and 21% in 2017, UNESCO), one of the highest government expenditure for education in Africa at that time, making significant progress in access and gender equity (PDEF, 2007; DPRE, 2008; UNESCO, 2013). Despite these notable efforts and achievements, Senegal with 60.9% in 2015 is still below the region's average (66.9%) achievement for universal primary education (ANSD, 2015). Moreover, recurrent and lasting students' and teachers' strikes for better educational conditions and protesting against the high failure rates at national exams are also major educational

issues that the country has been facing. Only 4% of Senegalese adults have attended higher education. The high rate of drop out and failures at secondary school exams are the main causes of this phenomenon. For instance, success at high school and university entrance exams has barely reached 40% over the past ten years (35.9% in 2013) and is even worse at the university level (www.officedubac.sn). Moreover, only 67% of the children who started primary school in 2001 have reached the sixth grade; the remaining 33% have either dropped out of school or been sent out for bad grades (Rapport PDEF, 2007, p. 57)**.**

This paper is based on the hypothesis that an incorporation of some positive traditional values and a greater local communities' engagement in the current formal educational system through a hybrid educational system would strengthen school and community relationship and therefore increase enrolment and performance. It may motivate reluctant parents to send their children to formal school and motivate teachers and learners for better quality education and school performances. Additionally, it can help secure and perpetuate some fundamental positive aspects of traditional values and adapt others that need to be. Overall, it may be a huge step towards universal primary education for all that is relevant to the country and a driver to a self-directed socio-economic development for Senegal and Africa in general.

However, many respondents in my previous research regarding this issue and documents consulted discuss some negative aspects of some of these concepts and practices, therefore the paper sometimes refer to them as traditional moral principles instead of values. Considering that values etymologically implies positive practices and

attitudes and the critical perspective of the study, I find it more interesting to sometimes refer them as traditional moral principles so that they can be discussed and critiqued objectively. Albeit, the aim of the paper is not to praise or negatively critique these "values" but to better understand their positive and negative implications so that their incorporation in formal school be more culturally relevant, effective, and accepted by different educational stakeholders.

Habermas argued that "Reaching and understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the presupposed basis of validity claims that are mutually recognized." (Habermas, 1998, p. 23). Drawing on Habermas arguments, Levinson claims that by recognizing the double edge reason we are fighting hegemony corroborates the idea of the necessity of introducing some of the traditional values and local practices in the educational system and blending them with some of the existing western type of education (Levinson, 2011). The presence of subjects or activities on traditional values in formal schools can be a counter balance to the Western knowledge to which schoolchildren are mostly exposed. Hence the need of what Bhaba (1994) calls "Third Space", a hybrid system to accommodate both educational systems for a more relevant education.

I studied traditional values including traditional moral principles and local practices in a community and its middle/high school in the region of Thies, western Senegal, where I was posted as a teacher in the academic year 2017-2018. My deep familiarity of the region, as well as previous work there, inform my choice of Thies: I have lived and taught there for many years. More importantly, the region has a rich socio-

cultural background and it is the closest region to Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. All these factors helped facilitate my research, which drew on critical ethnography and auto-ethnography.

In particular, I interviewed and interacted with teachers, students, parents, community elders, school administration, and educational authorities in Thies.  I used qualitative methods to collect data through the keeping of a field journal, conducted interviews, organized focus groups, as well as used participant observation, and collected relevant images and documents.

The main aim of the study is to explore discourses of traditional values and local practices within the selected community and the school environment. These discourses also illustrated power dynamics, controversies, difference in perceptions, and implications regarding these socio-cultural concepts. The study investigated the ways in which these cultural elements are present in the daily life of the community and integrated into formal schools as well as how they are integrated in formal teaching. In particular, I studied the concepts of *Jom* (hard work, pride, dignity), *Kersa* (decency), *Fule* (self-respect), *Mun* (endurance), *Teranga* (hospitality), *Kal* (kinship), and *Suture* (Protection). My own experience as a language teacher who has lived and studied in the United States was also used to complement this study, using a critical auto-ethnography lens.

### Context

Before the introduction of Western education, Africa had its own way of fostering education within society, different from the European system in terms of infrastructure,

curriculum, and means used to implement it. Nonetheless, one general objective was similar to Western education: to provide children and youth with socio-professional values and aptitudes that would facilitate their incorporation into society. Currently, with the advent of globalization, modernity and new technologies, Western education has replaced other forms of education in Africa, and it has also become one of the main pathways to improve people's quality of life and living conditions through the promise of the valuable and relevant knowledge students can acquire throughout the formal education process (Diame, 2011).

With the rapid spread of globalization, there is a pressing need for Third World countries to have an educated youth population to compete in the global job market and gain competences in new fields. However, it is important to note that the adoption of Western style education by African countries has been a direct consequence of colonialism and the introduction of the capitalist system. Such education was a means to covertly implant a new political economy of the colonizers. It also helped exploit the colonies' workforce and alienate their people (Mazrui, 1978).

I argue that Western education, if appropriately combined with aspects of Senegalese traditional values, including moral values, parents' and local communities' cultural practices, beliefs, local languages, and local aspects of traditional way of life may be an efficient means to involve local communities and schoolchildren in formal education, thereby increasing enrollment rates. Moreover, I believe it can help produce better citizens, rooted in a positive understanding of their traditional culture and open to what is best and relevant from the outside. However, I find it important to first explore

and describe discourses related to traditional values and local practices in the chosen community and the school before contemplating their potential positive effects on the formal schooling system. My own positionality and autobiographical background will help explore how a Senegalese teacher feel and think about these issues. At the same time, I seek to interrogate myself through a critical lens, acknowledging that my patriarchal background may influence my value system. Hence, this study will help to better understand which cultural elements are present in the daily life of the community and integrated into formal schools, as well as their implications for formal teaching. Associated, considering the potential challenges of integrating traditional values will help provide a more comprehensive awareness of the community's attitude towards traditional values. This information will allow for a more informed understanding of which values could be integrated into schooling and if applicable, how to best integrate them. Since these questions in many ways are subjective and investigating the deeper cultural understanding of interviewees, it is also necessary to critically interrogate myself (in my function as a teacher in the community) in the study.

My underlying assumptions of the study is that incorporating some aspects of traditional values alongside greater involvement of local communities in the current formal educational system through a hybrid educational system, i.e., through combining traditional and modern approaches and content, may strengthen the school community relationships. It may also motivate reluctant parents to send their children to formal schools and motivate teachers and learners to stimulate a more effective educational experience. Additionally, this hybrid educational approach can help strengthen and

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perpetuate some fundamental positive aspects of traditional values while adapting others. Overall, the blending of traditional values and more modern educational content and approaches may be a momentous step towards securing universal basic education for all. The latter merits further emphasis as a more educated youth population is a driver of self-directed socio-economic development in both Senegal and in Africa in general.

This research is highly relevant because few scholars have looked at the ways in which traditional values are used, perceived and understood in communities and within formal schools in Senegal as well as their positive and negative implications on education in Senegal. Professionals in education and development should consider this aspect in order to work out the most appropriate and relevant approach to education. Moreover, data collected from direct actors of the educational system and through a long-term participant observation of the community provided valid and reliable information that can help educational authorities better understand the discourse around these concepts, how they are already translated into formal schools and their potential implications. Casting my own person as part of the study added a layer of understanding of one teacher's critical perspective on these values.

## Statement of the problem

In Senegal, the curriculum, textbooks, and educational practices are inherited from the colonial system, which systematically excludes most local knowledge, experience, communities, and practices within the formal school premises. The current formal education as it is designed and implemented does not incorporate much of the Senegalese traditional culture (Diallo, 2003; GMP, 2015). Mazrui (1978) describes the

French colonial system as intolerant of local culture and institution and arrogant in their attitudes to local African traditions in their colonies and only promoting thorough assimilation. I believe that modern education, imported from the global West, if appropriately associated with some aspects of Senegalese traditional values and supported by stronger local community participation in different school activities can help provide a more relevant and efficient training for young Senegalese and Africans. Therefore, it can help build competencies needed locally to reach sustainable development. African traditional education is defined by Zulu (2006, p. 36) as:

> A means to an end; social responsibility; spiritual and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined.

Such elements are barely found in the formal education implemented in Senegal. As argued by Mbaye (2004), failure to incorporate these aspects of traditional culture reduces the African youth's competences for local needs and prepares them to merely work in the modern world economy or they may adopt Western knowledge to the neglect of local knowledge. On the other hand, the strategy of centralization of administrative control in France, as opposed to decentralization to the colonies, may have been another contributing factor (Njoh, A. J. , 2000). I believe that if some aspects of traditional culture are more and appropriately integrated in the educational system in Senegal, they can have positive impacts on youths.

My study also explored the negative implications such incorporation may cause to formal education as well as the community's discourse of these concepts through the critical analysis of power structures and traditions in the communities, and by questioning my own beliefs, current and past, regarding these issues. Based on my assumptions, this current study critically explored and describe the ways in which cultural elements are present in the daily life of the community and integrated into formal school, the implications of integrating traditional values along with local communities in formal teaching, and challenges of integrating them in formal schools in Senegal. I collected data from my own experience teaching in the community, my critical observations of the community's practices, activities, and ways of life, classroom observations, interviews and focus groups in Thies, western Senegal. As I discussed in the literature review, values are different from cultural practices; not all practices are values and not all values are positive values worth being taught and perpetuated. Therefore, I conducted my fieldwork, collected data, and analyzed them bearing in mind the complexity and relativeness of these socio-cultural concepts.

Traditional value[1] is a broad term; it includes but is not limited to traditions, customs, beliefs, languages, socio economic organizations. Overall, it is the objective cultural elements of the social life of a group as defined by Thomas and Znaniecky (1958). With about 20 ethnic groups, different religions and languages, talking about

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[1] Traditional values in this dissertation refer to Senegalese domestic and native values not acquired through colonization or other interactions. Traditional values do not mean backward past practices here. I avoided using the term indigenous values as it may have a negative connotation in the Senegalese context particularly when translated into French.

traditional values in Senegal is a broad topic so I narrow it down to the local values, moral principles, and practices in the community chosen for the study. I often refer to Senegal most common traditional values of *Kersa* (decency), *Fulë* (self-respect), *Muñ* (endurance), *Jom* (honor, pride, hard work), *Teranga* (hospitality), *kal* (kinship) and *Suture (*Protection*)*. The references to these values named in Wolof does not mean there is one common set of traditional values in such a multicultural country as Senegal, but these values have been identified as shared, used, and understood by most Senegalese in urban and rural areas (Diame, 2011). Due to the selection of Thies as fieldwork site, constituted mostly by Wolof but originally a Serrer village and surrounded by Peul villages, the study also examined aspects of Serrer and Peul traditional values and compared them with Wolof values, especially as related to the values or moral principles listed above.

This study examines: 1) the community's discourse of traditional values and how is it translated into school; 2) the implications and challenges of integrating local traditional values and local communities in formal teaching; and 3) the ways in which my educational experience both in Senegal and in the United States has influenced my position regarding traditional values and the local community in formal school. This current study present and analyze data I collected from my participant observations experience, documents collected, interviews and focus groups from 35 respondents (students, community leaders, teachers, school administrative staff, students' parents, and educational authorities/experts) in Thies in the academic year 2017/18**.**

## Significance and purpose of the study

I am interested in traditional values, local knowledge, local practices, and local communities' potential positive impacts on the formal educational system in Senegal. During my experience as a student and teacher, I noticed the role traditional values and parents play on children and youth's life process towards adulthood and their future responsibilities in the local community and nationwide. Therefore, I think these two aspects are inseparable from the education of children. Additionally, I would like to contribute to promoting a better understanding of the possibility to combine the two ways of education, both traditional and Western, for a better educational system that would suit most people in Senegal and promote positive local traditional values and practices at formal schools to perpetuate them. I am also personally committed to working with educational authorities to promote culturally relevant education, reduce failure during national exams, and help achieve basic education for all children and youth in Senegal.

This study is relevant because few scholars have looked at the positive impacts of traditional cultural values on education in Senegal. I believe that professionals in education and development should consider the positive effects some aspects of local traditional values including moral principles, practices, and stronger community involvement may have in the educational system in order to work out the most appropriate approach to education. This is why critical ethnography and auto ethnography are appropriate in this setting, because I will work actively to introduce some of these values in my teaching, and at the same time critically interrogate myself while doing so. Finally, the study gives voice to different actors involved in the educational system, so

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that students, teachers, parents, school administrators, community elders, and educational experts/researchers can express their opinions as related to traditional values and the meaning of education. Considering the complexity of these concepts and the controversies around them, I explored these concepts through a critical lens, i.e., critically reflect on my own positionality as a teacher and researcher, as well as on my interaction with the community as regards these values. This also prevented it from being a purely speculative investigation, since I described closely (and critically) my own understanding and engagement with these values, from a vantage point of being first a teacher, then a researcher. This study thus investigated the ways in which the aforementioned cultural elements are present in the daily life of the community and integrated into formal schools, their implications in formal teaching, and, as I progressed with my classes and teaching, the potential challenges of integrating these values in formal schools in Thies, Senegal, based on my own experiences in the classroom.

## **Research questions**

In addition to describing my own experience related to traditional values as a teacher in the chosen community's middle/high school, the purpose of this study is to explore and describe the community's discourses regarding these values and local practices, the ways in which such values along with local community are used in the community and at school, and the implications and challenges of integrating traditional values and local community in formal school in Senegal. More specifically, my research questions are:

- What is the community discourse of traditional values and how is it translated into formal school?

- What can be the implications and challenges of integrating local traditional values and local communities in formal teaching?

- In what ways has my educational experience both in Senegal and in the US influenced my position regarding traditional values and the local community in formal school?

These questions guided the exploration and description of the discourses related to traditional values and local practices in the selected community and the school.

## **Structure of the dissertation**

Throughout this dissertation, I present my findings about the discourse regarding local traditional values and their integration in formal schools in Senegal along with local communities. The paper also discusses the benefits and challenges of such a project. This is preceded by the socio-economic context, and the relevance and significance of conducting research in such an educational issue. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature concerning social theories of education western education with a focus on post-structuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonial. The social theories section discusses also Bourdieu, Freire, Fanon, and Foucault theories of education relevant to the topic. I privilege multiples voices and opinions to frame the concepts. In addition, Chapter 2 explores some definitions of the main concepts in the study, traditional education, and local traditional values in Africa and in Senegal in particular. This chapter ends with an analysis of some discussion about the needs and attempts to integrate of local knowledge in Western education in West Africa. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methods that comprise critical ethnographic and auto-

ethnographic study. The main techniques include participant observation, classroom observations, interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. This chapter also describes the sampling method and the different lenses of analysis of data collected as well as my positionality and relevant autobiographic information regarding this study. I then present the data and their analysis, which form the bulk of this dissertation, in the subsequent chapters. I begin my analysis by presenting and discussing the local community and the school's socio-economic background and history in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses participants' definitions, perceptions, use, and critical assessment of specific local values backed up by my own experience and some literature. Chapter 6 presents what I found in my research about the discourses regarding these values including gender dynamics, age and values, values in the past vs values now, and participant's different perceptions. Chapter 7 provides an analysis of participants' responses and data collected about the actual place and use of values in the target school and in formal schools in general. Additionally, the chapter discusses best formal and informal practices as well as participants' suggestions on how to better integrate them. Chapter 8 discusses the research's findings about the implications and challenges regarding the integration of local values and practices. The discussions are supplemented by my experience teaching and incorporating. Chapter 9 addresses the ways in which parents and local communities are engaged in formal schools and the education of their children as well as the effects a greater engagement has and could have on the entire formal educational system.

In the conclusion, I provide a summary of the findings and responses to the research questions. It also addresses lessons learned from the research and provides some recommendations about the ways in which traditional values and local communities could be integrated for a better educational system in Senegal as well as challenges. I also reflect on the relevance and significance of such a study and future research that can be pursued to better understand this culturally relevant educational issue

**CHAPTER II**

**REVIEWING THE LITERATURE AND FRAMING THE CONCEPTS**

This literature review aims to examine the discourse around the rationale, relevance, and benefits of integrating Senegalese traditional cultural values and local community in the formal education in Senegal. Since traditional values and local community are intrinsic to traditional education in Senegal and Africa, the study also reviews broadly African traditional education in contrast to modern education to discuss their differences, the relevance, the benefits, and challenges of combining the two types of education.

In the first section of this literature review, I revisit the contribution of social theorists to culture and education in the African postcolonial context. This section draws on existing literature to discuss the social theorists' views on traditional values and rationale, relevance, and benefits of Western education vs. African traditional education for the "development" of former colonies. I then review relevant literature about the concepts of education, traditional values and traditional education in Senegal and Africa.

I then discuss some attempts made by educational authorities to incorporate traditional values and local community in the educational system. Lastly, I present the literature on the need for hybridization, "Third Space" (Bahba, 1994), borders bridging and culturally relevant pedagogies that promote better and increased incorporation of some aspects of traditional values and local community in the formal education for the benefit of the students and the communities in general. I explore

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these values as related to traditional education in Senegal and the Francophone

Senegalese formal educational system and the need of a "Third Space", as described

by Homi Bhaba (1994), in the educational system for a better alignment with

students' realities, values and needs. In the last sub section, I also present some

examples and challenges to greater inclusion of local values and community in formal

schooling.

## Western education, cultural values and socio-economic development through the lenses of social theorists

Drawing mostly on post-modern, post-structural and post-colonial perspectives,

this section discusses the social theorists' views on the rationale and relevance of

Western education in the current African socio-economic and postcolonial context.

The perspectives that frame this study of how traditional values and local

communities may be integrated into formal schooling identify as postmodern, post-

structural, and post-colonial. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from "the colonial

testimony of Third World countries and the discourse of minorities within the

geopolitical divisions of East, West, North, and South. They intervene in the ideological

discourses of modernity that attempt to give hegemonic normality to the uneven

development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races,

communities, people" (Bahba, 1994, p.12). Both post-structuralism and post modernism

stressed "the situated nature of cultural practices and the existence of multiple voices,

realities, truths, and power relationships within discourse" (Sarr, 2014, p.19). I find these

three perspectives relevant to the study as they all "recognize the heterogeneity of

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knowledges, the co-existence of various ways of thinking, and cultural validity" (Sarr, 2014, p.20). I argue throughout this paper that a subtle combination of traditional education and modern education can be beneficial to schoolchildren and Senegal. As such these different perspectives align with the underlying assumption of this paper. One of the key points of this study being the effects of formal education inherited from French colonialism on the Senegalese and African traditional education and values as well resulting attitudes towards education will be key themes related to these three theories (postmodernism, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism). I also explore other perspectives including Freire (2008), Fanon (1952), Nyerere (1968), and decolonization theories throughout my following integrative analysis of this issue.

As Bourdieu (1990) argues in the reproduction function of the educational system performs three central functions that are conserving, inculcating and consecrating a cultural heritage. He pushed it further by stating, "this is its internal and most essential function" (Swastz, 1990). Bourdieu views schooling as not only transmitting knowledge and skills but also, as a means of socialization into a particular cultural tradition. Its paramount "traditional pedagogy" as discussed by Bourdieu (1990) made schooling an efficient tool initially used by religions such as Christianity and Islam to convey their embedded culture and traditions. Subsequently, colonial powers used schooling as it "deflects attention from and contributes to the misrecognition of its social reproduction" (Swastz, 1990, p.191). Just like Bourdieu, I believe that in general school systems, specifically ones inherited from the former colonizers, provide a guise of autonomy yet have a covert agenda of a subtle perpetuation of dominance and hegemony. Moreover, in

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the postcolonial case, I see the social reproduction more as an influence between West and the South, former colonizers and former colonized, developed and developing countries rather than internally at the state level. While the formal education system in Senegal may slightly serve some social classes over others because of access or means it serves the French former colonizers as we continue to learn exactly what the French learn, how they learn it and when they learn. Senegalese students even still have the same school calendar and same breaks and holidays. Ironically it is a calendar representative of Christian hegemony within a majority Muslim country.

To the question hegemony can it be a good thing? A linguistic lens provides even more insight into the ongoing influence of the former colonizer within Senegalese society. The French language has taken over many other local languages. There is a sense of social, intellectual and cultural divide between those who speak and write French and those who do not in terms of social class, benefits, considerations from authorities, and even in the job market (Negash, 2005). Without question, language has been an efficient vehicle to promote the "knowledge" (Foucault, 1985). One of the most influential thinkers in postmodernism, Michel Foucault (1985), critically looked at how meaning, and subsequently knowledge, is created in modern society through language and discourse.

During the decolonization waves occurring in many areas of the world in the 1950's and 60's, a new class of intellectuals emerged who straddled the cultural line between empire and colony due to their heritage, education, and experience. With substantive experience in both worlds, theorists such as Said (1995) and Fanon (1959)

poke against colonial rule not only from economic and political terms, but also in terms of psychological and cultural violence. Said looked at the portrayal of the Orient by the West, criticizing the binary structure of thinking that simultaneously separated and attracted the West to the Orient.

On the other hand, Fanon (1959) focused on the "native as savage" mentality that underlie the physical mechanisms of colonialism and examined how the violence of the colonial oppressor transformed the colonized through the adoption of nationalist frameworks that created rivalries among new leaders. Fanon's aimed criticism at the falseness of Western humanism, which had justified violence in the name of progress against the colonized, a violence that was in turn, perpetuated by newly independent elites upon their own populations. In addition, Fanon's (1959) work gave scope to the "actors" of colonialism, through deconstructing core justifications and beliefs surrounding the colonizer and the colonized. I align some of thoughts discussed above with these two theorists. By thoroughly adopting the French educational system we continually accept to accommodate and perpetuate the values of the dominant group. Contrarily to the functionalists' view of education as a process that prepares students for the job market (Hanrahan, 2000), radical theorists such as Illich (1971), Freire (2008), Gramsci (1971), and Nyerere (1968) saw education as an instrument of political awareness and economic and cultural freedom for social change (Dedominico, 2002).

Fanon (1952) was a fundamental theorist for politicians and academics such as Nyerere (1968) and Freire (2008) who concerned themselves with the liberation of the oppressed in post-colonial contexts through education. By exposing the roles, identities

and assumptions of colonialism, these theorists laid bare the psychological workings of dependency and oppression that the colonized endured. Furthermore, a common theme in all their works is that only the colonized can free him or her from the colonial system. Drawing from this key concept and working from the perspective of responsibility to society at large, both Nyerere (1968) and Freire (2008) recognized that the education of the oppressors was ill suited to the needs of their societies. Nyerere (1968) challenged the social values of "elitist" education catering to "Western" hierarchical interests and the modern sector of the economy. Instead, he promoted education for self-reliance and adult education, two sectors in desperately need of being readdressed in his newly independent and rural state of Tanzania. At the same time, Freire (2008) criticized the "banking" system of education in that it leaves no room for critical thinking and places the student in a dependent role. Instead, from a post-colonial perspective, a critical pedagogy must be developed so that those being educated would become self-aware of their oppression and thus authentically contribute to their own liberation. In this way, development (rather than modernization) could occur and the authoritative dichotomy of teacher/student and helper/helped be overcome. Nyerere's (1968) and Freire's (2008) view of education as a tool for liberation placed emphasis on raising critical consciousness, alongside an unwavering faith in a system of education for all as the only true education.

Moreover, Nyerere (1968) not only repudiated the formal education system that, according to him, has devalued elders' knowledge and social status but he also seems to have rejected some aspects of indigenous education in Africa such as traditional beliefs. Paulo Freire (2008), before him and in different terms, suggested a need to shift from the

"magical" and "naïve stage," which he describes as the fatalist attitude found in many traditional beliefs, to a critical stage. By criticizing the banking system in the formal education and the shift from magical and naïve stage to the critical stage, Freire is not only standing against some aspects of the Western type of education but also against some aspects of traditional beliefs and educational practices which thus perpetuates inequality and keep people in a realm of magic and a form of oppression (Freire, 2008).

However, if the two of them seem to have agreed on the necessity to change the educational practices inherited from our ancestors and from the colonizers, they do not propose the same alternatives. The concern of Freire (2008) was more an awareness raising or "*conscientization*" in his own words. He held that oppressed people, referring to former colonized people, needed an education which would enable them to understand the system of oppression that has governed the international relations, and which has changed forms throughout history. Independence was given to former colonies alongside with a system to make sure the status quo remains. Once conscious of these facts through a process of inquiry (Freire, 2008); oppressed people would identify their actual needs and the way to become more fully human which could only be achieved through solidarity but not isolation or revenge over the oppressor. When applied to the current context of the African countries, in general, these two visions can be seen as relevant, but they will require many adaptations and changes to actually benefit African countries. For instance, based on the rural context of Tanzania, Nyerere (1968) advocates an educational system that integrates agricultural skills learning, as early as primary school stage. Accordingly, children should leave primary school not with a degree but with some

practical agricultural skills. His vision was dictated by the context of overall poverty that characterized his country and other former colonies and a sociocultural context. It may not be replicable in other parts of Africa with different values and socio-economic concerns. Unlike Freire, Nyerere's alternative way of education (1968) looks more practical in the African postcolonial context although Freire's (2008) "*conscientization*" is a very effective way to maintain and integrate local culture and knowledge in the formal education of former colonies.

The plea for a stronger place of traditional values in the educational system may collide with the modernization theorists who depict traditional society as obstacles to development. This may be reducing development to its economic components. Society exists outside of individuals, regulated and strengthened through the bonds and roles of family, government, and religion. Both of these posit the importance of society over the individual and social development as progressive rather than revolutionary. Durkheim developed a theory of modern society as one based on complex social differentiation, as opposed to primitive, segmental society (Durkheim, 1997). According to Durkheim (1997), primitive societies, simplistic and uniform in their social structure, are composed of independent kinship groupings that lack social differentiation since they regulate and define the behavior of their members. However, they are unified together in a social whole based on their religious beliefs, which form the basis of their culture. Modern society, however, has replaced kinship structure with specialized social units (economy, family, military, etc.) to which individuals both belong to and regulate. This diversity has led to a different form of solidarity expressed through interdependence. Thus,

individualism, in a society characterized by cultural pluralism, has replaced religion as its central unifier and regulator.

It follows that the revolution advocated by Fanon (1952) always fails because of alliance and compromise according to an earlier thinker, Gramsci (1971). For the specific case of western and traditional education I discuss in this paper, I strongly believe in a need for compromise because the Western type of education has already finished finding its place in the Senegalese socio-economic life. This does not mean accepting one culture over another as Foucault (1985) decried but first try to understand better how we have come to accept this and how it perpetuates the hegemonic agenda of former colonizers. Then, it would be easier to smoothly usher in changes that strengthen and value our traditions and knowledge.

Another theory that frames this study is Bahba's concept of a "Third Space" (1994), in which he draws on postcolonial and poststructuralism theories to explain how people and communities are "hybrid" due to the inevitable intrusion of the past in our present life. According to Bahba, in postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable. Through his postcolonial perspective, Bhaba argues that such hybridity is built through language, discourse, and education and its acknowledgment could benefit societies if they explore better this inclusive way of viewing current cultures. He further argues that "the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the in-between space that carries the burden of

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the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bahba, 1994, p.38).

In the same vein, Bahba continues to argue that the discussions should no longer be on the cultural differences or division between past and present but to explore the existing Third Space that provides an in-between space and engenders new possibilities. Therefore, Bahba's Third Space "opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (1994, p.4). Bahba's Third Space provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that promotes a cultural homogeneity and syncretism by questioning hegemony and authority. It also "initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (Bhabha, 1994, p.1)

In the context of this study on the incorporation of local traditional values and practices in formal schools in Senegal, I find this theory relevant as it may strengthen the connection between formal schools and local communities through exploration and incorporation of local traditional culture in formal schools through interactions and activities. Additionally, in educational studies, Maniotes (2008) examines Third Space in a classroom where students' cultural capital merged with the content of curricula. Such a remark can be made for the Senegalese formal education where local culture is informally present in formal school settings. This Third space needs to be celebrated and privileged because it enables other positions to emerge and the possibility to negotiate cultural difference (Hoogvelt, 1997, p.158)

Furthermore, following up on Said's work, Bahba (1994) pleads for a "hybridization" to describe the emergence of a new cultural form from multiculturalism. By applying the post-structuralist methodologies in postcolonial theory, Bahba (1994) shows how histories, including colonialism, constantly intrude our present. Therefore, there is a need to transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations and colonialism studies. He presents cultural differences as an alternative. He talks about the need of a "Third Space" that he describes as an ambiguous area that develops when two or more individuals/cultures interact. It challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the original past, kept alive in the national tradition of people (Bahba, 1994). In this study, as Bahba argues, the current educational system could find explore a "Third Space" between Western education inherited from the colonial system and traditional education that reflects more the needs of the population. It is no longer easy to draw the line between cultures, languages and values; therefore, a compromise and a hybrid system need to be fine to better serve the schoolchildren and their communities. Following up on Bahba (1994), Habermas also acknowledged that fighting Western hegemony can be a double-edged sword, hence the necessity of introducing some of the traditional values in the formal educational system and to counterbalance the Western knowledge and values to which schoolchildren are mostly exposed (Levinson, 2011).

In conclusion, I would like to revisit the original questions posed in regard to more appropriate educational system in Africa from a social theorist's perspective. Throughout this paper, I refer often to the dichotomy of Western type of education and

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African traditional and local knowledge. It would be interesting to examine these terms in a historical discourse analysis, such as when, where, and how traditional, values, local knowledge, or indigenous knowledge become separated from "the knowledge," defined as the western type which is conveyed through schooling. Who benefits from this separation and how can a compromise be found?

In regard to the purpose of education, I find Bourdieu's (1990) analysis of social reproduction relevant. Rather than viewing education, particularly the Western type of education maintained and left by the former colonizers, as an institution of equal opportunity that through human capital would reach development he argues for an analysis the kinds of practices, regulations, and norms that compose the educational experience and how these practices contribute to fight social and power reproduction (Levinson, 2011). For example, my inquiry of the place of local knowledge and traditional values in the current formal education system in Senegal is worth exploring in hopes of effecting changes where needed. Finally, despite the relevancy of the radical or revolutionary societal change advocated by Fanon (1952) and Said (1995) I have a different view, I agree most with Bahba (1994) and Foucault and the post-structuralists' view on the issue. I believe that a thorough change of the system is not the solution since it would require a wide breadth of vision, time, and means that our states do not possess. Additionally, there remains a benefit from learning from others and the two ways of education can be compatible. Developing countries particularly should do something to protect their cultural and economic resources for the development they want rather than the development people chose for them. As stated by Foucault the task of critical thought

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is "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault 1985, p. 9). Development as a hegemonic discourse should be fought by a discourse from within. Any education proven to have hegemonic agenda should be fought with another form of education. By using French as language of instruction from kindergarten to university level, teaching almost the same courses as the French schools, using almost the same materials, the same classroom design, the same teaching techniques, the same testing and evaluation techniques, the same teacher training methods, and the same educational administrative structure the current formal education in Senegal is close to have covert hegemonic agenda left and nurtured by the former colonizers.

After I revisit and discuss the social theorists' perceptions on the issue of culture and education in the post-colonial context and how they inform read and understand traditional values in the context of this paper, I outline and discuss the key concepts of this paper in the following section.

## Description, discussion, and framing of main concepts

This section focuses more on African traditional education vs. formal, modern, or Western education. In this section, I first explore these concepts as defined by various thinkers and suggest an educational concept that aligns more to my argument throughout this paper. Because of its importance to my argument, I will address traditional education separately later in the paper.

This section explores the definitions of some key concepts in this study such as education, traditional values, African traditional education, and Western or formal

education from the functionalists' perspective before looking into the concept of holistic education as a potential alternative method.

I find it necessary to explore some definitions of education in general before describing formal traditional education and formal education. There have been various attempts to define education. I present here some of them that seem more relevant to my study. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2002) defined education as the transmission of a society's culture including values from generation to generation. They also believe that adult members of a society inculcated to children and younger ones the different aspects of culture in a community process. According to Baker (1994) education is a set of learning processes that enables a person to gain skills, behaviors, knowledge, values, and norms necessary for an individual to live harmoniously and successfully within his society (Cuthbert, 2014). By looking into the two definitions one can see strong similarities including the crucial place they both accord to values. However, there are some differences in their processes and goals. Education seems to differ slightly in terms of process and goals whether it is defined from a Western or an African perspective. Baker, from a Western worldview focuses more on skills and knowledge whereas Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2002) from African perspective seem to give a stronger place elders and community. Based on some definitions, I will discuss briefly traditional values, the two types of education focusing more on the differences. Further, this study will elaborate more on these concepts focusing on Senegal.

**Discussion and description of main traditional values**

This sub-section discusses first the perceptions of traditional values in education then it describes the main Senegalese values in which this study focuses. Since very little has been written about traditional values in Senegal the second part of this sub-section draws more on the Senegalese educational authorities' attempts to incorporate them in the educational system, online Wolof dictionaries, the Senegalese perception of these values and my own experience.

Values are the powerful directive forces that give order and meaning to acts, and make decisions (Sifuna and Otiende, 1992). Katola (2014) describes education as:

> the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from one generation to another. The attitudes and values acquired through education are not in born but the results of learning process. Values are the powerful directive forces that give order and meaning to act and make decisions. (p.32).

The place and importance of values in such education was raised earlier by Carleheden (2006) who argues that a central aspect of education has always been a passing on of norms and values. According to Katola (2014), these values include honesty, respect, obedience and generosity among others. Despite the presence of various ethnic groups with distinctive features in Africa, there are many similarities and the general goal is to create an "ideal individual who would fully fit into and be accepted by society." (Katola, p.32)

Values of pride towards one's society were taught through storytelling, initiation ceremonies, songs, dances, and proverbs among others. According to Katola (2014):

> It involved the study of the history of the family, clan, ethnic group especially the heroes and heroines who were recalled in songs and stories for their immense

contribution in the promotion of life of the people. The main purpose for doing so was to make learners proud of their society. (P.33)

It encouraged carriers of such education to develop pride in African youth but not an elitist class which values more imported values, and which has a negative attitude towards African culture (Katola, 2014). Education of this kind worked well for the society as it enabled children to acquire an ethic of responsibility, which formed the basis for peace in the society. Human relationships were further enhanced through greetings, social relationships between neighbors, and attitude of respect toward elders and people with physical disabilities (Katola, 2014). However, Freire would describe some aspects of this education as keeping people at naïve stage and perpetuating social injustice and inequality (Freire, 2008) which raises a need to be critical about these concepts. It will be informative to know who defines them and for what purposes to better select what is relevant and beneficial for education in the context of post-colonial Africa.

The present formal education system in Senegal gives minimal attention to spiritual and moral training. The educational authorities have tried to incorporate more traditional values in school. For example, in 1982 the Senegalese government set up a commission to work out strategies to integrate traditional values in the formal educational system (Ndoye and Diouf, 1982). The commission first conducted an inventory of what these traditional values are, and then they give a short definition to each term before they collected pedagogical approaches that are likely to promote an educational system that considers these values more. The list of traditional values they came up with includes all the ones I listed above but also other values such as *teranga* (hospitality), *yewen* (generosity), and *mbok* (family). According to Ndoye and Diouf, these values include

some universal values; however, societies perceive and analyze them differently. The commission also suggested an appropriate training of teachers and a motivation for Senegalese researchers to include this issue in their agenda. Additionally, they suggest the exploration of other venues, outside of formal schools to facilitate the Senegalese children and youth's permanent contact with these traditional values (Ndoye and Diouf, 1982). However, the Senegalese educational authorities have never implemented the recommendations of this commission.

For the purposes of this study, I understand traditional values as an overarching category for the ways in which people get motivated and abide by the communities' rules for harmony and development. Since this study focuses more on the traditional values or moral principles of *Jom* (honor, pride, dignity*), Muñ* (endurance*), Kersa* (decency*), kal (Joking kinship), teranga (hospitality), and *maslaa* (negotiation) and that almost nothing has been written on these values, the definition attached to each of term is based on the short definitions provided by the commission, the work of a prominent Senegalese historian, Iba Der Thiam, an online dictionary (http://www.freelang.net/online/wolof.php?lg=gb) and my own experience and research.

I have narrowed the scope of this study to the Senegalese most common traditional values or moral principles of *Kersa* (decency), *Fulë* (self-respect), *Muǹ* (endurance), *Kal* (joking kinship), *Teranga* (hospitality), and *Jom* (honor, pride, and hard work). The focus on these Wolof values does not mean there is one common set of traditional values in such a multicultural country such as Senegal, but these values have

been identified as shared, used, and understood by the majority of Senegalese people in urban and rural settings.

I choose to name the Senegalese values in Wolof because of the prominence of Wolof language and culture in Senegal. The Wolof ethnic group represents 45% of the Senegalese population; however, over 90% of the Senegalese population speaks the language as first or second language that makes it a lingua franca in the country. Moreover, linguists and socio-cultural specialists to show the ramshackle dominance of Wolof language and culture over the other local languages now commonly use the concept of Wolofization. Media, religion, rural exodus to the western part of Senegal, religion, and music have contributed to spread this language and culture throughout the country (Diallo, 2010, ANDS, 2014, Sarr, 2014). The use of Wolof to identify Senegalese culture, tradition, and values has also been described and decried as a form of internal hegemony. However, this study will not elaborate on this issue.

The concepts of *Kersa, Muñ, Fulë*, *Teranga, Maslaa, Kal*, and *Jom* discussed above among others such as *Fit* (courage) and *Kólëre* (loyalty), are based on traditional beliefs and have been passed down from generation to generation as described by the historian Iba Der Thiam in an online newspaper ([www.rewmi.com](http://www.rewmi.com)) in October 2010 and Ly (2016). In the same article he described how these values have been consolidated by the introduction of Islam and *Dahras* because most of them are compatible with Islamic teaching and seemed to form the basis in *Koranic* schools in Senegal. However, some *dahras* "teachers" even hide behind these values and send their students, known as *talibes*, to beg for food and money arguing that it is part of building in them *muñ* or *jom*.

This shows a controversial part of traditional values therefore the need to understand them then choose which ones should be integrated in formal education to produce the expected benefits. Freire and Marx would describe this form of education as a means to perpetuate social injustice and exploitation.

The paper will discuss later the discourse of different stakeholders regarding the introduction of these values in the curriculum, teaching students the actual meaning of such values and hopefully keeping them in society and to help people succeed in life with dignity. Below, the paper discusses the place of these traditional values among others in different types of education in Senegal and Africa.

## Traditional education

First, despite their many similarities, I prefer to use the concept of traditional education rather than indigenous education in this study because I find the concept of indigenous education as filled with negative connotations. However, Indigenous education referring to locally developed forms of teaching the young, based on the traditions and values of African societies (Kanu, 2007) is inseparable from African traditional education. Throughout the study I will also refer to indigenous education for the sake of references.

The concept of traditional education is complex, controversial and contested as discussed in many literatures about education. For the purpose of this study, I use African traditional education to express various informal and non-formal educational systems which; however, share lots of commonalities including the combination of theory and practices and the prominent place of elders and community. According to Kanu (2014)

tradition comes from the Latin verb *tradere*, meaning to transmit or to give over. The noun *traditio* means transmission of something. He identifies the "central responsibility involved in tradition as receiving something valuable or precious, preserving it, and passing it down onto those who come after" (p. 70). Similarly, Cuthbert describes tradition as a set of teachings, practices, beliefs and way of life that are inherited from the past to help us make sense of the world. Additionally, it guides, organizes and regulates our ways of living. Along the way, every culture has somehow undergone some changes as people have changed throughout their history due to encounter with other societies and nature itself. However, such encounters should not undermine the values and traditions embedded in their culture.

Given this definition of tradition, African Traditional Education can be defined as referring to how Africans transmit skills, knowledge, and experience gained over long period of fight to overcome the physical, environmental, and social challenges (Cuthbert, 2014). Unlike the so-called modern/Western/formal education, African Traditional Education is described as mostly having no formal settings and no administrative or academic organization. Different subjects such as science, arts, economics, morals, and agriculture can be intertwined in one teaching. The teachings could take place in the streets, at home, during initiation ceremonies, and through social events.

Teachers/instructors are community members mostly elders. Such education entails aspects of social life, spirituality, artistic, physical, emotional and mental development of the child within the community. Such values can be argued as universal values present in most forms of education worldwide. However, they occupy a stronger

place in African traditional education (Rodney, 1972; Marah, 2006; Cuthbert 2014).

Unlike the Western methodologies, traditional education in Africa is a collective task. Each member of the community can contribute to the education of the child at different stages of his/her life. At an early age, the child's education is under the responsibility of the biological mother and other members of the close family. Later, the community takes over through initiation ceremonies and other local social events (Cuthbert, 2014).

The community determines the content of the education of their own children. Knowledge, skills, and values are transmitted through different mediums including songs, games, cooking, drumming, dancing, storytelling, healing and social ceremonies. The contents of traditional education were determined to cater "cater for the physical, social and spiritual aspects of the life of children and followed certain principles." (Cuthbert, 2014, p.66). Such education is inseparable with traditions, values, and local community as they are intertwined.

## Formal education

Throughout this paper I use the term formal education to relate to the modern Western type of education inherited from the colonial system. For the sake of this study, I use the functionalist perspective to define formal education because its focus on human capital, grades and equity makes it somehow different but not incompatible with African traditional education views and therefore relevant to this study.

Based on the functionalists' assumption that education is one of the main pathways to development of modern society as it promotes equality, stimulates growth,

and develops a culture of shared values, norms and conventions through citizens, Harahan (2000) describes it as what makes society functional. Parson (1985) also describes argues that goal attainment, social integration, hierarchy, and pattern maintenance are central conditions necessary for society to function in an orderly. From his functionalist standpoint, he describes formal education as a means to help students acquire skills and knowledge required in the job market. Therefore, this model focuses on subjects that the modern job market values more. One of the goals of functional education is equitable access to education for everyone through public or private schooling. The students' level of study, performances, and readiness for the demands of the job market are determined through grades, degrees, and certificates that can be valid in different parts of the world (Mbaye, 2004).

Labaree (1997), another functionalist, describes the principles that underlie formal education as to build an ideal democratic society and to produce an outcome that fits in the modern and global market system. The mains goal of this educational system being to promote and achieve democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility as it ensures access to all and equal opportunity to all students. Powers, skills, and prerogatives should no longer be inherited or based on social status but based on competences (Labaree, 1997, Mbaye, 2004). Stratification of the educational system into different level (primary, secondary and higher education) and a parallel system of vocational schools facilitates the satisfaction of needs requested by the current labor market. Such educational system could be replicable in developing countries like African countries since they have common goals (Larabee, 1997; Mbaye, 2004). However, the

contexts, history, culture, and values in Africa are different from those in the global West. Different societies value different things; therefore, on size does not fit all when it comes to educating their children. Illich (1971) described the formal education as prepackaged solutions. He also argues that education has been a machine of propaganda to satisfy the needs of modern job market. Additionally, Illich (1971) describes the grading and degree aspects of formal education as generating frustrations that could result in social tensions. Furthermore, such system keeps children in a competition conundrum rather than a quest for knowledge. He argues that most relevant knowledge acquired by children is learned outside of the formal schools.

Each education system or model has a noble goal and as described above they have more commonalities than differences. Therefore, for the benefit of the students and society in general, they could be combined in a way that each society has the possibility to define what to teach and how to teach it.

**Holistic education**

Drawing from Miller's (1988) work on holistic education, Katola (4014) describes the concept as composed of the word holistic derived from Greek "holos" meaning a whole or connection and education described above. According to Katola (2014), the concept assumes that individuals connect with community, nature, and values to find their identity, meaning and purpose. From holistic perspective, education aim to

> develop every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentialities. In this way, the term holistic education simply means cultivating the whole person and helping the individual to live more consciously within communities and natural ecosystem. (Katola, 2014, p.32).

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Though different from integrative education, holistic education entails some integrative aspects. Within holistic perspective, moral education, for example, can be taught "by integrating it into various parts of the curriculum such as literature, history, social studies, civics sports and home economics. This way, learners would see the relevance of the subjects to their own lives" (Katola, 2014, p.32). This integrative method of education is very present in African traditional education.

As described above, each of the two educational perspectives gives either something more or something less. The holistic perspective which gives a stronger place to traditional values while tailoring learners to be well equipped for the modern job market plays a balanced role between them. Therefore, an incorporation of traditional values and a stronger involvement of local community in the formal education system, as I argue throughout this paper, align more with Miller's (1988) concept of holistic education. This concept frames more this study, as it not only includes both types of education, but it also helps learners to develop intellectual and become a responsible member of the community. In addition to the holistic perspective of education, experiential learning and collective or group-oriented learning also align with the characteristics of traditional education and formal education as well.

Overall, the two systems have both common and different aspects in theory and practice. However, there is room for an inclusive, hybrid system that will keep the students rooted in the good aspects of their cultural values but open to what Senghor called the "universal civilization" as long as it is relevant to their realities (Senghor, 1956).

**African traditional education: Place and role of community and values**

In this section I highlight the main aspects of traditional education that give a strong place to traditional values and local community focusing on the Senegalese context.

According to Mazonde (2001) the main aims of African traditional education are to:

> preserve the cultural heritage of the extended family, the clan and the tribe and to adapt members of the new generation to their physical environment and teach them how to control and use it; and to explain to them that their own future, and that of their community, depends on the understanding and perpetuation of the institutions, laws, language and values inherited from the past. (P.3)

Such goals of traditional education are intrinsic to local values and local community. Similarly, African indigenous education defined by Zulu (2006, p. 36) as

> a means to an end; social responsibility; spiral and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined.

is barely found in the formal education implemented in Senegal and in West Africa. Chaleard (1996) and Nyerere (1968) argue that failure to incorporate some aspects of traditional culture reduces the African youth's competences for local needs and prepares them to be merely operational in the formal economic system that serves the best interests of the former colonizers. Learning the former colonizer's values to the neglect of Senegalese values has managed to make many Senegalese adopt the French way of life and value the knowledge learned in the formal schools more than local knowledge (Wane, 2008). Traditional education was meant to maintain social cohesion

and build a strong personality and identity to children for the survival of the community as Durkheim (1956), argues:

> Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands. (p. 70).

Following Durkheim's argument, the loss of traditional education in Senegal will inevitably lead to a loss of these values and may result in an identity crisis for the African future generation.

Like the other regions of Africa, the Western part of the continent has a distinctive way of educating its people, particularly the young, which has been based mainly on the transmission of socio-professional aptitudes, skills and knowledge from generation to generation in order to perpetuate the social values of communities (Diame, 2011). Moumouni (1968) describes traditional education as an education dominated by the parents, family, tribes, and community. Education did not take place in classroom settings but were part of daily life. Traditional education was highly valued, and it was the key to adulthood.

At an early age the family initiates the child in dominant social values such as how to be a good member of the community. When the child reaches puberty, community members, chosen for their knowledge and skills, assured his/her education through some initiation ceremonies. The child also used to imitate and observe adult at work to learn occupational skills. This is how professional skills were transmitted within family lines through generations (Momouni, 1968). Education was thus geared toward acquisition of practical skills useful for the community and receiving a good education did not mean

changing social status but maintaining and reinforcing the current social order (Mbaye, 2004).

Considering the multitude of ethnic groups and communities present in the region, traditional education has been performed through different channels depending on the group's beliefs, social organization and values. However, such education systems share some commonalities, such as the paramount place of elders in the system. From birth, many Africans are immersed in a cultural setting that values the authority of elders and emphasizes practical knowledge. Elders embody wisdom and knowledge, as in Hampathe Ba's (1960) equation of the death of an elder African man to the burning down of a library.  Mazonde (2001) describes the role of elder women who entirely control the puberty initiation of girls. In his example of Tongaland, the initiation includes social, physiological, and moral education. The process includes teachings of healthy sex habits, the knowledge of procreation, the right and obligations of a woman within the community, self-discipline, and trial of courage. Older women also try to correct flaws noticed in a girl according to the traditions. Such practices may be positively viewed on the one hand as barrier to depravation but also negatively labeled as restriction to emancipation and disempowering women on the other hand.

In the southern part of Senegal, for instance, the most important part of the education process is performed through a two to three-month initiation period during which young people, generally boys, are gathered and hidden in sacred places of the forest and trained in different aspects of life. Training is the exclusive province of elders, who make sure younger generations know the history, secrets, values and skills of their

community so as to ensure their perpetuity (Mbaye, 2004). Such practice is also common in Mali, Guinée, Burkina Faso, Niger Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and other West African countries. The rite includes spiritual, physical, and social education. The age varies by country and community ranging from 6 years in Senegal to 35 years in Zambia (WHO, 2007)

## Role of community in traditional education

Before the advent of Christian missionaries and Arabs to Africa, there existed no schools of the type that we have today (Katola, 2014). However, pre-colonial African communities had an education system that was informal in nature. In that education system parents, grandparents and elder siblings spared no effort during the socialization process to bring up community members who perpetuated the values that helped the community to be integrated. These values include honesty, respect, obedience and generosity among others. The system bore similarities but each of the many ethnic groups had its own distinctive features reflecting its particular life and culture. The education system was designed to create an ideal individual who would fully fit into and be accepted by society (Katola, 2014). This shows the paramount role family and community play in this educational system.

Storytelling is also an important part of the traditional educational system. Full of moral values, storytelling, in addition to its entertainment and educative value, is an efficient way to denigrate flaws and vices and to encourage communal living, respect, humility, endurance, hardship, and other socially healthy values. In Senegalese stories, for example, the hare embodies the good example to follow, while the hyena is the anti-

hero as depicted in *Les Contes d'Amadou Coumba*, Birago Diop (1958). Nda (1984) describes storytelling as an educational tool that includes entertainment and exposes children to the society's way of life and beliefs. Most stories mirror the society and they value good behaviors while sanctioning evil ones so that children harmoniously integrate their community. In Senegal and most West African contexts, it is conducted at night with elders, mainly grandmothers, telling stories to a large group of children till they fall asleep. This socializing aspect of it is losing ground as in cities children prefer to watch TV or browse the Internet. Storytelling has helped fulfilled what Durkheim (1922) described as adults' role to perpetuate some customs that are crucial to the education and development of a community.

Through the family, too, children learn how to become responsible fathers and hard workers, or good wives. The skills learned through the family include cooking, dressing, and appropriate interaction within the community. This division of responsibility based on gender has also reduced women's opportunities and power within the society according to Western and many Africans' perspective.

Here the role of the educator lies not only with parents but also with the whole family and with neighbors. Full right is given to any member of a family or neighbors to correct, harshly if need be, children who are misbehaving (Mazonde, 2001). The journey from childhood to adulthood can be a hard and rich process through which the child learns how to become a responsible adult by acting according to the laws and guidelines of a specific community.

In the Senegalese community organization, mothers bear the whole responsibility for their children's socio-economic failure or success. The whole community put the entire blame on a mother whenever one of her children fails to find a job or, a "good" husband, or becomes a thief, prostitute, drug addict, etc., or simply fails an exam. On the other hand, it is her pride whenever one of her children succeeds in any field of life. For this reason, Senegalese mothers feel great responsibility and concern for the education of their children (DWP, 2009, Diame, 2011). Furthermore, most mothers are housewives and stay at home while the fathers are out for reasons related to work. Thus, mothers spend more time with their children at home and know their strengths and weaknesses, talents and flaws best, and can bring the appropriate improvement or remedy needed to tailor a good member of the community. Even in places like Dakar or other big cities where mothers go to work, it's up to the other women in the house such as grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and nieces to play the maternal role (Ba, 1981; Sow, 2003).

Unlike traditional Senegalese education, Western education is conducted differently and has different objectives. The role of elders and mothers' as educators has been transferred to younger, technically trained people who might come from different ethnic groups. The locations have shifted from houses and the bush to schools built on the Western model; the medium of teaching is no longer local languages and coded messages such as riddles and proverbs but French. Children are no longer educated to become responsible community members but to find a job other than farming in most cases. The contents of what is taught have thoroughly changed. Traditional values and socio-economic skills transmitted from fathers to sons, elders to youth, and mothers to children

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are replaced by general-knowledge teaching, specific knowledge such as mathematics, sciences, grammar, etc. and skilled knowledge based more on foreigners' culture, history and economics (Illich, 1971; Mazonde, 2010; Cuthbert, 2014;). The changes that accompany the Western educational system have had major impacts on different aspects of most West Africans' way life. Communities play a lesser role in the system, which has constituted of source of frustration and distance from the formal schools in Senegal (Wane, 2008).

## Social responsibilities and expectations

In this study, traditional culture is understood as traditional values, traditional moral principles, local practices, parents, and local community. With more than 20 ethnic groups, different religions and languages, talking about traditional culture in Senegal can be seen as a broad topic so I narrowed down to the Senegalese most common traditional values or principles of *Kersa* (decency), *Fulë* (self-respect), *Muñ* (endurance), and *Jom* (honor, pride, hard work). The focus on these values named in Wolof does not mean there is one common set of traditional values in such a multicultural country as Senegal, but these values have been identified as shared, used, and understood by the majority of Senegalese in urban and even rural areas. Another reason for the choice of these values is that the community (Thies Noon) where I collect ed data share these values. These terms convey a strong message when used by Senegalese in local languages and they can be motivators and sources of success if used appropriately. I will discuss, throughout this sub section, local community and family's expectations from children's education both formal and traditional and the responsibilities they place upon children.

This paper differentiates traditional, moral principles, values and traditional practices. Before elaborating on the importance to incorporate some African traditional values for a better educational system in Senegal and Africa one has to acknowledge not all African traditional practices are values and not all values are African traditional practices. Many traditional practices described as values are mostly a patriarchal discourse that has emanated from patriarchal and fundamental religious groups meant to subdue and demean women (Ba, 1981; Sow, 2003). According to Sow, "to fundamentalists, women symbolize ethnic and cultural purity, and their rights and status have been an enormous issue" (Sow, 2003, p.) in African countries like Senegal where Islam is the dominant religion. Such patriarchal and religious discourse born from the syncretism of Islam and some Senegalese traditions has even reduced the power and status of women who used to occupy greater medicinal, socio-political and economic responsibilities in their communities before the advent of Islam and Christianity (Ba, 1981; Sow, 2003).

The consequences of these practices and beliefs include early marriages and adolescents' pregnancies that affect negatively girls' education in Senegal and other parts of the world (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015). In Senegal, 12% of the girls get married by 15 and 33% by the age of 18, which inevitably result in school dropout because most women who marry are expected to devote themselves exclusively to their families, even if they are educated (Stringer, 1996; King, M. & Wintrop, R. 2015).

More generally, 30 million African girls are out of school or they have never attended school, or they have dropout as result of early marriage and pregnancy. Parents

also prefer to invest on boys' education because in some African traditions, Senegal included, girls may get married and dropout and even if they succeed it is not their responsibility to support their own parents but their in-laws. This practice, thus, contrary to what many may think, confers lots of responsibilities to girls and women as they are expected to support their husbands, children and in-laws (Johannes, 2010).

Considering that "educating girls increases women's wages, health productivity, and it also allows women in developing countries to gain access to rising job markets, thus, making them the main benefactors" (EFA Report, 2015) and the great responsibilities that the Senegalese society bestows on women, the educational authorities should explore some traditional values that could boost girls' enrolment, reduce their dropout and motivate them to perform better at school; then explores the ways which they can be smoothly incorporate in the current formal educational system for the benefits of students but also the whole country.

Senegal is among the 25 poorest countries in the world (WB, 2015) and the country does not have many natural resources, therefore it counts on its human, cultural and social capital and all hands and heads (men's and women's) are needed to achieve "development". There is a substantial literature dealing with early marriage, gender distribution of work and child labor as traditional practices within Senegalese and African communities and how they constitute obstacles to girls' and boys' education; however, this study focuses more on what local communities define, view and agree as positive traditional values that can improve education in general without causing great prejudices to individuals.

Many studies about education in Africa tend to show that traditions constitute a major obstacle to school fulfillment and intellectual development of many African learners. As discussed above, some of these studies have proven relevant and scientifically supported; however, other studies are based on generalization and stereotypical reflection made by some foreigners who do not understand the African social and cultural realities, and who do not take the necessary time to study it (Johannes, 2010). These studies underemphasize the fact that in Africa and particularly in Senegal, traditional values are very demanding in term of social success. As the Western school is perceived as a new avenue towards success, parents and society in general regularly remind the students that these values of *Jom, Kersa, Muɲ,* and *Fulë*, described above as shared and agreed upon by most Senegalese, should be used in all aspects of life and particularly in school. Each student does his/her best to succeed and honor his/her family in the neighborhood, village or city hoping one day to find a job and help his/her parents, family and to raise his/her own family later.

Beyond wishing to please their parents, families, and community; learners are haunted by the shame, the *kersa* of failure. In fact, exams (Entrée en Sixième, BFEM, BAC, universities) take place at the end of the year and the results are publicly released. The day of the results, the candidates come with their families, friends, and neighbors and the jury yells the results out loud to the public. The exams are selective in Senegal and, the success rate is very low, especially for high school examination where it is approximately 40% since 2000 (www.education.gouv.sn). Those who succeed are congratulated whereas those who failed are plunged into a big shame and sometimes they

receive remonstration from parents who often put the blame on them for not working very hard to succeed. The blame is also often put on the mothers. The publication of the results is an unforgettable burden for any student and the possible shame of failure haunts students and motivates them to work hard at schools this aspect of Western education that favors social competition, decried by Illich (1971) a consequence of the grade and degree system in formal schooling.

According to some Senegalese traditional beliefs, the success of a child depends on his/her mother. The Wolof saying *"liggèeyu ndey añu doom"* meaning a mother's deeds are reflected by her children's success or failure in life puts lots of responsibility to the mothers. However, the mother who sees her child fail may feel guilty towards the society and may have to bear gossip of other women at the same time she will take all the credit when they succeed. So, to avoid mothers in such a situation, children have to work hard to sit through the difficult exams. To avoid such a discomfort that accompanies failure during school exams and motivate them, parents and the whole family, supervise their children's schoolwork and constantly remind children about the values listed above to motivate them (DWP, 2009, Diame, 2011).

**<u>Western education effects on traditional education and values</u>**

This subsection discusses both positive and negative effects Western formal education has had on Senegalese and African traditional culture in general.

"*L'Ecole des Otages*" (The School of sons of Chiefs) as discussed above referred to the idea that the students were kept away from the chiefs and from their families, language and culture. One startling example of the formal school's run by colonial

administration was meant to assimilate the colonial population. This was a way to change their cultural ways of behaving and thinking. Later on, those students started to become the new local elites, the rest of the population became seduced by the Western style of education and Africans started to send their children to Western schools which has become a great pride, hope and success for parents and their children (Kinoti, 1984). Gradually, the pride gained through hard work on farms was replaced by degrees earned at school. The importance degrees have gained in the modern African society is discussed in many African novels. In *Double Yoke* (1982), Buchi Emecheta raises this issue of young African students who resort to unsavory means to earn their degrees. The example of the main character in the novel, Nko, who has an affair with a professor in order to get her degree, is sometimes cited by African traditionalists to criticize Western educational competition aspect which they accuse of being a source of depravity and loss of traditional values.

In fact, unfortunately, till now Western schools are perceived by some African traditionalists as being one of the main causes of current young Africans loss of moral and job issues. Girls are sharing the same schools, classrooms and even seats with boys, which according to some traditionalists, is a path to perversion leading to these (Emecheta, 1982; Ba, 1981). As for boys, they no longer want to work the farms, and every student is expecting that the authorities will provide them with jobs. This discourse may be a result of ignorance and distance between local people and formal schools in Africa or a patriarchal and fundamentalist religious rhetoric (Sow, 2003). In most of the cases, though, governments cannot satisfy the employment market and these young men,

often, opt to stay in the cities where they had come to continue their studies and do not return to work the land. Hence, the complaint of many African elders who see in Western education only the main cause of laziness (Diame, 2011; Ba, 1918; Dembele, 2003). [2]

As a matter of fact, formal schools are criticized as being centers of cultural alienation rather than a place of cultural affirmation. The result is some Africans who graduate from such educational system have come to look down upon most aspects of their culture including speaking their mother tongues (Kinoti, 1984).

However, one cannot deny some positive aspects of Western education on the current global scene. Africans, through this type of education, can now find within their populations all the competence they need to improve their agriculture, exploit and transform their own resources, understand international relations, fight for their rights, and work and walk towards development. Women are now participating in this process and thanks to their formal education they are reinforced in their role as educators and caregivers of children and youths, as Western education provides more knowledge about child care and reproductive health (Owusu-Opoku, 2000; EFA Report, 2015). In addition, being a good mother, formally educated women in Africa are now among the most

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[2] I recognize that the connection between the loss of traditional moral traditional values and girls' depravation is very reductionist here, and that the reality is far more nuanced than what is represented. Likewise, the intersection between westernization and the Africanization of gender may be reductionist in some other parts of this dissertation. I choose to do this as a way to demonstrate a need for Third Space to understand that western education is not only the negative perceptions some traditionalists have and that traditional values are not always as backward as they may be perceived. However, gender roles may at times be understood as a symbol of the difference between these two values.

respected, efficient, trustworthy, and fair political, economic, and social leaders the continent has experienced since independence.

Regardless of these positive benefits, it is still important that traditional values be included alongside Western-style education as Africans, and even the world in general, can only benefit from some aspects of traditional values. Going to Western schools should not mean one has to behave or dress like Westerners. Hard-work, dignity, and respect for elders are viewed mostly as great values which African youth have to learn and protect in order to show the rest of the world that they possess cultural pride and resiliency (Cuthbert, 2014).

Western-style education is also described as a major threat to African languages. It is conducted in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, the former colonizers' languages, to the neglect of Africans' local languages. Considering that language and culture are inseparable, learning through a foreign language leads to learning the culture it is a vehicle of; and being permanently exposed to a culture leads to an unconscious adoption of that culture (Negash, 2005). Some African leaders and elites can be examples of cultural assimilation, as they, culturally, are often far from ordinary Africans since they dress, speak, eat, and behave like westerners.   Western languages are now embedded in local African languages which are gradually becoming a mixture of French, English, Spanish, etc., and their mother tongue, which may result in the loss of many African languages and cultures alongside them. Negash Ghirmai (2005), in the same vein, argues that:

> "Indigenous African languages are largely eliminated and marginalized from use. Instead of investing in and using their linguistic, cultural, and human potential,

African governments and elite still continue to channel away their energy and resources into learning imperial languages whereas African languages could be the most critical element for Africa's survival and cultural, educational, and economic development. (p.7-8)

Despite the fact that the colonial educational system has marginalized local languages it still remains that the use of colonial languages has played a social regulatory role in some African countries with various languages. For example, in Senegal the use of French as a "neutral" is more easily accepted than the use of Wolof or any other local language as national language of instruction. It is not an easy task for political authorities to get various ethnic groups accept to use one local language over the others, particularly in public spheres.  However, it is high time African leaders contemplated introducing their local languages into the educational system for the sake of culture and identity preservation. Human beings are the "product of their education", as Negash (2005) says, so an ongoing Western education process will definitely lead to a westernization of young Africans. Therefore, the use of French as a language of instruction in Senegal may lead to an adoption of French values and ways of life while helping authorities to find a balance between the different local languages.

However, one cannot deny some positive aspects of Western education in West Africa. Countries like Nigeria with over 250 ethnic groups (www.cia.gov) would find it difficult to come up with one or even a few languages as the medium of education and the national official language. Therefore, the adoption of English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish, depending on who the colonizer was, has, in some West African countries been a social regulator for the prevention of ethnic or community misunderstandings and wars (Ushe, 2015). In addition, West African communities in general, are hierarchical, with a

caste system that denied some people the right to learn skills other than those assigned to their castes, social groups, or to mingle with other social groups or occupy certain positions of authority (Ba, 1981). Western education accepts any person, without considering their social, historical or cultural background. This is how one can find Muslims, Christians, Ibos, Hausa, Yoruba, etc., sharing the same schools and learning equally. Considering the permanent tension that exists between these different groups in Nigeria, Western education can serve as an alternative to overcome the ethnic friction that is undermining Nigeria and other African countries' socio-economic development (Emecheta, 1982, Achebe, 2012, Ushe, 2015). Thus, such education can not only be a factor in national identity and nation-state building, but can also allow anyone to gain knowledge, dignity, money and respect.

Furthermore, women, who as shown above actually occupy a paramount role in educating children in the traditional way, are enjoying more diverse opportunities thanks to Western education. African women are more and more empowered, and some stereotypes related to the occupations they should or should not take are ceding the ground to the modern-committed women who are as efficient as men in most parts of life (Owusu-Opoku, 2000).

Owusu-Opoku (2000) argues that when females are educated a nation is more likely to reach development at a faster pace as educating girls and women contributes to lower birth rates, improves family nutrition, increases life expectancy, and increases economic gains for the family and for the nation in general. However, though some traditional practices, which are viewed as patriarchal and sexist, should be adapted to the

modern, global world, they should first be understood, because none of them was meant to undervalue African women; then the reform process should be handled carefully and wisely, to avoid any frustration and allow every single African, man or woman, to benefit from whatever is good in the foreign ways and values (Diame, 2011; Sow, 2003; Ba, 1981). The paper discusses the need and challenges for a "hybrid" education that will combine good aspects from both types of education.

This won't be an easy task considering the complexity and controversy of some traditions. Still with a bottom up debate about the issue, involving the different socio-cultural layers of a specific community, people will agree at least on a set of traditions worth being kept and perpetuated, other that need to be adapted, and others that need to be buried.

On the other hand, Western education could have benefited from traditional education in the efforts to efficiently push West African countries towards development, if such education is really meant to do so. Actually, Western education, as argued by Locraft Lauren (2003, p.22) in his paper, has an overt and a covert mission. If the overt one is to provide with tools for development, the hidden part of it is to maintain a domination and hegemony. School as an institution was used as a means to disseminate western values throughout the French colonies.

Traditional education was "structured by the people and it was relevant to the needs of the society it prevailed then. Such education was based on the values and traditional systems of societies" (Mazonde, 2001). The Western education introduced in Africa with colonization has undermined the traditional value system and created social

classes that did not exist before its advent. Western values replaced traditional ones, and, in the process, traditional African education was relegated to the margins (Mazonde, 2001). To preserve traditional values in Africa there is a need to revisit traditional education and incorporate some aspects of it in the currently dominant formal education system.

## **Attempts to promote cultural values and local community in the formal educational system in Senegal and Africa and a plea for compromise**

This section discusses some attempts to incorporate local communities and traditional values and knowledge in the educational system in Senegal and Africa through reforms, policies, and curriculum changes. Then, drawing on existing literature, this section argues a necessity to find a compromise between different types of education and a more socio-culturally and economically relevant education. Finally, the section explores some existing literature on the rationale, benefits and examples of educational systems that combine formal education and local knowledge, community, and values. This section outlines also the existing and potential challenges and barriers to such a hybrid project.

### **History of reforms in the Senegalese formal educational system**

The history of the Senegalese educational system has been significantly marked by colonization. During the pre-colonial period, the social organization of the country was based on castes and ethnic communities. The transmission of knowledge, competence and socio-professional aptitudes was performed within families and socio-cultural groups. Even today we can find in Senegal some particular families or ethnic groups that retain the monopoly of skills and/or knowledge in making some particular

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tools, instruments, or to traditionally cure specific diseases, just to name a few. This socio-professional classification has resulted in the system of social castes in Senegal. For example, the "*griots*" make and beat the drums and some families cure snakebites, others treat malaria, and so on so forth. Such knowledge has been transmitted from parents to children and can rarely be acquired (Momouni, 1968, Cuthbert, 2014) by one who is a stranger to the particular social group. Socio-cultural and traditional values they are transmitted through an initiation system which can differ in performance from one community to another, but they have the same objectives of building up socio-professional aptitudes.

In addition, we have the gradual implantation of Koranic schools that started right after the introduction of Islam in the 10th through 11th centuries. Religious teaching/learning was the main means of conversion. Later on, with the expansion and consolidation of colonialism, a clash was inevitable, not between Western education and traditional education or between traditional education and *Koranic*/religious models, but between the two foreign "imposed" ones. The colonial authorities saw in these *Koranic* schools an obstacle to the expansion of French schools. Despite a tough resistance of the former, the French Western model of education managed to overtake the religious one in terms of geographic spread and population reached by the middle of the 20th century as discussed by Ndiaye (2010) in his article "Les Réformes de l'Éducation au Sénégal"**.** He argues that the colonial school has been considered disconnected from the social, religious, and community realities of Senegal. Therefore, communities that still cling more to traditional values in Senegal are reluctant to send their children to formal

schools, which has still affected the formal educational system progress towards EFA (Ndiaye, 2010).

In 1960 when the country got its independence from France, secularism was the motto of the educational authorities, and objectives set by the authorities, such as universal education, were taking shape with a rapid progress in terms of enrollment rate and infrastructure until 1980. African authorities made the vow to reach universal primary school by 1980 at the conference on African education in Addis Abeba, 1961 (Mazonde, 2001). Meantime in May 1968, the educational system was the target of a worldwide social movement that challenged existing hierarchy and curriculum at all levels of the educational system, especially in France. Senegal experienced an echo of post 1968-French educational reforms, culminating in 1981 in the *États Généraux de l'Éducation* et de la Formation (the National Consultation on Education and Training) which set up the basis of what is called *l'École Nouvelle* (the New School) with its main objectives being the integration of communities and social diversity (Ndiaye, 2010). The state started to increase the educational budget, and the new national fund for education was created to facilitate the financing of education by giving back part of the enterprises' taxes to the educational sector.

However, this project was hit by the consequences of Structural Adjustment Programs of the mid-1980s. The government was forced to reduce educational expenses, stop training and recruiting professional teachers, and cut back any social support to schools, families, and communities in order to get loans from the international financial institutions as required in the SAPs (Kapoor, 2011**).** In Senegal, this period also marked

the birth of *volontaires* and *vacataires,* a new type of teachers who are not trained and who are paid less. They have been positively affecting the educational system by filling the gap of insufficient teachers. But they have also had a negative impact because some of them are sufficiently trained, and due to their now large numbers they very often paralyze the educational system with many strikes demanding better pay**.** The consequences of the influx of undertrained teachers have created an unprecedented crisis in the educational system in Senegal, which is characterized by a huge decrease of the students' level, selective exams, and strikes from teachers and students (Dembele, 2003).

Two other major dates mark the history of education between 1960 and 1980. In 1972, a law was voted (loi 72-36) to change the educational objectives as set by the colonizers to a new orientation the main objective of which being to form a genuinely Senegalese citizen. This law was meant to adapt education to the local communities and focus on and integrate local realities into the curriculum (Ndiaye, 2010). Such laws and measures were also undertaken at a national level, to depart more from the educational system left by the former colonizers in Africa. However, on the ground little to nothing was done to bring an actual change by authorities, most probably because such changes require deep studies and financial means.

The second major date was in 1979 with a law meant to restructure the teaching programs and to base school and teaching on the Senegalese realities. This law is organizing the school structure that is still governing the elaboration of national curricula (Ndiaye, 2010). Though the curriculum lays more and more emphasis on local realities,

still very important socio-cultural aspects of the country are ignored and/or threatened as the thesis discusses.

Before these major challenges, the Senegalese government partnered with international development institutions, such as UNESCO, to set up the P.D.E.F. (Decennial Program for Education and Training) in 1998/1999. This new plan brought some positive changes towards the 1990 Jomtien goals: Education For All. After the 2000 education forum in Dakar, Senegal, the PDEF shifted from a decennial program to a longer-term development program for education and training (www.education.gouv.sn). This program has three main components: access, quality, and management that govern the current educational system in Senegal.  As stated in the PDEF document (2000), the main principles of program are liberalization, participation, partnership, and decentralization. These principles are meant to bring communities and partners closer to the school milieu for the benefit of the country in general. As stated in this program and argued throughout this study, local community involvement is critical for a better educational system and an increased incorporation of traditional values could be an incentive for local communities to involve more in formal schools' activities.

As clearly stated in the PDEF (2000), access has been a top priority and has gained lots of progress since the implementation of the program. This improvement has been facilitated by the recruitment of many "cheap" teachers, the *volontaires* for primary schools and *vacataires* for middle/high ones. Thanks to the PDEF, 330 schools have been built in rural areas and 216 schools in urban areas between 2003 and 2009 (PDEF, 2010). As stated in the PDEF, the Education de Base project, which is part of the program, aims

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to increase the partnership between the public and private sector in order to increase the long-term financing of education and to support the NGOs that are working to reduce the dropout and failure rate in Senegal.

Non-formal education and literacy started to gain more ground in the educational sector with the creation of the ministry of basic education and national languages. In their efforts to meet one of the EFA goals of increasing by 50% adult literacy, the Senegalese educational authorities implemented some literacy program in collaboration Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank targeting the out of school population. The World Bank literacy programs enrolled 190,000 participants over 5-year period, 87% of whom were women. According to Nordtveit (2004), these literacy programs among others have helped out of school children and adults who did not have a chance to attend school, learn some reading and writing skills, particularly in the last three decades. As Nordtveit (2004) argues in the same paper that such programs channeled through public private partnership may play an important role in harmonizing local and global discourses on education.

The reform process has been occurring since the country's independence and has brought many changes in the integration of local realities; but still some find it slow and ignoring the basis of the Senegalese traditional heritage such as values, local languages and rituals which may be lost in the long term.

**Traditional values and local communities in the Curriculum**

Educational thinkers have defined curriculum variously. According to Kelly (1999), curriculum is viewed as a "syllabus which may limit the planning of teachers to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit or a list of the subjects to be taught or both" (p. 83); Dewey (1902) described "Curriculum is a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies . . . the various studies . . . are themselves experience, they are that of the race. "(pp. 11–12). Similarly, Bobbitt (1918) defined it as "the entire range of experiences, both directed and undirected, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual." (p. 43); Caswell & Campbell (1935) described curriculum as a combination of "all the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers. Thus, curriculum considered as a field of study represents no strictly limited body of content, but rather a process or procedure. "(pp. 66, 70). Despite some differences in the way they are formulated, all these definitions acknowledge the power curriculum holds in the educational process of children through formal schooling. Unlike literacy, education should strengthen positive local values for every child. I will discuss below the place of traditional values and local community in curriculum in Senegal and Africa in general and different attempts that have been made to increase their incorporation.

Curriculum has been designed and implemented differently in West Africa depending on the former colonizer and the local socio-political aspects. Curriculum can be defined as what is to be taught and learned within school in a specific topic. Since its

main objective was to make sure that the teaching/learning process is leading to the desired learning outcomes (Obanya, 1995), the colonial system made sure to design curriculum in a way to reach the desired effects. In Senegal, people from Dakar, Goree, St Louis, and Rufisque, known as the four communes, were considered French and could benefit from the Western education as discussed earlier. The programs then were meant to assimilate and "civilize" those people as well as provide the colonial administration with educated auxiliaries. On the other hand, as Michael Crowder (1962) describes the majority of Senegalese living in different areas of the country were kept as taxpayers, obedient subjects and a source of labor and military services. Most of the people outside of the four communes could not benefit from the Western education. During the colonial period, curricula in West Africa were tailored to fit the need of the colonizers and the best illustrations of this are the language of instruction, which were all European languages, and the actual content and materials in the curriculum which are very similar to the former colonizers.

After independence, newly born African countries copied most of former colonizers political, economic and social institutions, education included. Senegal is a startling example of this approach of limiting the former colonizer's institutions, especially in the judicial sector institutions as well as the educational approach and programs. The first main educational reform happened in 1972, twelve years after independence (Ndiaye, 2010).

The curriculum described as the document that governs pedagogical orientations, including details on what is to be taught and how to teach in order to compose citizens of

given society, should be more adapted to local realities to escape the ongoing domination

and hegemony of former colonizers (UNESCO, 1995). Although sporadic changes have

been made since independence to incorporate more local aspects in curricula and

accommodate education to West African realities, still a recent survey shows that:

> Instruction is in French, at the primary level, and 100% of the time in the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The only exception is Guinea where instruction is 95% in French. In the Anglophone countries, the picture is different (Nigeria: 70%, Sierra Leone 45%, Liberia 25%, The Gambia 25%), mainly because the early years of primary education in these countries involve instruction in the various national languages. (UNESCO, 1995, p. 18).

In Senegal local languages are mainly taught to out of school people including mainly

women who did not have a chance to attend formal schools through some literacy

programs, and also to some students who major in Linguistics or languages at the university

level.

One of the main characteristics of formal education in Africa is the use of foreign

languages as media of instruction. Despite some advantages such as a high level of

achievement among marginalized groups and minorities, the use of foreign language in

the educational system has highly undermined the performance level of students and it

also constitute a threat to local languages (Mazonde, 2001). In 2005 Senegal's Ministry

of Education started to experiment with the introduction of national languages in 400

primary schools throughout Senegal (Walfadjril, Feb. 2011). This was probably an effort

by the government to implement one of the main recommendations of the 1981 national

consultation on education and training which was to give greater prominence to local

languages in schools but also in officials' circles such as administration and parliament

where French remained the only language use (Cavicchiomi and Eriksson, 1991). Even

though the children who went under that experimentation made good results during end

of primary school exams (Entrée en sixième and CFEE), the Minister of Education

described it as a failure, during his speech at the 2011 International Day of Mother

tongues, because many parents decided to retrieve their children from such class. He

acknowledged first the importance of local languages in the development process and the

benefits of starting children's schooling through mother tongues, however, according to

him, parents did not adhere to that initiative due to lack of information. He also sees in

the big number of codified local languages (6 in 2000 and 19 in 2011) an obstacle to a

successful implementation of such project. The project is now suspended for deeper

studies (Walfadjril, Feb. 2011). Similarly, UNESCO (2005) argued that the biggest

barriers to education remain the use of foreign languages in the teaching/learning process.

Following UNESCO's steps, the Dakar Framework for Action (2000):

> Recognizes the need to tailor primary education to reach those belonging to ethnic
> minorities to make education contextually located and locally accessible. Learners
> who understand the language they are instructed in are more likely to engage
> meaningfully with content, question what they do not understand and even enjoy the
> challenge of new things. (p. 8)

However, as discussed by Mazonde (2001), the use of mother tongues has been

facing many challenges and resistance sometimes even from the parents. Resistance

stems from various sources including beliefs that African languages cannot deal with

scientific concepts; that there is a big lack of materials and trained teachers to implement

it, refusal to learn through a new language as seen by most parents as a form a second-

class education. All these reasons combined make it unsuccessful and still at the

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experimental stage the attempts to teach in local languages particularly in Francophone West Africa.

Some great efforts are being done to adapt the whole educational system to the local West African realities. Recently, in September 2010 experts from 39 countries gathered in Kinshasa to discuss curriculum reforms and how to adapt them to the local realities (RTS1, 2010). In Senegal the *case des touts petits* (small children's hut) initiated by the president Wade in 2000 is an example of attempts that have been made to incorporate more local knowledge, local community and values in the educational system. However, there is also a need to find a balance, what Bahba calls a Third Space, between local knowledge and values and knowledge coming from elsewhere. Curriculum should also promote the use of culturally relevant materials and knowledge. Finally, teachers and school staff also must be trained to implement such curriculum (Mazonde, 2001). Overall, changes in framing curriculum for and by Africans have been quite slow. One might argue that it's because the subject has a small political and economic dimension for the West.

### Plea for compromise: Rationale, benefits, and challenges

The relationship between traditional education and modern education seems to be at a statu quo. There are not many studies that explore the relevance, benefits, and challenges of combining the two types of education. Instead, most studies focus on their differences and existing tensions between traditional and modern education as well as their practices and philosophies (Momouni, 1968; Semali, 1997; Diallo, 2003). In this paper, I argue that in this globalization era people consciously or unconsciously shift

from one from their culture to different culture in their daily life activities therefore it should be possible break this dichotomization and opposition of traditional and modern/Western education. In this section I discuss the need and benefits of a compromise, a Third Space, a hybrid system as Babha (1994) calls it, between traditional education in the current modern education in Senegal and Africa. This section also discusses the rationale and benefits of such a hybrid educational model, some models of educational systems and curriculum that combine the two systems before discussing the potential and existing challenges and barriers to such a project.

> At present our pupils learn to despise even their own parents because they are old-fashioned and ignorant; there is nothing in our existing educational system which suggests to the pupil that he [she] can learn important things about farming from his [her] elders. The result is that the [she] absorbs beliefs about witchcraft before he [she] goes to school but does not learn the properties of local grasses; he [she] absorbs the taboos from his [her] family but does not learn the methods of making nutritious traditional foods. And from school he [she] acquires knowledge unrelated to agricultural life. He [she] gets the worst of both systems!

-Julius Nyerere, first president of Tanzania. (Semali & Ami, 1997, p.1)

As discussed in this quote, there is an ongoing shift of focus and objectives in the way African learners are being taught through Western education.  In West Africa today, "modern" education - the formal, Western-style educational system currently in place -, is associated with Western thought and is perceived by Western-oriented educators as better than indigenous knowledge, which is typically associated with folk knowledge and hence considered "inferior" as discussed by Ladislaus Semali and Amy Stambach (1997) and Diame (2011). However, there is no doubt that every single community in the world, no matter how different it might seem, has acquired valuable knowledge that helps it

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survive. As such indigenous traditional knowledge and practices should be included in western pedagogical practices to make up valuable and skilled human resources that can ensure an adequate and relevant local development argued the same authors. Education and culture being closely linked and interrelated, the former be it modern or traditional, western type or indigenous, should consider cultural diversity and pluralism of knowledge to promote "welfare, civic and social advancement, the progress of democracy and respect of human rights, the building of peace…" (Wals and Corcoran, 2012, p. 427) and also train individuals, both men and women, to take full part in the development of their society while keeping alive essential values (UNESCO, 2000, Diame, 2011).

Modernity as opposed to tradition is considered as a major driver to development through urbanization, industrialization, capitalism, and secularization (Barker, 2005, p 444) and therefore, it should be implemented in poor countries to foster development. However, as it is perceived and implemented in West Africa it contributes to widening the gap between youth and elders in many rural African contexts, and, as Semali and Amy (1997) argue, it "perpetuates a false perception that modernization is a unidirectional process" (p.16). Western education is undeniably the main vehicle of Western "modern" culture. Therefore, some traditionalists who totally disagree with some forms and aspects of modernity promoting children's rights, inciting rural exodus, and favoring change of behaviors, might be reticent to bring their kids to schools, and if nothing is done to set this misunderstanding straight West Africa will never reach the Education For All (EFA) goal that the countries of the world committed to achieve in

Jomtien Thailand in 1990. Most Western educational curricula, as they are currently

developed and implemented, divide "indigenous" knowledge from "modern" knowledge.

Programs focus most on French literature, history, geography, and literature. Some of the

results are that young Africans, who have been educated through the Western model

since early childhood, dress like Westerners, eat and drink like Westerners, think like

Westerners, and behave like Westerners which most of the time creates

misunderstandings between different age groups (Semali and Amy, 1997; Diame, 2011).

Imported education based on imported programs and curricula according to

Semali and Amy (1997) "fails to teach students about the unique cultural patterns by

which people develop and advance their social worlds and ignores the ways in which –

modern - cultural beliefs and practices drawn from indigenous ways of life." According

to these authors, this shows the ongoing hegemony and engineered practices used by

some Western socio-political systems to maintain dominance over the former colonies

and the Third World countries in general. Education can only be relevant if it provides

individuals with the intellectual tools, moral values, and skills needed to cope with the

changing world situation imposed by globalization.

Classroom knowledge and curricula should be tailored to suit African students'

socio-cultural context to maximize its success.  Bahba's hybrid model which describes as

"a critical element in research relating to the postcolonial condition that reserves the

effects of colonial disavowal so that denied knowledges enter upon the dominant

discourse and undermine the authority of that discourse" (Kanu, 2007, p. 68) could be

explored for alternatives educational system with a hybrid or multilayered identities as a

characteristic of the African's postcolonial education (Kanu, 2007; Diame, 2011).

Traditional values of hard work, endurance, dignity, and modesty, just to name a few, which are common to most of West African countries, can only be beneficial in the process of raising up a responsible citizen appropriately prepared to face any life situation, good and bad, hard and sweet (Kanu, 2007). Many advocators for a greater Africanization of the curriculum or culturally relevant pedagogy stress its potential positive effects on the students learning performances.

The example of multicultural education in the US has demonstrated a higher success level on standardized tests and improved learning outcomes for students (Ladson-Billing, 1995; Sarr, 2014). Similarly, Gay (2010) argues that in states in the US where minimum cultural content has been implemented, students have improved their learning performances, self-confidence and engagement with subject matter.

Considering the high rate of failure at national exams and dropout in Senegal, the educational authorities and scholars should explore areas such as culturally relevant pedagogy and approaches as potential solutions to these educational issues.  Such pedagogy or curriculum should not be "isolationist (i.e., not singularly Africanist) in these intermeshed global environments, but minimally starts with an appreciation of Africa's ways of thinking, knowing and doing" (Abdi, 2013, p. 80), but a synthesis, border crossing (Giroux, 1992), a Third Space, a hybrid form of education appropriate for people locally first then globally. All these educational perspectives are similar to the holistic, experiential and collective learning discussed above and they can contribute significantly to improve the educational system in Senegal and Africa as argued in this

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paper. However, many indigenous scholars are skeptical to the possibility and argue the relevance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and values in the formal schooling copied from the Western models. According to Nakata (2007) such combination is impossible and problematic. Such concerns are worth being explored to anticipate any blockage to such compromise. Below, I will discuss some examples of models of education that try to combine formal and traditional education then challenges and barriers to this enterprise.

## Cases of implementation

The colonial educational system has managed to overtake other forms of education in West Africa. However, since independence, there has been a desire and great efforts made by local authorities and some elites to include indigenous knowledge and practices in the system (Ndiaye, 2010). More recently, UNESCO has joined the battle for insertion of African values and knowledge into the teaching of African children. Through the African Regional Framework of Action, which took place in Dakar, UNESCO calls for "community involvement in school-decision making and administration; employment of teachers in their own community of origin; curriculum reform toward locally relevant subjects; use of mother tongue as the language of instruction; the use of schools as community learning centers" (UNESCO, 2000). However, the program called for was limited to younger children, from birth to age eight.

In her article "*Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practice into ECCE,*" (2009), Alicia Soudee provides three relevant examples of integrating cultural traditions in the education of young children in three different West African countries: Senegal,

Mali, and the Gambia. In the case of Senegal, President Abdoulaye Wade announced, during the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, the idea of a *case des tout-petits* or "children's hut." The program started in 2004; in partnership with UNESCO and other partners, the National Agency for Children's Hut (Agence National de la Case des Tous-Petits; ANCTP) has built up many *cases* throughout the country, particularly in rural areas. This type of school is close but different to pre-school as it is less formal, and it does not depend on the ministry of education. It focuses more on local realities.

The building is designed in a hexagonal form with a mother's room and kitchen; a diagonal bar structured from the ground to the roof symbolizes a rooting in the local culture and reaching out to others (ANCTP, 2007). In addition to the architectural design, which is based on local pattern, the *cases* provide schooling, health and nutrition, and community education, which focuses on children from birth to age six, and their parents as well (http: //www.case-toutpetit.sn). The program focuses on accessibility and integration of traditional culture with modern pedagogical tools. Through stories and songs provided with the assistance of volunteer grandmothers, the program works to value and perpetuate local cultural heritage. Children are also initiated in modern technologies like computers. However, with 95% of the population Muslim; religion is embedded in the Senegalese traditional values and culture and many parents prefer to send their children to *Koranic schools* at an early age so that they learn the basics of their religion (Diame, 2011).

In Mali, with a similar education system to Senegal (both are former French colonies), education is based on the French system and the language of instruction is

French. However, unlike in Senegal, local languages are used in early primary schools. Mali also has a strong program to integrate indigenous knowledge and practices in children's schooling. The "*clos d'enfants*" (children's circles) project initiated in 1997 by a women's association, *Jiguiya*, in collaboration with UNESCO provides a "safe, clean environment to socialize and learn," to 15 children per *clos* under the supervision of volunteer mother-educators (Soudee, 2009). The latter are recruited locally, trained to provide knowledge of health, and hygiene, and great importance is given to local knowledge and practices too. The project, as described by Soudee, is a community based as local people choose the different actors involved and the distribution of closes through request from communities.

The Gambia is culturally very close to Senegal and Mali as well, because they share borders and have many ethnic groups and languages in common; but as a former British colony the educational system is based on the British model and English is the language of instruction. There is not a specific program like in Senegal and Mali, but a study done by Sagnia (2004) has shown how the Madinka, Fula, Wolof and Joola communities have already integrated local values, knowledge, and practices in the education of their children. Toys and grandmothers' stories have proven to be beneficial to children's emotional and intellectual growth. Unlike in the Malian and Senegalese examples, this example by Sagnia is more informal and generally performed at home. In his conclusion Sagnia suggests further integration of indigenous practices such as toys, songs, dances and stories in the formal education system to perpetuate traditional knowledge and ensure an efficient education system.

The three examples described above show alternatives means of implementation and incorporation of two different but complementary methods and approaches to education and are more broadly discussed in my Master thesis. However, these three examples are limited to young children, and psychologists and psychoanalysts describe the teenage years as a crucial stage in the formation of a person's personality. Teenagers frequent middle/high school in Senegal and West Africa in general; hence this project's focus on these schools to study the relevancy and benefits of incorporating socio-traditional values and local communities on students' school performance and the education system in general (Diame, 2011).

## Barriers and challenges

Educational policies and curriculum changes or reforms have always been subjects to opposition from different educational stakeholders. There have been many attempts to incorporate traditional education and values in the formal schooling in Senegal and throughout Africa; most of them were unsuccessful or not even implemented at all. There are many barriers and challenges to such projects including local resistance, funding, socio-political instability, teaching quality and adapted infrastructure (Obanya, 1995; Semali, 1999; Sarr, 2014).

Inefficient educational policies in this field are also a major challenge to the integration of some aspects of traditional values in the Western based formal education. This is mostly due to donors' contingencies and unwillingness to finance such projects as well as lack of research in the field of incorporating traditional values and education in formal schooling. As discussed by Semali (1999), the cost of research and

implementation of educational reforms of such scale is beyond the affordability of economically poor countries in Africa. Donors are now more willing to fund curriculum reforms on subjects that target development objectives such as AIDS and environmental studies African-centered curriculum (Brocke-Utne, 2000, Sarr, 2014).

Additionally, some local educational experts are against such reforms   because of their alignment to the global culture of education, the internalization of development discourse, and the results of hegemonic Western knowledge. They argue that with the current global trend Africa should not demark from the global culture of education for fear of slowing down the walk toward development (Escobar, 1995; Wane, 2008; Sarr, 2014). Beside some educational experts, some local communities in Africa are against integration of local knowledge and values in the formal schooling. Competition between various ethnic groups one may find in a locality as well as the fear of community elders' fear to lose their prerogatives and prominent place that traditional education and values grant them constitute also a major obstacle. Moreover, some community are also reluctant to share knowledge and values outside of the ritual channel for fear of losing the sacredness and the effects they are expected to have on children (Semali, 1999; Wane, 2008; Sarr, 2014).

Overall, there are and there will be resistance as there is resistance to most project that require changes in attitudes and practices. Both modern and traditional education need to make room to reach this compromise. However, the focus should be on what can be gained from a combination of both education and values. To be successful, such a

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project should be handled subtlety and with patience. There is a need for great sensitizing an awareness raising to see the success of such a project.

## <u>Conclusion</u>

The current formal educational system in Senegal is totally different in setting and implementation from the traditional one. The range of content is diverse and depends on the different levels of the school system. People have different views, understandings, and suggestions about the curricula and programs. Though formally few to no courses are teaching about local values depending on the schools and their understanding of traditional values, the Senegalese social structure, which gives adults, parents, and elders a crucial place in the education of children, means teachers and school administrators sometimes informally play the role of traditional educators at school. Traditional values including moral principles and local cultural practices occupy an important place in the everyday life of the Senegalese. From the running of the family house to the government of the state, the Senegalese refers to them to promote fairness, hard work, dignity, decency, respect, etc. For the particular case of education some people think that traditional values are integrated in the curricula whereas others argue that they are not integrated or not enough and that they should be more incorporated for the benefit of education in general. To better assess the place and role of traditional values in the Senegalese educational system, I will draw on data collected from different participants and analyze them further in this study.

As discussed earlier there is a high rate of drop-out and school failure in Senegal, particularly in middle/high schools, which needs rapid and efficient solutions if the

authorities want to value the 40% part of the national budget investment in education. Most of the time traditional values are considered tremendous obstacles to the education of children in Senegal and in Africa in general. In further studies I will investigate, among other themes and solutions to school failure, the effects that the integration of traditional values might have on children's school performances.

Parents and community elders have played a major role as educators in the traditional African society and in Senegal in particular. With the advent of colonization, and the introduction of Western-style education, the responsibility of educating youth has partially shifted from the parents and elders to formal schools. It first went to Western teachers, through missionary schools, and then gradually to local people who have been trained according to European concepts (Ndiaye, 2010). However, the institutionalization of Western educational system has not entirely succeeded. I conducted research to assess the actual discourse on local traditional values, the role and place of community in formal schools, and the effects and benefits they may have on the overall education system in Senegal.

The next chapter discusses the methods used to conduct research and collect data regarding traditional values and local community engagement in formal schools in Senegal.

# CHAPTER III

## METHODOLOGY

The study followed a qualitative design drawing from critical ethnography and auto-ethnography methods. The research examined traditional values and the local community in relation to the formal school system, for cultural description and interpretation (Geertz, 1975). In October 2017 to July 2018, I regained my position as a secondary school language teacher (in French and English) in the region of Thies. As I was teaching and residing in the community, I used critical auto ethnography methods to frame my account of the story as a participant observer who was actively integrating local traditional values and practices along with the local community members in formal schools in Senegal. I collected qualitative data through observations and information gathered in the selected community and at middle/high school. At the analysis stage, I drew on translation theories to demonstrate how traditional values are translated into the formal school system, and critical discourse analysis to demonstrate the production and consumption of discourses relevant to school and tradition.

In the next section, I will explain my personal background relevant to this study as well as further clarify the research design, the sampling and data collection and analysis methods that guided my study.

### Research design

The following paragraphs describe the ethnographic, critical ethnographic and auto ethnographic methods and their relevance to the study. Ethnography is the "in-depth study of naturally occurring behavior within a culture or social group. It seeks to

understand the relationship between culture and behavior; with culture refers to the beliefs, values, and attitudes of a specific group of people" (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, 2013, p.490). Anthropologists immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study, using primarily extended observation and occasionally in-depth interviewing to gain clarification and more detailed information. Spindler and Hammond (2000) describe some of the characteristics of good ethnography: (1) extended participant observation; (2) long duration at the site; (3) collection of large volumes of materials such as notes, artifacts, audio, and videotapes; and (4) openness, which means having no specific hypotheses or even highly specific categories for observation at the start of the study.

I collected qualitative data through observations of classrooms and teaching activities, local community members' daily activities, images and practices in the community. Additionally, I conducted interviews and focus groups with key educational stakeholders and community members for valuable input. Finally, I critically reflected on my past current experience. To better assess the relevance, implications, and challenges of integrating traditional values in the formal teaching practices, while in the field, I first collected information and suggestions regarding this issue. Then, I integrated some local traditional values in my teaching before I critically reflect on the issue. The proposed study aligns with these characteristics of ethnographic design as I will demonstrate more specifically below.

**Critical ethnography**

As I am trying to uncover covert hegemonic practices left by the colonizers through formal education and promote integration of traditional values and local community in

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formal schools, I find that critical ethnography is the most appropriate methodology for

this research inquiry. I employed a critical approach through taking an advocacy

perspective and purpose (Dunbar, 2009). This type of ethnography helps address

concerns of control, power, domination, and marginalization. It also enables the

researcher to study the issues of inequity, empowerment, and victimization. The

approach can give a marginalized group of people power and more authority (Crotty,

1998; Dunbar, 2009). According to Crotty (1998), critical inquiry goes beyond simply

seeking to understand a culture. Ethnography "unmasks hegemony and address[es]

oppressive forces" calling for societal transformation (p. 12). Furthermore, according to

Madison (2009)

> the critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances,
> disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted
> assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of
> power and control. Therefore, the critical ethnographer ... moves from
> "what is" to "what could be. (P.6).

Additionally, the researcher feels a moral obligation to contribute toward changing

specific lived conditions toward greater freedom and equity (Madison, 2009). Given

these characteristics of the method, I chose it as my main research approach because it

aligns more with my positionality as participant observer and my assumptions.

Critical ethnographers identify and celebrate their biases in research. They recognize

that all research is value laden. Critical ethnographers challenge the status quo and ask

why it is so. Moreover, critical researchers seek to connect the meaning of a situation to

broader structures of social power and control. Critical researchers also seek to create a

literal dialogue with the participants they are studying (Crotty, 1998; Dunbar, 2009). I

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also choose the method due to the freedom it provides in the field to collect data on the participants' lived experiences. Critical ethnographic approach was employed in order to gather detailed information of the participants using a critical lens (Dunbar, 2009). To me, the method is the most appropriate approach for this inquiry because it offers the best means to capture the personal experiences. In this study, the critical ethnography approach was theoretically framed with post colonialism, postmodernism, cultural relevance, and post structuralism.

## Critical Auto ethnography

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) auto ethnography is part of the qualitative research methods influenced by postmodernism, post structuralism, feminism, and post-colonial theories to draw attention to the complexities embedded in the research process. The method relies on the postmodern ontological position that the nature of reality is local, co-constructed, and that truths cannot be known with any certainty. Grounded in a post structural position, it narrates a complex story about the power of "discourse over the human imagination" (Holt, 2003, p. 24).

Ellis and Bocher (2000) define the method as a variety of genres that combine ethnography and autobiography. Accordingly, auto ethnography, according to Ellis and Bochner (2000), is "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural." (p. 739). In addition, they describe the method as a means for the researcher to fit in "the spaces between subjectivity and objectivity, passion and intellect, and autobiography and culture" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 761). Furthermore, auto ethnography offers a more

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engaging, holistic, integrative and authentic picture of human existence through critical

introspection, description, and analysis of a self. Therefore, the researcher becomes a

subject who observe, self-reflects and self-questions the ethnographic study of

him/herself (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Buripakdi, 2013).

Since auto ethnography is a radical reaction to realist agendas in ethnography which

"privilege the research over the subject and maintain commitments to outmoded

conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability" (Denzin, 1992, p. 20), I find it

necessary to include the method in the proposed study to support the critical ethnography

method that I was using as the foundation. Moreover, including auto ethnography

allowed me to integrate my personal, political, and professional input while bearing in

mind that I am not omniscient, and I do not claim ownership of the truth or reality

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Buripakdi, 2013).

Buripakdi (2013) describes the richness of auto ethnographic texts:

> variety of forms such as personal essays, poetry, short stories, journals,
> stream of consciousness, detailed unstructured interview narratives and
> other forms of fragmented writing, inspire readers to reflect critically upon
> their own life experience, their constructions of self, and their interactions
> with others within socio-historical contexts. (p.72).

I was mostly using my journal and short stories including storytelling used in the

community to illustrate the issue of values, to critically explore and describe the issue of

community members' discourse of traditional values within the community and their

translation in formal schools in Senegal. Additionally, my choice of the auto

ethnographic lens is also motivated by a need to incorporate the abductive approach. This

approach defined by Mangaliso (2019) as a theory building which requires a clear

understanding of the activities, language, and meaning of social actors, and discourages the imposition external frames of reference onto the research subject.

However, like any research method, many specialists also denounce auto ethnography. The use of self as the only source of data has been questioned and criticized for lacking validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and for being too self-indulgent, introspective and narcissistic (Coffey, 1999). In addition, auto ethnographic writing is criticized as sentimental, unscientific, and the product of the excesses of postmodernism (Duncan, 2004). Despite these criticisms, I believe that the method entails many research aspects that can help collect valuable data to answer the questions raised.

This study was guided by the two methods described above. I spent the academic year (November 2017 to July 2018) in the community to conduct in-depth research of what Geertz (1975) calls a "thick description" of the cultural traditions of the community with a focus on traditional local values as related to formal schooling. My main research techniques were participant observation as well as interviews and focus groups with key informants in the community and the school in order to capture from the perspectives of the respondents. Additionally, I collected data through document analysis, my reflective auto-ethnographic field notes, and journals.

## Research methods

In addition to the classes I was teaching, I observed five teachers in their classes all semester long. I interviewed these five teachers, one headmaster, two supervisors, 10 parents or caregivers (five men and five women) of students, four (two men and two women) community leaders, one political authority and two educational authorities.

Additionally, I collected data through two focus groups of five students each. I visited these students' families, interview their parents, and collect data through observation of their houses and their activities and way of life activities.

To assess the implications and challenges of integrating traditional values and local knowledge in the formal teachings, I divided my fieldwork into three phases. First, during the first semester of the academic year (November 2017/Mid-February 2018), I consulted with the community members, teachers, and students on how to integrate traditional values in formal schools and which ones to integrate. Then, during the second semester (March 2018 to June 2018), I incorporated some aspects of traditional values in my teachings through materials (texts, images, and audios) and assignments. High school language teachers in Senegal may pick materials and assignments they find relevant to reach their learning goal and objectives.

Additionally, language teachers in Senegal are currently trained through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach which promotes the use of local contexts to develop learners' communicative skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading). Therefore, implementing such approach aligns with the teaching/learning requirements in Senegal and it did not affect or change the students' learning environment. In the last phase coinciding with the end of school year, I drew mostly on my journal and field work notes to critically reflect on the implications and challenges based on my own experience integrating such cultural element in my formal teachings.

This section discusses the different methods that used to conduct research including participant observations, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and

other data and information collection. I also discussed the selection method, data analysis, limitations and ethical concerns.

## Participant observations

Participant observation is based on living among the people under study for a lengthy period and gathering data through continuous involvement in their lives and activities. As a full-time teacher, I was living in this community and I was teaching in the middle/high school during almost the whole school year (November to July 2018), for four days a week.

Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, (2012) describe participant observation as "both the most natural and the most challenging of qualitative data collection…p.75". In addition to immersing oneself and participating in a given community's daily life activities, one of the main challenges of the participant observer is "fulfilling the role of researcher— taking notes; recording voices, sounds, and images; and asking questions that are designed to uncover the meaning behind the behaviors" (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2012, p.75). Other challenges reside in gaining confidence and rapport with the respondents and to the community in general. The ethnographer should start the process with observations focusing on general and open-ended data gathering to learn the most basic cultural rules and aspects of the community to test the meaningfulness and practicality of the research objectives.

The ethnographer begins systematic observation and keeps daily field notes, in which the significant events of each day are recorded along with informants' interpretations. Field notes is crucial to the process (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2012).

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., and Shaw, L. L. (2011) further describe ethnographic field notes as "accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner." (p.5). The same authors argue that it is not only passively jotting down facts and events, but the process involves also an active process of making sense of social discourses, both verbal and nonverbal. For the proposed study, in addition to the field notes, I was recording and taking illustrative images during some socio-cultural events. To support the critical auto ethnography part of the study, I kept a journal of my daily activities. Considering my position regarding some aspects of traditional values in formal school and to critically explore and analyze the community's discourse, I did not only look for positive discourse and implications of traditional values but, also, negative ones in order to counter my pro-traditional values bias. My follow up questions will also be balanced accordingly.

**Classroom Observations**

I spent most of the whole school year (October 2017 to July 2018) living in the community. I visited the middle/high school at least four days a week as required by my teaching schedule. I choose middle/high schools because the students are teenagers at a crucial age of building their identity. At this age, students in formal schools are exposed to various types of knowledge and information and they are more critical of things they learn, see and hear. They get information through courses and social media and begin to develop a strong understanding of phenomena. My own teaching experience of having taught over six years in middle/high schools support these assertions and I personally believe that it is the most relevant educational and developmental stage to conduct the

proposed study exploring the relationships between traditional practices and formal schooling.

Every week, I conducted one classroom observation in each of the five selected teachers' classroom. During these periods, I was a "complete observer" (Creswell, 2003, p. 186) and respect the classroom sessions and minimize disturbance. I was looking specifically for the frequency and purpose of the use of traditional values by students and teachers during teaching sessions. I also looked for physical evidence of the presence of traditional values in the classrooms and the schools as well as parents and caregivers' visits to the school. Additionally, I tried to identify the implications of the usage in the teaching/learning process and ascertain the need and possibilities to increase the usage of traditional values. If applicable, I also identified where their integration may be reduced.

I recorded in my notebook any use or reference to values, local languages, and culture by the teacher or the students during interactions. I also looked at materials used during the teaching sessions, and I observed classroom decorations as well as clothing, seating and interactions between students to have a better idea of formal and informal discourse regarding local traditional culture including values in the classrooms. At the end of the classes, I sometimes followed up by asking clarifying questions to the teacher and some students as needed.

### Interviews

Interviews are defined as "a conversation with a purpose" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108). They can be an informal conversation or formal discussions, planned and guided by standardized open-ended and close-ended questions. Informal interviews can

be improvised, and they can take place during other activities, while formal interviews are often planned and recorded (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Sarr 2014). Interviews present many advantages as they allow the researcher to reformulate questions when need be and probe for more details as well as reading body language and other non-verbal cues of the respondents. However, the researcher needs good communication skills to guide the conversation in order to collect the information needed without frustrating participants (Mbaye, 2004). In the study, the interviews were based on a protocol I developed as a participant observant and my arguments regarding traditional values might cause throughout the data collection process. I made sure to develop a balanced set of questions that helped me draw various inputs regarding the issue (see interview protocol on annexes).

One of the primary methods to collect data was interviews along with participant observations. I mainly used open-ended questions to "elicit views and opinions from participants" (Creswell, 2008, p. 186) and a few close-ended questions to numerically present the data before analyzing the participants' responses and other qualitative data collected. I used interview protocols with close-ended questions about participants' discourses related to traditional values and local practices in the chosen community and the school, including but not limited to power dynamic, controversies, perceptions, and implications regarding these socio-cultural concepts, followed by semi structured open-ended questions to probe participants' input to the issues raised in the literature review.

One of the most important parts of my fieldwork was be semi-structured interviews, with open ended and close-ended questions. I conducted interviews with 25

people: five teachers, one headmaster, two supervisors, 10 parents or caregivers (five

men and five women) of students, four (two men and two women) community leaders,

one political authority and two educational authorities (see below table of interviews and

focus group breakdown and sampling section**)**.

Most interviews were conducted in French and Wolof to make sure participants

understand the questions and feel at ease to elaborate on their answers. Interviews with

teachers and school administrators was conducted mostly in French. However, I followed

the lead of my participants to make them more comfortable. Meaning that if they spoke

Wolof, I would too, even though they are teachers or administrators. I transcribed all the

responses and other data collected in French then English then I coded all the data using

NVivo software before I analyzed them. I then translated for readers when writing the

findings. I conducted most interviews on a one-on-one basis using primarily open-ended

questions and close-ended questions to collect qualitative data. Each interview took

approximately one hour.

In my final report, I kept the quotes in both French and English because I find it

important for readers to see the actual utterances of the respondents as suggested by

Rossman and Marshall (2011). I also kept many words and phrases in Wolof throughout

the text to align more with the hypothesis of inclusion of local values and knowledge and

to remind the readers I often collected data in local language.

## Focus groups

Focus groups, as defined by Nielsen (1997), are group discussions that bring together people to discuss specific themes facilitated by a moderator. Marshall and Rossman (2011) described focus group as an informal group discussion with as few as four people and those selected should share some commonalities relevant to the study.

Focus groups are also described as an efficient means to collect information from children and get them engage spontaneously in a contradictory discussion which allow the researcher to observe and learn from group dynamics (Mbaye, 2004, Marshall & Rossman, 2011, Sarr, 2014). Additionally, focus groups allow the researchers direct contact with the participants. The method also enables the researcher to directly observe participants and interview many of them at the same time. Focus groups can also be challenging if the researcher is not trained and/or prepared accordingly. For example, it may be difficult to keep the group focused on the issue, maintain mutual respect and allow each participant the opportunity to give their opinion (Nielsen, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Sarr, 2014).

With these considerations, I conducted two focus groups of students (five participants each). I met with the students at three different times during the proposed study, at the beginning of the fieldwork, in the middle of the study, and during the final days of the fieldwork. The first meeting enabled me to introduce myself to the children, to get to know them, and describe the study and main concepts in order to create a safe environment, trustworthiness and confidence. During the second discussion, I elaborated based on the protocol. During the final meeting, I probed where need be and follow up on

main questions to look for consistencies and/or contradictions. Each discussion lasted

approximately one hour.   I used a protocol to conduct the focus group discussions (see

Annex 2). I used MP3 audio recorder to record the discussions for back up when needed.

My questions were related to attitudes, understanding, use of local traditional values in

the community and at school as well as community involvement in schooling. The

technique is time saving and can help me collect diverse perspectives. I also probed

participants' views to maximize the information I intended to collect and better

understand the rationale behind answers they provided.

**Table 1: Breakdown of participants**

|  | *Interviews* | *Focus groups* | *Male* | *Female* | *Participants* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Students** | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| **Parents/caregivers** | 10 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| **Teachers** | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| **School principal** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **School administration** | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **Community elders/leaders** | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| **Educational experts/researchers** | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Political authorities** | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total** | 24 | 2 | 18 | 17 | 35 |

**Documents and other information collection**

Due to lack of updated websites and availability of information through official electronic channels, I also visited the Ministry of Education, other schools, authorities at school district level, etc. in order to collect data relevant to my study. In terms of documents, I relied on historical, demographic and administrative documents from the school, political authorities within the community and the Senegalese Ministry of Education to strengthen the qualitative analysis. These documents helped me gather crucial demographic information about the community and the school. I looked for information about the place of cultural values and the local community, in books, curricula, laws, and relevant studies by local researchers in the field of education. I also looked for information about student attendance, national/internal exams records, and demographic information about students and teachers. Moreover, the documents and information collected particularly in the schools and school districts provided an idea of the presence and involvement of parents and local communities at school as well as their participation in different school activities.

**Sampling**

Sampling is a crucial process to collecting valid and reliable data. The choice of participants should be motivated by the researcher's will to collect valid data to analyze and draw reliable conclusions. Sampling in qualitative research focuses on the context and the perspectives of participants because the approach is not concerned with generalization, but with the individual's point of view. One of the goals of the researcher is to analyze how people understand a phenomenon, and to develop a pattern of meaning

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(Creswell, 2003). Similarly, Gay and Airasian (2000, p. 139) argue that "Qualitative researchers choose participants whom they judge to be thoughtful and who have information, perspectives, and experiences related to the topic of research." I applied a purposeful sampling method for the interviews, and I selected participants with knowledge and valuable input related to the issue: Participants included school administrators (headmaster and supervisors), teachers, parents within and outside the Students' Parents Association (*Association de Parent d'élèves;* APE), students, and community leaders to conduct in-depth interviews. I chose 35 participants, including interviewees and focus groups respondents, as an effort to involve the whole community in this study and to maximize the diversity of input to make the most valuable and reliable conclusions.

With the help of colleagues to whom I explained the research project, I recruited teachers on a voluntary basis. For diversity concerns, I tried to select younger and older teachers as well as teachers originating from inside and from outside the community. When possible, I also sought gender balance. I used a similar process for school administrators' selection. With the assistance of the principal and the president of the APE, I targeted students from different socio-cultural backgrounds (trying to include different ethnic groups and socio-economic contexts), gender, grade levels, and home villages.  I also interviewed parents of the selected children. Ideally, at least two of the parents interviewed were also members of the APE. As for community leaders, I selected some of them from the community where the school is located (the research site) and the remaining will be selected from other villages (as many students live in surrounding

villages). Their knowledge of local history and values in addition to their title of traditional community leader informed selection. Educational experts and political authorities were selected based on their availability and knowledge of the issues. This selection process was facilitated by the fact that I was a language teacher in the city for many years, and I already know some of teachers and school administrators. In these ways, I used purposive sampling to maximize data collection on socio-cultural, gender and geographic variations in how community members and education stakeholders perceive traditional values and schooling. Diversifying as much as possible my choice of participants may result in findings that speak the different socio-economic layers of the community and provide a more holistic view of the discourses of cultural values and their integration into formal schooling.

I chose to conduct my research in such a culturally rich rural community, to have a broader picture of participants' perceptions and attitudes. Even though the goal of this study is not to generalize the findings, I picked this community and socio-cultural hub in order to reach a broader range of audiences to gather more data. Additionally, I was teaching in the middle/high school of the selected community.

To answer the specific question related to implications and challenges of integrating traditional values in formal teachings, I, first, discussed it with participants and collected their suggestions regarding which values to integrate and how to integrate them. Then, I implemented it in my teachings before reflecting on this experience through a critical auto ethnographic lens.

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**Data analysis**

The interview questions included the major research questions (See Annex of one Interview Protocol). I used the raw data (responses collected and observations notes) to answer the questions raised.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) define qualitative data analysis as 'the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation of the mass of collected data... it is the search for a general statement about relationships among categories of data' (p. 150).

I analyzed data collected based on the six following steps identified by Marshall and Rossman (1999). First, I organized the data through transcription of interviews, focus groups, observations, and field notes and arrange the information chronologically by community. Secondly, I identified themes, patterns, and categories. I used both inductive and deductive analysis to generate themes, patterns and categories since some of them emerged from the data and others are already suggested in the literature review and research questions. Then I code the data collected using Nvivo software as I describe below. Coding is the "process of sorting, categorizing, grouping, and regrouping data into piles or chunks that are meaningful" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 271). In the fourth step, I evaluated the data collected and analyze their relevance to the research questions as well as their accuracy and validity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Mbaye, 2004).

Still following Marshall and Rossman's (1999), in the fifth step, I presented participants' inputs and perspectives and my understanding and explanation of the data collected based on my experience, existing literature and socio-cultural background of the

communities and respondents. Finally, I wrote down my analysis and the findings and provide recommendations.

Considering the different methods of data collection, I used triangulation to make better inference and provide accuracy for the findings. To seek convergence and divergence of information collected from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents; I used triangulation data analysis technique (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mbaye, 2004). Subsequently, I identified and summarized categories into main themes related to the research questions including participants' views, perceptions and understanding of traditional values and local cultural practices, respondents' attitudes towards their integration in formal schools, local communities' involvement in formal schools' activities, and the existing and potential benefits and challenges.

Since the proposed design is a critical ethnography, I found it necessary to provide the reader with clear information about my identity, assumptions, bias, motivations, experience, boundaries, the perspective of the study, and sensitivities (see personal background to the study above). Though I advocate for integration of some aspects of traditional values in formal schooling, my aim, in the analysis of the raw data, is to provide the reader with thick description on the research topic. Such transparency and intellectual integrity will provide the reader with more room for his/her own interpretation and promoting better understanding of the logic behind this study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Bearing this in mind, I also looked for contradictory information throughout the data collection and analysis process. I chose to conduct my

research in such a culturally rich rural community, to have a broader picture of participants' perceptions and attitudes.

The findings that result from analysis was based on respondents' answers to my interviews, my own experience as a teacher in the selected school, document review, participant observation field notes, and images. I conducted my field work from November 2017 to July 2018 in Senegal. Swinton and Mowat (2006) describe analysis as a process by which data are broken down and "thematized" in a manner that brought out the meaning within the text. Based on this assertion, I analyzed the data I collected based on themes related to the research questions. Thus, I used an integrative analysis method. I used NVivo software to code all the data collected. The responses collected was transcribed in French first then coded in NVivo. Data was organized into nodes to facilitate the search for patterns, similarities, and contradictions during the analytical process. As appropriate, I also quantified some data, for example, some questions in the interview protocol refer to the frequency of parents' visits to schools contained response categories including "often", "very often", "rarely" etc.

**Lenses of analysis: Discourse analysis and translation theory**

To answer the questions raised in this proposed study, I analyzed the data collected mostly through the lenses of discourse analysis including discourse theory and critical discourse analysis and translation theory.

## Discourse analysis

I understand discourse analysis as "the idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domain of social life. Discourse analysis is the analysis of these patterns" (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.1). In the context of this proposed study, for example, values such as *Jom* (honor) is a fact but as soon as people start to ascribe a meaning to it, according to Jorgenson, it becomes discourse. This relates to the study's exploration of discourse of traditional values. Power, ideology, knowledge, and socio-cultural facts often accompany the concept of discourse. The concept includes not only written texts but also visual and spoken texts. Discourse analysis examines how power relations, gender, identities, socio-cultural aspects, and knowledge are constructed through spoken language and visual images (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002).

Laclau and Mouffe' s discourse theory argues that all social phenomena can be analyzed using discourse analytical tools because the social should be understood as a discursive construction. Drawing from Laclau and Mouffe, Jorgenson and Phillips (2002) also argues that "the meaning we attach to words is not inherent in them but a result of social conventions whereby we connect certain meanings with certain sounds" (P.10). Therefore; it can change according to context.  Laclau and Mouffe believe in the post structuralist idea that discourse constructs the social world and that due the changing nature of language, discourse is constantly changing through contact with other discourses. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments

in different social domains. The aim of critical discourse analysis is to shed light on the linguistic discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002). Both discourse analysis approaches are relevant to the proposed study as they provide different tools to analyze discourses and power relations between them, as well as the production and consumption of discourses. As discussed by Jorgenson and Phillips (2002) the primary aim of the discourse analyst is "to work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality." P.21.

**Translation theory**

In addition to the discourse analysis approaches, the study also drew on translation theory to analyze data regarding the ways in which traditional values are translated into the formal school setting in Senegal. Formal schooling in Senegal is inherited from the colonial times and is still similar to the French educational system in terms of content and teaching techniques and thereby vehicle French values and practices. Therefore, if traditional values have to be integrated, questions such as how to implement it, by whom, and when, are worth being investigated.

Shamma (2009) describes translation theory as "an effort to provide an overview of the theories of translation, with special focus on the application of translation for breaking cultural barriers" (189). According to him, translation theory includes also knowledge translation which makes it relevant to the proposed study. Furthermore, post-colonial translation theory examines intercultural encounters in contexts marked by

unequal power relations. Post-colonial translation theorists emphasize the role of power in the production and reception of translation (Shamma, 2009). Maria Tymoczko (2000), for example, finds postcolonial theories of translation a means of providing "an exit from the textualized world of French criticism and a return to practical experience, particularly when the practical experience can make compelling appeals for engagement and action, as can the situation of people struggling with disadvantaged positions" (p.32). The questions of engagement, action, and struggle are, therefore, central to the approach.

Besides, the major accomplishment of postcolonial studies has been their exploration of the symbiotic connection between language and culture in the colonial context. Postcolonial translation studies have contributed significantly to translation theory, not only through their investigation of actual (post)colonial interactions, but also as a mode of analysis that could illustrate crucial issues of identity, difference, and power (Shamma, 2009). Considering the colonial aspects of formal school in Senegal, this analytic approach can help better contextualize, understand, and analyze data I collected. Additionally, according to the sociolinguistic approach to translation theory, the social context defines what is and is not translatable and what is or is not acceptable through selection our own sociocultural background is present in everything we translate (Ndia, 1979). Adding to that the functionalist approach to language and its social functions, I find translation theory a relevant lens to analyze and draw valuable conclusions regarding the ways in which cultural elements such as traditional values and local practices are/should be "translated" into formal schools' curricula.

## Ethical concerns

As required by the University of Massachusetts, I submitted paperwork to the University of Massachusetts' Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to conduct my field work. To the best of my ability, I made sure that the interviewees participate in the interviews at a time most convenient for them and at a location that minimizes their discomfort. I chose, in conjunction with the participants' preferences, the location for the interview, so as to avoid or reduce any discomfort. The decision for location depended on where the interviewee felt comfortable, based on social and cultural considerations. Most parents and community leaders were interviewed at their houses whereas teachers, students, and school administrators met with me at the school.

In accordance to the ethical procedures, during my research I informed participants about the general nature of the research, their roles in the study, and their rights to withdraw anytime during the research process. I also told them their right to ask questions about the research.

For ethical concerns, I had my respondents accept consent or assent forms, through digitally audio recording their acceptance (many of the interviewees may be illiterate and cannot sign the forms). For confidentiality concerns, I coded the interviewees by letters and I also coded the place they occurred. All the data was stored in my laptop computer which is password protected.

The study involved children between 11 and 17 years of age. As required by the ethical procedures, I requested parental consent in addition to children's assent. There is a slight risk that interviewees could be identified by others through specific information

mentioned in interviews. To minimize this potential breach of confidentiality, I omitted many geographic and other specific information that could lead to identification of the interviewee. In addition, I transcribed interviews from my digital recording and notes onto my password protected encrypted laptop and destroyed original paper copies of interview notes. I did not record the names of the interviewees at any point. Although theft or loss is always possible, these precautions should minimize risk. To minimize intrusion and disturbance, during my classroom observations I sat at the back of the class to take notes.

## Limitations

The choice of middle/high school is one aspect of the limitations of the study, as it might have been more ideal to explore all educational levels. I justify this selection because the failure rate is higher in these educational stages and children are aged between 11 and 20. This makes them an interesting group to study, as it is an age when they are building their identities and acquiring a sense of responsibility that will determine many aspects of the rest of their lives.

Another limitation aspect is the choice of one community, Thies, which has some different socio-cultural aspects compared to other communities in Senegal; especially the ones located in the southern and eastern part of Senegal. However, the aim of this study is not to generalize the findings but to contribute to the existing knowledge regarding formal education and local values and practices.

# Background and positionality

As discussed by Creswell (2008) and Rossman & Rallis (2003), it is hard for a qualitative researcher to demark from a research project because the analysis of data collected is influenced by our assumptions, background, identity, sensitivities, and biases. Considering that the choice of my research project is motivated by academic and personal reasons, my fieldwork, data analysis, and interpretations as well as my insider's perspective through the autoethnographic lens may be biased by my background as a Senegalese who has lived, studied and taught both in Senegal and in the U.S. and specifically in the region where the study is conducted. Therefore, in this section, I disclose some aspects of my biography and experience that may have influenced my choice of this topic and my insiders/outsiders' perspective regarding this study.

As a Senegalese born who received a formal education and lived both in rural areas and bigger cities in Senegal, I have experienced the weights and enjoyments of traditional education as well as formal education. As I child, I lived in an extended modest family with fifteen persons including my parents who are illiterate. Other members included my siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, but especially my two late grandparents who have participated in my education, acquisition of local knowledge, practices, and local history.

My grandmother was very good at telling us about the history of the family and the village. I remember she would proudly tell us, children, then, about the Sheikh title and the hardworking farmer attributes of her father and how respected the man was in the community. She would always remind us to live by the value of *Fulë* and *jom*, to be

proud, and not to tarnish the reputation of the family. Besides, she was a skillful storyteller. We would run all her errands during the day, so she told us a story in the evening. She was good at dramatizing stories and making them look real. She also used the moral lessons of the stories to correct our misbehaviors during the day.

My grandfather who was mostly living in the capital city, Dakar, used to come to the village during the rainy seasons and take us to the farm fields. In his last years, I was the only one accompanying him to the fields. During the four kilometers walk to the farm fields, he would patiently tell me about the nature we passed by. He knew the medical attributes of trees, dangerous wild animals, and the farming techniques and gladly shared with me his knowledge and memories. My mother, despite her disability, worked hard to build a house for her children.

My father, who used to come home during weekends as he worked in a different city, always rigidly reminded us to suffice with what we have, to stay home with family, and to study hard. Thus, during my elementary and middle school years, I was navigating between this rural family life and formal schools where I spent most of my time. Though different from life at home, I enjoyed school and I used to receive good grades as well. In Senegal, as one passes national exams and advances in their studies, the family starts to be proud of you and puts hopes on you thereby putting pressure on you as well.

Growing in such an environment was a great source of motivation and responsibility. Sometimes I felt too much pressure to help the family, and I had to suspend my university studies, which I enjoyed, and started teaching so I can support my family. Luckily, I was posted close by the university and I could pursue my studies while

teaching. This experience sometimes affected my confidence and performances during my first years of graduate studies in U.S. universities. I discovered that in U.S. campuses oral participation, presentations, debates, eye contact, and conferences are very important, and they contribute a great deal to a student's grades and success.

Though the values I acquired growing in Senegal may have participated in my academic resilience, hard work, discipline, and focus during my graduate studies in the U.S., they may also have slowed my social and cultural immersion and adaptation. These effects of the double edge nature that Senegalese values have had on me and many other Senegalese were one reason for me to study the relevance of incorporating the teaching of Senegalese values in formal schools and give a chance to students to discuss their positive and negative aspects. In addition to discussing Senegalese traditional values, this study explores also how the formal educational system may be more culturally relevant through teaching some aspects of traditional values. The fact that I first learned about the *kal*, Senegalese joking kinship, in the U.S. from an American who studied the phenomenon in Senegal also motivated me to plea for more culturally relevant education in Senegal and throughout the world. Though I understand and use this value, I learned a lot about this practice through reading his articles on religious syncretism and joking kinship in Senegal (Galvan, 2006).

In the U.S., I have discovered many different values some of which are similar to some Senegalese values whereas others contradict the ones I grew with. For example, gender and age dynamics are very different in the two countries. A discourse or attitude can be described as very patriarchal in the U.S. and perceived as too feminists in Senegal.

They each may present different or contradicting arguments to show their respect for women and seniors. I have realized how countries could learn from each other in terms of cultural practices. As I have always been curious about cultural differences even between ethnic groups in Senegal, I developed an interest in cross-cultural understanding and I took a couple of cultural studies classes. Additionally, as I have also taught languages (French and Wolof) during my graduate studies in the U.S., I have always incorporated some cultural aspects from Francophone countries and Wolof communities in my lessons to develop the learners' cultural competence and help them also break some stereotypes and prejudices. I believe that if one take time to understand why others act or behave differently, one may become more open-minded and tolerant. These mixed academic and socio-cultural experiences and factors have influenced many of my choices in life and have motivated my interest in this particular research.

On the other hand, I recognize that my status as a Ph.D. student from the U.S. and senior high school teacher in Senegal may have facilitated my posting in a school of my choice. Besides, it has contributed to my smooth connections with the community and the school, and the "unexpected" availability and respectful engagement from most participants in the study (Senegalese are notorious for coming late to appointments or skipping them, particularly when it is about research). Moreover, my previous teaching experience in the region where I also grew up and lived and my fluency in Wolof made it easy for me to ask relevant questions, understand coded answers, read body language, and understand the local practices. I, therefore, could easily probe to request more

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information and encourage respondents to provide critical perspectives on local values and practices.

Though I promised them nothing, I could see that the principal, heads of APE and AMER, and teachers seemed happy to host such a guest teacher/researcher for more visibility of the school and expecting more connections and support. I could also see some nervousness during my observations of English teachers. However, being aware of my position of privilege and power beforehand, helped me to anticipate and mitigate disturbance and to be more attentive regarding participants' rights and comfort during the study as UMass Institutional Review Board requires.

## Conclusion

People have different views, understandings, and suggestions about the curricula and programs in Senegal. Though formally few to no courses are teaching about local values; teachers and school administrators sometimes informally play the role of traditional educators at school. Traditional values occupy an important place in the everyday life of the Senegalese. From the running of the family house to the government of the state, the Senegalese refers to them to promote fairness, hard work, dignity, decency, respect, etc. However, I find it important to elucidate the ways in which community members understand and use traditional values before any further action regarding their integration in formal schooling and impact is taken. To better assess the discourses, implications, and challenges of incorporating traditional values and local community members in the Senegalese educational system. I drew on data collected from

different participants, my observations, and my past and current experiences to analyze

and describe the issue before providing recommendations based on the findings.

My choice of critical ethnography and auto ethnography is motivated by my

knowledge and experience in the formal educational system in Senegal but, also, because

I find the methods the two methods most appropriate to collect, from a critical standpoint,

substantial relevant data that can help answer my research questions.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CASE

The village that the school is named after belongs to the *Serrer Noons* ethnic group. The *Serrers Noons* are found in edge of the eastern, western, and northern part of the city of Thies and are known for founding the city. For many reasons including ethnocentric, cultural, and agricultural reasons they since moved their villages to the edges of Thies to preserve their culture and continue their farming activities. There are currently a couple of *Serrer Noons* neighborhoods which are gradually merging in the melting pot city of Thies. Despite the growing contact with the other groups in Thies, the *Serrer Noons* have conserved a rich cultural background including the ritual dance of *Mbilim* (a dance and song festival organized occasionally in the community to celebrate or give thanks), traditional doctors, divination ceremonies.

The public middle school that hosted this study is located at the western entrance of the city of Thies. The school faces the traditional *Serrer* village of Thies *Noons* which constitutes the main community of this study. It hosts and gives its name to the school. The school is also surrounded by three other neighborhoods all of them in the westernmost city of Thies. SAPCO is another *Serrer Noons* community. According to documents and responses collected from participants (particularly community leaders), the other neighborhood, Azur, is an extension of the city of Thies located in where used to be the Thies *Noons* farmland. This neighborhood host people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Since lands building lots were not expensive in this area and because it is close and accessible to the center of Thies, it quickly became a favorite place for people

originally from other regions of Senegal working in Thies who were looking for a place to settle. Now it has become a residential area because of its quietness and accessibility to Dakar via the main national road. This place is an ethnically mixed community with Diolas, Mankagnes and other ethnic groups from the south but also Wolofs who dominate the area Western Senegal because their language serves as lingua-franca in Senegal.

The last community is Daral Peuls, a small Peul village. Peuls are known to be nomadic shepherds spread throughout West Africa under different names such as Fula, Hausa, Fulbe, etc. They move throughout Senegal from the North following green pastures for their cattle. They cling to a strong traditional culture and they live most of the time at the edge of bigger cities. They are historically bound to the Serrers and they are Joking kin or *kal* one of the main concepts discussed later. The social and historical relationships between the two ethnic groups are detailed below. The study involves the four neighborhoods described here with a particular focus on the *Serrers Noons* community. The following sections present the historical background of the city of Thies and the community of *Serrers Noons* because the two are historically and culturally inseparable.

### Thies: Historical and demographic background information

Thies is 70 kilometers to the east of Dakar, the capital city of Senegal going East. The city was created from scratch by the French colonial system in 1855 to serve as a strategic point for the railway system linking Dakar to other parts of Senegal and Mali. However, the region was already home the *Serrer Noons* that inhabited in several small villages 10 kilometers from the new city. Those villages surround the current city of

Thies. A couple of them, Janxeen and Jung, are now within the city whereas others such as Thies Noons are being reached by the growing city of Thies.

The information about the history of the city are drawn from historical documents consulted and interviews (Savonnet, 1955; ANSD, 2015). With the extension of the railways and the city being its headquarters, people started moving in from other regions of the country to find jobs, for commerce, and for other socio-economic factors. Since then, the city has become a multi-ethnic community surrounded by the traditional *Serrer Noons* villages and Peuls villages. The extension of the railways from Thies to Kayes, Mali in 1907 by the colonizers, contributed to the growth of the region of Thies which became a commercial hub also due to its rich soil and its bountiful seas. The growth of the city, however, and the development of military camps by the colonial system further depleted the *Serrers Noons* of many of their farms. In addition, their interactions with other cultures increased at this time which began to affect some aspects of the traditional conservative Serrers' way of life and beliefs.

The city of Thies now counts approximately 400,000 inhabitants according to official estimations in (ANSD, 2017). The city is currently the third largest city in Senegal in terms of population and second in terms of infrastructure and economy. Famous historical and contemporary political, social, and religious including union leaders are from the city or the greater Thies region. Some of these figures are referred by many people as the embodiment of the Senegalese traditional values as discussed later in the paper.

**The Serrer Noons**

According to the colonial archives at IFAN, Wane (2007) and other historical documents, the *Serrer Noons* were by far the most dominant group in the region before the establishment of the French garrison in 1865 (IFAN, 1955, Wane, 2007). After the advent of the railways and its expansion in 1885, many Wolofs, who were the main collaborators and workforce of the colonial system, started to move to the growing city. The new geographic configuration hugely impacted the *Serrer Noons* cultural tradition and activities. Many villages were relocated and depleted of their farms. With the increasing need for labor in the city, the shorter rainy seasons, and the reduction of farming lands, the *Serrer Noons* started to embrace new jobs and thereby opened up to different activities and culture. However, according to some responses collected for this study, the *Noons* continue to remain primarily farmers because many consider it as part of their cultural identity.

The *Serrer Noons* are slightly different in names and culture from other *Serrer Noons* located in the eastern and southern parts of Thies (Wane, 2007). According to Wane (2007), in 2007 there were 32,900 *Serrer Noons* who could speak the language. However, socio-linguistic studies conducted by Wane showed a significant decrease in the number of *Noons* speakers.

The Serrer *Noons* is a subgroup of the bigger Serrer group including Serrers from the Sine, Baol, and Joal areas of Senegal. According to oral history and other written historical documents, the Serrer are originated from Egypt. They moved down to the Senegal river in northern Senegal where they found the Pulaars. They lived there till the

11th century. With the advent of Islam in the region, the *Serrers* refused to convert to Islam and they broke down into smaller groups to move further south within of Senegal to safer places where they could keep their traditional religion and practices. This is how they came to lose the unity of the community. As a result, slightly different languages developed, and, in the end, the majority converted to Islam and Christianism, however; they maintain their same traditional culture. It is said that the joking kinship between them and *Pulaars* was born from their cohabitation during that earlier period (Encyclopédie d′Outremer Tome 2, 1959; Ciss 2001; Gravand 1983; Ndiaye, 1991, Wane, 2007;). Now many *Serrers* live in families with a combination of Christian and Muslim believers.

In the 17th century, the Serrers who settled in the region of Thies after they left the north, set up a Serrer state called the *Saafi* or Noon state. The current *Noons* community is a subgroup of the *Noons* state. The word Noon is a Wolof term, meaning enemy, used by the Wolof to qualify this Serrer community in the 19th century. Pinet Laprade, a notorious French colonial officer who served in Senegal, described the Noons as fierce and cruel to foreigners. They fiercely resisted the French and their Wolof allied invaders (Gravand, 1983; Wane, 2007). Despite their smaller number, they kept most of their lands and stayed isolated from the other communities in order to maintain their traditional culture genuine.

## The Serrer Noons' traditional culture

Unlike the many other ethnic groups in Senegal, the Serrer *Noons* have kept most of their cultural and traditional heritage. The main cultural events of the group include the *Mbilim*, song, and dance festival; initiations, funerals, socio-economic activities, and divination ceremonies called *Payaa*.

Despite their conversion to Islam and Christianism, the *Serrer Noons* still keep some ancestral spirituality. They still celebrate the deceased ancestors through sacrifices, dances, and songs during funerals to pay tribute to the person who is believed to pass to a different world and will come back to visit and protect the community. At the eve of the rainy seasons, they also organize divination ceremonies to predict the level of rain and harvest and instruct the community to make some sacrifices and prayers for a productive rainy season as needed.

According to some respondents, the *Serrer Noons* would marry among themselves to keep their traditional values and avoid intrusion. However, now with a stronger adherence to the monotheist religions and modernization, these practices and beliefs are dying out which is:

> a shame, even though we are now mostly Christians and Muslims we should find a way to make sure our children know these characteristics of their community. They were meant for the good of the community through a strong education. I do not mean we should return to animism. (Parent, female, 10)

Practices such as internal marriages, traditional funerals, and dancing festivals still exist within the *Serrer Noons* communities. At the same time, because of its annexation by the modern city of Thies, the community of Thies is among the ones who

have lost more aspects of the aforementioned traditional practices compared to the other remote villages.

The growing of the city of Thies and its extension to the doors of the *Serrer Noons* villages have caused more intense cultural interactions with other ethnic groups. Such interactions have resulted in the adoption of some of the western and Wolof traditional culture particularly the Wolof language. Wane's sociolinguistic study conducted in 2008 shows a loss of the None language which is less and less spoken. Many *Serrer Noons* children, and most of the children born from mixed marriages do not speak Serrer but Wolof instead. As a reminder, Wolof is the lingua franca in Senegal used in public spheres and in the media. The loss of language leads increasingly to the loss of some cultural aspects which can only be performed in the language.

## Economic background

As discussed above, the *Serrer Noons* are traditionally farmers and the economy of the community has been based on agriculture. The *Serrers Noons* mostly grow millet which forms the basis of their food (porridge and couscous) and peanuts which are sold to cover costs such as daily expenses, clothes, construction fees, healthcare, and children's school fees. The *Noons* women are skilled in weaving traditional clothes, pottery, the weaving of bags, chairs, and containers with palm tree parts. Palm trees are symbolic to the *Serrer Noons* and have been used for many traditional activities from healing to creating artifacts for sale. It is the main source of local wine another aspect of the *Serrer Noons* traditional culture.

Many girls from the community usually go to the big cities such as Dakar and Thies during summer vacations to work as housemaids with very low salaries ranging from $60 to $120 per month. The money they gain is used to support their parents, pay their school fees, and buy clothes. Because of the reduction of farming lands and bad harvests, young men are leaving the community to move to bigger cities for labor jobs and petty commerce.

The geographic position of the community of Thies *Noons*, situated at the western entrance of Thies coming from Dakar, on the main road, makes it a perfect checkpoint where police officers stop cars for security and administrative reasons. This situation is a great opportunity that women in the community seize to sell fruits and other articles to the halted travelers. In the Senegalese culture, people bring fruits as gifts when they travel. Many women in the community resort to this activity to support their husband and pay the school fees of their children. This de facto car stop faces the school that hosted this study. In the summer, many schoolchildren join their mothers and sell fruits there.

The head of school, also a woman, has been endeavoring to involve these women sellers in the running of the school and sensitize them to keep their children in school and support them. Teachers also use these female vendors as examples to motivate the students to work harder at school so that they may get good jobs and help their parents rather than becoming vendors like them.

## Education in the community

Despite the historic resistance to invaders and their conservative ideology, the community of Thies Noon and surroundings neighborhoods has now four primary schools and two middle schools. Likely because of the dominance of Christianity in the community, many *Serrer Noons* send their children to private Catholic schools in Thies. Currently, over 80% of the children in the community attend primary school. The dropout rate has significantly decreased thanks to the proximity middle school recently built in the area after a request the community made by the community to the former president as he happened to be passing through the area. The children no longer have to walk long distances for middle schools in Thies. However, they still have to walk or pay for transportation to go to high school.

At the same time, over 75% of people aged 40 or older are illiterate. Recently, there have been many literacy programs initiated by the government, NGOs, and the Catholic church targeting older people so that they can learn to read and write in *Serrer Noon*. Now the bible is translated in Noon and in some churches, mass is said in Noon. However, such literacy programs are not supported in the long term and it does not attract many people (Wane, 2007).

In addition to Thies *Noons*, the other communities surrounding the school, listed above, are also object of the study. The Peuls in *Dara Peuls* are geographically a bit more detached from the city because most of them are shepherds and they prefer to live next to their cattle close to the pastures. They also have a strong cultural tradition visible in their way of dressing, their braids, and their social events such as weddings. Because of their

isolation, they have been able to maintain much of their language and cultural practices. However, just like the other ethnic groups in Senegal, the majority use Wolof to communicate outside of their community and they have adopted many of the Wolof's cultural habits. *Peul* women sell milk and curdled milk from their cattle in big cities. Many of them carry their products in traditional containers and walk throughout the cities from door to door, office to office to sell them. They are described as brave women, strongly rooted in their culture, and full of *kersa*.

The two other neighborhoods in the study are dominantly Wolof with a strong presence of other ethnic groups from the southern part of Senegal (Diolas, Mankagnes, and Soces). As described above, most of the population here are not originally from Thies. Many of them are civil servants who chose this area because it is a quiet and modern, and open to the main roads.

This diverse economic and socio-cultural background make the community and the school an interesting and rich choice for conducting my ethnographic research on traditional values, local principles, and local practices in formal schools in Senegal.

**<u>The school</u>**

The school that hosted the study is a middle school founded in 2010 upon a request made by the local population to the then president Wade who was passing by. It is named after the traditional *Serrer* village of Thies *Noons*. The village faces the school and provides it with the highest number of schoolchildren. Before the advent of the school, children use to walk a minimum of two miles to attend the nearest middle/high school. The school started with no physical infrastructure. In the beginning, it only had

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five teachers, 17 desks, and 17 students and classes were held in a church. In 2013, as the school population grew, a neighbor lent the school his garage to host classes. The school finally moved to its current location, which was originally meant to host a primary school, in 2014.

Currently, the school has four classrooms and four offices for the administration and the principal. There are also two unfinished buildings within the school. In 2017, the departmental council built an office for the principal, an office for the administration, and a computer room. The computer room is not equipped yet with computers, therefore, it currently serves as the teachers' office. Without a formal enclosure, physical education classes take place in the front yard of the school in the open air close to the national road exposing the students to the pollution and accidents. The school has four bathrooms, two for the boys and two for the girls with the administration having a separate bathroom within their offices. The school has electricity and running water, but it is not connected to the internet. The principal describes most teachers as enthusiastic and dedicated to the success of the school. However, many of them are young therefore less experienced and sometimes undertrained. Subjects taught in the school include math, history, geography, physical science, physical education, English, French, Spanish, and natural sciences. There is no secretary and no social and family economy teacher. The latter normally plays a key role in covering reproduction health and some aspects of sexuality which are less sensitive to a culture with many sexual taboos. There is no dining room for students therefore, food served by the canteen is consumed in the yard.

In 2017/2018 academic year, the school population was made up of one principal (a woman), four school administrators (all of them women), 11 teachers (five men and six women), one school keeper (man), one (cook for the school canteen). At the time of the fieldwork, there were 190 students enrolled, 105 girls, and 85 boys. These class sizes are indicative of how it is now very common in Senegal to see schools with more girls than boys. There were more boys than girls in most of the classes I taught in Senegal including my research class.

Success rates at national exams have been very low in the school. The principal appointed two years ago, pointed out that some progress was made last year but the results are still low. Her objective is to reach a success rate of 50% during the middle school national exams in July 2018. However, according to data from the school administration and responses collected, the internal results have significantly improved during these past two years. Data shows that there are fewer students repeating classes due to poor grades, fewer dropouts, and the community is more and more engaged in the school's activities thanks to the new management.

Like any other public school in Senegal, Thies *Noons* middle/high school is run by a school management committee made up of representatives of teachers, parents, school administration, students, and the headmaster. They play the role of a managing board; they set the priorities of the school and allocate the budget. They meet regularly to discuss current issues and opportunities for the school. Besides the management team, there are clubs by and for the students under the supervision of the teachers and the principal. These students' organizations include a club for the environment, an English

club, a Spanish club, a civics club, human rights and values, and a club of literature, art, and culture. These students socio-cultural and pedagogical organizations common to middle high schools in Senegal with slight differences. They meet regularly during the school year and organize pedagogical, cultural, and entertainment activities relevant to their field of study. For example, the civics club, human rights, and values often invite traditional and religious leaders to discuss with them. The school allocates a small budget to them and they raise money in the community to cover the expenses of their activities. The environment club has a small garden in the school where they grow vegetables with the assistance of some parents. These clubs bring life to the school and help improve the learners cultural and contextual competences. As a teacher and as a researcher, I took part in many activities of the English club and it was an opportunity for students to practice their listening and speaking skills by watching movies, listen and singing songs, playing skits, etc.

Like the students, teachers, and the school administrations have their organizations too. The school also has the Students' Parents Association (APE). During my interview with the principal, she told me that she has been using a participatory approach by involving the local community in school activities as much as possible. The innovation she established was to set up a Students' Mothers Association (Association des Mères d'élevés; AMER) separately from the APE which includes mothers too. We will discuss the APE and AMER deeper in the chapter on the local community's involvement.

As part of the community outreach and fundraising efforts, the school through the management board has developed strong relationships with neighboring companies, factories, and community organizations. The partnership with these organizations helps the school gain expertise and support from different areas. The principal often mentioned the example of a neighboring gas station which financially supported some of their activities. Other local businesses also promised to support future events.

Due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the community and recent academic progress made under a motivated leadership, the school was selected by the regional educational district (*Inspection d'Académie*) with three other school to benefit from the Improving Working Performances and Entrepreneurship (*Amélioration des Performances de Travail et d'Entrepreneuriat*; APTE) is a project financed by EDC (Education Development Center) with a goal to train students in entrepreneurship so that after four years of middle school they will at least gain enough skills in entrepreneurship. Considering that the educational system has been decried as too general and not providing students with job skills such a project which is at its pilot phase can be a great initiative and scaled up nationwide. In addition to training students, the project trains teachers, parents, school administration and organize workshops for educational stakeholders. On February 2018, the project held a participatory community diagnosis to identify the school's needs and ways and means to meet them. In addition to the APTE project, the school was also selected by the *Renouveau des Tradition Originelles* (Reestablishing Senegalese Traditional Culture; RETRO) to send students to their workshops. RETRO is set up by a group of retired people in collaboration with the

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regional educational district and the main goal is to integrate traditional positive values in the formal education. They have started with a workshop to train some students, selected in the region of Thies, to better understand and use traditional values. Both projects were very relevant to my study and I had a chance to attend their different activities and conduct interviews with key people involved during the year I conducted research there.

## My year

I conducted autoethnographic and critical ethnographic research in the middle/high school described above and the surrounding community during the full academic year 2017-2018. I arrived in Senegal in mid-October hoping to find my paperwork ready, so I could resume my teaching position as a civil servant in Thies. I knew there are always delays in Senegal to process administrative paperwork, therefore, I submitted all necessary paperwork six months prior to October, the beginning of the school year. Despite all these advanced planning, I still had to wait and even resubmitted some papers as they had gotten lost during the process. Meantime, in early November there was a new baby in the family and the *Magal* of Touba. The *Magal* is an unofficial week break for civil servants, therefore, no regular school work during that period. After the Magal and the naming ceremony, my paperwork had still not been issued to me to resume teaching.

Tired of waiting for the paperwork, I moved to Thies, 15 kilometers away from my village and came back home during weekends. In Thies, I rented a studio in the neighborhood I used to live when I was teaching there. The place is close to the school I had in mind for my research and my family and friends' house, so I could spend time with

them in my free time. Once I moved in Thies, I went to the regional school district office and since I already taught in the city for nearly10 years they easily accept me to unofficially conduct my research and teach in a school of my choice on the conditional agreement of the school head. The principal of the school I chose to conduct my research had been a language teacher in a school close to where I was teaching. Therefore, we often met during languages teachers' regional professional development activities. Moreover, the teacher she wanted me to collaborate with and substitute for in some of her classes happened to be my former student. The principal introduced me to the other teachers, the administrative staff, some members of the APE and AMER and all of them seemed very excited to have me. All the teachers and staff gave me a warm welcome and expressed their availability to be observed and interviewed.

In early December, I started first with a meeting with the principal to plan my stay in the school followed by a formal interview with her. She provided me with all the administrative documents of the school. We agreed I would observe and conduct my interviews in December and January and then, start teaching English in a 4eme class (9th grade) afterward. She also invited me to attend all school meetings and be involved in all the projects in the school expecting me to provide them with feedback and suggestions.

Most of my observations lasted for one hour and took place in the mornings and early afternoons. During observations, I always sat at the back of the classrooms to have a better view of the classroom and minimize disturbance. Following the observation guide (see appendix) I took notes with my laptop or on my notebook. During that time, I selected the five teachers for interviews. These teachers, in turn, helped me select

students and reach out to their parents for consent. The principal provides me with all the contact information of the APE and AMER members as well as key community and administrative leaders. In addition to my observations, I spent the month of December contacting potential participants, setting up appointments, and conduct house and community visits. The principal and the head of the APE made my recruitment of participants easy because people in the community held them in high esteem. I finalized and met most participants without problems. For a few of them, I had to reschedule sometimes at the last minute. I expected delays and rescheduling as it is common in Senegal. People are expected to come to an appointment late so usually if you want a meeting to start at 10 a.m. you convene people for 9 am. I had to adjust myself when I came to the US to be on time to meetings.

During weekends, I would go to my village to visit my family and friends. It's 15 kilometers away from Thies, a 10 minutes' drive. I spent most of my time there with friends, having tea, watching soccer games, and arguing about *lamb* (Senegalese wrestling matches), politics, soccer, socio-economic issues.

December is a short month for schools because of Christmas break. It began on December 22nd, 2017 to January 2nd, 2018. In a country of 95% Muslims, Christmas is the longest break of the school year. It is celebrated by both Muslims and Christian with the difference the Muslims do not go to church services. I spent the whole vacation in my village with friends and family. I used my free time during the break to work on transcription and cleaning up data I had already collected.

After the break, I returned to Thies in early January. I continued my interviews, focus groups, observations, and field visits in the community.  Later in the month of January, I took over the class of 4eme (9th grade) to teach English twice a week, two hours each session. The teaching lasted until the beginning of May. During that time there were some sporadic religious holidays and many breaks related to teachers or students strikes. I met with the class on Tuesday morning from 10 am to 12 pm and Thursday afternoon. During strikes teachers do not come to school and on these days, I was sometimes the only one teaching in the school. A couple of other teachers too said they cannot leave the students without class, while they still get paid, and sleep with a clean conscious. Whether they finish the academic curriculum or not students will have to take national and internal exams and teachers continue to get paid even when they go on strikes. Many parents and authorities blame the strikes for the students' poor academic level and high rates of failure during exams. Some participants argued that with more values teachers and students would reduce the continued strikes, missing of classes, and delays.

In terms of the pedagogy, languages are taught in Senegalese middle/high schools mostly through texts and reading comprehension lessons. My approach was to incorporate some traditional values both formally and informally in my teachings without altering the national syllabus, the objectives, and goals in accordance with Communicative Language Teaching approach suggested was inductive. The school is using the *Go for English* textbook and they have approximately 20 copies available. With one textbook per table, all the students could follow in class and do group or pair work.

However, I realized that all assignment based on the book should be done in class because very few students had textbooks at home and they could not take the school textbook at home. In terms of process, I first discussed with the students to choose one value or moral principle to discuss per week right at the beginning of the class with questions and answers. Then, all students agreed to try as much as possible to enforce the positives aspects of the value in class during that week. At the same time, each week I chose texts or themes that could be linked to the value of the week. I used the same approach to discuss traditional local values or moral principles. I studied in the class the themes of traditional vs modern medicines, religious and traditional festivals, slavery, and black resistance throughout the world. All these themes are included in the textbook and in the national syllabus. Classes were lively because students were comfortable with the fact that I used to L1 (Wolof) in the second language class to reinforce the students when they do not understand. Effects and challenges during my teaching experience are discussed in subsequent sections.

From January 23rd to January 24th, I attended a workshop on students' entrepreneurship project (APTE) held in the school. It was supposed to start at 9 am, but as usual in Senegal, it finally started at 10 am. Political and local leaders arrived last with various excuses. Most of the people in attendance were women, parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. They all dressed up in traditional clothes as most women do on Fridays in Senegal. In addition, there were NGO representatives, local community groups representatives, religious leaders, and guests. The workshop began at 10:15 am with a welcome speech from the principal. After her speech, the principal asked

the local imam and the vicar to say some prayers for a peaceful and productive workshop. This is a common practice in Senegal. I noticed that the imam said his prayer in Wolof whereas the vicar did it in French. Then, a group of students, members of the music club played the national anthem on flutes; the audience liked it. Afterward, the *chefs de quartier* (elected neighborhood officials) of the three neighborhoods each speech to express their gratefulness for the choice of their school and they praised the importance and relevance of such a project. They were followed by the speech from the head of the APE, AMER, and the president of the schools' student school government. Lots of praises were given to the principal who is described as "*jiggeen bu men goor*" (a woman stronger than men).

The project coordinator then took over to explain the history and the objectives of the project. The coordinator, who is probably of Pulaar origin, started with a reference to *kal* to tease the Serrers and as a way of introducing the code of conduct for the workshop smoothly.

After the coffee break, around noon, participants were divided into mixed groups (made up of parent, teacher, student, local authority, and school administrator) to list the problems of the school and identify potential solutions. Besides training the students and teachers in entrepreneurship, the project set up a committee to work on the capacity building in order to find solutions to the problems raised. The main suggestions included increasing learning time and materials for scientific subjects, more responsibilities for *APE* and *AMER* members in the project to take advantage of their expertise, and to encourage them to stick to school. The coordinator acknowledges that if parents engage

more most issues of the school can be solved, sometimes just through connections. The second day was mostly about wrapping up and prioritizing issues.

In addition to attending the APTE workshop in the school, I also attended the RETRO (*Renouveau des Traditions Originelles du Sénégal* / Reestablishing Senegalese traditional culture) second annual symposium later in the year on April 13, 2018 thanks to the principal's connections. This organization is initiated by older retired civil servants to decry the loss of Senegalese traditional values and to advocate their integration in the formal schools. I was very excited to be invited in such symposium which is very related and relevant to my research. They also invited the principal, two students, and a supervisor of the school where I was conducting this research. The principal told them about my research and they invited me to hear what I have one so far in this topic and my research.

The main traditional values they chose to study and emphasize on during the meetings were *jom, muñ, suturë, kersa, and fayda*. The keynote speaker was the national mediator whose role was to regulate social and political tensions and be a liaison between the people and the political authorities. Other guest speakers included representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, religious leaders, NGOs, and the regional educational district office.

As common in gatherings in Senegal, the program started with a two-hour delay. There was also a sudden change of venue. Delays and disorganization are an expected part of Senegalese life. Many students from a dozen schools in the department of Thies were chosen and invited to attend the two-day symposium to be trained in the meaning

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and use of the traditional values. The symposium started with a prayer by an Imam and a representative of the Catholic church. In his speech, the national mediator described traditional values as "what made us who we are today." He then expressed his that children nowadays do not have the chance to endure the hardships his generation did as a way to build resilience and demonstrate hard work. He then insisted on the need to transmit the values to children and assure they live by them at school and within the community.

The other speakers were mostly defining these values or moral principles. The names people were using are the Wolof names. *Mun* was mostly defined as not only the capacity to endure but fostering resilience, not resignation. Talking about *jom*, speakers invoked Lat Dior (the Senegalese official national hero) who fought against the French and refused to compromise. The representative of the Ministry of Culture raised the relevance of the theme in light of the increase in crimes, adoption of anti-values, corruption, etc. He described the traditional values as the ultimate means of socialization particularly the *kal* (joking kinship). Other participants also agreed on the choice of the target population, middle/high school students, teenagers. Internet and social media were also pointed out by many speakers as a threat to children. They argued that students do not know how to use digital materials and for what they should use them. Social media is now very often used in Senegal very often to reveal people's secrets, to blackmail people, or view inappropriate images. In the same trend, most participants in the study showed their worries about this growing phenomenon.

On the second day of the workshop, the students formed small groups and each group was assigned one value (*jom, mun, fule, kersa, suturë, and fayda*). Each group was supervised by a teacher, a community leader, and an educational expert to train and guide them to define and illustrate the assigned value. Then, they promise to share their experience with their peers upon return in their school and communities.

This workshop was a great opportunity for different educational and community stakeholders to reflect on ways in which to promote and reinforce the traditional values. The organizers described it as a success because it gathered many more participants than during the previous year. Educational and political authorities made lots of promises to follow up on the symposium conclusions and lessons learned in order to accelerate the process of incorporating these values into the educational system. In the short term, they also promised to take the initiative in other regions to the country in the short term.

The two programs, RETRO workshop and APTE symposium, I attended were very relevant to my research and they helped me to know more about the current initiatives within the country regarding this topic. I had a chance to reflect while becoming involved in the activities.

Besides my teachings, classroom observations, meetings, workshops, and my family life discussed above; during my year of research, I also often visited the four neighborhoods surrounding the school to meet with parents and observe the community. During these visits, I noticed a socially and economically mixed environment. Houses within the same area suggested variance in socio-economic status. Though the economic differences were visible in the houses, clothing, and building materials it does not

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constitute a barrier in the social relationships of neighbors. My discussions and

observations revealed that most community members hung out together and share the

same perceptions and understanding regarding the discourses surrounding the traditional

values, sometimes referred as traditional moral principles, discussed in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER V**

**TRADITIONAL VALUES AND MORAL PRINCIPLES: DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS, PERCEPTION BY PARTICIPANTS, AND PLACE IN DAILY LIFE**

Firstly, the concepts under study in this section are understood and referred to by many participants as traditional values though I sometimes refer to them as traditional moral principles as already discussed. Traditional values are vast, ambiguous, and controversial as defined and understood by respondents. However, my experience in such a large and diverse community coupled my personal life experience has shown me that despite some differences in practices, beliefs, and attitudes most people in Senegal understand the value aforementioned, accept, and live by them.

Traditional values are defined by many respondents as the social contract inherited from ancestors which guide people's attitudes and practices within a community as defined by a teacher: "attitudes and behaviors inherited from our ancestors passed down orally. Use to regulate society, to boost courage, hard work, tolerance, sharing, joy and discourage laziness, disrespect, debauchery." (Teacher, Male, 4). It is opposed by some respondents to some practices brought in through colonization, western education, and more recently through technologies and globalization. It is important to note that many respondents decry some western practices, but they also praise the western values of organization, respect of time, gender equality, respect of public spaces, etc. and they decry the absence of such values in their own community. Such traditional values including moral principles, and practices were passed down through a traditional way of educating children as discussed in the literature review. Traditional values place greater

emphasis on social relationships and culture to support a harmonious community. This way of education is different from the modern education's functionalist view which focuses more on skills acquisition. People were expected to prioritize strong human rapport within the community over everything else. With the contact of the western capitalist vision of the world mostly through schooling, children adopted other values to the neglect of their own traditional values including moral principles and local practices.

Many participants praised the positive effects of traditional values and/or moral principles on them and expressed some nostalgia. They shared that the shame associated with behaving inappropriately had served to guide people's actions and it seemed to work better than the current dissuasive punishments.

This study focuses specifically on seven values or moral principles out of the long list of traditional values and moral principles Senegalese people will provide when asked. The choice is mainly motivated by their common use in Senegal for different socio-linguistic purposes. During the study, I asked a participant to share their definitions of each of these concepts, their usage in daily life, and the understanding they have regarding these values. Participants' input is supported by my own understanding based on my experience and my observations to define the concepts of *jom, muñ, kersa, suturë, masala, teranga, and kal*.

**Jom**

There is no exact linguistic equivalent of *jom* in French or English. It is mostly defined as honor and dignity, but it conveys a stronger message when used to motivate or to discourage people. It is considered by many participants as the quintessence of a human being's actions. Some participants equate it to the human being "nit jom" meaning without it one is no longer a human being: "*le Jom c'est ce qui nous différencie des autres êtres. Si on le perd on n'est plus une personne. L'exemple du fou, il n'a pas de problème de Jom donc il peut faire ce qu'il veut. C'est la même chose que le voleur*." (Elders_community leaders_Male 2). (*Jom* is what differentiates us from other beings. Let's take the example of people with mental issue they are governed by *Jom,* so they may do whatever they feel like. Same for the thieves.) It determines the success or failure of individuals. Similarly, to the other values named in the study, its acquisition and loss are not clearly explained by participants. Some described it to as inherited, acquired through examples in the community or beyond, or through informal and non-formal traditional education. Too much westernization, exposure to different cultures, ill usage of social media, poverty, and neglect of values education are pointed out as being the main causes of the growing loss of this traditional value.

Some respondents praised it as the straitjacket that keeps people pointed in the right way toward esteem and success in the community: "Imbued with *Jom* one never gives up, one should resist oppression, be courageous, loyal, hard work." Teacher, Male, 4. It is defined by many respondents as central and encompassing the other values. If one

loses it, one loses all the other values along with it and if you have it you have most of the other values.

A teacher provides the following exhaustive description of it:

> *Le Jom je le comprends comme étant la valeur autour de laquelle on n'autorise pas, en tout cas, la personne a faire certaines choses par rapport aux interdits. C'est une valeur guide, qui me montre la voie à suivre… Le gardien de tout ça c'est la société, tu ne dois pas faire ça parce que la société t'observe. Grosso modo le Jom englobe beaucoup de valeurs dont la bravoure, l'honnêteté, l'intégrité, et tout ce qui s'en suit. On a l'habitude de dire en Wolof nit sou amoul Jom du tekki dara (un homme dépourvu de Jom ne sert á rien).*

> I understand *Jom* as the values around which people are forbidden to do things forbidden. It is a value that guides people and that shows them the right way…. It all turns around the community, you can't do this or that because the society is observing. One can say that *Jom* entails many values including honesty, bravery, integrity, and so on. There is a common Wolof saying that without *Jom* one is hopeless. (Teacher male, 2)

This comment shows also the place of the community in the enforcement of such values by its members. It shows the power of its effects on community members but also the numerous grounds it covers. However, it also reveals that people sometimes may abide by some traditional principles not because they want it but because they are afraid of the collective judgment.

Moreover, "without it we are hopeless" (Educational authority, Male, 2). It is commonly used by parents or elders to reprimand children (most of the time) when they misbehave. It is also used to encourage people. It is a short word, however; it conveys a strong message full of emotions and directions. It can hurt when are told "*amoo jom*" (you don't have *jom*) by parents, therefore, it can have both positive and negative effects on children and should be used carefully with sensitive children or people.

## **Muñ**

Most respondents describe the concept of *Mun* as endurance, abnegation, resilience, and forbearance. It is also described as the attitude one is expected to show before the harsh challenges, hardships, failure, and difficulties of life. It is the patience and dignity to continue on in a country where basic things such as providing food to one's children can be a daily struggle for many. *Muñ* is also described by some as the value that nurtures the hope of a better future thereby preventing people to resort to easier and more dishonest ways of making ends meet. Community members refer to it to support and encourage any member in pain or sorrow during funerals, diseases, failure, etc. It is also used to encourage partners during family issues thereby privileging negotiation over divorce. Some participants pointed out the fact that people very often say "*ku muñ muuñ*" meaning in you are enduring you will smile someday. Women are encouraged to "*mun*" in their marriage life to bear successful children. Whether it is true or not it encourages many women to stay in their marriage hoping to see their children grow, succeed, and make them forget their past hardships:

> life is full of hardships. You have moments of glory and hard time. During the time of hardships, you must show endurance and resilience. And tell yourself that this life some days are happy others sad. It's a hope that tomorrow will be better. (Teacher Male 3)

*Muñ* also helps keep one's composure according to some other respondents. It is a form of generosity because it can lead people to leave what belongs to them or restrain themselves from retaliating thus promoting peace within the family and the community. On the other hand, too much complaining and whining shows an absence of *muñ*. For

fear of being described as not "*munkat*", someone able to endure hardships, valuing mu*ñ*

*also leads other* people to bury some serious abuses which thus remained unpunished.

<div align="center">**<u>Suturë</u>**</div>

To me, this concept is among the most interesting to study and debatable

Senegalese traditional value or principle to be studied. It is defined by the RETRO (see

annexes) as discretion, humility, modesty, and keeping secrets. It entails and recommends

positive attitudes to be considered in human relationships. However; it is among the most

controversial values or principle as it is sometimes practiced in a corrupted way. Most of

the definitions and descriptions provided by participants and those I have learned through

my own experience align with Ly (2018) and Thioye's interesting discussions of this

concept. It raises our awareness of the imperfect and sensitive nature of human beings

and how exposing them could negatively affect and destroy people. These aspects of

*sutur*ë are summarized in the following quote:

> *Y'a rien de tel que couvrir les secrets des autres. Certains secrets si révélés peuvent détruire la vie d'une personne. Et nous en avons tous des secrets qu'on n'aimerait pas partager ou voir divulguer au monde. Maintenant avec l'internet et les réseaux sociaux le jeu favoris de certaines personnes est de vilipender les gens, c'est regrettable !*

> There is nothing more important than keeping people's secrets. Some secrets when revealed may destroy someone's whole life. Moreover, we all have secrets we would never want people to expose. Now with the advent of internet and social network, some people use it inadvertently to divulge other people. It's a shame! (Parent, Male, 3).

The assumption underlying the utility of this value is that all human beings have

secrets they would never want to be exposed to others. As much as we do not want our

"secrets" to be exposed we should not expose others' or vilify them as expressed below:

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If it is done as it means, it should be what one should pray for every day. We are so full of imperfections that if we are not covered with the veil of *sutur*ë we will spend all our days in regret. We will always be asking ourselves what the hell am I doing here. Suture is the thing/value that hides things we do, and we don't want others to see. Suture is that layer that covers our imperfections. Then, by accepting that we are imperfect, we should accept it with others. We should use the blanket that covers our deeds we don't want people to see to cover other people's imperfections." (Educational authority, male, 2)

It is considered a virtue to cover for people with the suture for fear of humiliating them or causing them to lose the respect and esteem in the community and beyond. However, many participants said that suture should start with oneself. One should try his/her best to hide his wrongdoings before expecting others to do so for you. Marriage, family, and community issues are expected to be settled first internally first before taking them to court for the sake of *suturë*. This practice favors reconciliation and forgiveness. However, I will discuss later how such practices have been abused and criticized.

Other participants described suture as silence used for peace, solidarity, support, compassion, and respect as the Wolof saying goes "«*Fu jamm yendu nit a fa xam lu mou waxul» («Là où règne la paix, il y a quelqu'un qui a su taire ce qu'il sait*/where there is peace for a whole day it is because someone knows what could destroy it but keeps quiet)." Even when the truth needs to be told or critiques made, they should be done in a subtle way to avoid any shaming or frustrations that may bear negative consequences for the individual and the community. However, as discussed below within the critical assessment section, suture should not be utilized to cover every dirty action in the community "*suturë* only when need be. Sometimes it means telling the truth but in a subtle way" (Educational authority, Female, 1)

To back up his arguments on the benefits of this traditional value, Ly (Seneweb, 2018) cites one of the most respected and read religious and cultural figures in Senegal, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. The latter recommends in his writings,

> *Ne dis jamais à quelqu'un 'Tu mens', 'Ce que tu dis est faux', 'Tu t'es trompé' ou tout autre propos du genre, qui peut le frustrer, fût-il même un enfant. Dis-lui plutôt 'Je ne le voyais pas ainsi' ou 'Pour ma part j'ignorais que...'. Habitué ta langue à la bonne parole, ainsi tu en seras heureux et tu seras préservé de tout mal.*

> Never tell someone « you lie », « it's not true », « you are wrong » or any other expression that may frustrate him/her, even if it's a child. Instead you can tell them "I do not see it this way", "I did not know that…". Educate yourself to use respectful words, you will be happy in doing so and you may be protected from wrong deeds.

He added in his book Nahju qadâl'il haj:

> *Ne cherche pas à déceler, dans les défauts des gens, ce qu'ils ont mis sous voile de peur que Dieu ne déchire les voiles de tes propres défauts…Si tu désires vivre et que ta foi soit sauve, tes droits respectés et ton honneur préservé, alors n'évoque pas de ta langue les défauts d'autrui, car il figure en toi des vices et les autres ont des langues.*

> Do not dig out other people's imperfections, the ones the hide for fear that God reveals yours… if you wish to live and that faith is safe, have your rights and your honor respected, do not expose other people's imperfections because there is in you vices and other people can talk too.

According to many respondents, the biggest blow *suturë* has received comes from social media and information technologies. It is now very common in Senegal to see people being exposed or exposing themselves in social media sometimes unwillingly. This is often a result of a quest for fame, misuse of digital devices, blackmail, or just to hurt other people. Many respondents including traditional, religious, and political authorities decry such practices when talking about the value of *suturë*.

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There are now in Senegal new radio and TV shows that invite couples or siblings to discuss their issues which remind me of the divorce court, Judge Mathis, among other shows in the US. This was not acceptable in the traditional society of *sutur*ë as a respondent argues:

> The concept is now perverted by social media. The social media has invaded our intimacy. Senegalese usage of social media is too much, even illiterate people use it. Have they been trained? No! Have they been trained to be a digital citizen? If you see what people post in social media in Senegal, you get scared and you know that they misuse this tool. They have not been prepared to use it. They do not know that once you post something you do not have any control anymore on it. (Educational authority, Male, 2)

It has reached a point that people are now very worried about being exposed by social media. I know some people in Senegal who have opt out of these social media due to a fear of being hacked or just as a way of denouncing such practices missing thereby all the opportunities entailed in the social media.

### Kersa

According to data collected, human relationships in the Senegalese context is governed by the value of *Kersa* to promote harmony through mutual respect. It is hard to define or translate this concept as it may leads to misunderstanding or prejudices. People prefer to describe rather than translate them. The RETRO commission defines the concept as "decency, the contrary of arrogance. An attitude consistent with our traditional, cultural, and social values. It is expressed through our way of doing, communicating, dressing, overall how we live in the community". Participants mostly describe it as the respect young people display for others, particularly elders. This does not mean elders are not expected to show it; on the contrary, any elder who fails to

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embody it loses the respect, esteem, and considerations of the community. Like most of

the other traditional values or principles, they should grow in people with age. Such

respect is mostly expressed through the language we use before elders, the way we dress,

the shyness, modesty, and the shame to talk or behave in a socio-culturally inappropriate

way. Youth, particularly girls, are not expected to dress in a certain way in broad daylight

before elders. There is no overt punishment in for not expressing *kersa* but those who

show it usually gain more respect and considerations within the community. That

judgment is often based on clothing is decried by some respondents who argued that

*l'habit ne fait pas le moine*.  Someone labeled as having lots of *kersa*, "*beri kersa*" may be

shy or cold but for most people in the community s/he is an example of respect and s/he

receives high respect and esteem in return. *Kersa* is also described as:

> a mark a humility and decency. A woman should have it to be a good mother, a
> good wife. It's not only about clothing, but it's also a personality, self-respect and
> usually, people who have *kersa* are more respected and esteemed in the
> community. (Elders_Community leaders, Female 3)

As weird as it may seem to people with different cultural values including the US

such *Kersa* includes avoiding eye contact with others particularly elders: "*c'est la*

*timidité. Ne pas confronter les personnes plus âgées même dans le regard, baisse les yeux*

*et ne pas exhiber certains comportements répréhensibles par la société.* » It is shyness,

not to stare at older people, to look down, and not to exhibit some behaviors decried by

the society (Parent, Female, 9). I have been struggling in my life in the U.S. to change

this attitude when I learned avoiding eye contact may be interpreted negatively. As a

result, being involved in debates and lively discussions with elders be they faculty or in

community gatherings have never been easy experiences for me in the U.S. According to my upbringing, one may not agree with a comment, remark, or a point made by an older person but one does not correct or start an argument with them. If you have to do it, should be through respectful phrasing. One student describes it as "*C'est quelqu'un qui a de la pudeur et qui se retient de faire certaines choses par exemple quelqu'un qui a de la pudeur n'ose pas regarder dans les yeux de celui avec qui il parle*. It is someone decent and who holds on doing certain things for example someone who out of decency do not confront with the eyes their interlocutors" (Student, Female, FG 1)

Furthermore, Ly (1966) describes it as a diplomatic way to strengthen respect among other human relationships within the community and avoid conflicts. Imbued with *kersa* one finds a way to delicately to soften negative answers. It prevents one from shaming others, to the extent that sometimes the truth is not always told if it would result in shaming or hurting others.

> *Le kersa c'est quand pas une timidité mais un certain respect… c'est une attitude pudique envers autrui une certaine proportion à ne pas s'exposer c'est à peu près ça le kersa également le respect implique le respect envers les aînés également dans le langage on peut avoir quelques aspects du kersa ne pas tout dire avoir une certaine retenue avoir des limites à ne pas franchir.*

> *Kersa* is not shyness but a kind of respect… it is more or less a modest attitude that prevents one from exposing oneself. It also includes respect toward someone older. Language also can be governed by some aspects of *kersa*, one should restraint to say everything that crosses one's mind and have some limits regarding the language one uses. (Head of school, female, 1)

The comment above details how this practice, value, or principle is complex and how it can be a hold all bag which makes it is easy to be distorted or abused. From my own experience, the shyness part of it may negatively affect the public speaking

competence of the individual and therefore reduces their chances to get some jobs or freely express their opinion in public. I believe that an excess of *kersa* has led to my dislike of classroom presentations during my studies in U.S. because most instructors are older. I also assume it has not facilitated my socializing and smooth socio-cultural adaptation. Reason why I want them to be discuss with young schoolchildren, so they know the positive and negative effects of it and how to adopt them.

Additionally, to the value or principle of *kersa* seems to controversy with the "*jonge*" attitude expected from Senegalese women. Actually, women in Senegal are expected to show charms throughout their gait, dresses, makeup, smile, dances, etc. even if this often refers to the use of traditional means. The example of women from the city of Saint Louis who used to dress finely and wander in the streets of the city to be admired is often referred to as an illustration of Senegalese women's charms. This may mean *kersa* is not meant to confine people, particularly girls and women, in a world of restrictions, but it is a way of life different.

## Teranga

Senegalese culture is renowned for its warm welcoming and hospitality known as teranga, a Wolof expression. Senegal is often called the country of hospitality (*pays de la teranga*). The national sports teams are even called the *Lions of Teranga*. This word conveys more than what it means when translated into another language. Many respondents in the study define it as a natural generosity and attitude that Senegalese love to show to a guest, a neighbor, or a stranger. Hospitality and generosity are values throughout the world but *teranga* merits particular mention in the way it is translated

according to Senegalese tradition. Senegalese people often express great pride about *teranga* and use it as an identifier.

> *Le Teranga au Sénégal c'est typique. C'est traiter l'étranger toujours comme un roi. Qui qu'il soit. Toujours sourire á l'étranger et lui offrir ce qu'on a de plus cher, nourriture, chambre, etc. par exemple à Touba lors du Magal le maître mot c'est teral lenn gan yi. Malgré le grand nombre de pèlerin chacun mangeras bien, dormira bien, pendant trois jours au minimum. Et on le fait avec gaieté.*

> *Teranga* is different. It is welcoming a guest to an extent that he will think he is a king/queen no matter who he is. Always smile to the guest and offer him/her the best food, best room, etc. For example, during the Magal de Touba pilgrimage, welcome the guests is the local community's motto. Despite the big number of pilgrims most of them will eat good food and sleep well and this for at least three days. Moreover, they do it with joy. (Parent, Male, 3)

Citing Andre Comte-Sponville, Thioye (2018) defines this value as the generosity and virtue to give and share with others. There is joy in showing hospitality and sharing with others in the Senegalese context « *on le retrouve partout dans le monde mais ça a une particularité au Sénégal on le fait naturellement et sans rien attendre en retour. L'hospitalité sénégalaise est connue partout et c'est notre fierté* » it is found everywhere in the world, but Senegal has a specific way of showing it. It is naturally done and nothing s expected in return. Senegalese hospitality is known all around the world and it is our pride (Parent, Male,10). It is expressed through the face, the words, and the desire to make the guest, neighbor, stranger be at ease no matter his socio-economic background. According to a parent, it is motivated solely by the joy of fulfilling a societal expectancy. The idea of a potluck, everyone bringing food to a party in the US, would be a bit awkward in Senegal. The host of a friends' or family gatherings prefer to show his/her *teranga* even if he/she has financial issues. If one is very close to them and wants

to support, it is common to wait until you are leaving the gathering and greet him/her with money far from indiscrete eyes.

Social ceremonies such as weddings and naming ceremonies are pretexts to show *teranga* to in-laws, griots, and neighbors. One's *jaams* (translated as slaves) are cousins who will do all the work during the ceremony and receives many gifts at the end. The word *jaam* (slave) does not have a negative connotation in this context. We will discuss later in the critical assessment of the values section how this specific practice of *teranga* is often now corrupted to justify waste in Senegalese social ceremonies. During a more somber event such as a funeral, neighbors support the victim by welcoming their guests and providing them with shelter, food, and all the other expected aspects of *teranga* aspect due.

At a state level, foreigners are well treated in Senegal and the government does not enforce many controls or taxes on foreigners particularly from other African countries. A foreigner can easily become part of the community and is rarely experiences harassment or xenophobia.  On the other hand, some people express that this too much hospitality and sometimes attribute the loss of values to the uncontrolled exposure to exposure to foreigners. Some people also attribute crimes, scams, and swindles to strangers. Unlike many other countries, even in Africa, the process of getting Senegalese citizenship or residency papers can be relatively easy.

However, the value of *teranga*, as described above may not be the exclusive to Senegalese. I have also experience through my exchanges in the U.S. with another African student and American people as well.

**Maslaa**

*Maslaa* is mostly defined as negotiation and tolerance. A parent told me that "we use it because we are not a community of conflict but tolerance." (Parent, Male, 4). It is used to prevent retaliation or hatred but rather, to promote tolerance and forgiveness. In a subtle way, people and elders, in particular, highlight the importance of forgiving. They call on socio-cultural relationship that ties those involved in the conflict to forgive. Put differently, it also means being kind to people not being judgmental and rushing to punish people. The following description shows the way people call on masala to deter many people from denouncing other community members "we should first ask ourselves if we would do better if we were under the same circumstances. That kind of introspection leads us to be careful and tolerant." (Educational Authority, Female, 1).

It is also described by a few other participants as acceptance born from tolerance. Despite your socio-cultural difference or your past notorious actions, people accept you in the community. It is up to you then to prove that you earn this acceptance or lose it as illustrated in the following quote:

> *Nous sommes réputés pour être le pays de la téranga quel que soit l'attitude de la personne, on devrait pouvoir faire preuve de bonne volonté de gentillesse quand même pour pouvoir faire valoir l'acceptation parce que l'acceptante est un peu différente de la tolérance et ça c'est à travers le maslaa qu'on l'obtient.*

> We are famous as a country of *teranga*. No matter how people behave one should be gentle in return and accept people as they are. Acceptance is slightly different from tolerance; one can acquire it through *masala* (Head of school, Female, 1).

Now, however, the concept has been perverted and many people hide behind it to commit wrongdoing. Along with *suturë*, *maslaa* is one of the most controversial values

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called sometimes moral principles because of how people use it to cover up many wrong deeds leading to impunity. Their misuse and abuses will be dealt with more deeply in the section on critical assessment of the values below.

**<u>Kal</u>**

Personally, as I mentioned earlier, this is my favorite practice as we are living in uncertain times with a growing tendency towards nationalism, xenophobia, tribalism, etc. leading to a discourse of intolerance and rejection of the other. *Kal* is understood as joking kinship between ethnic groups and patronyms. According to Galvan (2006) while it is found in a few other western African countries, however; it is more commonly used and more effective in Senegal. An example is how the *Serrers* are joking kin to both *Diolas* and *Pulaars* ethnic groups. The origins of this social relationship are described in more detail by Galvan (2006). The next quote explains how many Senegalese people understand and use it,

> *D'aucuns disent que c'est la force du Sénégal. Dans tous les rassemblements, les lieux publics, les transports publiques tu entendras fréquemment des gens se taquiner parce que celui-ci appartient à telle ou telle autre ethnie. Même les noms de familles sont utilisés. C'est beau et ça évite beaucoup de problèmes entre groupes ethniques.*

> Some people describe it as the main strength of Senegal. During social gatherings, at public places, public transportation, one will frequently be making jokes to someone who belongs to the kin ethnic group. Even family names are kin. It is beautiful, and it prevents many it prevents many issues between ethnic groups (Parent, Male, 4).

I have used these this value and see people using it with little understanding of the history behind it. I first learned about them in a class in the US by an American instructor which, among other reasons, raised my interest and questions regarding the incorporation

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of these concepts and practices in the formal educational system in Senegal. In addition to the inter-ethnic usage of the joking kinship, this practice is found between family names and among cousins. This social relationship gives one the right to say anything he or she wants to their kin who must accept it as a joke. They can call each other "my slaves," say "you only think of food, you are all thieves" or other remarks that could easily result in conflicts if they were not joking kin. There is no offense and most things coming from your joking kin should be accepted with waves of laughter. It is used to correct, instruct, and advise people without raising any frustration or hard feelings, for example:

> *Le Kal fait la cohésion sociale de ce pays. Je suis Noon et chrétien par exemple grâce au kal je peux facilement discuter avec les autre ethnies nos voisins toucouleurs ou diolas sans gêne ou limite dans la discussion. On peut tout se dire même s'insulter sans rien risquer. C'est beau et très utile dans la société. Ça brise toutes les barrières sociales et économiques.*

> *Kal* reinforces the social cohesion of the country. For example, I am a *Serrer* Noon and Christian and thanks to the *kal* I easily discuss and chat with other ethnic groups, my *Toucouleurs* and *Diolas* neighbors without any restrictions during our discussions. We can say each other whatever we want even insulting without any risk. It is a beautiful practice and it cements our society. It breaks all the social and economic barriers (Parent, Male, 4).

Moreover, for example, if a *Diola* happens to visit a *Serrers* community, she or he is showed the highest *teranga* and is protected as a "*buur*" king. It is believed that if you harm or mistreat joking kin something bad will happen to you.

It is commonly used to socialize in public spaces and gathering to break the ice or provide instructions in a smooth and acceptable way. It breaks the socio-cultural and religious differences between people, creating new linkages and thereby guarantees peace

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and tolerance in the country. It is among the main pillars of the inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony in Senegal. I have noticed it is used very often during my observations and interactions during the field work. Subsequent sections will discuss in more details its use and presence in the community and at the school. Another respondent added :

> *Je l'utilise presque toujours même pour m'attirer et garder des clients. Les diolas sont mes Kal donc je communique facilement avec eux.*
>
> I use it every day and it helps bring and keep customers. The *Diolas* are my joking kin so I easily communicate with them (Parent, Female, 9).

However, despite the tolerant and acceptant role it has played and helped achieve between ethnic groups, occasionally see some conflicts still arise between *Serrers*, mostly farmers, and *Peuls*, shepherds. I also believe people should not abuse or use it as a cover to attack other people. For example, one day during my study, I witness a discussion between a *Tëgg* (jeweller) and a *Peulh* (they are joking kin); the former was accusing the *Peulhs* in the neighborhood as responsible for the recent theft of cattle. I could see that the *Peulh* was not pleased about the conversation, but he had to take it because of the joking kinship relation between them. Teaching of these concepts, values, or principles could discuss such ill-usages that can deteriorate its power.

## Other traditional values

In addition to the seven values, participants listed many other values or principles during the study though at a lesser extent. The most salient ones are solidarity (*jappalante, taxawu*), *kolëre* (gratefulness), and tolerance (*Muñalante*). The main description of solidarity provided by respondents is that is expected from family and neighbors first. It should be done spontaneously and according to *suturë*. Someone in

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need, in fear, stress, disaster, or suffering is supported by family and/or neighbors. For example, during the naming ceremony of my son, which happened during my fieldwork, friends, and family contributed to support me in the expenses even if I did not ask and even though I could support it myself. They insisted, and one cannot return or decline such an offer. Some people will greet you with money and others will buy food or drinks for the guests or pay some logistic expenses without letting you know. During sadder events, as one parent expressed "you never feel alone" (Parent, female, 2), parents, friends, and family will come to sit with you for a week sometimes to support you with comforting words during this process. In some rural areas, they help each other in their farms or during construction to reduce the cost or just to support older people.

My experience in the US shows me a different way of implementing solidarity. In the US, it is more engineered and sometimes organized around NGOs and fundraising. I witnessed it during the Irma storm; people raised lots of money to support the victims in just one week through the internet. The process in the US slower than in the spontaneous ramshackle way it is done in Senegal, but it is more accountable and efficient to collect large amounts of money and goods.

*Kolëre* shows the past orientation aspect of the country. As I understand it and as it was described by participants, it somehow challenges the idea of self-sufficient man. Someone has supported you directly or indirectly in your life and whenever possible you must show them your gratitude. People live in a community and therefore they support each other in different ways "Poor people support rich ones and vice versa" (Parent, female, 10). However, the concept does not and should not mean paying back. It is

common to see people describing someone as "*amul kolëre*" just because she/he denies them a favor because he can't, or they don't deserve it. Feeling you have to show it at any expense may lead to nepotism and disorganization in many public places.

Tolerance, particularly religious tolerance, has helped the country gain a prominent place in the eyes of the rest of the world. With 95% of its population being Muslim, the country was led for over 20 years by a president who was a Christian with support from the main Muslims religious leaders. Each religious or ethnic community supports and assists the others during their ceremonies and protect them when verbally or physically attacked by isolated ill-minded individuals. Outside of the religious places of worship (mosques, churches, sanctuaries), people live together, play together, study together, work together, in the most harmonious ways. Most students who attend Catholic private schools in Senegal are Muslims. Similarly, there are many mixed marriages and mixed cemeteries in the country. Most people do not feel this affects their beliefs and practices. The example of such tolerance is showed by religious leaders from different faith and subgroups who maintain strong positive relationships. The discourse around religion and ethnicity from politicians has been inclusive and tolerant because they know a divisive discourse is not welcome and that they would not benefit from it. Joking kinship has also played a big role in maintaining this rapport too.

Many other examples of values including *fit* (courage), *mandu* (integrity, circumspection), *teggin*(respect), *woyof* (humility, candidness) etc. were listed or used by participants during the study. Each of them plays a crucial role in the education of people for love, peace, and harmony within the bigger Senegalese community.

The values described above have positive connotations and they are very attractive in most descriptions. However, they remain words until they are put to practice by human beings. Depending on who uses them and for what purposes, the next section discusses the malleability of these concepts and how they can be misused or abused to commit or to get away with reprehensible acts.

## **Critical assessment**

First, there is no bad value or good value until they are put to practice as expressed below:

> as long as long as a concept is labeled value it is meant to be and to bring good of a community, I don't think they can have negative impacts if they are values. They should be things that are positive and should only have positive effects. Values do not come out of the blue they are set by a community for the good of the community. (Educational authority, male, 2).

However, depending on who uses it, when, where and for what purpose, a value or moral principles may be ill-used, corrupted, misinterpreted, need adaptation, or irrelevant. Hence, the need to differentiate traditional values and traditional moral principles through research, studies, and education.

The traditional values or moral principles, as they are described above, often have positive effects on individuals and the community, are expected. However, my in-depth questionings and observations revealed how many people may not approve of some of them, particularly, *suturë* and *maslaa*. While their central concept does not prove problematic, the ways in which these values or moral principles are used and abused by many people.

People often remind children and others of these concepts, in general, to motivate or reprimand them, not to frustrate or shame them. A political authority points out these sensitivities,

> *Certaines personnes l'utilisent seulement pour corriger les enfants et d'une manière ou ça ressemble à des insultes comme yaw amoo jom, nakk jom… ça peut encourager l'enfant mais ça peut aussi produire l'effet contraire ou même n'avoir aucun effet sur l'enfant si ou en abuses. Ça doit s'utiliser dans le suturë, discuter les avec les enfants seuls a seuls et les encourager pas les dire devant tout monde que amoo jom etc.*

> some people only use it to reprimand children in way sometimes close in meaning to insults tell them sometimes "you are useless, you have no shame." This can encourage the child, but it can also humiliate him/her or have no effect on them particularly if one overuses it (Political authority, 1)

*Sutur*ë, as described by many respondents is meant to settle problems with discretion to avoid shaming people and help them hide their imperfections and work on fixing them or repent with the support of those closest them. However, *suturë* is criticized by many participants as the causes of impunity and, especially, the perpetuation of sexual abuses among other wrong deeds. The concept allows some loopholes that many people use to escape punishment for some vile acts that should be punished severely to deter other people. An educational specialist involved in the study denounced that by striving to hide people's wrong deeds for the sake of suture the victims are frustrated and there is a fear to denounce «*par exemple dans une famille il y a l'inceste une fille, est violée au lieu d'aller à la police  tout simplement dénoncer  pour que  les coupables soient punis on essaye de tout voiler  on voile donc  sa quelque part c'est  un aspect négatif du suture.* For example, it may happen that someone is rape within the family and instead of reporting it to the police immediately so that the guilty be punished some people may

cover referring to suture, this can be negative aspect of it. *(Educational Authority, Female, 1).* Acts such as rape should be denounced and punished. However, it happens often that when the perpetrator is a close family member, an older person, a neighbor, a social, political or economic leader people tend to *maslaa* (negotiate) it and cover him/her with suture. Worse to me, people sometimes believe it is best for the girl, the victim of rape, not to be exposed and judged by society because such judgment may do her wrong. Rape is just one example among the many others of how *suturë* and masala help cover up harmful acts and protect perpetrator. This is another reason for me to teach these values, which are very often referred to, and clearly demarcated for students on when they are values, moral principles, and they should be called otherwise. "*Sutural lenko*" meaning do not humiliate or expose someone should not be used randomly to avoid perpetuation and recidivism of such reprehensible acts.

  *Maslaa* is very close to *suturë* when it comes to its use, abuse, and negative effects on the community, and controversies. Many participants believe that minor issues could be settled within the family or by local community leaders, but others need to be taken more formally to court for definite solutions. Internal negotiations may only delay some problems that may grow into bigger issues in the meantime. Police are more deterrent for potential criminals, however; the Senegalese traditional culture discourages people from taking a close family member or neighbor to the police. No matter how serious the act is, many people interpret this concept so that all acts should be dealt with *maslaa* in *sutur*ë. I have witnessed someone beating his young brother's wife. The latter took him to the police and many members of the community commented this act

negatively. Some people believe that by internally settling issues and forgiving we solve

problems forever but if you send someone to jail, he/she will never forget. His/her family,

and the people closest to them will never forget as well. The controversy around *maslaa*

and *suturë* is well expressed in the following quote:

> As a country that promotes peace over conflict, negotiations and forgiveness
> should prevail. Still, there should be a line to forgiveness or over tolerance
> otherwise, we will live eternally in disorganization and impunity. Issues such as
> rape, theft at some scale, embezzlement, violence, citizenship should be punished
> to establish and maintain order harmony, particularly at school where sexual
> harassment and rape between students and between teachers/administration and
> students do exist. (School administration, Female, 2)

Some participants also decried hospitality (*teranga*). They argued that, when

expressed too much it may lead to the loss of values to the uncontrolled exposure

foreigners. Some people also attribute crimes such as scams, swindles, human sacrifices

to strangers. At night, because it is very hot inside the house, we usually gathered, me and

some friends and older neighbors, outside to chat about current issues and life in general.

One striking point of the discussions, one night, was the relationship between a worker

and his/ her employer. Should or should not one give free food to a mason or another

laborer when working in the house. It was agreed that it is not an obligation, but most

Senegalese would give them food even though one pays them and despite the fact that

some of them cheat in their work: "it's our culture of *teranga*". Other participants raised

the fact that in big cities people no longer provide food to the workers arguing that it is

not normal because they are already paid.

A few other comments decry some ways values have been instilled in children,

particularly asking children in some *daaras* to beg. The original goal of having young

children ask strangers for food and money was to build humility, solidarity, and *jom* in them. However, now begging is all over the country. Many *daaras* keepers do not use it to educate children but to gain money. It has become a dangerous activity for children who are exposed to many forms of abuses and violence. Many respondents said there may be other ways to inculcate values in children different from asking them to beg and dress in rags.

The different comments throughout this chapter present and describe each of the values chosen in this study through examples and analysis. The discussion shows the positive nature of these values and the positive effects that they are expected to have on people and the larger community. The comments also present the negative perceptions and misuse of the concepts that may exist for different reasons. Based on these descriptions of the concepts and drawing on data collected, the next chapter takes the analysis even deeper in exploring the narratives and discourses regarding these values or moral principles and their practices in Senegal.

# CHAPTER VI

## DISCOURSE REGARDING TRADITIONAL VALUES IN SENEGAL

The discourse around the loss of traditional values and their integration in the formal education system has become a current issue in Senegal. In recent years, Senegal has witnessed a significant increase in violence, both oral and physical as well as, hate speech, xenophobia, large scale cheating during national exams, sacrifices of children, embezzlement, debauchery, use of technological devices to vilify people, etc. The result is a growing fear that the country may be losing its legendary stability in these uncertain times.

The main political, religious, and traditional leaders have lamented this gradual loss of values as leading to such acts in speeches of recent years. In addition, some organizations and local NGOs such as Committee for the Defense of Moral Values (*Comité de Défense des Valeurs Morales; CDVM*) and *Jamra* have been alerting, denouncing, and even suing some individuals and organizations for acts against the traditional values.

There are now many political parties with names including some of the values including moral principles listed above. The current president recently released an autobiography where he emphasizes how the traditional values instilled in him have helped him move up from a modest family to become a president. In regard to education, there are many voices and initiatives asserting the relevance of a pedagogical approach that would integrate these values within formal schools. Language of instruction is a crucial vehicle for this process and reflection of values. Many pilot programs and projects

including the *Lecture Pour Tous* (Reading for All) by USAID and the Senegalese

educational authorities have started to use local languages as language of instruction in

the early elementary years. Besides, languages there are other initiatives, debates, and

research that promotes the incorporation of local traditional values and practices within

the formal educational system for cultural relevance and to achieve the main goal of

education as stated in the national constitution. Such educational initiatives and discourse

will be discussed in the next chapter.

The discourse regarding traditional values in this paper investigated the local

community's perception and use of these values, referred sometimes as moral principles,

with a focus on their evolution throughout time, the contemporary and historical figures

who embody these values, gender, and age as perceived regarding traditional values, and

the relationships between local and national values.

### Values vs local practices

Participants and data collected describe traditional values as the heritage of

ancestors that govern people's actions and attitudes for productive community life. Most

of them are common among different socio-cultural subgroups in Senegal. They are often

in opposition to the values brought into the country through colonization and

globalization. Such imported values and practices include a reverence for foreign

languages, capitalism, individualism, etc. Unlike values, local practices are less common

across between communities and may encompass some aspects that clash with the current

world and may hinder progress and development. However, most aspects of local

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practices convey the identity and traditional culture of a particular community thereby need to be perpetuated.

Most values are universal. The differences lie in how they are understood and practiced by different communities. The majority of the Senegalese population speaks Wolof and they understand the values of *muñ, kersa, suturë, jom, kale, teranga,* etc. named in Wolof. As described above, people from different ethnic backgrounds live in the target community of the study. Despite the « cultural syncretism » dominated by the Wolof traditional culture, the different subgroups conserve their practices and cultural identity. Unlike the cultural practices, values are mostly described as the same everywhere in Senegal with some groups embodying more particular values.

People describe the population of Thies as courageous (*fit, jom*) and endurance (*muñ*). The following comment illustrates such description:

> *Le Thiessois est très courageux ; en général c'est un homme ou une femme de défis. L'histoire du Sénégal a montré que le Thiessois de par sa spécificité s'identifie à ces valeurs. Au niveau du Sénégal on parle du Jom, Suture, le Kersa, y a le Mun, l'endurance. Ce sont les valeurs cardinales qui caractérisent le Sénégalais en général et le Thiessois en particulier.*

> People from Thies are known for their courage, they are always ready to take the challenge. Throughout the Senegalese history, historical figures from Thies are identified with these values. In Senegal people talk about the values of *jom, mun, kersa,* there *mun* too, endurance. Those are the main values that define the Senegalese in general, and people from Thies in particular (Educational authority, female, 1).

Most local values identified in the community are the same as the ones discussed above. In general, they can be found everywhere else in Senegal. Most participants understood the values that were the focus of the study and identify them as a present and

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used in the community. When asked to list the local traditional values in their community

most respondents talk about *jom, fulë, mun, kersa, suturë*, etc.

> the most salient values; solidarity may be the very first one. It's a core value in
> our society, the second might be resilience because we are in an environment with
> a scarce resource where people have difficulties to make both ends meet. People
> make so many sacrifices to go to school or to survive and change their living
> conditions, only resilience can help go forward. Then faith, if one can define as a
> value. People, here they always think that things can get better. They always
> believe that things can change and improve they never get to a point that they say
> it's over. (Educational authority, Male, 2).

There does not seem to be any difference in the understanding and use of these

values in this multicultural community with a *Serrer Noons* dominance. It is common to

see some people attach some values to specific subgroups. For examples, Peulhs are

sometimes described as full of *kersa,* Wolof with t*eranga*, Diola with *jom* and *kolere*,

Serrers to loyalty and love of their parents etc. however, this attribution does not mean

such or such other group does not have such value, or the group only has such value.

Unlike traditional values, cultural practices still bear many specificities within

each ethnic group. For example, three participants, a Serrer*, a* Mankagne*, and a* Peuls all

described to me according to the customs within their community. The descriptions entail

many similarities but also different aspects as they commented below:

> *Je vais d'abord parler du mariage. Si l'homme vient parler avec tes
> parents pour te marier par exemple si on dit que tu dois rejoindre ton
> domicile conjugal dans 3 jours on amène les affaires culturelles et on
> danse la nuit. Le jour du mariage la femme ne sort pas. Elle porte un
> boubou palmane et si le boubou que tu portes touche une fille célibataire
> elle n'aura pas de mari et si tu rejoins ta demeure conjugale tu restes un
> mois sans sortir sans enlever le boubou.*

> I am going to talk about wedding. if the man comes over your house to ask
> you for marriage you need to join his family house 3 days after the

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wedding. During that night we exhibit the cultural practices including songs and dances. During the day, the woman does not come out of the room. She wears a "palmane" bubu and it is believed that an unmarried girl who touches that clothes will not find a husband. And you will wear the same clothes for the next whole after the wedding (student, FG 2, Female)

*Nous sommes Serrers chrétiens et nous connaissons les valeurs traditionnelles chrétiennes maintenant on voit que chez les chrétiens par exemple les sérères ont le mbilim et une façon de célébrer leurs mariages. En ce qui concerne les mariages ... si tu veux épouser une femme il faut que le garçon envoie ses parents pour les pourparlers avec du vin. C'est le premier pas s'ils parviennent à conclure ils choisissent une date pour la célébration du mariage ou si c'est une urgence ils choisissent une date avant de venir. La deuxième chose est qu'ils doivent acheter des caisses de vin pour que les parents de la fille appellent leurs amis comme témoin de l'union de des deux familles et ils peuvent ranger les 4 ou 5 caisses s'il n'y a pas de refus d'aucun coté. Ils vont préparer le grand mariage à l'église.*

We are Christian *Serrers* so we know the traditional Christian values but as *Serrers* also see lots of *mbilim* dances during weddings and other traditional practices. Still for marriage…. If you want to marry a girl, the man needs to send his parents to do the discussions with wine. That's the first step, if there is agreement, they choose a date for the wedding; if there is an urgency the date is chosen before they visit the girl's house. The next thing they need to do is to buy a whole box of wine to share with the witness and friends. They may bring up to five boxes of wine before the big celebration at the church (Parent, female, 1).

The descriptions of the marriage process between these different ethnic and religious groups demonstrate some cultural specificities in each group which are often also respected by others in the case of mixed marriages.

However, there is one common aspect in each of these ceremonies which is that they all integrate Wolof traditional wedding aspects, religious aspects, and modernity. Despite the insistence of families to perform some practices specific to their subgroup, there is a strong presence of what I would call "cultural syncretism" which is reinforced

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by commonplace mixed marriages. This description of marriage encompassing Wolof, religious, and western characteristics is the same for the other cultural festivals. One specific cultural practice named by many participants in the community is the *mbilim*, traditional *Serrer Noons* dance and songs activity organized for specific community festivals or celebrations. Despite the many changes it has undergone, this activity is still practiced in the community and people find it very interesting as described in the following quote:

> *Le mbilim dans la culture Noon. C'est les femmes qui chantaient. Le mbilim se faisait pendant les mariages. Chaque parole des chansons du mbilim portait un message d'encouragement ou de réprimandes. Et le tout c'était pour encourager les personnes à bien se comporter et au travail.*
>
> *mbilim* is part of the noon culture. Women used to sing it. It used to happen during weddings. Each word of the songs conveys a message to encourage or criticize some practices and behaviors. All was meant to encourage people to behave appropriately and to work hard (Community leader, Male, 1).

People expressed their regret the fact that *mbilim* is organized less and less. It is replaced by the *navetanes* activities, soccer and cultural tournaments between neighborhoods which is common throughout Senegal. Young people seem to prefer this activity and other dances and parties borrowed from the western and other traditions. Now, very few *Serrer* Noon women can still sing the traditional chants and organize the ceremony as it has been in the past. Many individuals participating in this study expressed a fear for the loss of *mbilim* in a few years.

In addition, throughout Senegal, traditional medicines, social events, songs, dances, and ways of dress, are performed differently by different subgroups without tensions or arguments. The tolerance between groups allows the area to celebrate a rich

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cultural background and makes it an enjoyable place to live, according to many respondents. Among the shared values, tolerance, and kinship play an important role in promoting both harmony life and perpetuation of the local practices within each subgroup.

At the same time, however, at school, students' clothing, braids, and home languages may also help identify a student's ethnicity. Yet, if not for the occasion of specific festivals, most students dress and braid their hair the same way which is a mix of the Wolof and western way.

In addition to language, social events, and way of dressing, food also depicts the cultural aspects of each group. Serrers are associated with millet couscous, the Wolof with rice (Senegal's national dish), and fish, the Diola with *kaldu* (a fish and white rice dish with green sorrel sauce), etc. There are also slight differences in the way food is served and the utensils used. However, in most groups, people eat with their hands around one bowl. It is advised to be quiet while eating. In many families, women parse out the vegetables, fish or meat to the men and children during the meal. Older people usually finish eating first to make sure children have enough food. Around the bowl, as Senegalese people call it, is a place where and when parents observe and rectify their children about their sitting, eating, respect, and behavior with food. In my family, children must hold the bowl with their fingers, remain quiet, keep their hands in their spot, not waste the food, and not watch the guests while eating. Overall, it is a long and calculated example of the process to inculcate children the values of respect, *teranga, suturë*, and humility. Water and tea are also marking of *teranga*. The first thing upon a

guest's arrival is to serve the guest with water. Some respondents explained this act also provide a way to know how tired he/she is and whether or not he/she is hungry, so the host can provide what is needed.

On the other hand, there are still castes and social classes born from traditional beliefs in the country. Such socio-cultural identifications draw from many sources within the community. Even at present it is possible to find some individuals and families reluctant to marry into particular castes, or they simply scorn them. Some people consider themselves "nobles" and, as one participant explained, therefore

> *Ils font de leur mieux pour respecter ces valeurs mais y a quelque part des gens qui bafouent ses valeurs là et qui sont encourager par la société ils se permettent certaines choses ils se disent de toute façon eux ceux ne sont pas des « guéer » comme on dit ils se permettent de faire certaines et les autres les laissent faire donc ça s'identifie plus à certains groupes par rapport à d'autres.*

> They do their best to respect these values but there are other people who do not follow them. Some say they are not "*geer*" (nobles) they still keep some practices to identify with their casts and other do not seem to be against. This will perpetuate the caste system (School administrator, female, 1).

However, thanks to religion and western education this phenomenon has dwindled over the years. It still remains a blemish against truly achieving the social cohesion of the country is so proud. I believe that discussing and teaching positive traditional values and local practices may help completely get rid of such practices.

A number of participants also mentioned rites of passage were also mentioned as one of the main vehicles for inculcating values and educating young boys and girls within particular communities. The remaining groups who still cling to the rites of passage perform it in a very different way from the past. Many aspects have been removed other

added to adapt the practice to monotheist religions and the modern world in terms of medicine, hygiene, sacrifices, etc.

### Perception, place, and use in the community

In this community and throughout the country traditional values are embedded in the actions and interactions in people's daily life. Many respondents said they use or refer to them naturally and that they rarely reflect on or discuss them. It is only when they are asked about values or when they have a chance to travel or live with other communities that they compare and realize the values and flaws in these inherited intrinsic life codes.

As a respondent argues, though values are universal and found everywhere in the world, there are differences in the way in which they are understood and practiced. However, many communities have values that they positively associate with their identities. The people of Thies are often identified with their *jom and fit.*

In their great majority, respondents describe traditional values as positive because « it cements their society the different building blocks of the society» Student, FG, 3. Moreover, many comments identify the gradual loss of these values and express some nostalgia. They only start to question them and acknowledge some misuse of these values as discussed above.

This community is mostly inhabited by the *Serrers*. Because of its name "Thies Noon", people automatically think of the *Sererrs*. According to data collected, solidarity and integrity are among the main pillars of the social cohesion of the community and they constitute strong elements of its identity. People comment that during the rainy season the community members would go and help some community members on their farms

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because they are old, or they do not have young children to help in the farms, etc. The whole village can dedicate a day to help certain individuals with their farms or to build or repair their houses for free. The receiver may provide the helpers with simple drinks and snacks as a sign of *teranga* and gratitude. Such solidarity is also found in other parts of the country in different forms. The following example illustrates the collaborative solidarity for community services:

> in Kayar, a fishing village next to Thies, fishermen pick a day for the schools during that day all the fish they get will be sold and the money given to the schools. I remember that the middle/high school in Ndayanne was built by the community without any dime coming from the government. They built about 8 classrooms. And there are similar cases in other areas where communities do not wait for the authorities, they no longer want to see their children walk 6 or 7 kilometers to go to school so they contribute and build a school. And once the school is built it's easier to have the authorities open it officially and send in teachers. (Educational authority, Male, 2)

On the other hand, the respect and importance people bestow on elders facilitate their role as social regulators and keepers of the traditions. They hold most traditional decision-making positions within the communities including village's chief or similar neighborhood position. With such status, they are called upon to settle problems within the community. They can also block some events from happening and make decisions regarding the community relationships with political authorities. The latter mostly concerns issues regarding the extension of the city of Thies that depletes their farming lands. The head of the neighborhood with whom I discussed gave me a detailed description of his role in the community. With the help of other community and religious leaders, he ensures harmony among the different religious and ethnic groups who live in the community. He told me how welcoming they are to strangers who rent or settle in

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their area, but this does not preclude a subtle investigation they conduct to make sure the new inhabitants are no threat to community' s traditional values. They also initiated a project to codify and teach the language of the Serrer *Noons* to illiterate women in the community. The language is now one of the world endangered languages. Unfortunately, however, at the end of the literacy project there was no follow up and the initiative died out. In addition to the language which is spoken less and less, the traditional culture around it is also dying. *Navetanes*, a national soccer tournament that opposes neighboring communities during summer, has been taking over traditional activities like *mbilim*. Many elders criticize how the *Serrer mbilim* that is organized nowadays has been deprived of its original essence and how it includes lots of Wolof *sabar* rhythms replacing traditional Serrer ones.

At a national level, these values are expressed on many occasions. For example, during *Magal*, a religious celebration that gathers over two million people in the holy city of Touba, guests are shown the utmost *teranga*. For a week, the local population provides good food, accommodation, drinks to their guests many of whom they never knew before. As a guest one does not contribute anything. The local community takes well care of you. They even give up their rooms for the guests. Disciples of this religious brotherhood are identified as very welcoming and hard workers as their religious leader advocated. In the Senegalese culture, *teranga* forbids you to ask a guest to sleep on the couch in the living room. Even if you have to move the children out of their room, the guest needs to be in a room.

Findings demonstrate that some ways that people express some traditional values target dead people. No matter how depictable and vile one was in his lifetime, people only talk positively about them once they pass away. Many people forgive debts owed by the deceased and others support widows and orphans that the person may have left behind. People show compassion and attend funerals of neighbors or strangers even if uninvited. Funerals are open to everyone and even if the house is full you must be there and sit somewhere outside. In some areas of the country, it's the neighbors who cook for the guests and welcome them on behalf of the bereft family.

Many comments and observations show that joking kinship is among the most used values within interactions between people. It is used to ease up or introduce discussions among people who do not know each other before. Just with your last name people can guess your ethnic group and joking kin nearby can address you anyhow they want; "it is fun to listen to such lively jokes between people who often meet for the first time" (Parent, female,8). Even stranger such as peace corps volunteers or interns who go to Senegal are often given names of their host families and get quickly involved in the joking with their kin group including family names joking kin.

In addition to their views and use of values, participants also discussed the traditional practices in the community and in the country in general. When asked about practices most participants refer to the *mbilim, sabar* (Wolof dance for women), divination ceremonies, wrestling, circumcision rituals, traditional medicines, funerals, etc. All these practices listed are still performed in the community that I studied and beyond. However, they have undergone lots of changes due to interactions with other

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communities, modernity, and religion. Many participants express the entertaining and educational aspects of some of these practices. They also express their fear of seeing these practices lost because they are organized less frequently, and they no longer play their pivotal societal role they would neither do they affect people as usual. One participant describes the current *mbilim* ceremonies, which "had originally been exclusively for Serrers, to include now Wolof and Diola neighbors thereby losing some cultural aspects but gaining in popularity and strengthening the good terms of interethnic cohabitation in return." (Parent, Male, 10).

Another respondent expresses his concerns about the loss of such practices in the following words due to religion:

> *Ça risque de disparaitre, toutes ces pratiques parce qu'avec la religion on est obligé d'abandonner certaines pratiques qui sont banni par la religion. La religion est devenue un rempart contre certaines pratiques. Mais y'a pas de problème d'ethnies ni de problème de religion dans ce quartier il y'a beaucoup de famille dont la moitié est musulmane et l'autre chrétienne. Une partie serrer l'autre diolas. Et y'a le cousinage qui a joué le rôle primordial. Tout peut disparaître sauf ça.*

> They may die out, all these practices because due to the religion we have to abandon some practices forbidden. Religion has become an obstacle to some traditional practices. However, there is no ethnic or religious problems in the community. There are many families with both Muslims and Christians. Some among *Serrers* others among *Diolas*. In addition, there is the joking kinship that plays an important role… all the other practices may die out except kinship (Parent, male, 2).

Many traditional values are very similar to Christian and Muslim values. However; because the way some of them in the ways they are practiced may conflicts with monotheist religious practices some people refuse to accept them as good practices. When talking about these values people most of the time refer to some contemporary or

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historic Senegalese or African who embodied them through their actions and behaviors. They are generally listed as examples to be followed and are discussed in the section below.

### Embodiment of values

Most Senegalese people refer to certain individuals and their actions as examples when talking about these values. Many of those people are national historical, religious, and political figures. Some contemporary people are often given as examples even though people avoid doing so because « as long as they are alive, they may change or do some disgraceful things in the eye of the community » Educational authority, Female, 1.

The official national hero of Senegal is Lat Dior whose resistance to the French colonization was done with courage (*jom, fit*) and integrity. His history is taught to schoolchildren in primary schools. There is an anthem written for his memory that we learned in primary school, and his pictures can be seen in many classrooms and on textbook or copybook covers. Other resistance figures of the colonial system often figure among people's references as holding exemplary values but to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, most respondents name religious figures as examples of the embodiment of these values. Besides naming these prominent individuals, one can see their pictures and drawings in houses, schools, shops, cars, public places, etc. Many public and private places are also named after them. One of them is Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, a Muslim religious leader who peacefully resisted the colonial system. According to data collected and historical documents consulted, he was deported by the colonizers to many adverse places such as Gabon and Mauritania his staunch adherence to his beliefs.

He showed exemplary resilience and humility during all those challenging moments. He wrote many poems and memoirs in which he praises the Muslim prophet Mouhamad (PBH) and advocated values including hard work, humility, resilience and hospitality. He also found a village, Touba, in the 19th century which has now become the second economic and populous city in Senegal after Dakar. The celebration of the date of his exile, *Magal* de Touba, gathers approximately three millions of people each year (Muslims and non-Muslims) within the city. The hospitality (*teranga*) by his disciples during this event is incommensurable as described in the *teranga* section above. As illustration, at the time of my fieldwork in Senegal, I had to postpone the date of my baby's naming ceremony because it coincided with that date and most everyone had left for to the *Magal*.

Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's disciples, the Mourids, are described by their hard work and humility (*jom*), their sense of *teranga*, and respect and obedience to their spiritual guide. Because of this obedience, politicians in Senegal continuously have tried to court favor among *Mourid* leaders by any means. The Brotherhood also promotes religious tolerance. One great example of that religious tolerance given by many respondents is the support Serigne Fallou, a son and Khalife of the aforementioned guide, gave Senghor the first president of Senegal who happened to be a Christian and who lead a country of 95% Muslims for over 20 years. Senghor received the support of many other Muslim religious leaders. In 1992, Pope John Paul II visited Senegal and received a warm welcome from both the Muslim and Christian communities.

Two other figures who embody religious tolerance and peace whom study participants often referred are Mame Abdou Aziz Sy, a late Muslim religious guide from the *Tidiane* brotherhood, and Abbe Hyacinthe Thiandoum a leader of the Christian community. Despite their religious differences, these two leaders had powerful relationships with one another. They would visit each other and send representatives in support of the other group's events. As further illustration, I will give an example from my own community which many people mentioned. The individual often invoked is Mame Abdou Aziz Sy. Many people see him as the embodiment of what a good citizen should be because of the ideas profound he was developing. He was always reminding people that whatever acts you do, whatever attitude you take, they should be grounded in faith and the community's best interests. Moreover, he argued that, as a result, there would be fewer harms and wrong deeds in the communities. He was respected and listened to by most people in Senegal. Every time there was a big problem in the country, he would make a pronouncement and people would listen to him and follow his recommendations. Neither Serigne Saliou nor Mame Abdou Aziz never hesitated to speak truth to the political leaders and they strove to promote tolerance in their speeches and actions. Their actions and rhetoric show that they could not be bribed or scared by any political authority. Many respondents say that their teachings should be integrated into the formal schooling of children. I will return to this below.

As for images, posters, paintings, graffiti, etc. of an embodiment of traditional values and local practices, most of them displayed throughout the community are pictures of religious leaders, spiritual guides, and images or messages sensitizing people to

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cleanliness or against embezzlement. Religious figures whose images are displayed on walls throughout the community, the houses, and the schools include El Hadj Malick Sy, Mame Abdou Aziz Sy, Serigne Touba, Baye Niasse, Mame Laye, Abbe Hyacinthe Thiandoum, etc. Participants also listed women historical figures such as the « women of Nder », who chose death by suicide rather than succumbing to slavery by the Arabs, and Aline Sitoe Diatta, a woman from the Southern part of Senegal who resisted the French colonizers.

However, despite the valuable written resources and exemplary actions these Senegalese people have accomplished, and the love and respect people bear to them; they are still barely taught in the formal education system. I remember, I learned about the bravery of French Jeanne d'Arc, Napoleon, or philosophers such as Sartre, Marx, Hegel, etc. whose discourses and actions are mostly irrelevant to the Senegalese culture and beliefs. Similarly, we learn about John Locke, Hume, Bourdieu, and all those western thinkers. I personally believe that locally we have prominent figures whose ideas would be just as if not more beneficial to our children as they are more contextual and therefore, more relevant. Otherwise, it will be difficult to teach our students the values we think are the country's core values. If we are to participate in the so-called global village, we should go there with something that is truly our own.

In addition, at the local level, in the community of Thies which hosted this study, many participants describe people from the city as historically non-submissive. Among the main examples I collected were Ibrahima Sarr, a leader of the famous railway workers' during the colonial system. He is named after some schools and neighborhoods

in Thies. Other late political figures such as Mantoulaye Diene and Ousmane Ngom are also described as an embodiment of the core values I explored above. It is rare in Senegal to see a politician referred to regarding values because politicians are mostly viewed as representations of anti-values of corruption, embezzlement, disloyalty, waste, etc.

In the *Thies Noons* community, two parents, named Kagne as a local historical hero who showed courage to the invaders. Kagne is named after the biggest protected forest in the Western part of Senegal which surrounds the village of *Thies Noons*. Interestingly, the oral history I used to hear about Kagne is that he was a notorious bandit, who would attack people going through the forest and rob them. I find such contradictions enough reasons to study these figures more deeply in order to identify more accurate information before deciding whose actions and writings should or should not be incorporated in the formal teachings.

Many people also refer to their parents as examples of resilience as the following comment illustrates:

> my dad, for different reasons. The first would be, I mentioned resilience at the beginning of the interview, the reason is because he is the embodiment of that. He had very fragile health, he was a civil servant. But he suffered from glaucoma, so after he retired, he could not see but he kept on buying the newspapers, novels, books, in which he was interested, and I would read them for him for 20 years. He never wanted to disconnect from reality though he retired, though he was blind (Educational authority, male, 2).

Many other participants identified their mothers as examples of endurance simply because tradition prescribes that mothers determine their children's success in life.

In general, the above comments demonstrate the importance and frequent reference that some Senegalese make to some historical figures, many of whom are

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religious leaders. People refer to them as examples of the embodiment of the traditional values in this study. Such figures include women and youth as well as older people. Many people would like to see them taught at school because outside of the school they play a big role and they are present in daily discourses throughout the country. At the same time, due to "untouchable" the religious status of some of them, critiquing their actions would be very sensitive for many.

## Gender and values

Women hold a strong place in traditional Senegalese society, particularly in regard to their children's upbringing. They are expected to spend most of their time at home to cook for their children and inculcate them with local values, first, through the example of their own actions and then making sure that they attend formal school, are well-mannered, and that they do their part of the housework. Older women play also the role of storytellers to entertain and educate children at night, traditional healers, and guardians of the community's history. During my research, I came across an NGO, the Grandmother Project, which works to incorporate traditional values and local knowledge in primary schools in the Southeastern part of Senegal through involving grandmothers in the formal schools.

As many respondents indicated, most Senegalese believe that women and men are naturally and physically different. Based on that belief, the traditional Senegalese society bestows on each gender different responsibilities and expectations which results in various gender roles. The data collected, my insider's perspectives and my observations reveal that the community perceives people according to their fulfillment or not of their

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responsibilities and expectations. For example, men are expected to work hard, nourish, and protect their families, therefore, they should not show a sign of weakness or fear. They are expected to wake up early and leave the house for work, and to be strong when confronting pain, sorrow, and danger. Therefore, some say that *muñ* (withstanding physical pain), *fit* (courage), *liggeey* (hard work) are mostly related to men but not exclusively. For example, society expects *muñ* (psychological endurance), from women when it comes to tolerating difficulties in marriages.

> well, we deny it, but the women are more expected to abide by the value than men. For example, if one take *kersa*, in terms of behaviors it is more shocking when not respected by women as well as *mun* in the household. However, *mun* in terms of physical pain is more expected from men. *Jom* can also be closer to male. (Parent, Male, 3)

Women are expected to endure polygamy, poverty, ill-treatment from in-laws, for example, and especially, to raise successful children. Respondents gave many relevant examples and it is common to see children who have become successful taking good care of their mothers with gifts, praises, a trip to holy places, etc. However, I have also witnessed a young man mistreating, threatening to kill, and harassing, his mother whom I personally know sacrificed a lot for his success. Such cases show that one cannot draw a syllogism based on some examples. Moreover, witnessing the pains in the pregnancy and child delivery of my own wife and how, despite her agony, she still wanted to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife regarding housekeeping strengthen my support for the values of responsibility and respect children are expected to show to their mothers. Additionally, the endurance women are supposed to express has helped stabilize many couples and nurture hopes in face for great difficulty.

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At the same time, the values of *kersa* (decency), *suturë* (compassion), *oyof* (humility), are mostly attached to women. As described above, decency is the closest word we could attach to *kersa* and its meaning entails expectations of how girls and women are to dress, speak, and behave in public. Moreover, some participants in this study argued that the community is harder towards girls and women in terms of their behaviors and attitudes, particularly in public and in front of elders. When asked why most respondents stated that women are expected to be chaste until marriage so that they do not dishonor the entire family. While there is less and less pressure on women regarding chastity nowadays, some communities still consider it intolerable and shameful. This has led to many practices such as early marriages and female genital cutting. However, there have been many cases where traditional and community leaders have successfully helped authorities fight such practices.

One finding that arises from the data is that most women interviewed tended to say that values and/or moral principles require more of them than men and vice versa. For example a female respondent complained that :

> *Normalement ça doit être vu de la même manière aussi bien avec les hommes qu'avec les femmes mais ici dans notre culture l'accent se met surtout chez la femme le poids est beaucoup lourd chez la femme que chez l'homme la femme est partout indexée elle n'ose pas faire certaine chose. Par exemple sur l'aspect du mun dans le ménage la femme endure beaucoup plus que l'homme.*

> It should be applied the same way for both women and men but as we practice it, they are more emphasized on women and more is expected from them. Women are pointed at and accused more often therefore they abstain to do many things. For example, regarding *mun* women endure more than men in the household (Educational authority, Female, 1).

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With regard to the discourse on gender and values, a teacher said:

> *Il faut mettre les choses dans leur contexte. Si c'est dans notre société traditionnelle, c'est un problème de responsabilité. Mais en termes de valeurs je ne vois pas beaucoup de différence sur le traitement des hommes et des femmes. Les valeurs sont exigibles pour l'homme comme pour la femme. D'ailleurs en parlant de valeur on ne distingue pas de genre on dit Nit (la personne), Nit ku baax, nit ku bonn, nit ku am Jom. Et cela réfère aussi bien à l'homme qu'à la femme. Donc je ne vois pas de différence de genre.*

> Things need to be put in their context. It our traditional society, it is a matter of social responsibilities distribution based on gender. But in terms of value I do not see many differences between men and women. Values requires the same things from both men and women. Moreover, when one refers to value one does not make the difference between genders, but the subject used is nit (human); for example, *nit ku baax* (a good person), *nit ku bonn* (a bad person), nit ku am jom (a person full of dignity). And this refers to both men and women. Therefore, I do not see the difference in terms of gender (Teacher, Male, 2).

The quote raises the need for revisiting the relationship between traditional values or moral principles and women contextually. Most of the expectations for women are motivated by traditional gender roles and physical abilities. However, many people pointed to the need to adapt some of the understanding of women's attitudes and responsibilities considering how gender role evolved. The country has shown great progress regarding women's rights. It is among the first and rare countries in the world to require parity in all elected political positions surpassing many industrialized countries, like the U.S.

None of the respondents strongly criticized the values and societal expectations regarding their gender. Even if they do not abide by them, many female participants argued that these values are meant for their good and the good of the community. Some respondents admitted that women bear greater responsibility in fulfilling the values more

often than men because failing to do so can result in a degradation of their image, the image of their family and children. The concept of "*liggeyu ndey anu doom*" expresses how a mother's respect of traditional values and her responsibilities determines the success of her children puts too much pressure on women and is an unfair societal judgment.

## Age and values

Many comments regarding age and traditional values state that Senegalese society, in general, requires respect and obedience to elders. It starts within the family where younger siblings are expected to respect and obey the older ones. Children are also required to respect and obey their parents. Within the community, elders are given much respect and obedience. This expected attitude toward elders' manifests in different forms. Young people are expected to always stop and greet elders in a traditional way which lasts longer and uses lots of back and forth formulas including last names and wishes of peace and good health. They also need to listen to older people's advice, provide them gifts such as money or kola nuts, lower their voice and eyes when addressing them, stop a fight or an argument when asked, invite them and allow them to speak during weddings, naming ceremonies and other traditional events, etc. The respect and obedience from younger people facilitate elders' role as social regulators, according to many participants. However, such privileges have to be earned. Elders are expected to thoroughly embody traditions in order to merit such esteem. In return to the privilege offered to them, society is more demanding and harsher on elders regarding traditional values when they fail to comply with them.

Throughout the study, older people provided more explicit definitions and explanation of the values. Many respondents related values to age, older people are described to carry more values acquired throughout their life experience. Elders are expected to teach those values to children and children are expected to understand and abide by these values as they grow. However, some youths carry more values than many elders:

> *A partir d'une certaine tranche d'âge l'individu est censé être plus sage c'est à dire de par l'expérience et l'expertise qu'il a eu à engranger il doit être beaucoup plus regardant par rapport á certaines choses. Mais moi je dis que la valeur n'a pas d'âge ; on peut trouver des jeunes qui portent et qui défendent ces valeurs-là. Bien que ce ne soit pas tous les jeunes mais on peut trouver des exemples qui se battent et qui croient en ces valeurs-là, qui les vivent qui n'ont pas besoin du franc d'autrui.*

> When they reach some age, people are expected to be wiser thanks to the experience and expertise they have gathered. They should be more tolerant and patient regarding some acts. However, I must say that value is not related to age. There are some young people who carry and defend the values. Even if it's not all the youth, some of them believe in the values and fight for their perpetuation. Some young people cannot be bribed (Educational Authority, Female, 1).

Many respondents spoke of how the Senegalese youth and modern rappers convey messages full of values and criticize anti-values in their songs and activism. However, a respondent who shared trainings and programs with some rappers told me that there may be a large gap between their lyrics and their behaviors regarding values

> *Quand tu les approches de plus près tu découvres que ce qu'ils véhiculent ce n'est pas ce qu'ils vivent. Dans le grand groupe y'a toujours de petits groupes d'affinités qui font que souvent ils ne sont pas en phase par rapport à ce qu'ils font et les messages qu'ils véhiculent...... ils te font des textes très denses mais en réalité ce n'est pas ce qu'ils disent est différent de ce font.*

> When you get closer to them, you realize that their lifestyle is different from their lyrics and messages. They always have friendship subgroups which often makes it

difficult to see all of them live by the message the send… they can tell strong lyrics and messages, but their actual lifestyle is different (Educational authority, Female, 1).

Other respondents condemned the language they use to send their messages as rude and contrary to the Senegalese values or moral principles of *keras, suturë, and yaru* (politeness). Recently a group of rappers released a song critiquing the president and its current regime. People reacted differently to their lyrics, particularly where they describe the president, an institution, a person who could be their father, as *sai sai*, a strong Wolof phrase for someone who is impolite.

**Values in the past vs values now**

When referring to values, many participants also expressed regret for their gradual loss of and less frequent reference by people. They conveyed that those values were more strongly held and meant more in the past. Besides the responses collected, such remarks are common place in the current discourses in Senegal whenever some vile acts or attitudes happen within society. Some of the main remarks are:

> people now want an easy payout, very few people want to work the land, more and more youth resort to politics as a shortcut for socio-economic ascension, youth are less respectful to elders, and that traditional expressions of language, art, and fashion are less common. They claim that this cultural loss accompanies a rise in crime, debauchery, embezzlement, lies, and dishonesty in society. Every day, when the media reports some hideous acts, many people's reactions are "these acts never or rarely happened in the past" (Parent, Male, 5).

Much like the controversial rap song indicated earlier, many participants also described current political leaders as an embodiment of anti-values. It common to now see in Senegal political opponents joining with a leading group for personal interests.

Even if the political parties have an opposing political ideology, once not elected many leaders join the regime in order to benefit from its privileges. People denounce this act and call it "transhumance" (shapeshifting). Some traditional and religious leaders are also accused of corruption. Furthermore, another comment mentions that the shame associated with behaving inappropriately according to the social norms and humility to show off are less and less common. The causes respondents listed for these shifts include modernization, technology, and materialism as expressed in the following quote: "*Elles ont tendances à disparaître surtout le kersa a tendance à disparaître. Elles copient sut sur l'occident surtout à travers les télés la télévision* (Teacher, Female, 1). ». They tend to die out, particularly the *kersa.* They (women) copy western lifestyle mostly through what they see on TV which not always true. A few respondents pointed at feminism and children rights as causes of such loss of values also.

Many respondents stated that *Teranga* (hospitality) is losing more and more the place it used to have in human relationships due to growing mistrust, particularly in urban areas. I remember a discussion with friends, one night during my fieldwork, about giving free food to workers in your house. The local culture encourages people to give free food, drink, and accommodations to mason, carpenter, plumber, for instance. Some participants admitted that they no longer do it anymore because you don't know the people who work for you and additionally because they charge too much. Others said they would be ashamed to have lunch and not invite or provide food to the workers. Other people said during the discussion that they would not serve them separately, rather they would invite them around the family bowl as the tradition of *teranga* dictates. Contradictory narratives

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regarding traditional values like these discussions occur regularly. Some people question the relevance of traditional values in the current Senegalese context where there is growing mistrust.

On the other hand, the decadence of these values has resulted in people exhibiting their intimacy and secrets or others' in the public sphere mostly through social media. Consequently, many parents do not want their children to use the internet, let alone social media, which reduces their opportunities to grow intellectually in a digital globalized world.

Many other respondents pointed out that values are embedded in language and cultural practices the loss of which leads inevitably to the loss of traditional values. More and more *Serrer* youths in the community cannot speak the language. Additionally, most local traditional practices are no longer performed within the community. The few remaining practices such as *mbilim* have lost all their spirituality and educational aspects leaving the entertainment aspects blended with other cultures.

Overall, most participants admit that traditional values were stronger in the past, they have fewer effects on people's actions, the consequences are bad for the community, and finally, something needs to be done to perpetuate these values. The two subsequent chapters below present arguments for integrating values more purposefully in formal schools, their relevance, how they might be integrated. They also present what the challenges might be after assessing their presence at the school.

**CHAPTER VII**

**VALUES AND/OR MORAL PRINCIPLES IN SCHOOL: PRESENCE, USE, AND**

**REFERENCE**

School serves as a microcosm of the community, the society, and the country in general. Many of the vices, social ills, and other anti-values present the bigger community are also found at the school. The negative effects of such social ills on the individual are magnified with children. Moreover, children are more exposed and vulnerable because they are still within the values and knowledge acquisition process. Caught between two different educational settings, the home and formal school, students may suffer consequences unless harmony, what Bhaba (1994) calls a "third space", is found between the two types of education.

In addition to being an area for the manifestations of the anti-values including hypocrisy, lies, corruption, and for the lack of respect to punctuality, to public infrastructure, disorganization, and cleanliness; formal schools in Senegal face particular challenges. Chief among these are cheating during tests and exams. On the other hand, the values or moral principles of *teranga, suturë, maslaa, jom, kersa, and kal* are present at school and used or misused between students, teachers, teachers, and students in their daily interactions. Of course, they may also be misused.

This chapter first assesses the presence and use of values including traditional moral principles, local languages, and local traditional practices in the formal schools in general and in the target school. Then, it discusses the formal and informal use and reference to values in the target school, suggestions made by stakeholders on how to better integrate

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values into the schooling of children. The chapter draws upon participants' responses, observations, and my own experiences to make these arguments.

## **Values in the schools**

Formal schools, in general, have a way of education different that is, in many ways, from that of parents and communities. In addition to these two different ways of education, children are now more and more exposed to the influence of technology in their daily lives. To find a solution for children many respondents commented that parents, communities, and schools should communicate and exchange more often for a better, more relevant, more efficient, and more effective education.

As pointed out by many respondents, nowadays in Senegal, most middle school students have cell phones with which they can access any website or social network without any regulations, restrictions, or prior education related to the use of technology. Many participants say that in most schools, children are forbidden to use their cell phones. However, most of the time, they are free to use their phones at home and on the way to and from schools. Even at school, they find a way to use their electronic devices and to cheat during tests or connect to irrelevant websites. This frequent habit suggests the need for improved communication between school and community members.

At the same time, schools are often sites where values and moral principles are stressed and referred to, including solidarity, *teranga, and maslaa* are used and referred to in the schools. More formally, there have been a few workshops on integrating values as the principal described:

> *bon récemment nous avons assisté à un séminaire sur le retour aux valeurs en passant par le système éducatif et les écoles c'est un plus qui peut nous aider*

*parce que nous sommes dans la globalisation nos enfants sont exposés fortement aux nouvelles technologies ils ont accès à tout et difficilement contrôlables parce que depuis l'avènement des smartphones ils ont accès à des domaines insoupçonnés et là l'éducation aux valeurs, un retour aux valeurs un ancrage culturel peut nous aider à avoir encore un peu plus d'emprise sur les enfants qui sont en formation ce sont des jeunes qui sont en formation.*

I recently attended a workshop on return to values through the educational system and formal schools. I think it can be a plus to help guide the children in this era of globalization. They are exposed to the new technologies, they have access to everything, unexpected domains with their smartphones and it is not easy to control it. This is a place education on values can play a big role through a consolidation of cultural values that can facilitate the control of children being educated (Head of school, female, 1).

Because the main role of the teacher is to educate, s/he should be fully aware of the local values and find ways and means to discuss them with schoolchildren. Teachers should strive to not only reinforce traditional values but take the best of them, adapt them, and translate them in ways appropriate for formal schooling. Additionally, some people cling to practices that may be harmful to children and society in general. Many people still believe that the traditional ways of education were better designed to respond to the needs of children and society than formal schools as illustrated below:

I was talking with one headmaster who told me I do not think we are living better than how we used to. He said that he does not believe that our girls and women are receiving a better education than the traditional one. Because we had some basic values that overprotected our women. Currently, the system is not considering young girls' periods. We do not have facts on girls' dropping schools because of those considerations. In many schools, we do not have separate toilets. Such things were considered by traditional education. What I believe in is something needs to be done to include all children's needs, boys and girls, into the educational system (Educational authority, Male, 2).

Moreover, surprisingly, an educated woman, feminist, told me she is not thoroughly against female cutting that it just needs to be modernized arguing that the

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practices have positive effects on girls. Such remarks suggest the need for further investigation of the subject in order to better understand the associated values and practices to help schoolchildren discern the advantages and disadvantages of such practices.

Respondents also commented that students spend more time at school than with their family. Moreover, many parents do not have time to educate their children, therefore, teachers should not limit their role to being academic knowledge providers. A few other participants believe that traditional values should be left to the community who knows best what they want their children to be and how best to achieve that end. However, this argument was rebuked by participants who worried about orphans, children with irresponsible parents, and children who are not living with their parents. They argued that the school is, in fact, the community and it allows children more freedom to question values, moral principles, and practices and give their point of views thereby receiving feedback and guidance.

Many parents involved in the study indicated that they do not trust formal schools because of some cases of rapes and pedophilia that occur among students, between students and teachers in or on the way to school. Some parents cited how the fact that children take advantage of breaks between classes to loiter in the streets, gamble, smoke, and, in particular, that girls visit with boyfriends leading to pregnancies. At the end of 2018, an NGO published a report pointing some cases of teachers abusing sexually school girls. The report raised controversial reactions and teachers criticized the methodology used by the NGO to conduct the research and how it generalized of the

results. In any case, many participants stated that teachers should first be good examples to their students and then provide advice through discussions of good and bad attitudes.

Cheating during national exams has reached a large scale and it has become a great concern to educational authorities. Even the students acknowledge the fact and attribute it to lack of *jom* because according to one student "with *jom* one does not cheat or steal. Nowadays, students cheat and when they are caught, they laugh instead of crying in shame. Some even brag about their skills in cheating, it's a shame!" (Students, Female, FG 1). Students gave me many examples of cheating in their own class. Some students decry the fact that their friends spend too much time fooling around, other students attribute it to large class sizes, and the social pressure to get good grades. Some students misunderstand the *jom* that pushes them to work hard for good grades as a requirement to have good grades through whatever means possible. All these threats to the education of schoolchildren demand a stronger role of the teachers and school administration as one participant described below:

> *Vous savez qui dit élèves dit jeunes. Qui dit élèves dit apprenant et de mon point de vu le rôle de l'éducateur ne doit pas se limiter au transfert de connaissances mais c'est tout un package de service que tu dois donner á l'enfant. Il faut l'éduquer, instruire, l'accompagner, l'orienter et si l'enfant n'est pas porteur de ces valeurs il ne sera pas ce réceptacle pour un bon transfert. Ces valeurs doivent lui être inculquées au fil du temps pour qu'ils grandissent avec. C'est pourquoi moi je trouve pertinente la proposition qui est faite et qui est d'introduire des modules sur les valeurs et les droits humains dès le bas âge pour que l'enfant grandisse avec et jusqu'á l'université aura besoin de ces enseignements là parce que la personne a toujours besoin de recyclage.*

> Talking about students means talking about youth. Students also means learners and to me the role of an educator is not limited to knowledge transfer. Education is a package to be delivered to schoolchildren. Teachers need to instruct them, educate, and guide them and this cannot be achieved if the children do not carry these values. They should be inculcated to children gradually so that they grow

with them. That's why I find it relevant to introduce some modules on values and human rights at an early age. And even at university level because need recycling not to forget and lose (Head of school, female,1)
.

School is a microcosm of the community and as such, it should help establish and nurture the values of the local community. Curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of the community to be better accepted by the community. There needs to be a link between home and formal education systems. The parents may be doing their job and the teachers may be doing their job but if there is no link between what is inculcated to students at home and what they learn at school, the students may find themselves lost.

## Values and anti-values in the target school

In this particular school, the discourse around values echoes that in the community. School stakeholders argue that it needs to be more present within formal schooling. Values need to be discussed and be unpacked for both learners and teachers. Like most other schools with adolescents, the school administration and teachers set some strict rules meant to deter students from temptations and vices found within the society. They first sensitize the adolescents about their behaviors, talking to them like parents when they cheat, fight, miss classes, misbehave, etc. then they talk to their parents, and finally, they take pedagogical sanctions if there is no improvement. The principal and school administrators informed me that they forbid girls to wear miniskirts, makeup, and synthetic hair extension within the school premises. Boys haircuts and dressing are also regulated. All students are required to wear uniforms to avoid related competition and assure clothes adhere to local values for dress.

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The school administration emphasizes students' respect for teachers and other personnel as well that they work hard to succeed, and their duty to make their parents the school and the community proud. Together, they contemplate a better future. The school principal calls students into her office for one on one discussions and goes to classes to speak with them. She also makes sure that gambling kiosks are not located close to the school as commonplace in many other middle schools' surrounding areas now.

In addition to the above, the school has been implementing various formal and informal approaches and activities to promote many local values and practices. The sections below discuss purposeful references and practices related to local traditional values, moral principles, and practices at the school.

## Informal use and reference to local values, traditional moral principles, and local practices

The findings from the present study show that people's conscious or subconscious use of traditional values, local practices, and moral principles at the schools, manifest in a number of different ways. Some educational stakeholders imply or embed them in their pedagogical discourse. Language requires particular mention as it both an illustration of values and a vehicle for conveying values. It embeds many aspects of a community's traditional culture that could not be effective in a different language. The Wolof language was more used than other languages during the study. Even though French is the sole language of instruction, teachers, students, and school administrators speak very often in Wolof very often to chat outside of the classrooms and even within the classrooms to help students' understanding. Teachers use Wolof to illustrate their explanations with

examples from the community or to liven up the class and breech the language barrier that prevents many students from participating fully in classroom activities. My observations revealed how some teachers tell stories and jokes in Wolof. Students also speak Wolof among themselves.

When asked why they are using Wolof sometimes in their classrooms, most teachers responded that it brings fun and help students' comprehension of key concepts. No teacher explicitly linked it to a way of incorporating traditional values. The physical education teachers used *kal* (joking kinship) very often when providing feedback to students. The French teacher used lots of Wolof in one of her classes I observed, asking students to tell stories in Wolof. It was a way for her to introduce a reading comprehension lesson based on a text that incorporate tales from Senegal. Some participants lamented that it is a shame Wolof is not the language of instruction. It would be much easier and efficient to teach and learn in Wolof. Other respondents decried the use of Wolof and described its use in the school premises as a result of the inability of some teachers to speak French well. They argued that students' French competencies are lower as a result. During my teaching in the school, I found myself using lots of Wolof too, as I was incorporating the aforementioned traditional values.

In addition to the use of Wolof, the presence of instruction on traditional values is present within parents, and community/religious leaders being very often invited to the school. The principal told me she invites the imam and priests very often to talk to students about traditional values and about the community's expectations. The imam corroborated the principal's account in the following response:

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*Je prends en charge certains enfants les samedis et on discute sur tous les thèmes autour d'une natte parfois je distribue les thèmes dans les maisons. A l'école la principale m'appelle pour qu'on fasse le tour des classes pour conscientiser les élèves et je me bats pour cela et souvent je vois des choses et je convoque ces enfants qui se battent pour les ramener à l'ordre.*

I meet with a group of students on Saturdays and we discuss some social themes in the school yard; I do the same thing in the houses in the community. Sometimes, the principal brings me to school and we enter different classes to briefly "conscientize" the students about current social issues. I also often talk to children when they fight or when they are in bad terms (Community Leaders/elders, Male, 1).

Students, through the Citizenship and Values Club (*Club de Citoyenneté et des Valeurs*), organized a couple of events with guest speakers to raise the fellow students' awareness of the dangers of new technologies as well as their expected behaviors (respect, tolerance, solidarity) towards teachers and toward their peers. Children often abuse their peers consciously or not. Some of them often make nasty jokes if a classmate makes mistakes, score bad grades, or for other reasons. Teachers address what they see but many of these exchanges occur far from teachers' sight. Such sensitizing can help change the attitudes of some schoolchildren for the better.

On the other hand, students also show great respect, empathy, support, and compassion to their friends when they are sick or in material or emotional need. Lending, borrowing, and sharing school materials between classmates come naturally to many students in formal schools in Senegal. Few students manage to buy the materials but most of them are willing to share with peers. Teachers do not even need to ask them to do it. When a student is sick, or loses a family member, it is common that his or her friends go from class to class to collect money for him/her. They also may visit them during sad

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events. Such practices are also common among teachers, administrators, APE, and AME members:

> *La solidarité, l'entraide, ici à l'école quand un enfant a besoin de quelque chose les autres se cotisent, voilà c'est ça surtout parfois comme c'est un milieu un nécessiteux ils n'ont pas assez de moyens. Y'a d'abord l'administration c'est elle qui gère les inscriptions jusqu' à présent y a des gens n'ont pas encore cotisé les parents viennent expliquer leurs problèmes et on les comprend depuis le mois d'octobre jusqu'à présent y a des élèves qui ne sont pas inscrits et après tout on est des mamans donc on comprend.*
>
> Solidarity and mutual assistance; here in the school when a child needs the other schoolchildren contribute to assist him/her. Many people in the community have financial issues. The school administration puts no pressure on parents who cannot pay the registration fees. Till now there are some parents who have not paid. They come and tell us their problems, we understand them, we are mothers too, so we understand their issues (School administrator, female, 1).

Other informal ways of using or referencing to traditional values and local practices in the school include sporadic events organized by the students through clubs or by the school administration. For example, the student governments in all middle and high schools in Senegal hold annual cultural weekends toward the end of each school year. It is a time for students to enjoy the time on board through entertainment and pedagogical events. Entertainment often includes a display of the local cultural traditions such as song, dance, games, clothing, and skits. Respondents told me that the school use to organize wrestling matches, *mbilim, sabar* dances, and skits. Senegalese wrestling embeds and conveys lots of cultural aspects and religious syncretism. Even now, traditional wrestling (lamb in Wolof) is the most popular sport in Senegal and wrestlers make a show of how dressing, dancing, and singing according to their ethnic group's cultural traditions. This demonstration is perhaps the best illustration of Senegalese

cultural and religious syncretism as wrestlers publicly mix monotheist religious prayers with traditional spirituality. Other religious and cultural groups in the school also hold some evening events involving songs and group discussions.

Additionally, students and some teachers often wear traditional dress to school during and after national or community religious and social events. For example, I noticed for *Mardi gras* many students dress up in a traditional or funny way. "*Mardi gras*" is a Christian festival however, both Christian and Muslim schoolchildren dressed up in the school. Another example by a school administrator was:

> *Pendant les journées semaine de l'école de base y a des élèves qui organisent des événements comme on est en milieu sérères ils se déguisent en sérères et font des cérémonies. Pendant les journées de la semaine de l'école de base ils organisent des théâtres sur des thèmes par exemple sur l'éducation des filles ou sur les mariages précoces ça permet aux enfants de se découvrir aussi. On organise aussi, par exemple on peut appeler une personne ressource qui vient à l'école et cause avec les enfants sur des thèmes pertinents.*

> During the national basic education days, some students organize events and since we are in community of *Serrer*, they dress up in traditional *Serrer* way and celebrate. During that week of basic education, the present skits on themes including girls' education and early marriages. Such events help the children to self-identify. The school organize some events also for example we sometimes invite a resource person to come and sensitize to the children on relevant educational or social issues (School administrator, Female, 1).

Other informal usage and references to traditional values and local practices I noticed in the school were the school garden initiated by the principal and the students' environmental club with the support of the AMER. Parents and school administrators told me that fostering agriculture at school is a way to nurture a love of farming and respect for farmers as well as contemplating it as a future job. Such activities represent an effort

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to address the decision of many youth to depart from farming which they see a sign of poverty and backwardness in order to embrace blue collar jobs and with it, a better chance at social and economic status. According to other responses collected regarding the school garden, the activity presents the opportunity to raise children's awareness about the importance of agriculture within the economy of the country, protecting the environment for sustainable development, and how one can gain a decent life through agriculture. Moreover, the small harvest contributes to the school lunch program and is a sign of solidarity.

Besides the examples above, manifestations of traditional values on the school grounds may also be subtler. Unofficial rules that have been agreed upon by the principal, teachers, and the APE to send home students if their dress, shaving, and/or behaviors are found to be inappropriate. Their parents are summoned to discuss the issue. Graffiti and messages were also visible on the walls of the school, including likeliness of traditional and religious leaders. Many messages are in Wolof talking about hard work, solidarity, cleaning, etc. I have also noticed such wall art in other schools I have visited. Moreover, in each grade, girls divide themselves into groups and clean the classrooms and the bathrooms after school and boys moving tables, desks, and moving trash bins. Many participants find these extra-curricular ways of bringing culture and values to school as efficient, important, and enjoyable. Some participants think that it is good but not enough:

> efforts should be more done in middle/high schools in terms of integrating local values, knowledge, and practices because it is at this age, they start to build their identity and develop a critical view on what they read or see. You can have all the diplomas in the world, you can have all the degrees, from the schools in the world

but if you do not carry these values of your society that what happens; cheating and easy gains, embezzlement, *maangaan* politic. Those skills and knowledge one acquires in school have to be filtered by local values otherwise they will be misused. (Educational authority, Male, 2).

Therefore, they argue that values should formally be taught for their perpetuation and to strengthen their effects on promoting student's social and economic success.

As for the physical aspects of the classrooms, I noticed that girls wear veils (Muslim hijab) and most of the girls in the different classrooms I observed sit among themselves and in the front rows. Wearing the veils may be an expression of religious beliefs or traditional values such as *kersa*. Either way, girls continue to regularly hang out with other boys and non-veiled girls and be involved in different activities.

Some participants at the schools also mention the phenomenon of "*Jine Maimouna*". This phenomenon is well known throughout middle/high schools in Senegal, particularly during these past 5 years when it has occurred in many middle/high schools throughout the country. Schoolgirls suddenly fall into trances in great numbers. There was no rational explanation of the phenomenon. Some people attribute it to girls' indecent dress habits and evil spirits that may be within the school. When it occurred in this particular school, the administration called on traditional healers in Thies and other groups to appease the spirits. Despite the fact that the Senegalese are 95% Muslim and the rest Christian with very few animists, people still believe and resort to these traditional practices. Moreover, they sometimes use them along with monotheist religious practices.

**Formal use of values and local practices**

In exploring the formal use of values including moral principles and local practices, the present study is referring to the presence of the aforementioned concepts and practices within the curriculum, materials, training, and courses. Findings from the study show that most respondents find it relevant to integrate such knowledge and practices in formal schools to better educate the children and to conserve the Senegalese socio-cultural heritage. Moreover, the role of teachers goes beyond transmitting knowledge.

However, a few respondents, including both students and parents, rejected that idea and they think that such aspects of children's upbringing should be the sole responsibility of the parents, family, and community. One of their reasons was cultural diversity and the fact that parents know best what values they want their children to acquire. At the same time, this view was rejected by many other participants who argued that despite the cultural diversity Senegal is "one nation sharing the same values and goals. Separation will only lead to rejection of the others with all the consequences that entails." (Teacher, male, 5).

The fact is, there is no such a course in middle schools that deals solely with traditional values and/or local practices. Even though it is explicitly stated in the constitution that education in Senegal should be culturally relevant and incorporate our traditional values to build a citizenry with strong roots in Senegal; there is still a long way to go. Many respondents, however, stated that efforts are under way to formally integrate traditional teachings and develop a course dedicated to them. Some respondents spoke

about a subject in primary school "*Vivre dans son milieu*" (living in local community) as a stepping stone toward a greater formal integration of these aspects. The course involves *"on apprend déjà à l'enfant à se tolérer religieusement, à respecter les personnes âgées, à prendre de bonnes attitudes pour devenir un bon cadre. Je trouve que c'est une bonne chose de les intégrer au primaire.* /Children are taught religious tolerance, respect to older people, to acquire positive attitudes to become a good leader. I find it important that they are taught in primary school" (Teacher, 4).

At the middle and high school level, the civics curriculum was described by some respondents as dealing in part with some aspects of the traditional values and morals. However, it focuses more on citizenship as defined within the Senegalese constitution which is inspired by the French constitution. In addition to this course, many respondents, mostly teachers, conformed that textbooks, topics, and themes within the curricula contains additional aspects of the Senegalese traditional culture. Subjects such as history, geography, languages, and natural sciences are increasingly designed in accordance with cultural relevance thereby incorporating more local values and knowledge. It still remains that references to French history and values make up a good a good portion of the curriculum. This may not be a totally bad thing some participants argued as it is always beneficial to learn about others.

While I was teaching and incorporating local values and practices during my fieldwork, I noticed that many texts and images in the "*Go for English 4 eme"* textbook are about Senegalese traditional festivals, cultural aspects, traditional medicines, polygamy, west African heroes and historical figures. All references are supported with

images familiar to the students. Those texts were a great pretext for me to keep to the curriculum while teaching about local values and practices. For example, when teaching the text on traditional medicine compared to modern medicines, I developed interesting skits with students about a patient at a hospital and a patient with the traditional doctor in the community. We then discussed the advantages and drawbacks in each case. The choice of such texts allows me to start each of my classes discussing one value in a structured and smooth manner.

During my classroom observations, I also noticed that some teachers chose culturally relevant texts possibly because they already had an idea of my research and knew I was coming to observe. I observed an interesting class regarding the incorporation of local values and practices. It was a French reading comprehension lesson. The text was a Senegalese tale (storytelling) that depicts the hyena as the embodiment of anti-values and the hare as the good, honest, smart, a member of the community. The teacher started the class by asking students to tell stories in Wolof. Students are so excited when given a chance to speak in Wolof because it is easier for them, less stressful, and they can make jokes easier in Wolof. It was an effective combination of the students' initial storytelling in Wolof with the cultural traditions embedded within the story expressed in French. Students not only learned semantic and grammatical aspects of the French language; but they also discussed the values of honesty and sharing as evident by the hare's actions compared to the greed and disloyalty of the hyena.

Teachers and school administrators implicitly values incorporated in different ways. Teachers, particularly older ones, find many opportunities to discuss traditional

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values with students. If a student misbehaves or does not work hard at school, they not only talk to him/her separately, but they talk to the whole class about their parents' and the community's expectations for them.  In subjects such as natural sciences, some lessons discuss human reproduction and many teachers take that opportunity to discuss sexuality with the students. However, discussing sexuality to children is still taboo in many parts of Senegal so teachers often make sure they only provide advice that aligns with the traditions out of fear of parents' disapproval. Given current concerns for unexpected pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, teachers can nonetheless speak more openly about the use of family planning techniques.

School texts and bylaws also support aspects of traditional values through forbidding some behaviors and inappropriate acts within the community even though such acts and behaviors are not forbidden by law. However, it would be beneficial for the schools and the communities to revisit these values, concepts, and practices in a participatory way to draw out the positive aspects of them that for formal instruction. One teacher explained how he taught about joking kinship in his lesson:

> *Le Kal… on l'a fait en 3ème avec une dialogue de culture et des religions où on parle de la tolérance, on parle du dialogue des cultures avec les cultures sérères, diolas, wolofs, peulhs etc. Ensuite on parle aussi de l'interaction du dialogue des religions*
>
> Joking kinship… we did it in 10<sup>th</sup> grade through cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogues where we talked about tolerance. We discussed the cultural rapport between *serrers, diolas, wolofs, peulhs,* etc. we, then. Discuss inter-religious interaction and mutual respect (Teacher, Male, 4).
> .

Many middle/high schools currently have a school government run by students. Its goal is to educate and prepare future leaders by exposing them to the political system

at an early age and inculcating them with the values of a good leader. The government

involves different academic departments as well as individual teachers to help students

through the process. Each department has a president who works to involve most students

in the different department. Its role is to develop in students those skills and attitudes

needed to be a good citizen and/or community member. School is a microcosm of the

community and therefore it should help establish, maintain, and nurture the positive

values traditional practices of the local community. Schools should be institutions for the

community run with the community. According to many comments from participants,

there should be a link between parents and teachers. while the parents may be doing their

job and the teachers theirs, if there is no link between what is inculcated to young

students at home and at school, the students may be lost. However, school is a secular

and multicultural space that teaches students skills and values to enable them to become

good citizens skilled in a specific domain to benefit the human capital of the country.

Therefore, values, if to be added, need to be introduced and developed in a way that

meets the need of the different stakeholders so as to ensure positive effects. In the section

below, participants provide suggestions for the best ways to incorporate values in formal

schooling.

### Suggestion on how to best integrate them

Respondents have suggested various ways to best integrate positive traditional

values and local practices, within students' school experiences, either formally or

informally. One of the main points raised by participants was that the process needs to be

initiated by the political authorities through the ministry of education. Many people

suggested that the authorities should first conduct participatory research in the field followed by projects:

> *L'état á travers l'école doit s'en charger et ceci en les incorporant dans les curricula. Cela sera bénéfique á l'état même tous ces problèmes qu'on vit maintenant et que tout le monde décrit comme résultants de la perte des valeurs pourraient être résolus.*

> This is the government's responsibility who should incorporate them in the curricula. It would be beneficial to them; and even all the current social issues we are facing and that everyone denounce as a result of the loss of values could be resolved (Teacher, male, 2).

Teachers, heads of school, and other school administrators should be expressly trained in this field as they are the first model it to the students and they need to embody them before teaching them. There are modules on ethics during the teacher training programs, but it does not include discussions on these traditional values. Besides improving the training of teachers and school administration on these values, many responses suggested the creation of new lessons on traditional values and local practices. This can also be done through reinforcing the presence of these concepts within the civic education classes. Other respondents, including teachers in their great majority, think that it exists subjects such as literature, history, civic education, geography, social sciences, and philosophy could also better highlight positive values through the choice of texts, themes, and figures for the study.

Many respondents suggest that storytelling, local legends, poems, and songs could be more prominent in literature and history classes. Teaching such local knowledge means teaching local traditional values and practices because they are intertwined. As one teacher explained,

*Le conte ça passe parce qu'il y a toujours une leçon de morale à la fin donc plus de contes non seulement en 6ème mais dans les autres classes peut être dans les autres classes aussi.*

traditional storytelling works, there is always a moral lesson at the end so more storytelling not only in 7th grade but even in all the other classes (Teacher, Female, 1).

Philosophy and literature classes in middle schools in Senegal, as they are currently designed, study mostly exclusively European thinkers. Improvements to the curriculum could integrate more texts and thinkers from Senegal such as Cheikh Anta Diop and other figures listed above to make lessons culturally relevant and effective. As illustration, one educational authority explained the following:

we learn about John Locke, Hume, Bourdieu and all those western thinkers I believe that locally we have prominent figures whose ideas would be very beneficial to our children as they are more contextual and therefore relevant. Otherwise, it will be difficult to teach our students the values we think are the core values. If we have to participate in the so-called global village, we should go there with something ours. (Educational authority, male, 2)

Many other participants strongly advocated the teaching of local languages and the use of local languages as the language of instruction. As long as children learn in a foreign language, they tend to adopt the culture and values that are embedded in the language of instruction. Moreover, as argued by a teacher "most of the texts, materials, ideas, strategies, job skills, values we teach children are French and western oriented" (teacher, male, 4). Middle school students are at a critical age for constructing their identity. Many are not yet ready to critically assess their traditional or foreign values to choose the best in each. Moreover, a language in itself is a value, therefore, teaching it

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means teaching values and most values and practices make the best sense when discussed in the language of the community.

Other respondents argue that theories should be backed up by practices, therefore, they suggest various informal ways of further incorporating these local values and practices within the formal schools. Suggestions include informal morning or evening sessions on these values by knowledgeable community members and professionals in the field. In addition to suggesting more frequent organization informal means of incorporating traditional values discussed earlier in the study, some participants also suggest identifying specific dates or weeks dedicated to values and local practices. Most of the informal strategies that respondents suggested included teachers and school administration reminding schoolchildren about these values and play the role as responsible adults within the community in instilling these values in children.

Overall, participants reiterate that formally and/or informally teachers can pick materials that deal with traditional values and use them in their teaching since they have some power, flexibility, and freedom in their job as one of them stated,

> if they have the will, they can use different formal and informal channels to integrate them in their teaching. But for a harmonized teaching it needs to be in the curricula and main materials. (Teacher, male, 3)

### **Values in formal schools: What for?**

Most respondents acknowledge the gradual loss of traditional values. In addition to respondents, the narratives of elders, religious and political leaders in the country often refer to the issue. There has also recently been a high rate of unemployed youth with university degrees which raises the question of effectiveness and relevance of the current

formal educational system in Senegal. On the other hand, the educated elite, many of whom are political leaders are often depicted as the embodiment of anti-values such as corruption. One can have all the degrees, from the schools in the world but if s/he does not carry the values of his/her community the inevitably result would be cheating, easy profits, embezzlement, disloyalty, etc. "the skills and knowledge one acquires in formal schools have to be filtered by local values otherwise they will be misused." (Educational authority, male, 2)

According to many participants, the main reasons for incorporating the teachings of traditional values and local practices to perpetuate national cultural traditions through a culturally relevant approach and to promote stronger human relationships. Many see this as a necessity to provide students with the knowledge and skills that are relevant to the needs of the country. Children are exposed to the good and bad things happening in the world and to the exclusive rhetoric. Therefore, it is beneficial for youth to explore the values that have guided their ancestors and maintain the prevailing peace in the country. There should be more systematic triage of the material students encounter in school. Some efforts have been made but there is still a long way to go regarding a more culturally relevant education.

Even though most participants find it relevant to integrate traditional values and local practices in formal education and move towards a stronger culturally relevant education, it is still important to assess the existing formal or informal attempts to integrate these teachings in formal schools. The next chapter discusses the implications

such incorporations have had and may have on formal schools in general and the existing

and potential challenges in the process.

# CHAPTER VIII

## IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

After discussing how traditional values and local practices are, could be, and should be translated in the formal schooling, I find it necessary to assess the existing and potential implications and challenges regarding such a project. Based on my teaching experience during the fieldwork during which I incorporated some of these aspects, my observations, and responses I collected; I explored the positive and negative effects of integrating these aspects of the Senegalese traditional culture in the overall formal education system and the challenges in bringing such changes.

### Effects on the teaching-learning process

The comments, responses, and observations show many positive effects that incorporation of local traditional values and knowledge have and may have on the teaching-learning process. It may strengthen the relationships between formal schools and local communities and increase different stakeholders' motivation. Some parents, traditional, and religious leaders see in western education as a channel through which their children embrace new values to the neglect of their own. As the school principal argued, the main role of the school is to educate children therefore if formal schools manage to fix the growing issues of anti-values they fix at the same time:

> *Plus de la moitié des problèmes de l'école. On n'est tous conscients et tous les discours maintenant convergent vers ça, comment faire pour restaurer ces valeurs qui sont en train de nous échapper. Et si la communauté parvient en synergie avec l'administration á restaurer ces valeurs l'école y gagnerait grandement. L'enfant ne subit plus la rigueur éducationnelle ni dans sa famille ni á l'école.*

Many issues at school. We are all conscious of it and all the discourses converge to how to restore those values which are endangered. If the community manages to collaborate with the school administration to restore them, the school will benefit from it. Children are no longer experiencing the necessary educational rigor neither at home, no at school (Head of school, Female, 1).

Other comments show that the negligence regarding local traditional culture has made some parents prefer sending their children to *daaras* or just keep them home to train them in professional activities. If more parents are involved in school activities and made aware of the implementation of programs on traditional values and local knowledge, they could be more motivated to send and keep their children to school and invest in their education.

In addition to the effects on parents and community, such culturally relevant programs will make formal education more efficient and tailored to meet the needs of the country in terms of human resources. The findings show that classrooms could be livelier, and it will be easier for the teacher to illustrate their teachings when referring to these values. As I mentioned earlier, I noticed that when I started my lessons with an overview of value and tie it to the lesson of the day it helped me involve most of the students in the classroom activity. I have to admit it could be more challenging for me to take over a class, get the students involved, and attend class regularly without conducting these activities in English supplemented by Wolof whenever needed.

Other comments from teachers and educational authorities mentioned the fact that initiating such programs will ineluctably lead to deeper reflections on the formal education system and the pedagogical and societal failures it entails. Reflections on the curricula, the materials, the teaching-learning process, and actors will be beneficial to

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formal education in general. The system has been criticized as a failure because of the high failure, drop out, and retention rate plus a huge number of university graduates are unemployed. There is a mismatch between the training they receive and the jobs available out there. This explains partly the many temptations to immigrations towards western countries.

A language teacher also pointed out that incorporation of values and local practices through formal and informal channels would facilitate the implementation of communicative language teaching approach language teachers are entitled to. In addition, they will be trained in how to better integrate them in the formal school. It will also promote local knowledge, writers, novelists, and cultural production thereby breaking the complex of speaking, dressing, behaving, eating like other cultures do, to be an intellectual. It may also revalue, modernize, and adapt traditional jobs such as farming, husbandry, and weaving that are more and more abandoned by youth who consider them as second-class jobs and sometimes sign of socio-economic failure.

Many other comments on the implications talked about social reproduction role as Bourdieu described it (1990). A teacher frames it as follows

> it is high time our education teaches and perpetuate our values and not foreign values. It is good to learn other people's way of life but after you know and understand yours first. Foreign knowledge should supplement and help critique local knowledge not the other way » (Teacher, male, 2).

Furthermore, the same respondent argued for the use of local language as the most efficient and effective way to achieve the paramount goal of our formal education

> *Personnellement, je pense que ces valeurs devraient être incorporées dans le système. Je crois qu'une éducation qui ne repose pas sur la langue maternelle ne*

*peut pas être performant. Ça c'est ma position profonde. Les langues maternelles sont cruciales pour un système éducatif performant.*

Personally, I think that these values should be incorporated in the educational system. I believe that a system that is not based on mother tongue cannot be successful. Mother Tongues are crucial for a successful educational system (Teacher, Male, 2).

Most respondents thought it cannot have many negative effects on the formal schooling of schoolchildren. However; some negatives pedagogical effects were mentioned. If the process is not designed and implemented according to the needs and suggestions of the community it may promote the value of one group over the others and lead to frustrations. Considering the fragile state of African countries regarding ethnicity, it would be wiser to avoid any frustration. However, the fact is that Wolof is dominating other languages in the media and public places. Other negative effects raised include the potential loss of knowledge as a result of cut off of some subjects.

Integrating local traditional values should not mean de facto an elimination of subjects teaching foreign history, geography, literature, or philosophy otherwise there will be a great loss that can hinder schoolchildren's capacity to compete in the global world market. Besides the general pedagogical effects of the integration of the aforementioned traditional culture in the formal schools, I will discuss below the specific effects on teachers, school administrations, and the students.

### **Effects on teachers**

The main positive effects gathered regarding teachers include motivation, professional development facilitates their tasks, and achievement of their pedagogical and human capital objectives set in the national constitution. As the main actors expected to

teach and facilitate the incorporation process, teachers need to be trained in the local

practices they may teach and also to embody the target values:

> *Parce que même l'enseignant n'est pas épargné l'enseignant doit également être porteur de ces valeurs là parce que nous n'oublions pas que l'enseignant est le premier modèle de l'enfant á part sa famille c'est le modèle de l'élève ; chacun voudrait ressembler à son enseignant donc lui doit être porteur de ces valeurs là ; l'administration doit être porteuse de ces valeurs là pour pouvoir les inculquer aux enfants. L'inculcation de ces valeurs-là, l'éducation des enfants également nous avons une responsabilité dans ça, c'est à la maison c'est ici à l'école.*

> Because even the teachers should learn and carry these values. One should not forget that the teacher is the schoolchildren's first example. Besides their family, most students imitate their teachers and idealize them therefore they must carry some values before putting them on children. The school administration should as well. It is not only the family's responsibility to inculcate values on children we have our responsibilities too (Teacher, Female, 1).

Many parents believed that the integration process will have effects on some

teachers who behave inappropriately with schoolchildren and their colleagues. In

addition, if the students study, use, and practice the values in a positive way it will

strengthen the mutual respects among them and between schoolchildren and teachers and

administrators. Students' discipline is a big issue in middle/high schools in Senegal due

probably to age. Therefore, respect and hard work from students motivate teachers and

facilitates the implementation of their classroom activities.

Other comments mentioned the age of teachers who are younger therefore, if they

are not imbued with ethics and values it may be hard for them to avoid having

inappropriate relationships with students who are teenagers. A mother told with a worried

face that:

> *Le prof doit avoir un comportement exemplaire qui fait qu'aucun enfant n'ose le dépasser dans la classe mais si le prof se comporte comme un enfant et a des*

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*relations avec eux sur WhatsApp ils ne pourront pas respecter le prof car c'est l'âge de la puberté car les filles parlent de manière impolie avec leurs mamans donc les profs doivent être fermes pour la bonne marche de l'éducation. L'erreur vient des profs car ils se comportent comme des enfants.*

Teachers should have a respectful behavior so that schoolchildren behave appropriately in class. But if the teacher behaves like a child and has relationships with them through WhatsApp, they will not respect him/her. These are teenagers, the girls at this age do not even address their mothers respectfully so the teacher needs to be firm with them. The problem is with the teachers because they are childish (Parent, Female, 1).

The comments show that values can be taught without resorting to corporal punishment. Throughout their behaviors and actions, teachers can instill positive values on the children. Therefore, they should watch their dressing, language, discourse, and socio-emotional relations with their colleagues and students because children tend to imitate them.

Few negative effects of teaching traditional values were mentioned during the research including the fear of change may lead to ineffective teachings. Other comments included frustrations of some teachers because of extra teaching hours or teaching subjects they may not be interested in.

### Effects on learners

If schoolchildren are educated with these values, they have the basic foundations to now open themselves up to the rest of the world. Senghor used to say one has to be first rooted in one's values and culture before opening to the world. Therefore, schoolchildren if trained in these values they will be better equipped to face the changes, temptations, cultural identity challenges, and be ready for cross-cultural understanding. There are three main interconnected potential and existing effects of integration of

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traditional culture on schoolchildren listed by participants: social, pedagogical, and economic. Many respondents expected to see some positive social and economic changes in the country as a result of effective incorporating positive traditional values and local practices in the formal educational system.

Socially, many respondents believed that a positive change in attitudes will reduce the growing threat of violence, crimes, and sociocultural identity tensions. Acquisition and nurture of respect to the others were often listed as a basis to tolerance and peace between different social, cultural, and religious groups. Such respect is strongly present in the values of *Kal, suture, mun*, and *kersa*, therefore, teaching them could be beneficial to the whole community. Imbued with respect the students may behave better at school before their teachers and peers and focus more on their studies. In addition, children will grow to learn and love their cultural tradition, compare them with others for more flexibility and open-mindedness in the current global world. Such thoughts are illustrated in the following quote,

> *Ah d'une part oui, cela peut permettre à l'enfant de connaître les cultures de son milieu et les racines de leurs cultures ce qui va éveiller l'enfant et les pousser à découvrir les pratiques culturelles chez leurs amis. En plus ce sont des enfants ils ne sont pas encore mûrs ils ont besoin d'être guidés pour ne pas choisir le mauvais chemin et ces valeurs sont des garde fous et des sources de motivations pour travailler plus et bien se comporter.*

> Ah yes on the one hand, this can help children know their culture and history. This can trigger some intellectual curiosity in the child and push them to learn more about their peers' cultural traditions. In addition, these are children, they need to be guided so that they do not choose the wrong way and the values can be watchdogs and motivations to work harder et behave appropriately (Community leader, Female, 3).

Once they know and live by the positive values it will affect their attitudes in their future responsibilities. In addition, parents will give more importance to formal school when they realize that their children learn about their traditional culture at school thereby reducing the lack of confidence and sporadic tensions between school and communities.

With large classrooms, it is difficult for teachers to manage the students' discipline within one or two hours of classroom sessions. Therefore, a strong education in the values whether at home or at school or both, would be helpful and time saving for teachers if children received an education on values separately or beforehand.

However, few participants did not believe that values in the school can affect students' behaviors and social relationships. A student commented that,

> *Non, non ceux qui n'ont pas de pudeur ils ne l'auront jamais tous les profs nous conseillent mais cela ne change rien. Chaque jour on donne conseils aux élèves de la 4ème mais ils sont têtus. Si vous êtes ferme personne ne parlera mais le défaut de notre classe est que nous sommes trop bavardes. Les 4èmes sont d'habitudes comme ça mais c'est depuis la 6ème que nous sommes indexées comme les plus bavardes et les plus indisciplinés.*

> No, the teachers cannot change the children who do not have the decency, they always advise us, but it does not change our behavior. We, in 10th grade, are labeled as strong headed children we only behave if the teacher is firmed. We talk too much during classes. 10th grades are usually like that, but our section has been like this since 7th grade (Student, female, FG1, 4).

Other responses argued that local practices such as traditional way of eating and social celebrations entail many positive aspects that remain unknown to children. If they understand the positive side of their traditional culture the children could be prouder of themselves and hopefully this can reduce the illegal emigration to Europe and promote self-sufficiency.

*C'est toujours un aspect positif et en utilisant les valeurs traditionnelles on peut quelque part comprendre le sens même de notre alimentation. Par exemple l'alimentation aujourd'hui les gens tombent plus en plus malades parce que les gens sont mal nourris pourquoi les gens mal nourris parce qu'on a créé toujours et on crée actuellement une alimentation artificielle où il y a beaucoup d'engrais chimiques ensuite on utilise une alimentation on ne peut même pas savoir d'où qu'elle vient c'est ce qui actuellement les gens tombent malades alors que dans le passé je me rappelle de ma grand-mère, ma grand-mère n'utilisait pas le cube magie à la place du cube magie les grand-parents utilisaient du tamarinier des feuilles de baobabs des feuilles du bissap, etc. donc c'est pour cela j'ai dit que l'utilisation ou l'enseignement des valeurs traditionnelles moi je crois que en plus de l'aspect positif.*

It is always positive. Traditional values teach us about our food and diet too. For example, the food we consume nowadays is not quality and the consequence are we are all sick. There are lots of chemical products and we eat lots of food we do not even know where they come from. I remember my grandmother used to cook without any bouillon. Our grandparents used organic leaves of baobabs and other local trees. That's why I think teaching traditional values including these aspects can be positive (School administrator, female, 1).

Some of the participants' main arguments that support the economic effects of integrating traditional culture on students come through hard work and humility traditional values value can instill in children promoting thereby hard work and local jobs. Children must know that they need to do something to achieve something. Values are meant to better people and their living conditions as a parent argues: « *je le pense sincèrement, ces valeurs ne font que promouvoir le travail, le respect, la tolérance et la résilience.* / I do believe the values only promote hard work, respect, tolerance, and resilience » (parent, female, 8).

The love of work and hard work will ineluctably lead to economic growth from low scale up to the national level some respondents said. Children need to be reminded of

the values of endurance and resilience to work harder and be more productive. An educational authority (male) argues that,

> we need to teach our children that things happen here not there. They are born here, and this is where they belong and are mostly accepted. This may even reduce the youth emigration issue. We have to teach them that if you need to succeed there are some sacrifices and investment to be made" (Educational authority, male, 2).

Many other people argue that poverty could be used to motivate children to work hard to succeed and to get their family out of poverty. Such arguments are often supported by the example of the current president who comes from a modest family, went through hardships, and occupies the highest position in the country.

Many comments discussed the pedagogical effects of such projects on schoolchildren. Love of school through learning more relevant knowledge and better academic performance through motivation was often referred to as effects of the integration of traditional culture in formal schooling. Many students do not perform well at school and drop out before high school because:

> *Les cours sont très difficiles et nombreuses… la littérature française est dur á comprendre et les coefficients sont élevés. Si les profs parlaient plus souvent wolof ou on enseigne plus les choses qu'on peut comprendre, nos réalités, ce serait mieux. Beaucoup d'élèves viennent au cours et n'y comprennent rien. On n'aime pas l'école on vient juste pour plaire á nos parents.*

> There are too many subjects already and they are hard to learn… French literature is not easy to understand, and the coefficient is high. If the teachers spoke more Wolof or if they teach us things more related to our culture that we can understand, it would be better. Many students do not understand the lessons. We do not like school we come just to please our parents (Students, male, FG2).

There is an obvious language barrier for students to better understand the lessons. Moreover, it is hard for them to find authentic materials and resources when asked to conduct research projects in many subjects with no connection to the local community's way of life. In addition, many parents who are supposed to follow up and supervise their children's homework do not play their part because of various reasons. Therefore, courses that could motivate children to work harder at school may affect their performance. Such courses may also replace other forms of punishments effectively.

> *Si l'enfant est imbu de ces valeurs ça va positivement impacter sur son travail. Être apprenant c'est difficile mais un mun kat quel que soit les difficultés va persévérer. Donc ça peut impacter sur les performances des enfants… Par contre, l'enfant dépourvu de ces valeurs finira toujours par ne pas travailler dur et se comportera moins bien á l'école. Ces valeurs peuvent et doivent être inculquer sans pour autant recourir aux moyens coercitifs comme la cravache ou tout autre forme de châtiments corporelles.*

> Values positively impacts children's work. It hard to be a learner in formal schools but if the child is "endurant" he will persevere and overcome the difficulties. Therefore, it can impact children's performance. On the other hand, children without values will end up learning less hard and will not behave appropriately at school. These values could and should be taught but without using any form corporal punishment including a whip (Educational authority, female,1).

From my own teaching experience during the fieldwork, I noticed that students were very enthusiastic in the values discussions and interactions related to them. Most of them attended classes regularly and were involved in different activities. It was not obvious that I could have the students attend regularly my classes let alone be involved. Therefore, I find starting my classes with values discussions a great motivator and an interesting subject considering the students' reactions during class time.

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Even if very few negative effects on schoolchildren regarding integration of local values and knowledge were listed, the few of them should be dealt with carefully as they can be windows for those against such projects. People are moving constantly in Senegal, therefore, teaching specific local values, knowledge, and languages may exclude some children because they recently moved in an area and may not speak the local language or be interested local practices. It still remains that if they are willing to learn the western language and knowledge it should not be hard to convince parents and children to learn one subject culturally relevant to the community that hosts the school. Another point is that if it has to be taught separately it will be one more subject adding to the already numerous lessons, students have to study.

Many positives implications on different educational stakeholders and the system itself were listed and praised by most respondents. However, such a pedagogical change will face various challenges to be implemented. The next sections draw on data collected during the fieldwork to discuss the existing and potential challenges and barriers as well as suggested ways to overcome them.

## **Challenges**

Incorporating traditional values and local practices into formal schooling in Senegal is described as a relevant project by most respondents. It has been implemented at a small scale in different forms since independence. However, until now there has been more discussions than actual actions. Moreover, the few attempts were never scaled up because of existing and anticipated challenges and issues. Drawing on participants

responses and other data collected, the main challenges discussed in the study are political, economic, pedagogical, and relevance.

## Political and economic

To many respondents the first and main obstacle to the integration of local values in formal schooling is the political will. First, because formal education in Senegal is public, nationally harmonized, and under the supervision of the political authority through the ministry of education. Therefore, unless such initiative is approved and backed up by the government it cannot be applied for leave alone succeed. Moreover, incorporation of such cultural aspects in the curricula requires financial and pedagogical means to finance the training of teachers, the confections of pedagogical materials and sensitizing the different educational stakeholders.

Besides the financial means, there is a need for a qualified human resource to implement such a project. According to many responses collected, financial and human resources are both interconnected to the political will because formal education is the sole responsibility of the political authorities. It has been present in the political discourse for decades now, but little has been done. Many participants attributed it to the lack of financial means from the authorities who may face reluctance from international financial institutions and educational donors to fund such projects. Moreover, political authorities prioritize other projects more attractive and susceptible to help them gain votes.

> *L'obstacle premier serait son application c'est á dire le suivi et les moyens qu'il faut. Est-ce que l'état est prêt á mettre les mesures d'accompagnement parce que ce sera impossible sans ça. Ça se fera d'abord avec une sensibilisation et ensuite des moyens. Des moyens financiers et des moyens humains. Et je doute que l'état le fera. L'obstacle ne peut venir que de la volonté de l'état à le mettre en œuvre. Aucun parent ne s'opposerait à l'enseignement de sa langue et de ses valeurs.*

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The only obstacle would be its implementation, I mean the follow up and provision of means. Are the authorities ready to accompany such a project because it is necessary for its success? It requires sensitizing first then financial means and human resources. And I doubt that the authorities are willing to do it. The only obstacle is the authorities' will to implement it. No parents will oppose to teaching of their language and their values (Teacher, Male, 2).

A community leader followed up and described the political authorities as unwilling to support a project that teaches schoolchildren values contrary to many politicians' actions and behaviors,

*Si c'est un projet ça demande beaucoup d'efforts et de travail car si les autorités ne sont pas intéressées ça ne passera pas et si aussi ces valeurs sont contraires á leurs pratiques ils se sentiront visés et ne seront pas enchanté par de tel projet. Il y'a de bons projets au Sénégal mais ils ne sont jamais appliqués.*

If this is a project, it requires lots of efforts and perseverance because if the authorities are not interested it won't work particularly if the values are against their actions and practices, they may feel targeted by such a project and they won't promote it. There are good projects in Senegal but unfortunately, they are never implemented (Community, elders, male, 2).

Other participants also criticized the inactions of the political authorities to back up some initiatives at school level to regulate the schools and their surroundings in terms of morals and values. For example, the head of school listed the installation of gambling kiosks near the schools thereby tempting students. Even though it is forbidden nothing is done by the authorities to secure the students outside of school. It was also mentioned by a few participants that authorities could regulate children's access to some websites and/or educate them to the use of such tools new to the children. Television programs should also be regulated, and they should promote programs related to local values and positive practices:

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*Nous aurions préféré à la place de bons téléfilms qui nous montrent de bon comportement qui nous montrent nos valeurs traditionnelles qui nous montrent nos personnages historiques porteur de ces valeurs là même les émissions radios la même chose au lieu de nous faire mettre de la musique …. Nous mettre des émissions éducatives.*

Instead, we would rather have good movies that shows us good behaviors, our traditional values, our historic figures who carried those values. The same for radio shows instead of filling us with music all day long there should me more educational programs (Parent, female, 1).

Overall, most comments regarding the political challenges acknowledged that integration of traditional values and local knowledge can only be implemented through national educational reforms initiated and supported by the political authorities. The expected reforms to be effective should be preceded by research, pilot programs, and trainings which require a strong political will to accelerate the process. The following quote corroborates the preceding statement:

*La volonté de l'état et l'absence de recherches et de politique pour leur incorporation. On se plaint beaucoup de la déperdition des valeurs mais peu est en train d'être fait pour les intégrer dans l'enseignement. Et ce ne sera pas une tâche facile car ça va nécessiter beaucoup de réformes et d'investissement pour moi ça vaut le coût. C'est notre identité qui est en jeu dans cette ère de globalisation on risque de tout perdre et nous perdre.*

The will of the authorities to implement it and the absence of research are missing. People complain a lot about the loss of values but actually little is done to incorporate them in the educational system. It won't be an easy task and it will require many reforms and investments, to me it's worth it. Our identity is at stake in this era of globalization. We risk losing everything and to get lost (teacher, female, 5).

In addition, there is a fear to see changes and concrete reforms to implement such project occur as the following parent argues:

*Je ne pense pas, á part la volonté et peut être la peur du changement. Le gouvernement peut avoir peur des dépenses financières que ça va engendrer. Mais y a l'expertise et y'a les hommes qu'il faut pour le concocter.*

I do not think it will happen except if there is a strong will. People are reluctant to embrace changes. The government may worry about the financial means such project may require. But the expertise and human resource is available (Parent, male, 3).

## Pedagogical

From the pedagogical lens, most participants found it relevant to integrate some traditional cultural aspects in formal schooling. Many countries have already successfully implemented such a project why not in Senegal, the country that hosted the first formal schools in Francophone West Africa. From a pedagogical standpoint, the comments and other data collected show that there is a need to train teachers, incorporate suggested aspects of traditional culture in curricula, develop appropriate and relevant materials, translate and transcribe local educational resources, boost the will and motivation of teachers and other stakeholders.

The national curriculum guides the teaching-learning process in public schools in Senegal. To tackle any educational issue or contemplate any change there is a need to update the curriculum accordingly first. However, one single change in the curricula may have various positive and negative effects in the formal educational system chain because the different elements are interconnected. Therefore, many participants argued that any change or reform regarding the text requires prior research, piloting, and evaluation from the different stakeholders to anticipate and offset potential negative implications. Another

point raised regarding the pedagogical challenge is the lack of inclusiveness in the design

of the curricula as discussed below

> The first challenge would be the curriculum because who is writing the curriculum, who is involved in the process? Are we going to say that only those who are learning or been educated in a western way should? The marabouts in the neighborhood or community leaders don't have their say in the matter. It's about the education of members of their community. Things have been changing because when I was in primary school even the names of characters in all the readings were French names. (Educational authority, male, 2)

Such comment among others deplored the exclusion of local leaders, traditional

and cultural leaders in the curricula from conception to implementation. For many

participants, unless there is a stronger involvement of the different stakeholders it will be

hard to design an efficient and relevant culturally relevant curriculum. So far, the

curricula are designed through a top-down model missing thereby crucial information

from illiterate people.

From my own teaching experience during my fieldwork, even though there were

some relevant texts and images in the textbook to help me introduce traditional values

and local practices in my teachings, there was still a lack of materials to better illustrate

the reference to such cultural aspects. Most relevant illustrations exist in Wolof and other

local languages whereas the language of instruction is French. Therefore, I had to twist

the rules to be able to incorporate the aforementioned cultural aspects through short

discussions in Wolof. This fact raises again the issue of the choice of language of

instruction in formal school in Senegal. The discussions around this issue have been

going on for many years now and recently there have been few pilot projects to use a few

local languages in the first years of primary schools. Hopefully, the evaluation of such

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projects will encourage educational authorities to scale it up to the national level. If a consensus is found in the choice of languages to be used on geographical basis beforehand, the use of local language will be a first and significant step toward incorporation of local values and practices in formal schools. The following quote relates,

> *Même quand nous enseignons si les élèves ont des difficultés á comprendre certains termes ou notions il suffit d'utiliser la langue locale pour les voir soulager. Je crois que notre grand retard sur le plan éducatif c'est ça, le fait d'utiliser une langue étrangère comme langue d'instruction.*

> When we are teaching, and we notice that students cannot understand some concepts we use local languages and they easily grasp the meanings. I think our main educational problem is the use of foreign language as language of instruction (Teacher, male, 2).

There has been a project "*Lecture Pour Tous; LPT*", financed by USAID that promotes the use of local languages. It is currently piloted in many primary schools using the local language to teach reading the schoolchildren. The results from this LPT project may be used among other research and studies to contemplate the use of local in formal schooling.

As mentioned above, there is a need to train teachers and create teaching materials drawn from local and traditional resources, translate and transcribe what need be, and adapt them to the pedagogical requirements of the formal education bearing in mind the existing social cohesion. In addition, there is a need to decide on the ways in which it should be implemented, formally or informally, through some already existing subjects or through subjects designed to teach traditional values and local practices solely.

Other comments raised the issue of time and motivations. Adding these aspects in the teaching/learning process will require extra teaching time from teachers and extra

learning time from students. Considering that both are already complaining about the too much teaching hours and classes for students, there will be a need to convince and motivate them regarding the addition of new teachings either formally and informally.

Few other respondents argued that such cultural aspects should be taught informally by community members with relevant knowledge through the supervision of the APE and the school management committee through optional classes.

Overall, many comments argued that there should be more voices in the conception of curricula and other pedagogical resources. Political will should be backed up by efficient, relevant, and effective pedagogical means as well as community approval and input.

## **Relevance**

Besides the political, economic, and pedagogical challenges, few participants raised also the relevance of such initiative. Some voices are against the integration of these traditional cultural aspects in formal schools. Such remarks and views may constitute barriers to the incorporation of these socio-cultural elements in formal schools. They argued that there is a need for deeper reflections and studies regarding relevance before bringing in such reforms. According to some respondents, there is a need to assess the worth of bringing such pedagogical change as far as teaching-learning outcomes is concerned. The following comment is an illustration of such concerns,

> *L'enseignement c'est un système et tout système repose sur des choix. Et le choix doit être fait par les acteurs. Si vous essayez un système depuis près de 60 ans et que ce système ait toujours des tares il faut oser changer. On peut dire que c'est dû au sous-développement que les bailleurs nous choisissent les choses á apprendre. C'est ça le manque de courage.*

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Education is a system and every system imply making choices. The choice should be made by the stakeholders. If you try a system for over 60 years and you realize it is not meeting your expectations, you should dare to change it. One may say it is because we live in a developing country that the funders choose for us what to study and not. There lies the lack of courage (Teacher, male,2).

Some respondents stated that it would be difficult to teach values in formal schools because of the number of socio-cultural subgroups and each may want their cultural aspects to be integrated. It may be hard for authority to accommodate each group; therefore, it is easier to leave this task to the community. Other comments argued that to strengthen the nation's socio-cultural cohesion there is a need to teach children about their values but also the values and cultural aspects of the others. If they understand why the others are behaving differently, they will be more likely to tolerate the differences between people locally and at a broader level.

After the discussions about the challenges many participants also gave their views on the solutions to overcome the challenges listed. One of the main solutions listed is the need to integrate more communities to better understand their needs regarding the education of their children as well as the ways and means to meet them. The more they are involved the better they understand the goals and objectives of what is being taught and for the specific case of this study the relevance to integrate local knowledge in formal education. They have their say in the education of their children and moreover, they may provide with valuable pedagogical information and resources when it comes to integrating the cultural aspects aforementioned. Other solutions to anticipate the barriers and challenges are to start with small scale projects and informal initiatives and learn from them before scaling up the best practices learned from these experiences.

Considering the crucial role of the local community in local values and practices teaching, the chapter below gives an overview of formal students' parents' association and assesses the community's involvement in formal school. Additionally, it discusses their support to children's education, the effects such involvement can have in formal schooling, and the ways in which the community's engagement can be increased.

# CHAPTER IX

## LOCAL COMMUNITY

To determine the parents' and local community's formal and informal engagement in the different school's activities, I analyze data collected from interviews and the school administrative documents regarding Students' Parents' Associations (APEs), School Management Board (CGE), Students' Mothers' Association (AMER), and other related documents. This helped me triangulate other data collected as well.

The main questions I asked participants were meant to explore what Senegalese think about the degree of inclusion of parents in their children's schooling. For instance, do parents supervise their children's school work at home? How often do parents visit their children's school to request information? And do parents participate in school activities and the running of the school? In addition, the following questions will be used in our analysis of the effects parental and local community involvement may have on the formal educational system.

Analysis of the data collected addresses the school organizations that include local communities, show to what extent parents are actually involved in the school life and teaching/learning process, in which activities are they mostly involved, what prevents some of them from engaging, what can be done to increase their involvement, and whether their integration into school administration and involvement in school activities could benefit the formal schools.

**APE, AMER, and CGE: Role, engagement, and effects**

APE and CGE are the formal channels through which local community members can participate in different school activities and decision-making. According to Niane (2005), the first APEs were created in Senegal in 1956, before the independence, to bring parents closer to formal schools. All primary, middle, and high schools in Senegal have an APE elected by parents to represent them at the school management and decision-making meetings. Parents' engagement often varies depending on their level of education and whether the school is in a rural setting or urban area. They are expected to participate in the administration and the functioning of the schools (Niane, 2005; Diame, 2011). The APE typically has a small budget drawn mostly from the students' registration fees which they can use for school maintenance, remodeling, and for hosting guests. For example, in many areas of the country, the APE provides free food and drinks to teachers assigned to their school during national exams.

Most respondents in the present study describe the school's APE as very active and engaged compared to other APEs in the region and the country. In the first years, there were few members who volunteered to be part of the APE mostly because they were literate individuals within the community. At the same time, there was not a strong structure and the organization the former administration did not involve the APE in many activities and meetings. Many respondents give credit to the new principal for her participatory approach and efforts to involve the community. The new head of the APE, the Imam, the priest, parents interviewed, and many teachers praise her inclusive approach towards parents in this community where many parents are illiterate. The

president of the APE confirmed that he was convinced by the principal to participate in the organization. During my interview with her, the principal invoked many times the term community participation many times to show the importance she attributes to community involvement. She describes the APE as:

> *L'APE c'est la roue de secours de l'administration. Elle joue le rôle de relais entre l'école et la communauté. L'APE aussi va à la recherche de moyens pour soutenir le CEM à travers des réseaux d'amitié. L'APE est là aussi pour la motivation des élèves. Quand il y'a des remises de cadeaux ou autres cérémonies.* APE is the spare wheel of the school administration. It bridges the school and the community. The APE also uses its connection to raise funds and collect pedagogical means for the middle/school. They also help motivate the students during award distinction ceremonies (Head of School, Female, 1).

Moreover, the principal told me that she initiated the Students' Mothers Association (AMER) in supplement to the existing APE in order to involve more mothers. She said she noticed that many girls help their mothers to sell water and fruits along the main road facing the school. This how she talked to many mothers and decided to set up an AMER which is a new concept in Senegal. In addition, she argues that:

> *Ici culturellement quand un enfant réussit on dit que ah ça c'est les fruits du travail de sa maman si l'enfant a des difficultés tout le monde le rejette mais si tout va bien également on dit que ah c'est notre enfant à nous même tous nous en avons discuté je leur ai dit que attention socialement les retombés des résultats de vos enfants c'est vous qui les ressentirez directement d'abord et elles ont dit effectivement nous allons nous investir pour leur réussite ça c'est un peu aspect social culturel.*

> In this culture, when the success of a child is attributed to the mothers' endurance and hard-work. On the other hand, if a child has issues mothers are blamed as well. Moreover, a good child is everyone's child, but a misbehaving child is his/her mother's. I gathered the women and reminded them that they bear the responsibility of their children's performances. They are directly concerned. They said they will invest more for the success of their schoolchildren. This is a socio-cultural aspect (Head of school, female, 1).

This comment shows the plight of mothers and how they can be blamed if their children fail at school or in life in general. The principal uses this discourse to get more mothers involved and invest in the education of their children, particularly the girls. It seems to work because I have noticed that many AMER members frequently visited the schools to help students with the garden, help in cooking and serving food for the school lunch program, and attended meetings and workshops in great numbers. They also collect money to build benches within the schoolyard.

However, I noticed that very little was done to deconstruct the discourse that blames women alone for the failure of their children. In addition to the APE and AMER, the CGE made up of teachers, parents, school administrators, and head of school. It is responsible for making major decisions in planning and managing the school (see the school section above).

As described by the principal,

*Elle est très impliquée dans les activités de l'école d'ailleurs l'APE a deux sièges au niveau du CGE où se prennent toutes les décisions de l'école toutes les activités également que nous déroulons nous avons un devoir d'informer l'ape sur tout le processus parce que c'est une façon de les remercier nous avons une démarche participative. D'autre part, ils savent quelles sont nos besoins d'ailleurs l'année quand nous avons grillé notre imprimante lors des examens blancs c'est le président de l'APE qui de sa poche est allé gracieusement nous offrir une imprimante…. Ils tiennent leurs réunions par weekend régulièrement également nous établissons le budget les différentes rubriques du budget… nous déterminons les montants des frais d'inscriptions.*

The APE is very involved in the school activities and they have two representatives at the CGE where the main school decisions are taken. We also have to inform the APE about the different activities we organize at schools. It is a way to thank them. We are using a participatory approach. They already know our needs for example last year our printer was broken, and the APE president bought us one out of his pocket…. They hold their meetings on weekends within

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the school... Together, we work on elaborating the budget and we determine the registration fees (Head of School, female, 1).

The APE is also very involved in the different activities of the school. They hold meetings regularly and they have two members who sit on the CGE. In addition, according to the principal, they have their say in all the decisions regarding the school. They help solve misunderstandings between school personnel and parents and they also facilitate the relationships between the children and their teachers.

Pedagogically, the APE supports the school through the organization of national exams and ceremonies to honor the best students. They also help convince their friends and neighbors to invest in their children's remedial tutoring sessions particularly those in 8th grade who will sit for a national exam at the end of the school year. I attended a meeting between the school administration, the APE, AMER, and teachers on identifying the ways in which the school results at national exams could be improved. The main point was the need for remedial classes in the most challenging subject areas. However, because they have to pay for these classes, many parents do no send their children to those classes. Others also, think it is an excuse for their children to loiter around and engage in other dubious behaviors associated with juvenile delinquency. During the meeting, the president of the APE was urging the parents to their children for tutoring sessions, identifying ways to save money for that purpose. He also committed to paying for a couple of parents who could not. In addition, the APE/AMER leadership asked the teachers to reduce the fees for such classes. The latter accepted to do so and the school administration promises to find other incentives for volunteer teachers who receive lesser pay than the civil servants.

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In addition to the organizations mentioned above, the community's women associations, sports groups, and cultural associations are all involved in the school activities albeit to a lower extent. They participate at events in the school including student events. Most of the times, they participate as guests and do not actively engage in the workshops, meetings, events, etc. However, they often help students when they are planning socio-cultural activities. They also lend materials to students and support them financially.

Despite the noticeable dynamism of the APE, AMER, and CGE, it still remains that parents who are not active members of these organizations rarely visits schools, let alone participate in school activities due to various socio-economic reasons.

Low involvement is even worse in rural areas because parents are not well informed, or they are illiterate, so they think their responsibility stops in sending the kids to school. They perceive that the rest is up to the teachers and administration. That's why it is sometimes hard for such committees to operate and have the parents play their role. They have an important role to play in informing other parents. The school even allocates them fund funds to function and implement their projects.

The general remark one can draw from the quote above is that many parents do not know their responsibility vis-à-vis formal schools. This may be due to illiteracy or lack of sensitization from school authorities at the local and national level. Parents often lack the confidence as an illiterate person to actively participate, feeling they cannot make a meaningful contribution.

**<u>Local community's engagement and visits to schools</u>**

While respondents have a different opinion regarding the local community's engagement, most respondents stated that parents rarely visit schools to inquire about their children's work and behavior. Most responses show that besides active members of the APE and AME, other parents only go to schools when they are summoned up regarding academic grades or discipline issues. Among the many reasons raised, illiteracy is the underlying issue even if it is not explicitly mentioned by many participants. Many parents think they may not join the APE and AMER because they cannot read and write in French. They think that formal schools are all about paperwork, so they just send the schoolchildren's older siblings or a neighbor when convened. The latter do not have the same influence a parent may have in motivating their children to study harder and behave more appropriately. Consequently, when many children whose parents do not visit school may have more absences than other students. Some contributions from study participants reflect the importance of thinking about the actual role illiterate parents might play in the education process and how they could be better integrated for the benefit of children and formal education in Senegal**.**

Since APE and AMER members are very engaged in school activities, I think they should be welcome to more members than usual. More efforts and initiatives need to be done to sensitize reluctant and ignorant parents to play a bigger role in the formal schooling of their children. One of the best ways to do it is to be physically and financially engage in education.

Besides the illiteracy issue, many respondents including students and parents themselves, argue that they are too busy working to feed the family and pay other bills. Food is a priority in many families in the community and for many, it is a daily struggle. Parents have to wake up early to leave the house each day to provide for their family as discussed below:

> *Y'a des parents qui n'ont pas le temps même de voir ce que font les enfants parce que à tout moment, 24h /24, ils sont en train de chercher vraiment quelque chose pour nourrir ses enfants. Mes propres parents n'ont jamais visité l'école parce que mon père travaille dans une autre ville et rentre le weekend. Ma mère étant illettrée préfère envoyer ma grande sœur ou mon oncle.*

> Some parents do not even have time to check on their children because they are busy working to provide food to their families 24/7. My parents never visited me at school because my father was working in a different city and he only visited us on weekends. My mother was illiterate and preferred to send my older sister or my uncle (Student, FG, Male, 4).

In my own experience, my parents never visited my schools, however, they cared about my studies and they made sure I stayed at home to study instead of playing outside. Most teachers I spoke with described other parents as simply irresponsible "they think that all they have to do is send the kids to school. They never come and do not often know the grade and performances of their children" (Teacher, male, 3)

Teachers and school administration accused parents of giving up on their children and doing nothing to help the schools in their jobs. According to this perspective, parents are not concerned about the academic progress of their children to such an extent that many children resort identifying other people in the streets to play the role of "fake parents" when requested. The school administration told me they are very strict about the phenomenon of fake parents and they deter the students through academic sanctions.

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Some students also mentioned the fact that some of their peers are not living with their biological parents due to various reasons and that as a result, some of their caregivers do not care much about their education. This argument was reinforced by a school administrator who condemned it and told me that the school is working on identifying children in this situation and will talk to their guardians.

Besides these main factors, some participants mentioned that other parents in the community still keep a distant from formal schooling due to prejudices they have over formal schools. The head of the APE stated that they are regularly reaching out to such parents to sensitize them.

Overall, the analysis of data collected reveals that there is an increase in some parents' and certain community member's engagement in school socio-pedagogical activities and their visits to schools. However, in general most parents still rarely visit a school and do not participate in socio-pedagogical events at formal school.

**<u>Parents pedagogical and financial support to schoolchildren</u>**

Echoing school visits and engagement in school activities, most responses reveal that few parents supervise and/or support their children's studies at home. The most concerning points to me were that some parents do not even know their children's current grade level, their academic grades, the names of their teachers, or even the school of their children. Such attitudes from parents are mostly attributed to ignorance and irresponsibility. Few parents acknowledge that they do not have the basic information regarding the education of their children because they spend much of their time to work to take care of their family responsibilities as a parent. One parent remarked "it does not

mean I do not care; his older brother is old enough to help him with school and I know he is doing it right" (Parent, male, 8). This response from a parent shows how some family responsibilities are bestowed upon older children. However, responses collected at school still show the disagreement of teachers and school administrators some of whom thought "it just because they are irresponsible, anyone can find 1 or 2 days in a semester to visit the school of your children just to see how it looks like..." (Teacher, female, 1). Along with many participants, I can understand that parents ask older siblings to help the younger ones with their homework and other pedagogical aspects, but other responsibilities are parents' because they need to know how their children are educated by whom and when. Moreover, due to the influence parents have on their children in the Senegalese society, it will be beneficial to modern schools if parents followed up more on their children's schoolwork most of which need to be done at home. At the same time, many parents, even those who are illiterate, still make sure their children have a specific time to do homework and they will find them the necessary support from neighbors or family. On the other hand, other parents require their children to help with housework, particularly the girls, and with their small jobs thereby leaving very little time for children to devote to their school work.

As for the financial support aspects, the study investigated parents' willingness and capacity to pay school fees, buy school materials, provide pocket money, and pay for necessary remedial tutoring. Data collected reveal that most parents pay the fees for their children. While public schooling is free in Senegal, however; school administrations in accordance with APEs charge small amounts per students for uniforms and other school

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expenses, approximately $30 per year. The school administration's data show that few parents did not pay the school fees but that most of them were identified by the APE as unable to pay due to financial issues. The school waives the fees for such parents. Other parents who are reluctant to pay will be sensitized by the APE and the school principal. Students can still attend classes because fees are not mandatory.

As for materials and school fees, many students state that the parents do not buy school materials for them because they cannot, or they are unwilling. Some parents deplore that the school requests many textbooks and copybooks "I have 2 children at the school and each of them takes approximately 8 different subjects, each teacher ask requires textbooks and copybooks in addition to other materials. I can afford it as because I am a civil servant, but many parents can't." (Parent, male, 5). The school administration and teachers admit that it may be hard for many parents to buy them all the materials, therefore, they accept and encourage students to share textbooks and other materials with their peers. In addition, the school provide some books for each subject and the students can borrow them for class. However, sharing textbooks can be embarrassing for some students and it also brings noises to the classrooms. Additionally, students are rarely allowed to take home textbooks from the classroom, which also may hinder their learning.

Because of the numerous strikes, students miss many lessons and thereby need remedial lessons, which combined with overcrowded classrooms often translates into students needing remedial lessons, particularly students in 10th grade preparing for national exams. Most school parents said they cannot pay for these classes. I attended a

meeting between the principal, the APE, and teachers on improving the school's results on national exams. One of the main solutions that arose was the need for remedial classes for students with financial difficulties. The APE decided to sensitize all the parents' whose children are in such a situation. They also with the support of the principal convince the teachers to reduce the amount they charge for these remedial classes also I already mentioned.

Overall, an analysis of the data collected shows that many parents still do not adequately support their schoolchildren's financial needs due to poverty, ignorance, and sometimes neglect. Overall, the data show that parents are more willing to pay the school fees than buy materials and pay for remedial tutoring. I noticed that parents who are more educated tend to spend more on financing the education of their children. Many students also receive pocket money from their parents because they have to spend the day from 7 am to 4 pm at school and need to buy food. However, the amount they receive is often very low and they cannot even buy enough food and drink for the day. Fortunately, the school has a food program that sells sandwiches to children at a very low price. Data show that the school administration, teachers, and APE are making great efforts to sensitize parents to better finance the education of their children. More and more parents are also aware of the necessity to buy school materials and pay for remedial courses to help their children improve their academic performances and succeed at exams.

## Effects on schooling

Most comments and other data collected reveal that parents and the local community's engagement can positively affect the administration and school management as well as the performance and attitudes of students and teachers,

The school principal stated that greater engagement of the community brings more hands, ideas, and networks to the school. As already discussed, the CGE, APE, and AMER are involved in all the decisions-making committees of the school; however, few of them are fully active in administrative activities, which results in the principal and the president of the APE often doing all the work. This can delay the planning and implementation of many projects and limits the chances for school improvement. Moreover, the principal admits that she is already too busy with administrative paperwork of the students and teachers because she does not have an assistant. Data suggest that the lack of active engagement of many parents and community members is due to their illiteracy. Most members of APE are willing to help but all administrative paperwork is in French; therefore, they prefer to be more active in running the school lunch program, helping students in the school garden and during their events, and attending and providing valuable ideas during meetings and workshops. However, many study participants also praise the engagement of the community. Compared to many other schools, the community around the school are involved in almost all school activities even if their engagement is limited due to their illiteracy and unawareness.

Many responses supported the idea that stronger community involvement can bring about positive pedagogical effects in formal schools. Many comments, particularly

from teachers and students, show that the latter worry more about their grades and attitudes at schools when they know their parents visits or are otherwise involved in the school's. In addition, student discipline has been a big issue in formal school due to the plethora of students and different background, however, most schoolchildren in Senegal do not want their teacher to report their bad attitudes to parents. Therefore, having parents visit the school more often might deter students from misbehaving and motivate them to work harder. Some responses indicated that students are very proud when their parents visit schools and receive positive testimonies on their discipline and performances. A teacher commented that,

> it can be an effective emulation and motivation as well as a relief for us teachers because I have noticed that all the students whose parents are in the APE and AMER work hard and behave appropriately and they are involved in the students' socio-pedagogical groups in the school (teacher, female, 1)

This comment also shows how teachers wish to see more parents care more about their children's education. The visits and engagement not only motivate students, but they also motivate the teachers and school administration. Many teachers express their joy and pride when parents come by, thank, and provide encouragement by thanking them for their teaching or other specific actions they have done for their children. Moreover, recurrent visits of parents and their engagement in the school administration and activities deter many teachers from missing classes, misbehaving or abusing students. They also may be less apt to teach irrelevant topics or lag behind in terms of the curricular topics they need to cover. A veteran teacher told me that he always reminds the younger teachers to prepare their lessons and teach them as they should because « Since many parents are educated and maybe expert in the field you teach you do not want to be

embarrassed by mistakes or irrelevant information. Many parents like myself carefully read their children's textbook. » (Teacher, male, 2). As further evidence, I recall how I once received the visit of a parent of two of my students who happened to have been my trainer at the teacher training school in Dakar, Senegal. Furthermore, I observed one of my former students teach English during my fieldwork.

A few other responses also address the role parents can play to settle social issues at school. Because of their age and the respect Senegalese bestow on older people, particularly older parents very often manage to avoid or stop strikes by teachers and/or students. The phenomenon of strikes either from students or teachers has negatively affected formal public schools in Senegal. Students very often stop classes to demand better learning conditions or to express their anger against the management of the school or the behavior of a specific teacher. Any small issue can be an excuse for children to vacate the classroom sometimes up to a week at a time. As for teachers, they also very often strike very often to request raises in their salaries, professional development, and timely payment as well as other benefits. Their complaints are well justified but they ways and means used penalize the students nonetheless. These strikes significantly negatively affect the performances of the students as they cannot cover the materials on which students are supposed to be tested on national and district exam or teachers may rush their teaching not providing adequate instruction. The principal and the president of the APE both told me the role they have played in convincing most teachers not to go on strikes at least for exam-level "I think they accept because I talk to them as a mother and not as a principal." (Head of school, female, 1). The president of the APE also related

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having called the students many times to convince them to stop their strikes and resume attending the classes.

Conversely, a couple of responses suggested existing and potential negative effects that stronger parental involvement may have on formal schools. Most comments pertaining to the negative effects of parental engagement come from teachers and school administration. Their responses revealed some fear of seeing some parents invade the school premises during class times or interfering in the teachers' or administration's work. Some parents and community members sometimes come to school to reprimand a teacher or their children without following the appropriate channels. According to the principal, this should not be allowed as it will result in chaos and frustration. She instructs the APE to discuss such issues with parents and inform them of the procedures to follow when they want to participate in activities, denounce something, or see their children while at school. However, a teacher told me that "because of their age we always negotiate with them; it's hard to send them off or be strict with older people. It will tarnish the image of the school." (Teacher, female, 1)

Overall, however, study participants identify parents' increased inclusion and engagement as beneficial to the teaching and administration of formal schools in Senegal. As discussed above, they can be relevant resources to finance, manage, and support teachers and students pedagogically. Therefore, despite the active involvement of some parents in the APE, AMER, and in school activities, there is a need to engage an increasing number of parents and community members in formal school. Their pedagogical, financial, and moral support is crucial to the educational success of formal

schools in Senegal. Many participants suggest various ways of increasing local

community engagement as discussed in the next section.

<div align="center">**<u>Promoting increased involvement/engagement</u>**</div>

Comments and data collected discuss various ways and means to increase the

local community's involvement, including parents', engagement in formal schools. After

acknowledging the positive effects that parents' increased inclusion may have on the

overall education of schoolchildren, many teachers suggest that formal schools make it

mandatory that parents frequently visit schools to inquire after their children's academic

performance and behaviors as well as participating in meetings and workshops. A teacher

argues that "parents can be doctors, teachers, peasants, athletes, religious, masons,

ministers, etc.; each of these persons can bring something to the school be it ideas,

financial means, or network…" (Teacher, female, 1). In addition to what they can bring

to the school, parents' presence also deters and motivate students and teachers as

discussed above. Therefore, the formal schools should reach out to as many local

community members as they can. According to them, making school visits mandatory

can bridge schools and community. Moreover, they should reach out to parents and find

them in their houses or place of work to sensitize them about the positive effects they can

have on school and students:

> *Il faut convoquer ces parents pour les rappeler leurs devoirs…. Quand le parent te dit qu'il doit nourrir ses enfants et les acheter des fournitures on doit les rappeler à l'ordre pour qu'ils se rendent compte que leurs enfants pourraient être des Présidents, des députés, des ministres, des directeurs, des enseignants, des imams et des prêtres d'églises donc vous devez les soutenir quelque que soit les événements les parents doivent connaître toutes les fêtes pour mieux guider leurs enfants dans le droit donc il faut appeler les parents. Si on doit convoquer un parent qui vend des oranges pour subvenir aux besoins de leurs enfants il serait*

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*difficile de les convoquer mais s'ils ne peuvent pas venir il faut aller à la rencontre de ces dernières par exemple la principale doit dire aux enseignants qu'ils vont à la rencontre des vendeuses à la gare routière, dans les baptêmes, les mariages, dans les dahiras, pour les expliquer davantage leur rôle envers leurs enfants.*

One should summon those parents and remind them their duty toward their children… if they argue that their priority is to feed, buy school materials, and clothe the children, we need to remind them that these children may become presidents, members of parliament, ministers, directors, teachers, imams, and church parishes therefore, they should support them and know the school year calendar to better supervise children. However, if one needs to summon a parent who is busy selling fruits to support her family, it would be hard for them to stop their activity and come to school. If they cannot come the teachers should go meet them. The principal should ask the teachers to go to the women selling by the street, at naming ceremonies, weddings, religious gatherings, to sensitize them about the rights of the children (Community leader, male, 1).

In addition, other comments from teachers and administration suggest that students should be encouraged to convince their parents to visit schools more often and not resort to "fake parents". Few other teachers and parents suggest also that the APE and AMER be expanded to more parents and give each of the members some responsibilities. This can build a sense of ownership and make them feel more respected.

Many parents on their side talk about sensitizing and explaining to illiterate parents that one does not need to receive formal education to be engaged in the school's activities. This may be challenging considering everything is written in French and illiterate parents may feel lost during meetings and workshops held in French. School administrators should consider parents' potential discomforts in planning their meetings and workshops by translating documents or using local languages in some cases.

Many other participants including parents and students argue that promoting a greater engagement of parents largely involves the school management and improving

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the academic performance of its students. They argue that if the head of the school, the administration, and the teachers implement the participatory approach, the community will be more willing and motivated to visit the school and be involved in activities. Moreover, if people hear about the cleanliness of a school, interesting socio-cultural programs, or other attractive arts or performances they will be more curious to visit the school, transfer their children to the school, thereby growing the school, and becoming more involved. On the other hand, grades and particularly success rate on national exams are great motivators for parents and communities. The school has great hope for parents who are looking for the best school for their students. Therefore, according to some responses collected good results on national and internal exams is a great motivator for parents and communities to visit schools and engage in their different activities. The following quote from the principal illustrates the above arguments:

> *Pour plus impliquer les parents c'est d'abord le travail scolaire des enseignants, de l'APE, de la principale, des surveillant et des élèves parce que les bons résultats motivent les parents. Peut-être aussi les infrastructures pourront séduire l'école. Les partenariats que nous nouer aussi.*

> Parents' engagement is the scholarly responsibility of the teachers, APE, the principal, the school administration and the students because good school performance motivates the parents. Modern infrastructure could also attract parents. Our connections also could facilitate the process (Head of school, female, 1).

This comment reveals that parents can be motivated directly through awareness raising and involvement but also indirectly through the school's reputation and academic performances. Interestingly, one can conclude that more parental engagement can improve the school's administration and academic performances and vice versa.

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Overall, each of the different stakeholders can and should play a role to increase parents and local communities' engagement if formal schools. Educational authorities should explore and adopt good practices and suggestions made by different educational stakeholders including the parents themselves.

**CHAPTER X**

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since the EFA forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2001, the Senegalese authorities, with the support of International Financial Institutions and International and local NGOs, have invested lots of financial means and human resources to boost the access to formal education and achievement of basic education for boys and girls. As a result, the enrollment rate has increased with more girls attending formal primary schools than boys in the past ten years, as indicated in the introduction. There has been a net increase in students graduating from high school and universities as well. However, after graduation many students cannot find jobs related educational fields. The educational debate is now more oriented toward the quality of the formal educational system which many Senegalese decry as culturally and professionally irrelevant. In addition, there have been formal and informal debates regarding Senegalese youth's loss of traditional culture and the necessity to integrate them in the formal educational system. This paper investigated the relevance and the ways in which some aspects of the traditional culture including, traditional moral principles, local languages, local practices, and local community could be integrated in the formal educational system as well as the challenges and benefits.

I find this study ambitious and challenging as it chooses to address ambiguous and complex concepts of formal education, traditional values and moral principles, local communities, and their practices. Despite the cultural challenges around the discourse on values, I found the topic worth investigating since it is part of the worldwide cultural relevance discourse regarding education. Moreover, the choice of this topic and some

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specific cultural concepts and practices can lead to a critical and open discussion around traditional values, principles, and practices that could be, should be, should not be kept as well as those that needs adaptation. Moreover, it provides through participants and data collected some hints on the ways in which they may be integrated in school and potential barriers to such a project.

The dissertation was a great opportunity for me to review a great deal of relevant literature and theories regarding post-structural, post-colonial, and culturally relevant education, collect relevant documents, insights from key educational stakeholders in Senegal, and attend related symposium, workshops, and formal and informal debates. The choice of this particular school and community depict what is found, in terms of most economic, cultural, and pedagogical context, in most Senegalese middle/high schools. The school includes people from different socio-economic background and the community around is a mix of the main ethnic groups of the country. Considering the important place that values, principles, and traditional practices in the community, it is important to bring the best of them to the formal schools for a greater community engagement and educational effectiveness. By no means should this argument be understood as a promotion of all traditional practices, principles, beliefs, etc. or a rejection of the formal educational, which has succeeded in many ways in the socio-economic development of former colonized countries, but as an attempt to contribute to the debate in favor of a more culturally relevant educational system.

The literature discusses social theorists' discourse on education particularly in the post-modern and post-colonial contexts. It highlights the ongoing changes in different

educational system focusing on western formal education and traditional African education and the need of a "Third Space" for a more culturally relevant and holistic education. The literature also argues that a greater incorporation of some positive aspects of local people's traditional culture and greater community engagement may contribute to the revalidation and perpetuation of positive local traditional culture and a more culturally relevant education proven to be an effective and sustainable educational system.

Discourses regarding traditional values or moral principles describe the positive nature of most of them and positive effects they have had on Senegalese communities and could have on middle school. However, many comments reveal negative perceptions and misuse some of the traditional values (particularly *Maslaa and Suture*), referred many times as traditional moral principles because of the controversial perceptions. The analysis reveals that people in the community and at school refer frequently to these concepts and to some historical figures as embodiments of such or such other value or moral principle. Many responses also argue that older people and women are more expected to comply with them and the social sanction seems to be harder on them too. This analysis may show a patriarchal bedrock that, according to me, can be fixed through a critical course on the concepts and practices.

As for presence of values at formal schools, the findings show that there is no formal course on traditional values including moral principles, local practices, or local languages in the formal school and other middle/high schools in Senegal. However, teachers, students, parents, and school administration use or refer to informally,

consciously or unconsciously, within the school premises. Wolof language is frequently used in the classrooms and among teachers, the latter very often refer to the concepts in their classroom to encourage, tease some students but to often shame some of them. Hence, a need to discuss and study all these concepts be they values or moral principles to pick and choose the one that will only benefit the educational system.

Local practices are also very present is the different school events. There is strong discourse in favor of incorporating some aspects of local cultural traditions including local languages, some traditional local practices, some historical figures and their teaching, and some traditional values as they may have positive implications on middle/high school students, teachers, and local communities' motivation, attitudes, and performances. At the school that hosted the study, the principal individually or in concertation with the teachers, school administrators, and student parents' associations make significant efforts to expose students to what they consider to be moral and proper behavior through formal and informal channels.

Various formal and informal ways and means are suggested by different participants to incorporate the selected aspects of traditional values in the formal schools. The study also identifies many existing and potential political, economic, and pedagogical challenges and barriers to such a project. The choice of the values, local practices, and languages to be taught may disrupt the existing social cohesion of the communities. In this regard, one has to acknowledge that some research needs to be done beforehand. With this concern, some participants suggest an exploration on how to better incorporate them informally through social activities and events.

The investigation also provides interesting findings on local community's involvement and leads to the conclusion that besides the APE members, few parents participate in school activities. Even though many respondents hail local community participation in this particular school compared to other middle/high schools in Senegal, this involvement is limited to sporadic events or when they are summoned for grades or discipline issues. This result corroborates my findings on community engagement in my previous studies. The causes of such absence range from illiteracy, lack of information, poverty, and irresponsibility. However, most respondents acknowledge the importance of local community engagement in formal school. The analysis also reveals that it is intertwined with integration of local traditional values and practices and that a greater community engagement can facilitate the integration of relevant traditional values and practices for the students and the community.

Finally, I believe that culturally relevant education that includes positives aspects of local community's traditional culture can be an efficient alternative education for local development. Some traditional values, principles, and practices have held the Senegalese and Africans in general, together and have helped them face the hardest moments of their life and adverse natural effects long before colonialism. Others' have proven to be divisive, patriarchal, or misused and should be abandoned. Therefore, assessing the positive and relevant ones can lead to an efficient and relevant education that instills in Senegalese students the values of social community life, hard work, living with dignity, sharing, along with professional skills required in the current global market. Education

could be used to discuss, adapt, keep, and drop some of those values or principles, not to keep children away from them.

### Contributions and future research

Overall, the findings and discussions from this study provide an interesting panoramic picture to understand the study's contributions to international education in the postcolonial context. Regarding the answers to the study's research questions, it appears that the school is a microcosm of the community and the Senegalese society in general. Though the language of instruction, the content, materials, and teaching approaches are dominantly copied from the French educational model, the school, just like the surrounding community, is socio-culturally hybrid. People at school and in the community come from the diverse socio-cultural background. They consciously or unconsciously navigate from one culture to another through their interactions, dressing, and behaviors. However, the Wolof ethnic group's language and other cultural aspects occupy a stronger place in this syncretism. In the school, students, teachers, and other personnel frequently backed up their arguments with examples from the local practices.

Regarding the translation of local traditional values and practices into formal schooling, there is a presence and use of these cultural aspects in the classrooms and the school environment. Though most of the examples of the use of local traditional culture provided are informal, there were few lessons and formal teaching/learning practices that participants described as formal integration of values in the school. Therefore, the findings show an existing "Third Space" in the school and the community that is under-explored for more culturally relevant education in the formal high school.

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Additionally, the findings show a demand for a more culturally relevant education through the incorporation of local languages, storytelling, historic figures, and the local community. On the other hand, most parents acknowledge their low engagement in the school's socio-pedagogical activities due mainly to illiteracy, poverty, distance to school, and lack of awareness. However, parents attend, in bigger numbers, the informal school's socio-cultural events during which Wolof is spoken and students display local fashion, songs, and kits than they do with formal meetings and activities.

Teachers, school administration, educational authorities, and some students encourage the AMER and other inclusive initiatives from the recently appointed principal, APE, and AMER. The principal argued with official data in support that since her appointment and her inclusive approach there have been a net progress in the results of final exams, the enrollment rate, and decrease in dropouts. However, they acknowledge that more efforts need to be done in local community engagement as it has already contributed positively to the school's enrollment and academic performances at local and national exams. There is a need for a better external relationship to better involve the local community and hopefully raise enrollment, reduce dropouts, and achieve better performances in the school.

Regarding the specific case of integrating local traditional values or principles such as *jom*, *kersa, masala*, f*ule*, *mun*, etc. informal schools, my findings have revealed their double-edged nature. Therefore, if to be formally incorporated in the teachings, it should be critically discussed with students, so they see the positive and negative aspects and the effects they may have on the community. Their misuse and abusive aspects

should also be discussed with students. Moreover, some aspects of the aforementioned values or moral principles can be viewed and critiqued as sexist and patriarchal by feminist movements such as the "Me Too" movement. The dominance of the Wolof language and cultural aspects may also be viewed as hegemonic as the former colonizer's system or as a result of the choice of the community studied. Hence, there is a need for further studies to better deconstruct the different arguments and contemplate if and how they should be best approached in formal school settings.

Overall, I find this study relevant and worth being conducted though complex due to the ambiguous nature of discourse around culture and education. However, new interesting perspectives and issues such as diversity and complexity of values within one community, challenges, and implications to integrate traditional values and the local community is such a high school; were raised with different arguments in this study. It remains that I have not yet investigated this issue in some areas in Senegal where Wolof is not the predominant language and culture and where values and traditions are sometimes different from what we have seen in this community.

In future studies, I intend to extend the scope of the study to other regions in Senegal. I will elaborate more on participants' views on the relevance, benefits, and challenges of the integration of traditional values and involvement of local communities in the formal educational system. Additionally, I will investigate this issue in non-formal schools and formal schools with a gender-sensitive and socio-cultural approach to see whether there is a difference in the aspects and level incorporating traditional local values and local community depending on the status of the school. Furthermore, to better

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understand this issue and the existing and potential challenges, I will also collect more data from experts on education and local knowledge in Senegal and from initiatives to promotes local values and knowledge in formal school such as the RETO and the Grand Mother Project (GMP) mentioned in this study.

## Recommendations

Based on the discussions, results, and findings, this study recommends the following formal and informal actions to make the current educational system in Senegal more holistic and relevant to schoolchildren and the community:

The schoolchildren should also be educated to local traditional values through theoretical and practical academic means to instill in students a sense of self-respect and skills relevant to a proud exploitation of indigenous resources while opening up to the world. Such introduction of traditional values teaching should be done through pilot projects then integrated gradually.

Teachers' and school administrations' trainings should include modules on national and local cultural values including local languages, values, principles, traditional practices, and historical figures. Such training should be continued while in service and be contextualized to their school community.

To avoid teachers' and students' complaints regarding extra workload, the educational authorities should find ways and means to compensate teachers and encourage students to enroll in such subjects for example making them optional rather than mandatory.

The CGEs (School Management Committee) could explore and develop a socio-cultural activity plan to be implemented formally and informally throughout the school year. Such activities could involve as many community members as possible and explore ways and means to share every subculture including traditional values and practices present in the school. This can foster a common goal oriented to cohesiveness and make it more participatory.

Educational authorities should control and harmonize the different initiatives regarding incorporation of traditional values and local communities to avoid frustrations and non-alignment to the national education laws. They should also assess the different initiatives and conduct more research to come up with subjects that could be formally integrated at a national level. This will ensure that only positive traditional values and practices are critically integrated and reduce the risks of complaints. At a local level, they should send experts to train and accompany CGEs in developing socio-cultural activity plan.

In terms of methodology, in addition to integrating local languages, the use of traditional songs, games, dances, and storytelling should be more used as pedagogical techniques. Teaching of the selected values and practices should be implemented with a critical approach that discusses the advantages, disadvantages, misuse, and abuses for schoolchildren to discern positive from negative aspects.

All community members need to engage in the formal education of their children. This can be achieved through sensitizing, giving them responsibilities, extending the size

of APEs, breaking the literacy barrier because many parents are illiterate and school

formalities tend to exclude them.

# APPENDIX A

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Date:                    Instructor:                              Class:

Textbooks/materials:

| Time | Topic/Activity | Use of traditional values and local knowledge by instructor | Presence of traditional values and local knowledge in the classroom, materials, clothes. | Use of traditional values and local knowledge by students | Implied/covert use of values and local knowledge | Notes |
|------|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|      |                |      |      |      |      |      |
|      |                |      |      |      |      |      |
|      |                |      |      |      |      |      |
|      |                |      |      |      |      |      |

# APPENDIX B

## RETRO DEFINITIONS OF VALUES



**Journée de réflexion du 21 /12/2017 au CDEPS de Thiès Sur les valeurs Kersa, Mougn, Diom, Soutoura.**

Monsieur NDioba DIEYE *IEMS* Représentant de l'Inspecteur d'Académie de Thiès monsieur Baba DIASSE, madame Ndèye Nar BEYE chargée du partenariat à l'IA et monsieur Momar Talla MBAYE Président du RETRO en face à la Presse locale

**Les Groupes de travail**

**kersa** définition : c'est la pudeur, le contraire de l'arrogance un comportement conforme à nos valeurs traditionel sociales et culturelles ; lequel comportement s'applique dans notre manière de faire, de communiquer, de s'habiller en somme dans notre manière de vivre ensemble avec les autres.

**Mougn** Définition : le Mougn est une attitude sereine, réfléchie, positive, endurante face à une difficulté, un obstacle, une épreuve que l'on rencontre dans la vie quotidienne et qu'on cherche à franchir dans la dignité le courage et l'honneur et ceci en rapport avec nos valeurs positives.

**Diom** :définition : le Dion est un concept englobant qui peut etre défini comme un ensemble de vertus qui désigne la dignité, les sens de l'honneur, le refus de la compromission, le respect sans équivoque de la parole donnée, l'engagement personnel pour réussir à franchir les étapes difficiles de la vie conformément avec nos valeurs de vie commune.

**soutoura** définition : le soutoura est une qualité individuelle qui signifie discrétion, humilité, modestie, disposition à se mettre au service des autres de manière désintéressée et dans le secret le plus absolu ... ... traditionnelles les plus

---

**REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL**

*Un Peuple- Un But- Une Foi*

**Renouveau des Traditions Originelles du Sénégal (RETRO)**

Siège Social Villa N° 518 rue 14 Lazaret Thiès- Contacts : 77 314 45 00 – 77 600 59 53 – BP 353 Thi7s RP Email – momartallambaye4@yahoo.fr; Compte BNDE Thiès 01300966601

**RETRO**

Renouveau des Traditions Originelles du Sénégal

**fondation sonatel**

**2ème EDITION**

· SYMPOSIUM NATIONAL SUR LA PROMOTION DES VALEURS ET DE LA CITOYENNETÉ ·

**INVITATION**

Le Renouveau des Traditions Originelles du Sénégal (**RETRO**) en Partenariat avec la Fondation SONATEL

**En Collaboration avec :**

Le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, le Ministère de l'Education National, le Ministère de la Culture, le Ministère de la Jeunesse et de la Construction Citoyenne, le Ministère des sports loisirs, la Médiature de la République l'UNAPEES et Elton

**THEMES**
Diom – Mougne – soutoura – Kersa – Fayda
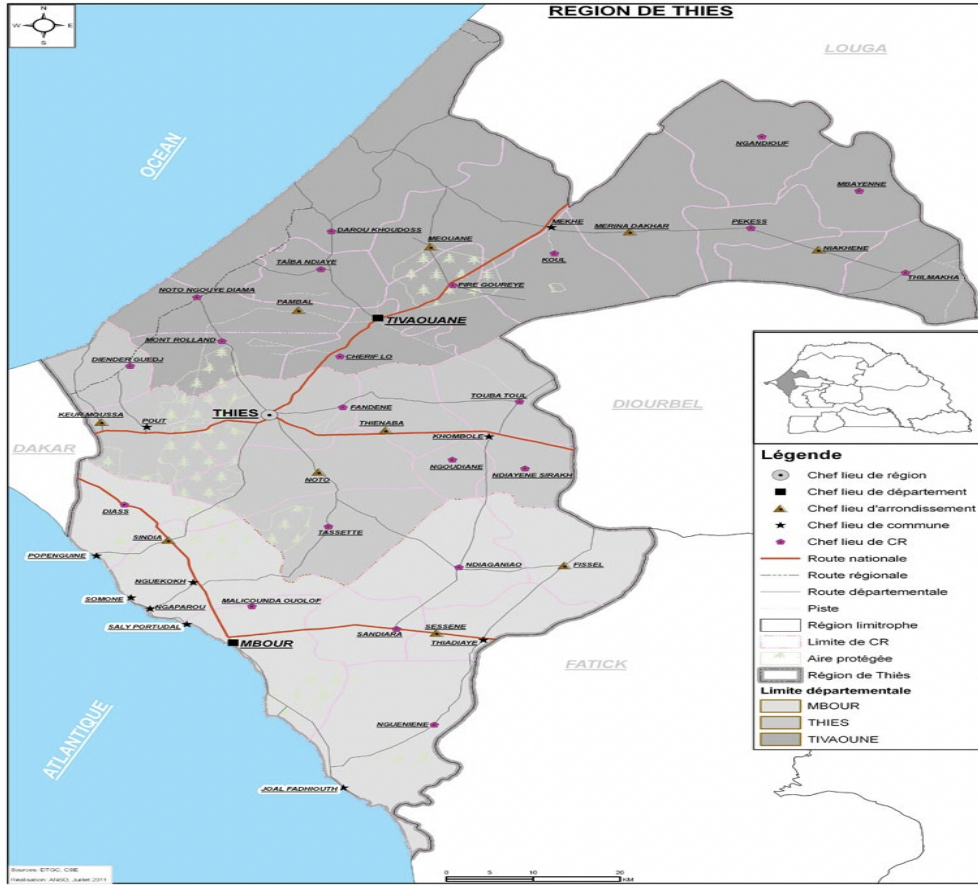
**CNEPS de THIES**

... ... 14 Avril 2018

# APPENDIX C

## MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL SENEGALESE GRADE LEVELS EQUIVALENTS TO

## U.S. GRADE LEVELS

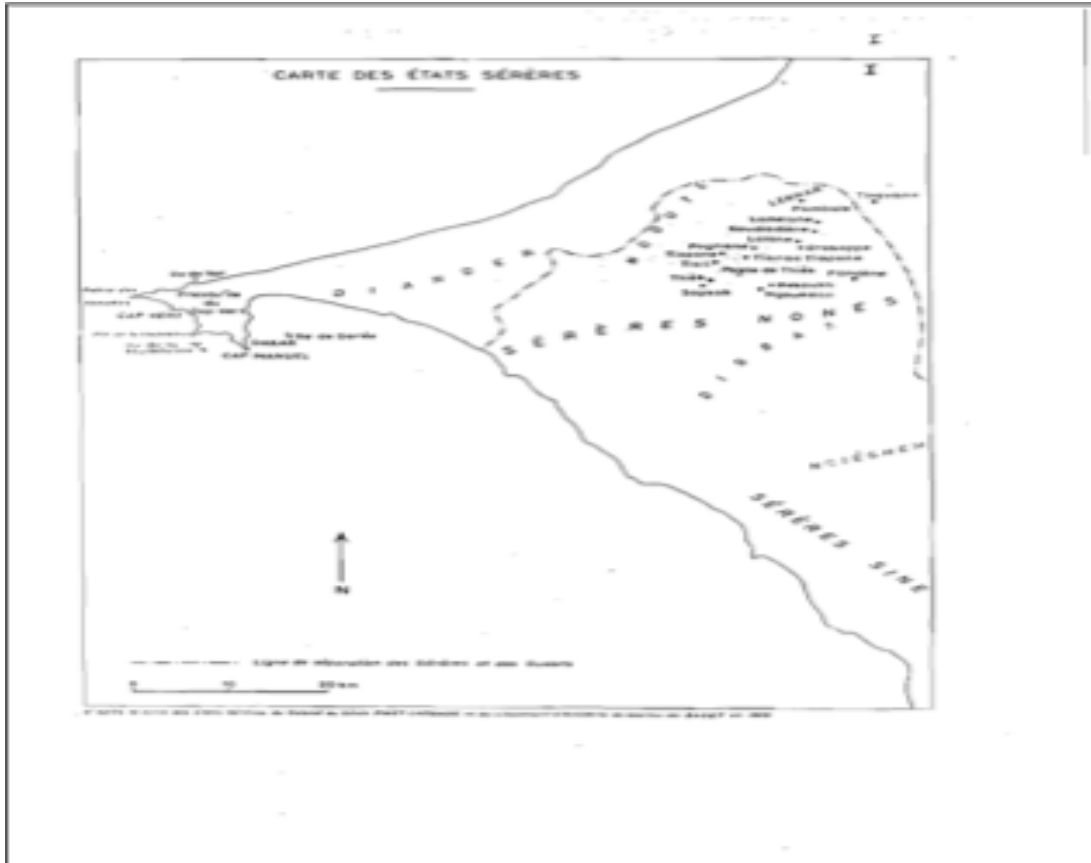| Senegalese Grade level | American grade level |
|---|---|
| Sixième | 7th grade |
| Cinquième | 8th grade |
| Quatrième | 9th grade |
| Troisième | 10th grade |
| Seconde | 11th grade |
| Première | 12th grade |
| Terminale | (13th grade) |

# APPENDIX D

## MAPS OF THE REGION OF THIES

# APPENDIX E

# CATRTE SERRER NOON



Carte Serrer Noon : Lopis-Sylla 2009

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