

The Current State of Education in Madagascar: Challenges and Solutions

The Secondary School FJKM Manohisoa At the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar Named FJKM Isoavina Fihavaozana

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Abstract

The first Missionary Station in Isoavina was established in the early years, with the initial school providing basic education and extracurricular activities, such as crafting, woodwork, and iron modeling, during the years 1870-1877. The school was known as the "Sekolin'ny Firenena" (National School). Education, in general, flourished under the guidance of foreign missionaries. However, when they departed, the school encountered several challenges. All activities experienced a significant decline due to the Malagasy teacher who continued the work lacking proper training. The school regained momentum with the inauguration of the new preschool "Manohisoa" on September 12, 1995, followed by the primary year 1 on September 10, 1997, and the Secondary year 2 on September 5, 2009, as stipulated in the authorization N2012/17-DREN ANALAMANGA on May 16, 2012. Regarding the performance in examinations, "MANOHISOA" School FJKM Isoavina had a 100% pass rate for CEPE (72.33%-74.44%-75.40% pass rates for CISCO Manjakandriana) in the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022, respectively. As for the BEPC, it was 56% for the year 2019-2020 (50.99% for CISCO), 100% for the year 2020-2021 (64.16% for CISCO), and 100% for the year 2021-2022 (74.23% for CISCO). Another 100% pass rate is achieved this 2022-2023 academic year. The disparity between public and church-affiliated schools poses a significant issue. Public schools have a considerably higher student population compared to their church-affiliated counterparts. Additionally, the number of teachers managing students in public schools is notably lower than those at MANOHISOA school (15 students per teacher). The inclusion of Holy Scripture curriculum in the educational program in FJKM schools helps to shape moral and ethical value to the students.

Keywords

education; challenges; school; church; teacher; student; parents



I. Introduction

All Malagasy parents share the same desire to educate their children and lead them toward a successful future. They have a saying: «Ho sakely mihoajoro ary ho saonjo mihoatra akondro - Mahaleova mahalasàna - Misondrota amin'ny ambony indrindra ka ho tabia sy ho reharehanay raiamandreny anie ianareo zanakay" which means: "may they

surpass us - may they be bright and smarter – May they rise to the highest peaks as a testament to our parenting". Christian parents, in particular, seek guidance from the Holy Scriptures to instill values in their children, as they say: "The Lord will make you the head, not the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:13a). This means that all parents are committed to providing the best for their children. What do they do for this purpose? It is clear that they make sacrifices and work hard for their children's well-being, whether materially, morally, or spiritually. They prioritize their children's education at home first and then invest in their future by enrolling them in schools to ensure their proper development.

Regarding the well-being of all individuals and the progress of society, education plays a vital role in shaping and enhancing them because it nurtures the mind and human potential. Often, there is a strong emphasis on educating the youth, but it is equally important for adults to continue learning and developing themselves. In the field of education, there is a shift towards lifelong learning, as when one advances to higher levels of knowledge, they contribute more to society, and the cycle of learning continues. Both knowledge and skills are equally important. The purpose of education is to cultivate capable and responsible citizens within the community. It encompasses three main aspects: moral, intellectual, and physical education. As the Holy Scripture in John 8.32 said: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free," this implies that through knowledge, one gains freedom and is not bound by the limitations of this world. Education also aims to achieve the goal of personal growth and capability development.

If we simplify it, education involves both knowledge acquired through schooling and the practical application of that knowledge in everyday life.

When discussing education in Madagascar, it is essential to understand the following three main points. First, the government's policies and laws. Second, the choices made by parents regarding their children's school enrollment. Third, the issue encountered when raising students in public and private schools as well as in church schools. What is the current situation in FJKM schools? Many problems will persist without close attention to education and training, particularly in terms of educational quality and teacher development. Let's focus on FJKM's "Manohisoa" School in Isoavina, which is committed to improving education.

II. Research Methods

The research and development of educational policies have been ongoing, with Law 78-040 of July 17, 1978, pertaining to education and training, Law 94-033 of November 23, 1994, establishing the framework for education and training in Madagascar, Law 2008-011 of July 17, 2008, amending Law 2004-004 of July 26, 2004, regarding education and training, and complemented by the "Sectoral Education Plan for the 2018-2022 period (PSE 2018-2022)" established by the Fourth Republic and Law 2022-018 of January 30, 2023. The latter are used as a tool to support our research.

The assessment of the Manohisoa schools and the statistics related to the students, starting from the 1995-1996 academic year to the present academic year (2022-2023), as well as the result of examinations within the schools, from the 2001-2002 academic year to the current year (2022-2023), have also been considered. This endeavor has been supported by the teachers and school administrators, with guidance from the local educational authorities such as the Manjakandriana Educational Service (CISCO) and the Pedagogical Zone (ZAP) Ambanitsena.

In the Isoavina Village, an outlying commune of Ambanitsena, in the Manjakandriana district, located in the Analamanga Region, stands the FJKM Isoavina Fihavaozana School of the Synod of Antananarivo Atsinanana (SPAA.12). The school is aptly named "MANOHISOA" because it continues the mission initiated by dedicated missionaries who founded both the school and the church building there. Here is the description provided by the satellite imagery and topographic photos:

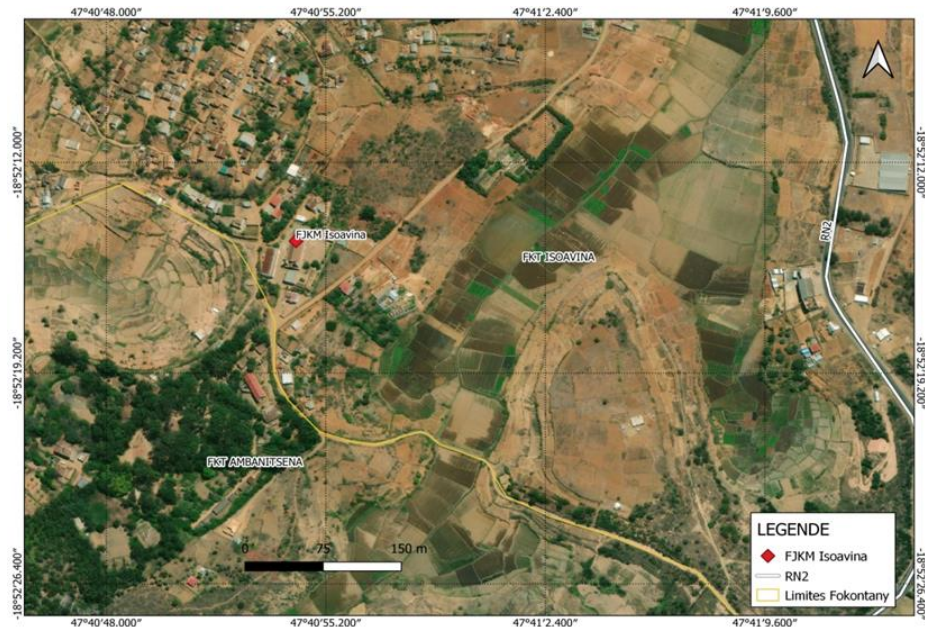


Figure 1. Satellite photo of the town

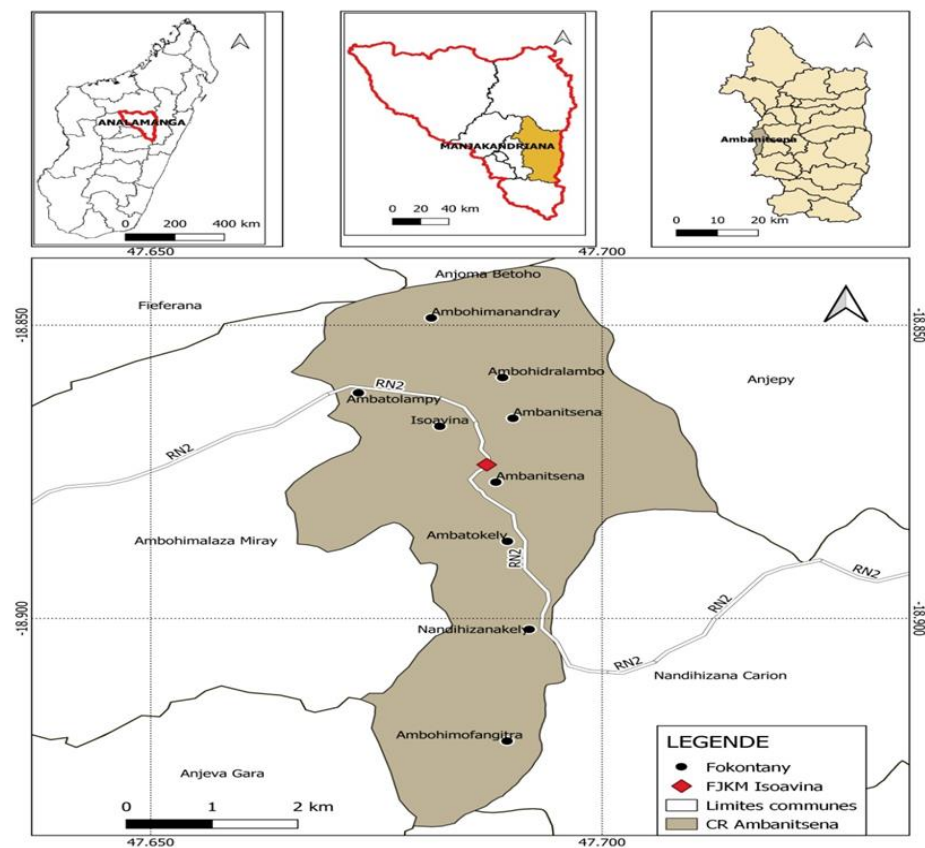


Figure 2. Topography photo of the town

III. Results and Discussion

The first Missionary Station in Isoavina was established in the early years, with the first school offering basic education and extrascholar activities such as crafting, wood and iron modeler during the years 1870-1872. Educational activities were initially conducted within the church (1875-1877).

In 1949, the first-year classes (CP1 – CP2) and second-year classes (CE1 – CE2) were introduced, followed by CM1-CM2. After CM2, a "Cours Supérieur" class was established, which prepared students for the CEPE examination (a primary school completion certificate). This was followed by the creation of higher grades, eventually reaching the third-year classes (3è). The school was known as the "Sekolin'ny Firenena," and it saw significant growth, attracting numerous students who came from various regions. Most alumni students are now famous and have high responsibility within the country and even abroad.

The school and education, in general, thrived under the guidance of foreign missionaries. However, when these missionaries left, the school faced several challenges. All of the activities declined significantly because the Malagasy teacher who continued the job had lack of training.

The school regained its momentum with the establishment of the new school, "Akanin-jaza (Preschool) MANOHISOA," on September 12, 1995. It initially operated in a small building within the compound of the current SAF/FJKM. The Primary Year 1 was inaugurated on September 10, 1997, in a building adjacent to the church, which housed the pastor and the school director's office. The Secondary Year 2 was established on September 5, 2009, following the official authorization (AO N2012/17-DREN ANALAMANGA) dated May 16, 2012. It is located in the new large building near the church, featuring seven classrooms and the personal's office. This building has also an upstairs area with a spacious hall and a library. It is important to note that this new school commemorates the 140th anniversary of the Church (1868-2008).

Similar to what the missionaries did, the School is closely connected to the Church. The presence of the School within the Church is significant, and it actively participates in all aspects, including financial support (especially through monthly contributions into the School's treasury, amounting to 350,000 Ar per month during the 2022-2023 academic year). In addition, the church has set a special month for school so the parishioners can show off to the teachers and staff their support (financially, materially...).

The teachers for FJKM schools are usually provided by IFRP (Christian Reformed Education in Madagascar). But, the government also allow volunteer teacher from public school to help. Manohisoa School has currently a mix of both. During the 2022-2023 academic years, there were 285 students, supervised by 19 teachers.

Table 1. Number of Students from the 1995-1996 Academic Year to Present academic year

School academic Year	Preschool Year	Primary Year 1	Secondary Year 2	Total
1995-1996	60	-	-	60
1996-1997	72	-	-	72
1997-1998	64	18	-	82
1998-1999	67	42	-	109
1999-2000	75	50	-	125
2000-2001	78	65	-	143

2001-2002	80	70	-	150
2002-2003	84	84	-	168
2003-2004	88	99	-	178
2004-2005	91	122	-	213
2005-2006	94	128	-	222
2006-2007	108	136	-	244
2007-2008	102	155	-	257
2008-2009	87	169	-	256
2009-2010	89	168	6	263
2010-2011	62	138	27	227
2011-2012	44	146	38	228
2012-2013	70	158	74	302
2013-2014	62	142	80	284
2014-2015	60	115	78	253
2015-2016	62	136	63	261
2016-2017	61	130	73	264
2017-2018	66	114	65	245
2018-2019	68	123	72	263
2019-2020	78	120	88	286
2020-2021	76	118	83	277
2021-2022	85	123	79	287
2022-2023	69	131	85	285

Source: "Manohisoa" School, FJKM Isoavina

Manohisoa School has a library and staff members compared to other schools in town. The Headmaster did not take any classes during the 2022-2023 academic years. The FRAM (School Management Committee) is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the building and various administrative tasks, in addition to their primary duties.

Regarding other schools within the ZAP Ambanitsena area, there is a Public Primary School (called EPP) in the Isoavina hamlet, and in the Ambanitsena hamlet another Public Primary School (EPP), a Second-Level Public School (CEG), and a Catholic Church School (EPP and College), which falls under the commune's jurisdiction.

The following information provides details about these schools during the 2022-2023 academic years: - about the numbers.

Table 2. Public Primary Schools (EPP) in Isoavina - Academic Year 2022-2023.

Student's numbers			Teacher's numbers		
Preschool Year	Primary Year 1	Total	Preschool Year	Primary Year 1	Total
29	144	173	02	05	07

Source: EPP Isoavina

The school does not have a library. It has one "Master FRAM" (School Management Committee Representative). The Headmaster teaches a class.

Table 3. Public Primary School (EPP) Ambanitsena - Academic Year 2022-2023

Student's numbers			Teacher's numbers		
Preschool Year	Primary Year 1	Total	Preschool Year	Primary Year 1	Total
30	120	150	02	03	05

Source: EPP Ambanitsena

No additional departments. Has one "Master FRAM." The Headmaster teaches a class.

Table 4. Second-Level Public School (CEG) Ambanitsena - Academic Year 2022-2023

Student's numbers			Teacher's numbers
Year Sixth to Year Eighth	Year ninth	Total	23
319	79	398	

Source: CEG Ambanitsena

Has additional departments and some technical equipment for practical science lessons. Has a school manager and a "Master FRAM." The principal teaches a class.

Table 5. Catholic School Ambanitsena (EPP and CEG) - Academic Year 2022-2023

Student's numbers				Teacher's numbers
Preschool to Year Eighth	Year fifth	Year ninth	Total	21
363	36	18	417	

Source: Catholic School Ambanitsena (EPP and CEG)

No additional departments but it has a few reference books for use. The FRAM manages school transportation in addition to their administrative responsibilities.

About the participation There are no school canteens for students at the primary school (EPP), but parents are involved in school development through FEFFI (Work Promotion for Educational Excellence Foundation) contributions, collected annually according to parental income as reported in the government circular dated 21/04/2015, which outlines the FEFFI system and its monitoring in circular 22091-2015/MEN. As a result, the following was observed:

Table 6. FEFFI Academic Year 2022-2023

School names	Annual Participation per parents (Ar)
EPP Isoavina	26.000
EPP Ambanitsena	37.000
CEG Ambanitsena	42.000

Source: EPP Isoavina, EPP Ambanitsena, CEG Ambanitsena

For schools affiliated with the Church, there are no school canteens, but there is a collective contribution system in place, as follows for the 2022-2023 academic years:

Table 7. Catholic School Ambanitsena

Preschool	Year First to Year Eighth	Year Ninth
9.000Ar	10.000Ar	11.000Ar

Source: Catholic School Ambanitsena

Table 8. "Manohisoa" School FJKM Isoavina

Preschool	Year First to Year fifth	Year sixth to Year ninth
12.000Ar	10.000Ar	12.000Ar

Source: "Manohisoa" School FJKM Isoavina

About the results of the national examination Similarly, the following are the results of the national examinations (CEPE and BEPC) for each school during the 2022-2023 academic years:

Table 9. CEPE (Primary School Certificate)

School names	Year fifth numbers	Percentage (%)
Manohisoa FJKM Isoavina	25	92.000
EPP Isoavina	32	78.125
Sekoly katolika Ambanitsena	36	100.000
EPP Ambanitsena	15	73.330

Source: Various Schools

Table 10. BEPC (Junior High School Certificate)

School names	Year ninth numbers	Percentage (%)
Manohisoa FJKM Isoavina	19	100.00
Sekoly katolika Ambanitsena	18	94.44
CEG Ambanitsena	79	46.96

Discussion

According to leaders, the education policy and program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training, from the grassroots level to the highest academic achievements, changes a lot. This also includes the schedule and subject studied in both primary and secondary education.

The quality of education in Madagascar is influenced by a range of factors, from the national education policies to the individual choices made by parents and school leaders. The commitment of all stakeholders is essential to ensuring that the education system effectively serves the needs of the country and its students, especially in the context of diverse educational challenges.

When we consider the broader context of schools, several crucial elements come into play. First, the physical infrastructure (school buildings and their maintenance) is of paramount importance. Second, various stakeholders' leadership and collaborative efforts (principals, different administrative roles, teachers, and parents) are instrumental. Third, the curriculum (aligned with national objectives or not) plays a central role. Fourth, the qualifications of teachers and students (holding relevant qualifications or not, well-equipped or not) are crucial factors. Fifth, the location of the school (near or far from the village). We must also acknowledge the five key elements mentioned earlier, which impact the effectiveness of education within each school. When any of these elements are lacking, it can affect the overall quality of education in a given school. Plus, there is supervision by the Ministry of Education to confirm the criteria mentioned above before allowing them to open.

Parents are responsible for making choices for their children's education, believing that the school they choose will align with their children's educational goals. They

carefully consider the impact of the school's curriculum on their children's learning and strive to fulfill their obligations to enhance it, particularly in terms of discipline.

Most parents are farmers in the Ambanitsena ZAP, which is part of the Ambanivohitra Commune, but they are dedicated to their children's education, particularly in the church-affiliated schools (Catholic and FJKM). However, many students attending public schools in the surrounding areas eventually drop out. According to assessments conducted in the Ambanitsena Commune, parents are urged to enroll their children in their own local community schools due to practical reasons (proximity, transportation issues) and the high cost of school supplies. When it comes to remote students, it becomes necessary for parents to facilitate their children's learning and provide for their educational materials.

For students attending distant schools, it becomes a challenge for parents to manage and support their education, especially due to the financial burden. The selection of schools is often influenced by the parents' desire for their children to receive a quality education. The choice of school for their children is determined by their local community, taking into account factors such as availability of resources (textbooks, classrooms) and the distance of the school. When the schools are far from home, it becomes an added responsibility for parents to oversee and ensure the students' attendance and progress.

There is also a focus on performance in examinations. For "Manohisoa" School FJKM Isoavina, a 100% pass rate for CEPE is achieved when compared to the 72.33%-74.44%-75.40% pass rates for the Faritra (CISCO) Manjakandriana in the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022, respectively. As for the BEPC, it was 56% for the year 2019-2020 compared to 50.99% for CISCO, 100% for the year 2020-2021 compared to 64.16% for CISCO, and 100% for the year 2021-2022 compared to 74.23% for CISCO. It is projected that another 100% pass rate will be achieved in the 2022-2023 academic year. This success is attributed to the students' diligence and determination to succeed in their studies and education.

In terms of infrastructure, the FJKM school is the only one with additional departments, which are essential for providing comprehensive education within the school. There are educational materials that align with the grade levels and curriculum. Concerning facilities, the number of students and teachers is significantly higher in primary schools (79 students on average) compared to Catholic schools and "Manohisoa" FJKM schools, which have 18 students on average for Catholic schools and 19 students for "Manohisoa" FJKM schools. Similarly, the average number of teachers is higher in primary schools (32 for EPP Isoavina, 15 for EPP Ambanitsena, 36 for Catholic schools, and 25 for FJKM schools).

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing the disparity between public and church-affiliated schools, especially those affiliated with the FJKM, remains a critical issue. While the number of students in these church-affiliated schools, particularly those in the first grades, is relatively low compared to public schools, there are still challenges to be faced, such as at the "Manohisoa" school with only 15 students in a class.

The involvement of FJKM schools in the public education system also includes the implementation of a Holy Scripture curriculum in the educational program, which brings moral and ethical values to the students, making them responsible individuals in society.

As a result, parents are encouraged to enroll their children in church-affiliated schools in their local communities or financially contribute annually to schools like FJKM

"Manohisoa" Isoavina Fihavaozana if they send their children to distant public schools in the Ambanitsena Commune.

Many challenges exist regarding infrastructure and educational materials in Madagascar, including concerns about the adequacy and maintenance of school buildings. Often, dilapidated or makeshift buildings are used as schools, needing more basic facilities such as proper seating and learning materials.

The provision of facilities, such as classrooms with proper furniture, libraries, science labs, and computer labs, is crucial to improving the quality of education and ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources. For instance, schools should have clean drinking water and canteens to provide students with meals.

In summary, addressing the educational challenges in Madagascar, especially in remote areas, requires infrastructure and educational resources investments. It is essential to provide students with a conducive learning environment to ensure their holistic development and academic success.

There was no formal teacher training provided for those running the School, and they relied on their basic knowledge and skills. Consequently, the management, whether it was employees or volunteers, lacked the necessary training, considering the school's financial constraints. This meant that obtaining funding for teacher training for the Headmaster and the supporting staff in non-affiliated schools remains a challenge. This situation has implications for the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators, which plays a significant role in a student's education. Many non-affiliated schools do not prioritize maintenance, leading to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient facilities. This can negatively impact the quality of education and hinder the development of both students and schools.

The collaboration between parents, teachers, and school administrators is crucial for a successful educational experience. A harmonious relationship between these parties is essential for the progress and well-being of students. Effective collaboration greatly contributes to a student's academic and personal growth.

When parents are actively involved in their children's education, they play a vital role in helping students achieve their goals. Unfortunately, in some cases, parental participation may be limited. For instance, some parents may struggle to fulfill their responsibilities due to financial constraints or other factors. Collaborative efforts between parents and teachers can help address these challenges.

Moreover, the lack of resources is another issue affecting the quality of education. Many schools need more essential educational materials, such as textbooks and supplementary learning materials. This shortage can hinder students' learning experiences and limit their educational opportunities. Therefore, ensuring that schools have access to necessary resources is crucial for improving the quality of education.

When people found themselves without employment or were unable to achieve their intended goals in the country, they sought out schools to enroll as teachers. Some received formal training, while others did not. There were those who provided guidance to these individuals, but many relied solely on their inherent skills, depending on the grade they were assigned.

This situation gave rise to disparities in teacher qualifications. Some teachers received proper training for the grade they taught, while others lacked formal education in the specific subject matter they were responsible for. In primary school, for example, there were teachers who, although not certified, were assigned to teach elementary students and were given classrooms. They may have lacked teaching materials and may not have effectively communicated with their students, who were also disadvantaged and struggled

to understand the curriculum due to various limitations, such as a lack of textbooks, language barriers, and other factors.

Efforts have already been made by the church in the field of education and training those who will become teachers within it, such as the establishment of the IFRP (Institut de Formation et de Recherche Pédagogique) within the FJKM (Fiangonana Jesosy Kristy eto Madagasikara). However, it is essential to support these newly trained teachers, either through the provision of resources from the central institution or by integrating them into pedagogical frameworks during their work or in their daily lives.

For instance, the FJKM Isoavina Fihavaozana actively participates in financial contributions to the school on a monthly basis, provides guidance for principals, teachers, and students, and conducts monthly leadership meetings and evaluations. It should also consider allocating a specific monthly budget for the school, similar to the budget allocated to the Living Waters Ministry within the Church. If possible, this support could be extended to the Schools of Religion within the church, and it should be managed transparently, especially when it comes to financial matters.

If these measures are implemented successfully, it will greatly contribute to the development of education and training in Madagascar and empower individuals to uplift both the church and the nation.

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