



Improved Management and Accountability: Conditions for Better Access and Quality of Primary Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo?



Policy & Practice Discussion Paper

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Abstract

There are well-documented access and quality issues in the schools of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that negatively affect the learning of Congolese Children. Indeed, one out of three children will drop out of primary school before graduation, while only about half of those graduating are considered literate. This Policy & Practice Discussion Paper explains how these issues are intimately linked to governance challenges facing the education sector. Understanding how school systems are managed, and how accountable school directors and these systems are to parents is crucial when intervening to strengthen the delivery education services in sub-Saharan Africa. While school construction and teacher training are important interventions, they are not sufficient on their own to sustainably improve learning outcomes. This discussion paper aims to stimulate a broad debate of these questions among education stakeholders in the DRC. Concrete actions by the Congolese government on this front will be indispensable to improve learning for all Congolese children in coming years.

WHO WE ARE

The mission of the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** is to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. Our vision is that the IRC will lead the humanitarian field by implementing high-impact, cost-effective programs for people affected by crises, and shape global policy and practice by sharing our learning and experience with others.

All IRC programs are designed to achieve meaningful change in people's health, safety, education, economic well-being and ability to influence the decisions that affect their lives. The **Governance Technical Unit**, as part of the **Policy & Practice Department**, works to ensure people have a voice in how their societies are managed and governed at community and local government levels. We further work to ensure people have the power to influence the quality of the services they receive and are able to regain control over their lives.



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Cover photo "Children during a class in a school of North-Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo."

Photo Credit: Aubrey Wade/IRC

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Acronyms

BCC	Banque centrale du Congo (Central Bank of Congo)
COGES	Comité de gestion (Management Committee)
COPA	Comité des parents (Parents' Committee)
COPRO	Coordination provinciale (provincial coordination for confessional networks)
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FBO	Faith-Based Organizations
FC	Francs congolais (Congolese Francs)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDA	International Development Assistance
IIAG	Ibrahim Index of African Governance
LEDG	Local Education Donor Group
MEPS-INC	Ministère de l'Éducation primaire et secondaire et de l'initiation à la nouvelle citoyenneté (Ministry of Education)
MINERVAL	Frais de promotion scolaire (School promotion fee)
PARSE	Projet d'appui au redressement du secteur de l'éducation (Project for the support to the recovery of the education sector)
PIE	Plan intérimaire pour l'éducation 2013-15 (Interim Education Plan)
PROVED	Province éducationnelle (Educational Province)
PSPE	Primary, Secondary and Professional Education
SECOPE	Service de contrôle et de la paie des enseignants (Service for the control of the teacher payroll)
SERNIE	Service national d'identification de l'élève (national service for the identification of students)
Sous-PROVED	Sous-province éducationnelle (educational sub-province)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSEF	Stratégie sectorielle pour l'éducation et la formation (Sector strategy for education and training)
TENAFEP	Test national de fin d'études primaires (national exam for primary studies)
USD	United States Dollars
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicators

Foreword

The aim of this paper is to provide a well-documented overview of the main governance issues affecting the education sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), building on the experience of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the latest information available. The IRC also hopes that preparing and publishing this paper will be a useful first step toward developing a shared diagnostic of governance issues in education and how these, in turn, affect learning outcomes. We further believe that a better-informed dialogue and discussion among the key stakeholders involved in education and governance in the DRC is an indispensable first step toward solving the challenges identified in this paper. The initial research and interviews that provided the information for this paper were conducted in 2014-15, ahead and during the proposal development process for the governance component of the DFID-funded ACCELERE program. This program is one of the main activities of the joint USAID-DFID funded program that aims to improve educational outcomes for boys and girls in select provinces of DRC. The research and content of the paper have been further updated and refined by the author during the inception phase of ACCELERE over the course of 2016.

The author would especially like to thank the numerous officials of the “ministère de l’Enseignement primaire, secondaire et initiation à la nouvelle citoyenneté” (MEPS-INC) in Kinshasa who have graciously offered their time and shared information that enabled the preparation of this paper. We extend our thanks to the numerous officials within the education system, school directors, teachers and parent representatives that we have had the chance of meeting during two separate field visits in Haut-Katanga in December 2014 and February 2015. Further thanks are also warranted to officials of the World Bank in Kinshasa as well as numerous staff members from the IRC Child, Youth, Protection and Development Program and the IRC Governance Program in DRC. The information and insights they provided about the education system helped to link the experiences of the population at school level with broader policy and governance issues in the sector. Special thanks also to Noemie Kouider from the IRC’s Governance Technical Unit as well as Elsa Duret, from the ACCELERE program, for their considerable help in editing and improving this paper.

The statements and opinions contained in this paper are solely those of the author and do not represent the views of the IRC. Errors and omissions are entirely the responsibility of the author.

Executive Summary

There are well-documented access and quality issues in the schools of the DRC.¹ These issues are intimately linked to governance challenges facing the education sector. If school construction and teacher training are important interventions, they are not sufficient on their own to sustainably improve quality and access. This also requires understanding how the school system is managed and how accountable school directors and this system are to parents. Shared knowledge and acknowledgement of the governance problems that matter for educational outcomes by DRC education stakeholders is a necessary condition to addressing them. This is essential to move beyond high-level commitments for sector reform and toward specific interventions and actions. This paper aims to stimulate a broad debate on this theme, in the hope that this would help generate both consensus among education stakeholders and lead to specific initiatives that ultimately improve learning for Congolese children.

The Overall Governance and Education Sector Context in DRC

The delivery of public education services does not operate in a vacuum. The institutional performance of the education system is impacted by DRC's governance context. Whether it is measured through the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, or Transparency International's corruption perception index, DRC's governance performance ranks among the weakest in the world. This is especially true of government effectiveness, accountability and corruption. Despite the country's significant economic potential, and its mineral and natural resource wealth, DRC was ranked 176th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index for the year 2014. A recent history of conflicts and state fragility largely explains the country's low rankings.

There have nonetheless been significant increases in the number of primary school students in DRC over the last decade, with enrollments going from about 5.5 million in 2001-02 to 13.5 million in 2013-14. However, nearly half of these students will drop out before completing primary school, adding to those never enrolled, and explaining the estimated 3.5 million children remaining out of school in 2013. This disproportionately affects girls relative to boys. The limited access results in large part from the high school fees Congolese households need to pay. Primary school students also exhibit low learning achievements, with nearly half of them not considered literate by the end of their primary studies. Meaningfully increasing access and quality of primary education in DRC still requires significant progress.

A Diagnosis of Governance Challenges in the DRC's Education System

Education Sector Policy Framework

The education sector strategy 2016–2025 ("Stratégie sectorielle pour l'éducation et la formation" [SSEF]) presents an integrated planning framework as well as reform objectives for the whole sector. It is structured by three strategic objectives: 1) Developing access and ensuring equity; 2) Improving the quality of learning; and 3) Improving governance and oversight of the system. Objective 1 is particularly concerned with the expansion of the free primary education policy. Objective 2 aims to improve quality assurance and monitoring as well as the learning environment across the system. Objective 3, concerned with governance, aims to strengthen the education system by implementing transparent norms and mechanisms for managing resources, and improving management at all levels.

The SSEF is a positive step forward, in part due to inclusive consultations and resulting strategy developed with inputs from all key education stakeholders. However, it still contains a number of weaknesses: the large number of priorities, unclear responsibilities for implementation, and a lack of alignment between this plan and the resources contained in the MEPS-INC budget. Even if issues of prioritization among SSEF objectives and of responsibilities for their implementation could be resolved, the availability of sufficient budgetary resources for implementing this plan will remain the biggest

¹ MEPS-INC. (2014). « Rapport d'état du système éducatif – République Démocratique du Congo (RESEN RDC) ». Retrieved from : https://www.iipe-poledakar.org/sites/default/files/fields/publication_files/resen_rdc_-_novembre_2014_0.pdf

obstacle. This highlights a need for the education sector to do more with existing educational resources to meet at least some of the sub-objectives of the SSEF.

Institutional Arrangements in Education

According to the 2006 constitution, education in DRC is both a central and decentralized government responsibility. Under this framework, the central level is responsible for setting norms, school inspection and national statistics. Provinces are responsible for the administration of the education system within those norms. There are also shared responsibilities around the creation of schools and educational statistics. However, the decentralization framework is only partially implemented in DRC. So local structures of the central government's MEPS-INC remain responsible for most of the day-to-day operation and management of the Congolese Primary, Secondary and Professional Education (PSPE) system. The fact that nearly all the staff in PSPE remains on the central government's payroll illustrates this well. This further explains the more limited role and capacity of provincial governments in this sector.

A distinguishing feature of the Congolese education system is that "public" schools are composed of both state ("écoles non conventionnées") and confessional schools ("écoles conventionnées"). Confessional schools are run by faith-based organizations (FBOs).² In practice, confessional schools account for seven out of ten primary schools. State schools account for fewer than two out of ten schools, while private schools account for the remainder. State and FBO school networks also have five parallel management structures overseeing schools, with one public and four FBO administrative networks. Public and FBO networks remain structured around 30 educational provinces (PROVEDs) and 30 Provincial Inspections. These have an oversight role over the whole education system for each province, with the support of a plethora of lower level administrative structures. Structures such as FBO coordinations need to coordinate with PROVEDs and Sous-PROVEDs, while provincial inspections are responsible for all networks. However, the multiplication of these administrative structures across networks, combined with poorly defined roles and responsibilities, has resulted in overlapping mandates and coordination problems. In turn, this has increased the financial burden on schools, which have to share a growing portion of school fees with those structures, despite the limited pedagogical and management support they provide.

The Role of Parents and CSOs in Education Management

The preponderance of school fees in DRC's education sector could imply that parents and community members have a strong voice in school management, but this is not the case. The "comité des parents d'élèves" (COPA) aims to ensure parent and community participation in school management. The "conseil de gestion" (COGES), on its part, aims to ensure management decisions for facilities are taken in consultation with representatives of parents, teachers and students. Numerous civil society organizations (CSOs) are involved in education, but they are often weak and do not meaningfully represent parents' interests. CSOs should still play an increasing role in education, and supporting more capable and representative coalitions at provincial levels could be a relevant strategy for achieving this. Moreover, currently neither the COPA nor the COGES serve as effective structures for holding the school director accountable. The generally weak capacities of their members explain this in part. The disincentives created by school fees also play a role, as it is regularly reported that parents on many of these committees receive a portion of them or obtain exemptions for their children.

Key Management Systems and Related Governance Issues

Budget and Financial Management: Actual expenditures in education have increased faster than other sectors over the last decade, reflecting higher relative prioritization. Total education spending represented 12.4% of total central government expenditures in 2015 relative to 6.7% in 2005. Despite this positive trend, DRC still allocates and spends significantly fewer resources in PSPE than the Sub-Saharan Africa average. In addition, salaries represented 94% of PSPE spending between 2013 and 2015. This implies that higher spending for personnel has absorbed nearly all the additional resources allocated to the sector. As a consequence, almost no resources were made available for other operating expenses in

² The four main FBO networks are composed of the Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguiste and Islamic school networks.

education, let alone investments. This explains the continuing reliance of the system on school fees for funding its day-to-day operations, despite an official policy to reduce them.

Human Resource Management: There has been a significant increase in the number of registered and paid teachers and administrators in recent years. Estimated numbers on those that remain unpaid vary significantly. According to one measure slightly more than seven out of ten teachers are paid, whereas based on another, only six out of ten are paid. While the number of unpaid teachers has been an issue for years in DRC, the growth in the number of administrators has garnered less attention. Driven by the growth in the number of administrative structures, the number of administrators has increased at a much faster rate than that of teachers. In 2016, there was one administrator for ten teachers, whereas the same ratio was one for twelve in 2011 (see Table 2 below). This is in contradiction with education sector plans that prioritized paying teachers. In addition, despite the reform of the salary payment system, numerous teachers, especially in rural areas, do not receive their whole salary or face significant delays. These issues highlight a need for improved management, control and data systems for human resources in education.

Information Management: An analysis of the official data in education highlights that information about schools and teachers is partial, incomplete, and often unreliable. This concerns both the data from the education payroll as well as data from the education statistical yearbook. On the payroll, a number of weaknesses have been documented, including poor individual file management, a centralized database that is not secure, and long delays for registering or changing the status of teachers and administrators. The process for registering schools and administrative structures, a condition for later registering and paying the staff attached to those structures, also remains characterized by lack of oversight and control. There are also significant weaknesses around the production of the education statistical yearbook. The main issues include the use of paper forms distributed across the whole country by land. This results in a low response rate and significant delays in its production. As quality and timely information is key for the management of the education system, improvements in the exhaustiveness, accuracy, and timeliness of educational data should be prioritized.

School Fees and Household Payments

Primary school fees represent a significant education access issue for parents in DRC. Despite the “politique de gratuité” (free education policy) that is also integrated in the SSEF, average estimated fees per student per year in DRC can range from 26,300 to 59,900 CFs (from \$27 to \$62³), depending on the source. The significance of school fees is well illustrated by the fact that for every 1000 CFs spent by the Congolese state in primary education, parents were directly contributing about 2000 CFs through fees during 2012. The collection of fees at school level, and the fact that administrative structures collect up to 40% of those for their own operations, has turned schools into de facto taxation units that are preyed upon by the administration and their staff. There are also regular reports of illegal and informal fees collected in schools. There are even documented cases of provincial politicians collecting a share of the fees distributed upward or FBOs using proceeds from fees to finance non-school activities. This has transformed a necessary pedagogical relationship between schools and administrative structures primarily into a financial one. In parallel, there still remains a total absence of public accounting, transparency or accountability concerning the collection and use of school fees. This concerns both schools and administrative structures, and raises serious questions on how these resources are used.

Even at the lower end of the estimated level for school fees, the burden they impose on the population is large and unsustainable. When considering that 81% of households earn less than 1,080,000 CFs (\$1100) per year and that Congolese women have up to seven children,⁴ school fees make the goal of universal primary education virtually unattainable in DRC. This is supported by an opinion survey that found 61% of parents who thought school fees were unaffordable. At a minimum, this situation calls for better regulation and monitoring of fees and their use, starting with schools, and then moving onto administrative structures.

³ At an exchange rate of 1 USD = 971 Congolese Francs in October 2016.

⁴ 57% of households earn less than 540,000 CFs (\$550) per year, and 81% less than 1,080,000 CFs (\$1100).

Governance Challenges in Education and Recommendations for Action

This section synthesizes the key governance challenges and recommendations following five core dimensions for improving performance in education. It does not aim to recommend specific interventions. Instead, it provides an integrated framework for discussing and later supporting the articulation of a concrete governance reform agenda among DRC education stakeholders. The implementation of such reforms would support improved quality and access, and ultimately, would improve learning.

Improving oversight and accountability: Clear roles and responsibilities are the basis on which performance expectations are built and monitored. Defining clear performance standards for administrative structures, administrators, schools and teachers would be the basis upon which to build oversight and accountability for the whole system. Stronger external accountability relying on a more capable civil society would also be key for improving the management, transparency and effectiveness of the sector. This would require meaningful organizational and technical support toward Congolese CSOs.

Access to information and transparency: A first step toward a more transparent culture would be to make publicly available budgetary information, workforce statistics and overall education statistics in formats that are easy to access and analyze by education stakeholders. A second step could include supporting mechanisms for information sharing and joint decision-making over key issues of importance to education stakeholders at different levels. This would enable the submission of parents' grievances for redress, including critically for issues around school fees.

Organizational capabilities: Overall, the current system needs to shift from a dynamic of ever-expanding numbers of personnel to a system that works toward increasing quality. A key part of this would be the definition of clear organizational and individual responsibilities, especially in administrative structures, along with adequate support for their implementation. In parallel, education stakeholders, starting with community structures and CSOs, would require stronger individual and organizational capability to access, analyze and use information to advance their collective interests. Enhancing the organizational capacities of state structures and CSOs would be a key step toward fostering a more accountable and responsive education system toward parents and students.

Inclusion and participation: Along with access to information, meaningful inclusion and participation are key enabling factors for ensuring effective accountability. Starting with the COGES, COPA and CSOs, as well as joint decision bodies like provincial education commissions, it is important that all these structures become more inclusive and representative of their constituents. This is a prerequisite for their decisions and actions better reflect the needs of Congolese parents and their children.

Responsiveness: There is currently a limited capacity and willingness by administrators and teachers to respond to demands from parents and the public. Parents and civil society are presently not enabled to provide feedback concerning the decisions and actions of key actors in education. This is due to a lack information and transparency on performance, combined with limited or non-existent feedback mechanisms. A lack of accountability, poorly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as an absence of clear individual and organizational performance standards, contributes directly to poor responsiveness. However, the presence of transparency and accountability are not sufficient conditions to result in responsiveness. This requires the presence of sufficient capacity to address problems. In the absence of a focus on adequate organizational and individual capability, even if grievances can be formulated, they will rarely be acted upon.

In conclusion, obtaining a culture of responsiveness to parents in schools and administrative structures will be a function of developing incrementally and gradually all the key components outlined in this section: oversight and accountability, information and transparency, organizational capability and inclusion and participation. This is the overall framework recommended for analyzing, formulating and implementing reforms addressing management and accountability challenges in education. As the title of the current paper reflects, it is our view that this approach is necessary to increase access and quality in education, and ultimately result in stronger learning outcomes for all Congolese children.

1. Introduction: A Call for a Shared Diagnostic of Governance Issues

Any strategy for addressing the system and governance challenges of the DRC education sector needs to be grounded in an in-depth diagnostic of the problems facing the sector. The issues around access and quality are currently well documented and understood across the sector. This is less so for key governance issues, due to abstract and multifaceted concepts, lack of information and transparency, and the divide between formal processes and informal practices across the different levels of a very complex education system. In addition, if interventions like school construction and teacher training are important, they are not sufficient on their own to sustainably improve learning outcomes, without considering governance. It would thus be important to engage on these issues key officials within the Government and the MEPS-INC, along with key stakeholders at the national, provincial and local levels. In turn, this would ensure that the diagnostic of governance issues is broadly shared and understood. *Knowledge and acknowledgement of existing management and accountability problems that matter for educational outcomes will be the first step in a process to eventually address some of them.* This is essential to move away from high-level commitments and toward specific interventions and actions. This report thus aims primarily to set the stage for such a joint discussion in the DRC. It does not represent the final word on governance issues in primary education. It merely is an attempt to highlight the main problems we have documented and provide the material for informed discussions and engagement on these issues.

In terms of specific content, section 2 of this report briefly reviews the overall context in which basic social services are delivered in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In section 3, it then turns specifically to education sector performance issues and associated governance challenges. It looks specifically at the sectoral policy framework, institutional arrangements, the role of parents and communities in education management, key education management systems, as well as school fees and household informal payments. This will set the stage for the conclusion, which provides an integrated framework that could help articulate improvements in education governance that builds on the current sector strategy. This further underlines what in our view are priority governance issues the DRC government and main education stakeholders should consider when setting any practical reform agenda going forward.

2. The Overall Governance and Education Sector Context in DRC

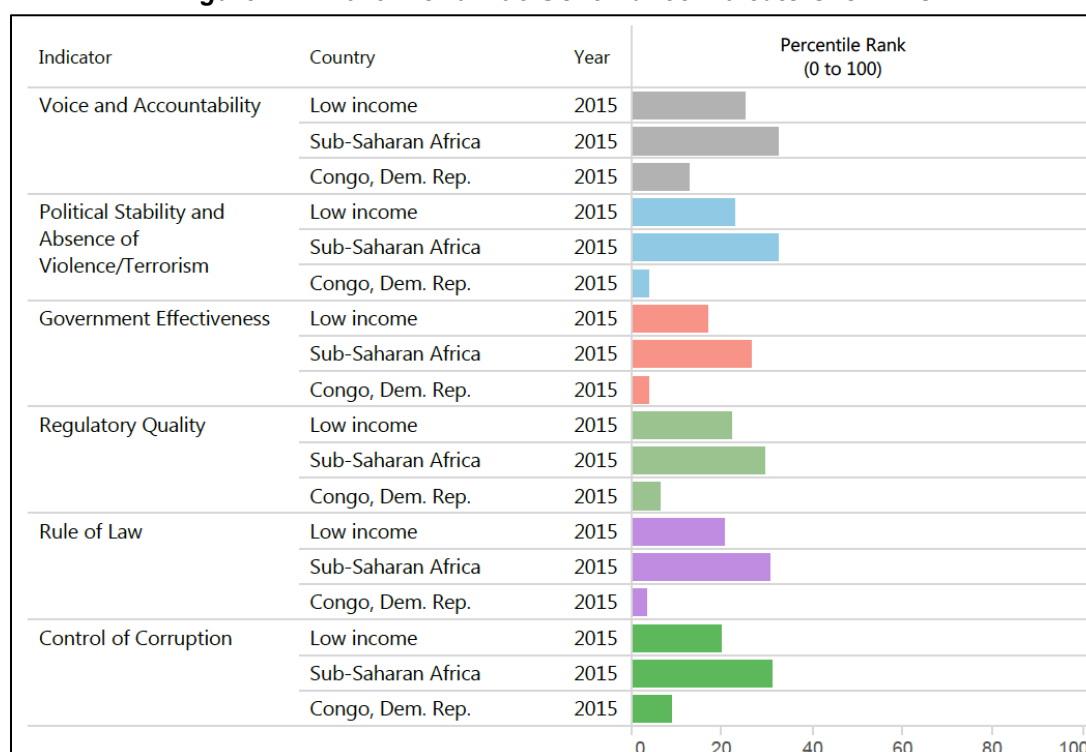
The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the second largest country in Africa. Its population was estimated at 77.2 million people in 2015, with an estimated annual growth rate of 3.1%. Despite its significant mineral and natural resource wealth, DRC was ranked 176th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index for 2014. A recent history of conflicts and state fragility is no stranger to this situation. Indeed, even with the presence of the largest UN peacekeeping operation in the world and relative stability since the arrival in power of the transitional government in 2003, conflicts and violence remain recurrent in the eastern provinces. The country has held two rounds of presidential and legislative elections in 2006 and 2011, leading to a gradual reassertion of the authority of the Congolese State over this period. More recently, the postponement of the elections foreseen for 2016 has nonetheless resulted in a degrading political environment. The vast majority of the population lives in poverty and has limited access to basic services. The political stabilization and significant natural resources driven economic growth averaging 6.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the last decade as thus had limited effects on standards of living. In this context, and while acknowledging some improvements, the Congolese state remains weak. This holds true for the education sector: notwithstanding recent budgetary increases, public investments remain low, the large majority of schools are managed by religious organizations, while the supervision of schools and overall management of the system by the Government remains lacking.

2.1 The Governance Context

Delivery of public education services does not operate in a vacuum and the institutional performance of the education system is impacted by the country's governance context. Below is a brief overview of how DRC compares in governance rankings relative to the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region, with an emphasis on the most critical elements explaining low performance.

The DRC is ranked among the list of “failed states” according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). The WGI reports on six broad dimensions of governance for 215 countries over the period 1996–2015: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. The WGI is a research dataset summarizing the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprises, citizens and expert survey respondents from industrial and developing countries. It is gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms. The survey shows that DRC is a weak performer relative to the average for both low-income countries and the Sub-Saharan Africa region. Indeed, DRC ranks among the worst-performing countries surveyed in all 6 governance dimensions, with its lowest performance (below the 4th percentile) for the dimensions of political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, and rule of law (see figure 2.1 below).

Figure 2.1—2015 Worldwide Governance Indicators for DRC



Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators Project 2015; <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home>

DRC is ranked among the weakest states in Sub-Saharan Africa according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). The IIAG measures the quality of governance in every African country on an annual basis since 2000. It does this by compiling data from diverse global sources to build an accurate and detailed picture of governance performance in African countries. The index is based on four categories and 14 sub-categories: 1) safety and rule of law (rule of law, accountability, personal safety); 2) participation and human rights (participation, rights, gender); 3) sustainable economic opportunity (public management, business environment, infrastructure, rural sector); and 4) human development (welfare, education, health). This IIAG has been tracking 93 indicators in 54 African countries over the last 15 years from 33 data sources to calculate its rankings.⁵

For 2014, DRC ranks 48th (out of 54) on the continent, and was one of the bottom ten overall governance performers, having scored 33.9 (out of 100). Over the last 15 years, DRC has never achieved an overall governance rank placement higher than 47th and it scores lower than both the African average (50.1) and

⁵ Mo Ibrahim Foundation. (2015). Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Retrieved from : http://static.moibrahimfoundation.org/u/2015/10/02201334/14_DRC.pdf

the regional average for Central Africa (40.9). This score places the DRC 6th out of eight countries in Central Africa, outperforming only Chad and the Central African Republic.

DRC remains at a low rank within the IIAG, despite gains over time in ten of the IIAG's 14 subcategories in recent years. Dramatic deteriorations in the indicators on National Security have a large impact on the country's performance in Safety & Rule of Law, while more widespread declines in Participation & Human Rights also explain this. In contrast, DRC's gains in many elements of Sustainable Economic Opportunity are widespread and large in magnitude, representing the country's positive highlight for the 2015 IIAG.

Figure 2.2—Ibrahim Index of African Governance by Category for DRC in 2014



Source: Ibrahim Index of African Governance; http://static.moibrahimfoundation.org/u/2015/10/02201334/14_DRC.pdf

Widespread corruption hampers government effectiveness. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide, based on expert opinion from around the world. None of the 168 countries assessed in the 2015 index received a perfect score and two thirds of countries score below 50, on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).⁶ The average country score on the 2015 index globally was 43, while the regional average for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was 33. DRC ranks 147th out of 168 countries with a score of 22 (compared to 21 in 2012), while it ranks 39 out of 46 in the SSA region. Perception of corruption in DRC is worse than Nigeria (136/168) and the Central African Republic (145/168), similar to Chad (also ranked 147th), but better than Zimbabwe (150/168), Guinea Bissau (158/168) and Angola (163/168).

2.2 The Education Sector Context

According to the latest national education statistics, there were about 13.5 million primary school students in DRC for 2013-14. This compares with 5.5 million students in 2001-02, implying enrollments have more than doubled over this period. This is reflected in the gross enrollment ratio (GER), which increased from 62% in 2001-02 to 106.8% in 2013-14.⁷ The reassertion of the basic functions of the State after the arrival of the transitional government in 2003 partially explains these improvements. National and donor resources dedicated to increasing the number of teachers and schools over this period further supported this. However, over 3.5 million children between 6 and 11 years of age are estimated to remain out of

⁶ Transparency International. (2016). Corruption Perceptions Index 2015. Retrieved from http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/cpi_2015

⁷ The gross enrollment ratio measures the total enrollment in primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary education age. It can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students due to early or late school entrance and grade repetition.

school in DRC.⁸ This figure is consistent with a primary completion rate of 71%, implying that three out of ten students enrolled in grade 1 will have abandoned their studies before the end of grade 6.⁹ One should also note that important variations on the GER per province remain, with the highest figure in Kasai Occidental at 124.2 and the lowest in Katanga at 93.1.

In parallel, learning achievements by Congolese students has remained weak, suggesting there are performance issues in the education system related to both quality and access. 26% of Congolese students have learning difficulties in grade 2, while 51% of grade 5 students face the same problem. After completing grade 6, only 47% of Congolese students are considered literate, relative to a figure of 59% for comparable countries in the sub-region.¹⁰ Resources can have an influence on these results, and ratios like students per teacher and textbooks per student vary widely across provinces and between schools. Nonetheless, almost no relationship has been found in DRC between resources available per student and learning outcomes. This highlights that how effectively existing resources are managed by the system, all the way down to classrooms, is as important as the absolute level of availability of these resources.¹¹

Returning to access, a multivariate analysis of the factors explaining the relatively low enrollment and retention rates in primary education was recently conducted. It showed that income of households, school distance in rural areas, and the education level of the head of the household were the strongest explanatory factors affecting school attendance.¹² A key issue explaining the low enrollment numbers from a parent's perspective is the relatively high primary school fees relative to household income, a point confirmed by this analysis. In DRC, parents provide directly for the majority of education costs through these fees, a situation that meaningfully reduces access given the prevalence of low incomes.

In practice, financial costs remain the most frequently cited barrier to enrolling children in school according to parents, a factor that is more prevalent in rural areas, where livelihood opportunities are significantly more limited. Across DRC, 73% of household heads with children who have left school or have not been enrolled cited lack of money as the main reason explaining this.¹³ Geographical distance to school (an issue for 58% of households who live in rural areas versus 42% in urban areas) is another significant factor explaining access or lack thereof. Indeed, 30% of boys and 32% of girls in rural areas are out of school relative to 17% of boys and 19% of girls in urban areas.¹⁴ Moreover, there is a gender dimension to low enrollments. There were 100 girls for 104 boys registered in grade 1 in 2013-14, meaning a relative equality of access to primary school. However, there were 100 girls for 136 boys graduating from primary school after grade 6. The relative number of girls to boys is thus decreasing steadily between grades 1 and 6, implying that when parents face financial constraints they tend to prioritize education for boys.¹⁵

3. A Diagnosis of Governance Challenges in the DRC's Education System

The summary data presented in section 2 reveals that the Congolese states, despite the progress realized over the last decade, remains affected by weak management and poor governance. This obviously affects the performance of the education system. Indeed, there is a lack of public resources reaching schools, explaining the relatively high school fees. There are also concerns relating to their unequal geographical distribution. These factors contribute directly to relatively low access and quality. In order to better understand the root causes explaining the performance of the sector, the remainder of this section will provide an overview and assessment of the main governance issues contributing to this situation. This includes separate subsections looking at policy frameworks, institutional structure, management systems, parent participation in school management and school fees. The findings of these sub-sections are drawn

⁸ UNICEF. (2013). National Survey on the situation of out-of-school children and adolescents. p. 9. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/education/files/DRC_OOSCI_Full_Report_\(En\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/DRC_OOSCI_Full_Report_(En).pdf)

⁹ MEPS-INC. (2014). « Rapport d'état du système éducatif – République Démocratique du Congo (RESEN RDC) ». p. 110. Retrieved from: https://www.iipe-poledakar.org/sites/default/files/fields/publication_files/resen_rdc_-_novembre_2014_0.pdf

¹⁰ MEPS-INC. (2014). p. 47.

¹¹ MEPS-INC. (2014). p. 60.

¹² UNICEF. (2013). p. 143. & MEPS-INC. (2014). p. 239.

¹³ MEPS-INC. (2014). p. 242.

¹⁴ MEPS-INC, METP, MESU, MASAHSN. (2015). « Stratégie sectorielle de l'éducation et de la formation (SSEF) 2016-2025 ». p. 12.

¹⁵ MEPS-INC. (2014). p. 237.

from recent studies and statistics, as well as first-hand evidence collected by the IRC during the proposal development and inception phase of the ACCELERE program.

3.1 Education Sector Policy Framework

From 2013 to 2015, education policy was structured by an interim plan. This provided the time for education stakeholders to come together and chart a new 10-year overall strategy for the sector. Both of these plans will be examined in turn below.

3.1.1 Interim Plan for Education

The Interim Plan for Education (Plan intérimaire de l'éducation [PIE]) is a transitional plan for the Primary, Secondary and Professional Education (PSPE) for the 2013-15 period. This plan aimed to work toward the attainment of universal primary education within a 10-year period. Approved both by the government as well as technical and financial partners, it aimed specifically to: i) increase access to education; ii) improve the quality of education and learning; and iii) strengthen the governance of the sector.

The latest annual review of the PIE¹⁶ underlined that the prioritization of the sector as a share of overall executed resources from the national budget had increased. However, nearly all this increase was channeled toward salaries of teachers and administrative personnel, whereas other operational and infrastructure expenses remain vastly underfunded. Access to education has nonetheless continued on an upward trend, with the gross enrollment rate attaining 107% and the primary completion rate 75% in 2014. This was supported to some extent by the increased number of teachers integrated on the MEPS-INC payroll, targeted fee abolition and school constructions funded outside of the MEPS-INC budget, either by the government or donors. There was limited progress on the quality of education and learning, with the exception of continued, if limited, reductions in the repetition and dropout rates. Concerning the governance of the sector, some of the proposed measures are advancing. This includes revised payroll registration procedures, a proposal to restructure the central MEPS-INC, the establishment of a National Observatory on Education, and the formalization of the role of COPAs and COGEs through official government regulations. Nonetheless, there remain numerous initiatives for which more work is needed before attaining the objectives outlined in the PIE, a point illustrating the limited ownership of this plan by national authorities.¹⁷

3.1.2 Education Sector Strategy 2016–2025

The education sector strategy 2016–2025 (“Stratégie sectorielle pour l'éducation et la formation” [SSEF]) presents an integrated planning framework and reform objectives of the whole education sector. This includes primary, secondary and professional education, literacy, informal education as well as higher education. The development and finalization of a sector strategy was a precondition to access new funding from the Global Partnership for Education. The preparation of the SSEF, started in 2012 and concluded in 2015, was done in consultation with all the key education stakeholders. This included the relevant central level ministries, provincial governments, representative of confessional networks, parents, and civil society, as well as technical and financial partners. The SSEF also contains a five-year budgeted action plan, which will be reviewed and updated annually.

The SSEF is structured around three strategic objectives: 1) Developing access and ensuring equity; 2) Improving the quality of learning; and 3) Improving governance and oversight of the system. These three objectives each contain specific orientations that directly concern primary education. Following paragraphs will provide more detail on these.

Under objective 1 on access and equity, this axis aims to ensure the free primary education policy is effectively put in place for all children. This would be implemented by increasing and rationalizing school constructions, and extending the policy of registration and payroll inclusion of teachers, so that they would

¹⁶ Only two IEP joint reviews have been held so far, the first one in August 2014 and the second one in August 2015.

¹⁷ MEPS-INC. (2015). « Mise en oeuvre du Plan Intérimaire de l'Éducation – Rapport de suivi numéro 2 ».

all be paid by 2020. Ensuring the payment of operating expenses to all schools and administrative structures would further support this.

Under *objective 2 on quality*, this axis aims to implement a quality assurance and monitoring system as well as put in place an environment conducive to learning. This would be achieved by improving quality assurance and monitoring at the school and local levels. Learning would be improved through a reform of initial teacher training paired with a continuous learning strategy. Better salary and conditions for teachers and strengthened pedagogical support would support this. Another supporting measure involves the development and implementation of a policy on the production and distribution of learning materials.

For *objective 3 on governance*, this axis aims to strengthen the education system by the implementation of transparent norms and mechanisms for managing resources and by improving management at all levels, through more supportive and better organized partnerships. This axis is examined in greater detail below given the focus of the current paper.

Box 1—Governance in the Education Sector Strategy 2016–2025

Planned orientations to achieve the governance objective of the SSEF include revising the conventions with the religious networks and increased support for decentralization. Another measure is better defining the roles and responsibilities of provincial and sub-provincial structures and actors within the education system (PROVED, Sous-Proved, SECOPE, Religious Coordination, Provincial Inspections, etc.). The revision of relevant laws and regulation structuring these relationships within the sector would contribute to this. Another key orientation would be to strengthen the management and accountability of administrative structures at provincial and sub-provincial levels and support greater oversight by the MEPS-INC. This would be complemented by better upward information flows on the performance and management of these structures. In parallel, the SSEF foresees strengthening the role of school management committees, parent committees (COGE and COPA) and relevant parent associations, in order to bolster transparency and community participation in the management of primary education.

Another orientation to strengthen governance is ensuring adequate central funding for the Education Management Information System (EMIS), while ensuring each province can collect, analyze and publish education statistics. This would be combined with the development of dashboards at provincial and sub-provincial levels to monitor in real time the performance of the education system. Other key orientations include improving financial management and the traceability of resources within the education system as well as rationalizing human resource management for both teachers and administrative personnel.

3.1.3 Endorsement and Evaluation of the Sector Strategy

The Local Education Donor Group (LEDG), representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Congolese Government successively endorsed the SSEF in January 2016. It is worth highlighting that the endorsement letter of the DRC government, signed by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of the Budget, contained specific budgetary engagements that would increase the effective public spending allocated to the education sector between now and 2025. This specifically entails increasing funding to the sector to 20% of the total executed budget (after excluding public debt expenditures), compared to an average of 15.4% over the 2011–2015 period. The LEDG also explicitly noted in the endorsement letter its desire to closely monitor the vigilance points highlighted in the evaluation of the SSEF conducted at the end of 2015.

This independent evaluation of the SSEF highlighted a series of points education stakeholders should monitor closely. The key points concerning the SSEF governance objective included:

- (i) The fulfillment of budgetary commitment by the Congolese Government to the education sector;
- (ii) The abolition of direct school fees, notably MINERVAL, SERNIE and TENAFEP established at central level;¹⁸
- (iii) The accounting in the national budget of the upward flows to administrative structures captured from the fees collected at school level;

¹⁸ The section on free primary school of the SSEF was explicitly planning to retain the MINERVAL fee.

- (iv) The establishment of detailed responsibilities and accountability around the implementation of the objectives and orientations contained in the SSEF;
- (v) The definition of overarching priorities among the multiple orientations of the SSEF, given the large number of planned reforms and the low likelihood that they will all be implemented.

In addition, the endorsement letter from the LEDG stipulated they expected the implementation of the measures concerning the abolition of school fees fixed at the central level. They also noted they expected the transparent accounting and management of upward flows captured from school fees. Both of these points were listed as requirements before the Government receives the next phase of GPE funding.

In final analysis, the SSEF is a positive step forward, notably given it was developed through a process inclusive of all key education stakeholders. However, it still contains a number of weaknesses, starting with the large number of priorities, unclear responsibilities for their implementation and the difficulty of aligning this plan with the annual education budget. Indeed, the availability of sufficient resources to implement solely the portion of the plan concerning the registration of all teachers by 2020 is openly in question. The 2016 budget contained extra resources for the registration of an additional 12,500 teachers, a number that would need to increase significantly in the future to attain this goal. In addition, when looking at the share of PSPE in overall education sector resources, the commitment by the Ministry of Budget and the Ministry of Finance would translate to an 11% increase to PSPE resources in 2016. These resources would be welcome, but insufficient to meaningfully implement the SSEF. Therefore, should issues around the prioritization within SSEF sub-objectives and specific responsibilities for their implementation could be resolved, the availability of sufficient budgetary resources for implementing this plan will remain the biggest obstacle. This is especially critical in light of the recent slow down in overall economic growth and resulting budgetary challenges in the DRC.¹⁹ Another point arising from this analysis is that there are grounds to improve the management and use of existing resources to attain at least some of the ambitious goals of the SSEF.

3.2 Institutional Arrangements in Education

3.2.1 Division of Powers

DRC is nominally a decentralized state according to the 2006 constitution, structured from the national to local levels around the central state, the provinces and decentralized territorial entities. The constitution defines the powers that are exclusive and shared between each of those levels. Education is one area where powers are shared between the central state and the provinces. The distribution of the main responsibilities in PSPE is the following:

- **Exclusive powers of the central state:** the setting of educational norms, the nomination and deployment of school inspectors, national statistics and census, and national planning;
- **Concurrent powers of the central state and provinces:** statistics and census, the creation of educational facilities, international projects, programs and cooperation agreements;
- **Exclusive powers of provinces:** the operation of provincial public services and facilities within the boundaries of the national legislation, including PSPE, in accordance with the norms and regulations set by the central state.²⁰

Moreover, the constitution states that primary education is compulsory and recognizes a right to free primary education in all public facilities (article 43). The constitution recognizes the right of parents to register their children in schools that are in conformity with their religious beliefs, in collaboration with public educational facilities (article 44).

¹⁹ Té-Léssia, J. (2016). RD Congo : Le gouvernement prévoit une réduction de 1,7 milliard d'euros du budget 2016 - JeuneAfrique.com. Retrieved August 2016, from <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/324153/economie/rd-congo-gouvernement-prevoit-baisse-de-22-budget-2016/>

²⁰ Constitution de la république démocratique du Congo. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/DroitPublic/Constitution.2011.pdf> (Articles 202, 203 and 204)

In parallel, the Law on National Education,²¹ further defines the regulatory role of the “ministère de l’Éducation primaire et secondaire et de l’initiation à la nouvelle citoyenneté” (MEPS-INC) in terms of educational norms and school inspection, states that it is the central Ministry that names the head of the Educational Provinces (PROVED), of Educational Sub-Provinces (Sous-Proved), and other administrative structures at deconcentrated levels that are responsible for managing the system. Furthermore, the law states that the Provincial Minister of Education is responsible for naming school directors, albeit on the recommendation of the head of the PROVED.

In addition to the powers attributed in the constitution to provinces, the law defining the power and nature of decentralized territorial entities in DRC attributes a responsibility to local governments for the creation and maintenance of educational facilities.²² Those powers are referenced and confirmed in the Law on National Education. The Law on National Education also states that the budget of public schools (both for the state and religious networks) ought to be integrated in that of decentralized territorial entities, those of provinces and that of the Central Government.

These school level budgets would notably include the transfers and grants from the different levels of government, as well as the revenues collected from the school itself (implying that fees should be integrated in the budgets of the different levels of government). This law also specifies responsibilities for setting various school fees between the central government, the provincial governors as well as schools and parents, in contradiction to the provisions in the constitution concerning free primary education.

In summary, according to the constitution, provinces are responsible for operating the PSPE system, subject to the norms, regulations and inspection of the central state. However, the situation in reality is much different from that outlined in the constitution, as the Law on National Education makes clear. In particular, decentralization in DRC remains a work in progress. The laws and regulations enabling the application the distribution of powers outlined in the constitution and the effective distribution of resources among the national, provincial and local levels are either not fully in place or ineffectively applied. This is well illustrated by the fact that taxation and public financial resources mostly remain centralized. As a direct consequence, provinces and ETDs have generally very limited human resources and managerial capacities. The central MEPS-INC and its deconcentrated structures thus remain de facto responsible for managing primary and secondary education in DRC. This is well exemplified by the fact that nearly all the staff involved in PSPE remain on the central government’s payroll.

3.2.2 Administrative Structure of the Sector

As noted previously, primary education remains a deconcentrated sector in DRC and is managed through the provincial and local structures of the MEPS-INC, with limited involvement by provincial education ministries. As illustrated in figure 3.1 below, there are 21 central directorates responsible for the management of the education system, while there are 30 PROVEDs, who all report to the Secretary General of the MEPS-INC. There are 16 other central directorates responsible for school inspection and quality, in addition to 30 provincial inspections, which also report to the Secretary General, although through the Inspector General. There is still a nominal link between deconcentrated educational provinces (or PROVED) and the provincial ministers in the organograms of the MEPS-INC. Nonetheless, the day-to-day management and decision-making for primary and secondary education is conducted largely without the formal involvement of provincial officials.

A distinguishing feature of the DRC education system is that “public” schools are composed of both state (“écoles non conventionnées”) and confessional schools (“écoles conventionnées”), which are run by faith-based organizations (FBOs).²³ Confessional schools account for 7 out of 10 primary schools, as per

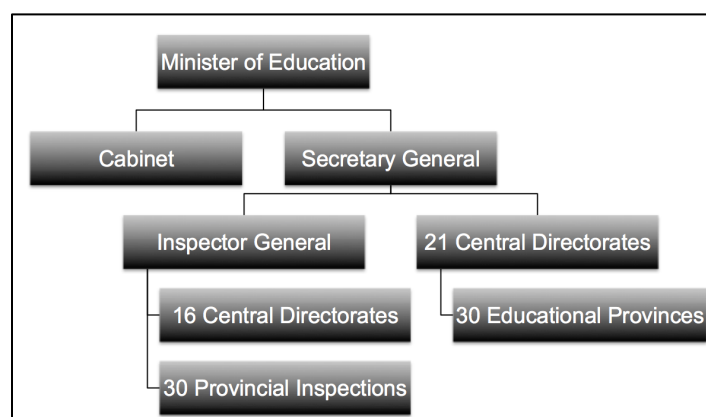
²¹ Loi-cadre n°14/004 du 11 février 2014 de l’enseignement national. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/DroitPublic/enseignement/Loi14.004.11.02.2004.htm>

²² Loi organique n°008/016 du 7 octobre 2008 portant composition, organisation et fonctionnement des entités territoriales décentralisées et leurs rapports avec l’état et les provinces. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/Administration.ter/L.08.16.17.10.2008.htm>

²³ The four main FBO networks are composed of the Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguiste and Islamic school networks that accounts for the vast majority of confessional schools, but there are 11 other smaller denominations.

table 3.1 presented below. State schools account for slightly less than 2 out of 10 schools, with private schools accounting for the remainder. There were 48,147 primary schools, 13.5 million primary school students, and 383,207 primary school teachers in DRC according to the MEPS-INC statistical yearbook for 2013-14. The proportion of primary school students and teachers was distributed between the state, confessional and private schools along similar proportions than those presented for schools in table 3.1.

Figure 3.1—Structure of the MEPS-INC



The distinction between state and confessional schools explains why there are five parallel management structures overseeing schools down to the local level, with one public and four faith-based networks, as will be explained further below.

Table 3.1—Total Number of Primary Schools per province and School Network for 2013-14

PROVINCE	State Schools	Confessionnal Schools						Private Schools	Total	% of total
		Catholic	Protestant	Kibamguiste	Islamic	Other	Sub-Total			
Kinshasa	239	390	498	73	30	139	1 130	2 703	4 072	8,5%
Bas-Congo	316	654	512	232	12	155	1 565	244	2 125	4,4%
Bandundu	1 959	1 901	3 423	625	139	188	6 276	61	8 296	17,2%
Equateur	1 434	1 414	1 437	435	306	92	3 684	163	5 281	11,0%
Orientale	865	2 011	1 733	192	17	73	4 026	289	5 180	10,8%
Nord-Kivu	396	852	1 273	43	51	130	2 349	364	3 109	6,5%
Sud-Kivu	312	690	1 803	55	27	60	2 635	397	3 344	6,9%
Maniema	235	357	677	114	163	17	1 328	39	1 602	3,3%
Kasai-Oriental	1 042	1 099	1 177	253	109	159	2 797	620	4 459	9,3%
Kasai-Occid	943	958	1 557	300	115	231	3 161	392	4 496	9,3%
Katanga	981	1 283	2 408	160	9	118	3 978	1 224	6 183	12,8%
DRC	8 722	11 609	16 498	2 482	978	1 362	32 929	6 496	48 147	100,0%
% of total	18,1%	24,1%	34,3%	5,2%	2,0%	2,8%	68,4%	13,5%	100,0%	

Source : Annuaire statistique de l'enseignement primaire, secondaire et professionnel 2013-14

3.2.3 Deconcentration and the Role of Administrative Structures

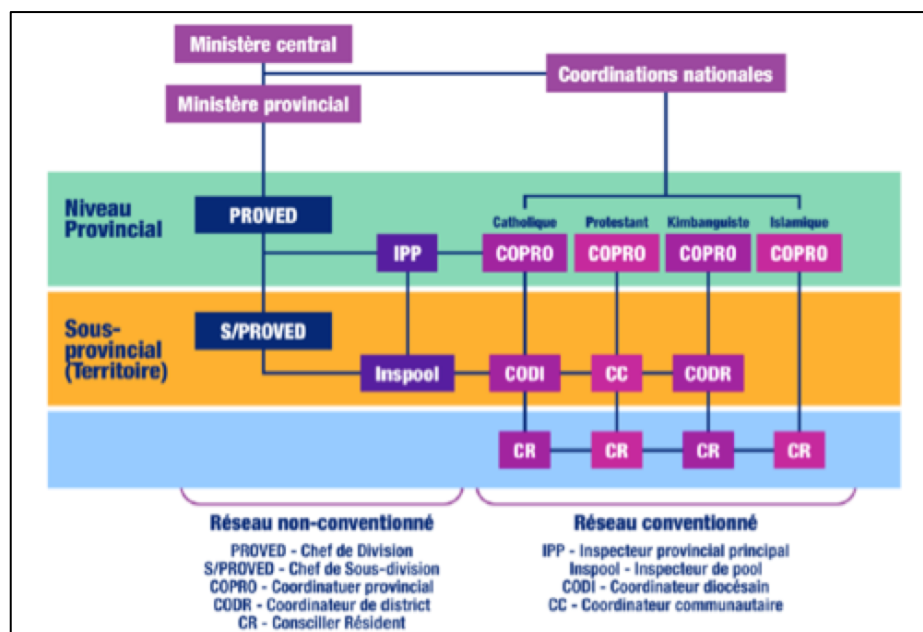
At the deconcentrated level, the MEPS-INC is structured around the PROVEDs, which nominally report to the provincial minister (i.e. “ministre provincial” in the organogram), but operationally report directly to the “Direction des services généraux” of the Ministry, thus making the PROVEDs deconcentrated structures as per earlier points. They are responsible for the day-to-day administrative and technical management of the education system. There are 30 PROVEDs, a figure that is aligned with the recently promulgated

structure and map of 26 decentralized provinces.²⁴ The confessional networks, on their parts, are organized around four national coordinations that are divided into provincial coordinations (“coordination provinciale” or COPRO). These have some relationships to PROVEDs, but are relatively autonomous and report to their own national coordination.

There were 230 Sous-PROVEDs reporting to 30 PROVEDs in 2012. There were also 118 sub-provincial coordinations that were reporting to 105 provincial coordinations, across the different FBO networks. These coordinations often have a role very similar to the PROVED for their respective confessional network. The Sous-PROVED is the closest to schools in terms of day-to-day operations, effectively responsible for supervising how schools are administered and nominating school directors. The sub-provincial coordination in the confessional public networks holds similar responsibilities with their respective schools. The organizational structure at provincial level is illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.

There are therefore five main administrative structures managing schools in parallel across the DRC, when adding the MEPS-INC structures and those of the four main FBO networks. Both MEPS-INC and confessional administrative structures benefit from resources earmarked from the national budget for their salary and operational expenses, as for State and FBO schools.

Figure 3.2—Administrative Structures in Education



Another issue on administrative structures is the multiplicity of such structures across the DRC. Table 3.2 below highlights the distribution of key structures discussed above, as well as the recently created SERNIE offices that added another layer of structures in 2012. However, SECOPE data for the same year identified a total of 2,712 administrative structures. These included over 400 local SECOPE and 360 local SERNIE offices, but it is unclear what the remaining structures represented. Further, the total number of administrative structures has kept increasing since, and there were 2,879 such structures as of January 2016, including 418 SECOPE offices.²⁵ The proliferation of these administrative structures and their staff, as will be discussed later, results in significant pressures for increasing upward flows from school fees to finance their operations.

²⁴ There are three PROVEDs in Kinshasa, while North Kivu and Bas Congo have two PROVEDs each, accounting for the difference between 26 and 30 (see table 3.2).

²⁵ See Table 3.4 further below for the latest total number of administrative structures.

One result of those numerous parallel structures across DRC is that the division of roles and responsibilities between these structures is unclear, causing duplications and inefficiency. Another issue is that the effectiveness of these various structures and the quality of their management can be highly variable, and they typically suffer from a general lack of operating resources. For example, both deconcentrated MEPS-INC structures and religious network structures perform school inspections for pedagogical and managerial oversight purposes in confessional schools. Nonetheless, they do not share information systematically, while trust and collaboration among them is limited. This is partially caused by the turf issues between public and confessional networks, as well as the multiplicity of these parallel networks (including further divisions within Protestant networks). Another issue is that despite an extensive network of local offices, key functions of the MEPS-INC, including payroll registration and information management, remain highly centralized. They are also affected by recurrent managerial and technical issues, including significant delays in the transmission of files and information from local to national levels.

Table 3.2—Number of Administrative Structures per province for 2012

Provinces	Government Structures					Confessional Structures			Provincial Total
	PROVED	S-PROVED	Inspection Provinciale	InsPool	SERNIE	Coord. Prov.	Coord. sous-prov.	Conseil résidents	
BANDUNDU	3	40	3	34	3	20	25	13	141
BAS – CONGO	2	12	2	17	-	7	10	7	57
EQUATEUR	5	34	5	29	4	13	14	10	114
KASAI OCC.	2	21	2	16	1	13	11	10	76
KASAI ORI.	3	29	3	30	3	11	7	8	94
KATANGA	4	26	4	26	4	10	12	12	98
MANIEMA	1	6	1	5	1	5	2	7	28
NORD – KIVU	2	9	2	8	2	4	9	2	38
ORIENTALE	4	29	4	24	4	16	3	22	106
SUD – KIVU	1	9	1	9	-	5	6	11	42
KINSHASA	3	15	3	17	4	1	19	16	78
Total	30	230	30	215	26	105	118	118	872

Source : SECOPE Database and Projet PARSE, Rapport de Suivi des dépenses à destination, 2014

3.2.4 Decentralization and the Role of Provincial Authorities

As was noted previously, the responsibility for the management of education in DRC remains primarily a central government's prerogative, if largely carried out through its deconcentrated structures. Figure 3.2 above nonetheless shows that PROVEDs report to the MEPS-INC through the provincial minister of education. Nevertheless, the day-to-day management and decision-making in education is conducted largely without the formal involvement of provincial ministries. Indeed, provinces are involved only superficially in the management and financing of the sector, given both limited capacity and limited financial resources, which are a result of a partially applied decentralization framework. They remain seen as an important stakeholder within the education sector, but their real influence is typically limited to that of a convener. The fact that provincial ministries of education can rarely count on more than a handful of staff illustrates this well. The former Katanga province, which was able to raise meaningful fiscal resources and leverage them for targeted investments, was still able to exert more meaningful influence with the decision makers of MEPS-INC. This remained nonetheless an exception explained by the availability of provincial fiscal resources.

Starting with their involvement in the provincial commission that set school fees chaired by the Governor, provinces are implicated in decisions around the level of fees and the capture of upward flows from those fees. In provinces where there is limited fiscal capacity, these fees become a key source of revenues for provincial officials. This therefore adds another administrative level that sees schools as taxation units and revenue sources. They are thus not well placed given this to act as a check on the management of the education system and that of school fees in particular, as they often benefit from them. Finally, in the context of the transition to 26 provinces, provincial ministries will become even weaker relative to the PROVEDs and the Central Government. This will be the case at least until the institutional environment in the newly formed provinces becomes clearer and a minimum amount of capacity is in place.

3.3 The Role of Parents, Communities and CSOs in Education Management

The prevalence and high levels of school fees in DRC's education sector could imply in principle that parents and community members have a strong voice in school management, but in practice this is not the case. The school director holds significant responsibilities and remains the central actor in school management. In principle, the school management committee ("conseil de gestion" or COGES) and the parent committee ("comité des parents d'élèves" or COPA) have a meaningful oversight role on school management. The COPA is the structure that ensures parent and community participation in school management. The COGES ensures management decisions for facilities are taken in consultation with representatives of parents, teachers and students. There are also a number civil society organizations involved in education, but they poorly represent parents and typically remain weak and ineffective.

3.3.1 The Parent Committee (COPA)

The COPA is elected by a general assembly of parents. Typically the COPA is composed of a president, a vice-president and a secretary. Some additional advisors ("conseillers") can also be part of the COPA. Two general assemblies per year must be held by the COPA. In addition to approving the internal rules of the structure and electing its members, the general assembly approves the school action plan prepared by the COGES. This plan crucially includes the level of school fees for the year. Other key roles of the COPA include participating in the development of the school budget, as well as monitoring the administrative, financial and infrastructure management of the school.²⁶

There is in practice a significant gap between the numerous functions of the COPA outlined in MEPS-INC policies and the role they actually perform. First of all, elections of COPA members are irregular, in part due to the lack of clear guidance from regulations. In many cases, COPA members are not very well aware of their responsibilities, often confusing them with those of the COGES. There is also typically an important difference in the capacity of COPA members between urban and rural areas, due to lower literacy and livelihood opportunities in the latter.

In reality the school director tends to dominate the COPA, thus limiting the capacity of this committee to perform its watchdog functions and effectively represent parents' interests within the school. Furthermore, COPAs are sometimes directly brought under the influence of the school director, as COPA members can be acquaintances, sometime receive a share of the school fees collected, or else benefit from fee exemptions for their children. This result in a much weaker incentive to pressure school management to limit or reduce school fees, while they can even sometimes actually collude with school management to establish their levels.²⁷

3.3.2 The School-based Management Committee (COGES)

According to MEPS-INC regulations, the COGES of a primary school is composed of the school director, the assistant school director or head teacher, a teachers' representative, three representatives of parents (including the president of the COPA and at least one woman) and one representative of the student committee (with no voting right in this last case).²⁸ By regulation the school director is the head of the COGES while the teachers' representative is its secretary. There is also a treasurer named among the members of the COGES. The COGES must meet at least four times a year and its members are all volunteers and cannot receive any compensation for their role.

The responsibilities of the COGES include providing guidance and control relative to school operations, monitoring pedagogical activities, assessing the management of students' disciplinary files and active

²⁶ MEPS-INC. (2011). « Arrêté Ministériel N°MINEPSP/CABMIN/0799/2011 (COPA) ». (Published September 2, 2011) pp. 2-3.

²⁷ Banque Mondiale. (2013). « Rapport de suivi de la situation économique et financière de la République Démocratique du Congo ». pp. 30-31. Retrieved from <http://www.banquemonddiale.org/fr/country/drc/publication/rapport-de-suivi-de-la-situation-economique-et-financiere-en-rdc-transformer-la-richeesse-miniere-en-vecteur-de-croissance-de-developpement-et-de-cohesion-sociale>

²⁸ MEPS-INC. (2011-2). « Arrêté Ministériel N°MINEPSP/CABMIN/ 0827/2011 (COGES) ». (Published September 6, 2011).

engagement in financial and infrastructure management. The COGES prepares and approves the school budget in consultation with the COPA. It is specifically responsible for approving the financial reports of the school, that need to include a statement of school fees, grants received and other financial support the school benefits from. Data from a survey conducted in 2011 and 2012 highlighted the presence of a COGES in 96% of schools. In schools where a COGES existed, 83% of those had approved the budget.²⁹

As per the COPA, the school director also tends to dominate the deliberations of the COGES, whether due to his connection to the system or simply by being typically more educated than his peers. In addition, COGES members are frequently replaced and they sometimes receive a portion of school fees. These are all factors that contribute to reducing their incentives and abilities to hold the school director accountable. The absence, weakness or lack of capacity of the members of the COPA often means the COGES are fulfilling in part or in whole the role of the COPA. This can result in a situation where the school director is almost completely unaccountable to parents or teachers.

3.3.3 Civil Society Involvement in Education

There are a number of CSO actors active in the education sector. They include: COPAs that are federated into associations at the Sous-PROVED, PROVED, Provincial and National levels along public or confessional networks lines (ANAPECO, APECATH, etc.). Usually, the president of an association at one level is the representative at the next level. However, there seem to be legitimacy issues with respect to these higher-level representatives of parents, which are not formally elected and relatively unaccountable. There are also reports that at least some of them capture a portion of the school fees ascending through administrative structures, notably at local and provincial levels, given some of them are represented in provincial education commissions. This again runs counter to their purported role to defend parents' interests. There is also a realm of CSOs active at provincial and local levels that need to be identified and assessed in order to measure their potential for advancing the interests of parents.

At the national level, there are a number of teacher unions that could have a constructive role to play in the education sector. However, they are typically poorly representative and accountable to their members and therefore too often act as judge and party. There is also a small circle of individuals (connected to CONEPT, COASCE and the "Observatoire indépendant de l'Éducation" [OIE]) that have somehow created a tight network of influence that currently frames the contributions of CSOs in education at the national level. This raises once more key questions around representation and accountability to education constituents and results in serious risks of political manipulation.

In general, most of the CSOs involved in the Congolese education sector lack credibility and legitimacy. Many of them are involved in school fee collection or receive school fee exemptions, while the government politically hijacks others. National CSOs are especially susceptible to this given their weak connections to constituents due to physical distance and weak transportation networks in DRC. Unfortunately, some of their members are more driven by personal gain than collective service to parents. They also typically face internal governance issues, being often dominated by a few individuals, beyond whom there is weak capacity and professionalism.

3.3.4 Weak School Governance and an Unaccountable Education System

CSOs are not meaningfully representing parents currently. In parallel, the power of the school director relative to the COGES and COPA implies a lack of ability by these structures to truly hold him accountable. This highlights a significant breakdown of the participatory governance policy architecture at school level. Indeed, the school director very often prepares the budget and manages expenditures with very limited oversight from either the COGES or the COPA. This can result in a situation where school fees are higher than required and where the resources received for operating expenses or school fees will not be managed in the best interests of the school or children. Moreover, the lack of influence of parents

²⁹ Banque Mondiale. (2014). « Enquête de suivi des dépenses publiques à destination dans le secteur de l'Éducation en République Démocratique du Congo ». (Prepared by projet PARSE) p. 90.

on school directors highlights that they are primarily upwardly accountable to the administrative structures that nominate them and not effectively accountable to parents.

As a direct consequence of this limited accountability to parents, school directors have a limited capacity and power to question the demands of administrative officials for a portion of school fees. Being primarily accountable to the system means that in spite of parent pressures for reduced fees, they are very unlikely to question what share of school fees ought to be transferred upward. If this was not sufficient, there are reported cases of salary payments being interrupted in schools that pushed back on this system. The absence of mechanisms to hold administrative structures and education officials accountable, despite the 20% to 40% share of school fees they receive, is another cause of current problems. Indeed, instead of monitoring and supporting school operations and activities, administrators often simply collect the share of school fees allocated to their respective structures and perform their responsibilities at minimal levels. In addition, officials from these structures will rarely meet with the COGES or the COPA, and are not accountable to them, even indirectly.

As we have seen in this section, notwithstanding a clear framework for participatory school governance, in reality there is very limited accountability to parents in school management. In fact, the school director has a disproportionate power in schools that is rarely kept in check. Similarly, despite the fact that administrative structures extract significant resources from schools and parents, they are accountable to neither. CSOs could potentially play a constructive role in terms of advancing the interest of parents and children, whether at the school level or above, but they are currently either unable or weakly interested in effectively performing this mandate. In spite of these drawbacks, CSOs should play an increasing role in education in DRC. In this context, assessing the capacity and representativeness of existing CSOs, and particularly provincial coalitions, should be prioritized. This could then be followed by the provision of tailored organizational support to increase their effectiveness in representing parents' interests.

3.4 Key Management Systems and Related Governance Issues

This section will be concerned with the performance of key management systems in education. This includes budget and financial management, issues around human resources, payroll and salary payment management, along with information management. As will be apparent in the following sub-sections, problems in one system will often influence the performance of another. For example, the growth in the number of teachers over time is strongly influenced by the process authorizing school creations. Conversely, the availability of financial resources in the budget for PSPE strongly influences how many teachers will get officially registered in the payroll and will receive their salary.

3.4.1 Budget and Financial Management

Despite significant annual variations, the real expenditures for PSPE³⁰, when accounting for inflation, have been increasing on average by 16.5% per year between 2006 and 2015. This is faster than the average growth in real GDP of 6.8% and faster than the increase in national budgetary expenditures of 11.3% over the same period, as per figure 3.3 below. In absolute terms, this implies that education has benefited from a higher degree of prioritization in terms of executed expenditures relative to other sectors. Consequently, and over time, the expenditures for PSPE have seen their share relative to total national expenditures grow from 6.7% in 2005 to an estimated 12.4% in 2015.³¹

Similarly, PSPE executed expenditures expressed as a share of GDP increased from a low of 0.7% in 2005 to an estimated high of 1.6% in 2015. Looking at regional comparisons that are using the higher budget allocation figures (which are typically not fully executed), PSPE allocations in DRC accounted in 2013 for 1.7% of GDP, compared to the average for Sub-Saharan Africa of 3.4% of GDP.³² This highlights that notwithstanding significant increases in expenditures after the lows attained in the early 2000s, a

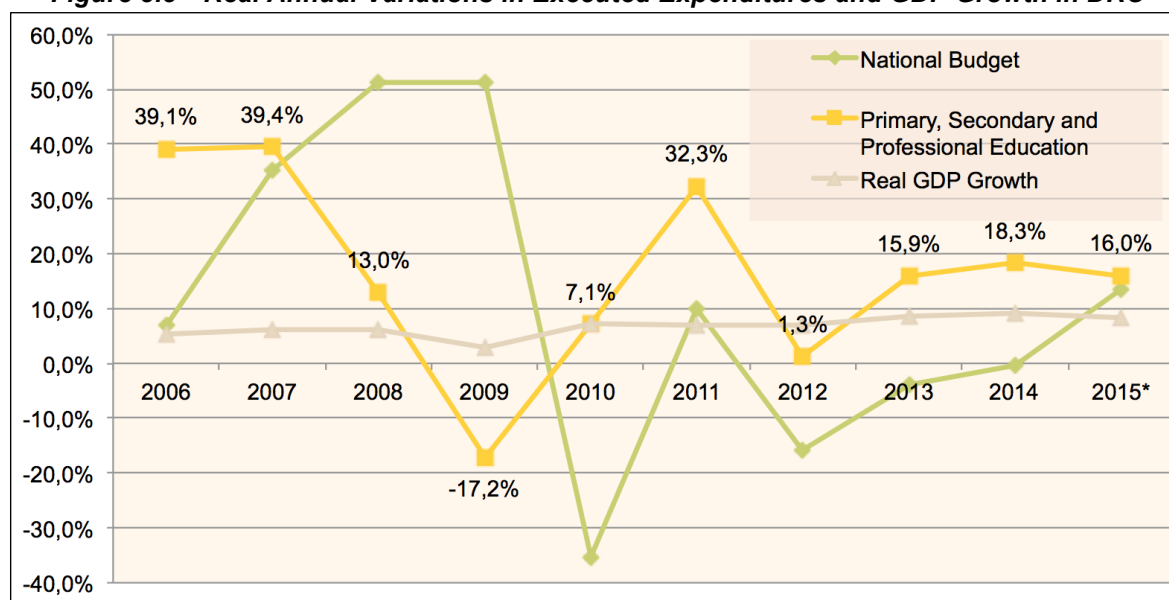
³⁰ PSPE correspond to the expenditures of the MEPSP for 2014 and before, which included professional education. MEPS-INC and METP budgetary data have been combined in all numbers for 2015.

³¹ Data Sources: GDP & National Budget Data 2005-09: IMF World Economic Outlook 2015; MEPSP Budget 2005-09: RESEN Report 2014; Budget Data 2010-15: SSEF 2016-2025.

³² Ratio calculated from the information available in the RESEN DRC report p. 104.

doubling of PSPE expenditures as a share of GDP is still required only to reach the regional average. Education in DRC thus remains underfunded compared to most other countries in the region. This relatively low level of expenditure also undoubtedly affects access and quality, and this explains at least in good part the high school fees and weak learning achievements in primary education in DRC.

Figure 3.3—Real Annual Variations in Executed Expenditures and GDP Growth in DRC



Looking at the allocated versus executed expenditures for the national and PSPE budget between 2013 and 2015, on average the national budget was executed at a rate of 54.6%, compared to 78.7% for the PSPE budget (see Table 3.3 below). This is consistent with a higher degree of “prioritization” in terms of the executed expenditures for PSPE. However, the key point explaining this is that more than 90% of all PSPE expenditures are for the salaries of teachers and those of the personnel of administrative structures.³³

Table 3.3—National and PSPE Budgets: Allocation Versus Execution

(In Billions of Congolese Francs)		2013	2014	2015	Average 2013-15
National Budget	Allocated	6 434,7	7 449,0	7 586,2	
	Executed	3 577,3	3 690,1	4 445,8	
	Executed / Allocated	55,6%	49,5%	58,6%	54,6%
PSPE Budget	Allocated	522,4	579,5	638,2	
	Executed	374,1	452,5	550,0	
	Executed / Allocated	71,6%	78,1%	86,3%	78,7%
PSPE / National Budget	Allocated	8,1%	7,8%	8,4%	8,1%
	Executed	10,5%	12,3%	12,4%	11,7%
SECOPE Budget	Allocated	328,1	442,5	519,9	
	Executed	359,8	421,6	510,3	
	Executed / Allocated	109,6%	95,3%	98,2%	101,0%
SECOPE / PSPE Budget	Allocated	62,8%	76,3%	81,5%	73,5%
	Executed	96,2%	93,2%	92,8%	94,0%

Source: Ministry of Budget, execution on December 31st 2013, 2014 and 2015

³³ The budgetary line of the SECOPE also includes a small share for operational costs that are now budgeted for schools and decentralized administrative structures (represented 15.6 billion CFs or 5,3% of total executed expenses of 293,6 billion CFs for the SECOPE in 2012). The SECOPE is only nominally responsible for the payroll and salaries of teachers and administrative personnel. However, this is done to leverage the prioritization given to salaries by the Ministry of Finance and ensure these operational expense allocations are funded and do reach schools and administrative structures.

The importance of salary expenses explains why the SECOPE line in the PSPE budget, the structure responsible for the deconcentrated payroll, is by far the largest budgetary line in the education budget. It is also as one of the largest lines in the overall national budget. The “prioritization” of education in terms of budgetary expenditures therefore entirely reflects the growth in the number of registered and paid teachers and administrative personnel over the last 10 years. This is further emphasized by the higher prioritization given by the Ministry of Finance, at the payment stage, for salary expenditures. This implies that operating and investment expenditures for PSPE have been systematically underfunded to this day, something that necessarily has an impact on the high school fees paid by parents, as will be discussed later. This further provides some explanation for the absence of meaningful quality improvements in recent years. Improving quality in the absence of funding for key learning inputs and teacher training, among others key aspects, is a rather difficult undertaking.

Box 2—Budgetary Information and Management

Beyond the analysis of the currently available PSPE budgetary information, there are issues concerning its presentation that hinders effective scrutiny. For example, investments in school construction through the PRISS project are not reported as part of the PSPE budget. In fact, it cannot even be tracked in published budgetary documents as it is handled separately through exceptional procedures under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office. These exceptional procedures, which are used extensively by the Government, notably allow bypassing the relationship between a given budgetary allocation and the related expenditures, resulting in questionable integrity and accuracy of individual spending lines in reported expenditures. This situation notably explains why the SECOPE line presented in Table 3.4 could be spent at 109.6% in 2013. This reflects poor management of the expenditure process and lack of budgetary discipline by the Government.

Concerning issues of availability, historical budgetary data pertaining to PSPE should be publicly available in a consolidated and accessible format including allocated versus executed expenditures. This would facilitate tracking and analysis of education spending over time by all education stakeholders, including civil society. This should also include detailed breakdown of spending across provinces (for both transfers and central PSPE expenses in these provinces), something that is available in the Ministry of the Budget database, but not publicly. The recent separation of professional education from primary and secondary education will also create budgetary presentation and tracking issues, which will need to be mitigated to ensure comparable budgetary figures will be available over time.

The current budgetary nomenclature and the budget allocation process also suffer from weaknesses. Indeed, it is presently impossible to establish what strategic objectives education expenditures are actually contributing to, and even less so link these systematically to results. This is explained by the input based budget nomenclature (personnel, transfers, investment, etc.) and the absence of a budgetary presentation by objectives that would allow linking the sector strategy to budgetary allocations. This points to the relevance of advancing program budgeting in the education sector. Nonetheless, input based budgeting would likely need to be strengthened first to ensure all education spending is included accurately, consistently and within relevant lines of the budget. In a second step, input based budgeting could be combined with result based budgeting to enable better reporting against results. Further, the current budget prioritization process is opaque and highly centralized, with most decisions made by the Ministry of Budget without significant involvement by education officials. These allocations are therefore made without a clear relationship with key determinants of needs across provinces or strategic priorities.

The budgetary information and management issues enumerated above ultimately result in a lack of alignment between resources, policies and the needs of the population in education. Meaningful progress toward implementing the vision of the SSEF will require addressing at least some of those issues. A key starting point at the MEPS-INC toward this objective would be to effectively put in place the Directorate for financial and administrative management that is currently foreseen. Regrouping the related functions in one structure, relative to the status quo where responsibilities are divided across a number of central structures suffering from poor coordination and capacity, would be a helpful starting point for strengthened planning and budgetary management.

3.4.2 Human Resources Management

The salary expenditures for teachers and administrators represent over 90% of PSPE spending, and are responsible for almost all the growth in expenditures over recent years. This growth has been driven in part by salary increases, but also by significant increases in the number of registered and paid teachers

and administrators. Indeed, the total number of teachers and administrators active in the sector has increased by about 200,000 since 2006, attaining about 538,000 in early 2016 as per table 3.4 below (figures in this section include primary and secondary schools). This data was obtained from the SECOPE. This represents the central MEPS-INC structure responsible for managing the payroll of teachers and administrators, excluding the personnel of the ministry located in Kinshasa (a responsibility of the “Direction des services généraux” in this case).

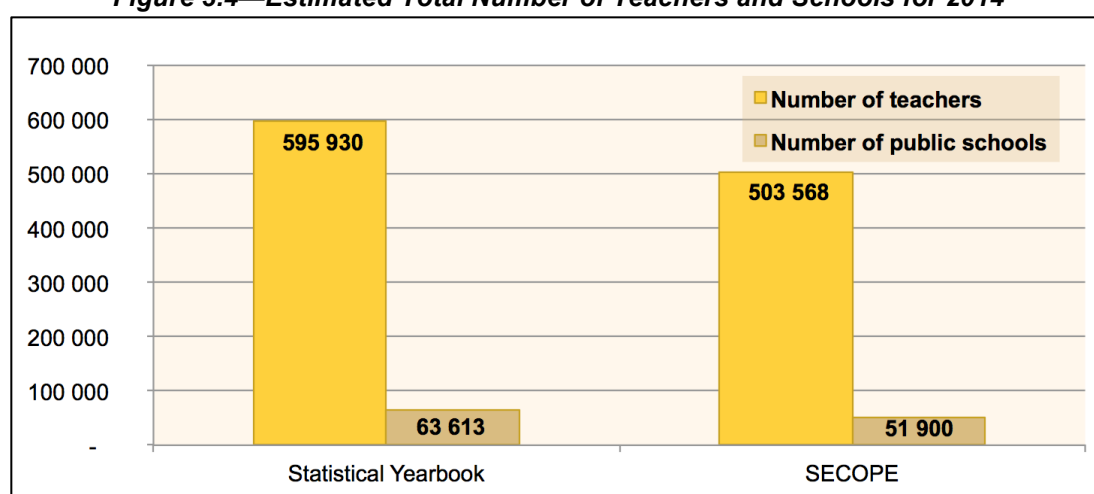
Table 3.4—Registration Status of Teachers and Administrators for 2016

Status	Schools			Administrative Structures			Teachers and Administrators	
	Number	Teachers	% of total	Number	Personnel	% of total	Number	% of total
Registered and paid	37 201	353 397	72,0%	2 228	41 539	87,6%	394 936	73,4%
Registered and unpaid	9 155	49 878	10,2%	578	4 964	10,5%	54 842	10,2%
Unregistered and unpaid	12 519	87 684	17,9%	73	915	1,9%	88 599	16,5%
Total	58 875	490 959	100,0%	2 879	47 418	100,0%	538 377	100,0%

Source: SECOPE database

However, the SECOPE data is not meant to capture the entire mass of teachers active in the sector. It merely covers personnel from schools and administrative structures that are registered or those that are in the process of getting registered (more details on the registration process are provided in the next subsection). As a consequence, many unpaid staff in unregistered structures or those in registered structures for which an individual registration request has not reached the central SECOPE remain unaccounted for. The difference can be significant, as shown in figure 3.4 below. The figure shows the estimated number of teachers and schools from the latest MEPS-INC’s education statistical yearbook³⁴, relative to that of the SECOPE for 2014. The statistical yearbook reports about 90,000 more teachers than the SECOPE, an 18% difference, when adding both the number of paid and unpaid teachers contained in its database.

Figure 3.4—Estimated Total Number of Teachers and Schools for 2014



The difference in the number of schools is also central, as teachers in unregistered schools cannot get registered. There are thus a much greater number of unregistered teachers than those reported by the SECOPE. This also highlights a clear need for more accurate data on the total number of schools and teachers in DRC, for both planning and management purposes. Nonetheless, based on the data contained in table 3.4 above, adding 90,000 teachers to the unregistered and unpaid teachers line would increase their numbers to over 177,000. This would decrease the ratio of registered and paid teachers relative to the total number of teachers from roughly seven out of ten, to a ratio of six out of ten for 2014.

There are data quality issues with both the SECOPE and the statistical yearbook data. Nevertheless, this difference in the estimated number of schools and teachers would have a huge impact on the ultimate

³⁴ Excluding private schools and the teachers employed there.

cost of integrating all teachers on the payroll, as per the “politique de gratuité” and the SSEF. This first raise issues in terms of how schools get certified and registered. Second, on whether the growth in the number of teachers can somehow be rationalized, and focused in relatively more under-served areas. This points to a need for better data, planning, and oversight within the education system to ensure relatively scarce additional resources are allocated where they are most needed.

There has been a large increase in the number of administrative personnel in the last decade. Indeed, the total number of administrators in 2016 is more than triple what it was in 2008 (when the comparable figure was 14,652). This was at least in part driven by the continued growth in the number of administrative structures discussed previously, in addition to the hire of more administrative personnel in existing structures. Table 3.5 below shows the comparative evolution between the number of paid and unpaid teachers and administrators over the 2011–2016 period. It shows a 38% increase in the number of paid administrators compared to an 11% increase in the number of paid teachers. Further, when looking at the ratio of teachers to administrators (paid and unpaid), we can see that there was a 20% decrease in this ratio. The last two RESEN reports also show that the number of administrators has been growing faster than the number of students, with this ratio of students to administrators going from 233 to 194 between 2005 and 2014.

Table 3.5—Evolution in the Numbers of Paid and Unpaid Personnel in PSPE

	Teachers			Administrators		
	2011	2016	Variation	2011	2016	Variation
Paid	314 077	353 397	11,1%	25 693	41 539	38,1%
Unpaid	69 970	137 562	49,1%	5 191	5 879	11,7%
Total	384 047	490 959	21,8%	30 884	47 418	34,9%
Ratio of Teachers per Administrator				12	10	-20,1%

Source: SECOPE database

The ratios presented above highlight a problematic management of human resources at MEPS-INC and the SECOPE. These ratios further suggest a decrease in the actual workload of administrators over time. This is in direct contradiction with the SSEF engagements concerning free primary education and the integration of teachers on the payroll of the MEPS-INC. Indeed, the proliferation of administrative structures and administrators, while the number of unpaid teachers keeps growing and remains high, results in increased financial pressures on parents and households through high and growing school fees. This is a consequence of unpaid teachers relying on school fees for their salaries, while administrators prey on schools for a portion of those fees for supplementing their salaries and covering operating costs.

This provides evidence of weak oversight of human resource management and control in education and a failure to align the policies outlined in strategy documents, management decisions and budgetary resources. A lack of coordination between the different levels of the MEPS-INC, the SECOPE and the Ministry of Budget currently explains why teachers are not deployed where they are most needed. The involvement of three distinct structures that are poorly coordinated partially explains this situation. This provides a strong rationale for consolidating in a Human Resource Directorate within the MEPS-INC the planning and management of teacher recruitment, careers, along with planning and monitoring the outlay of the financial resources required.³⁵

3.4.3 Schools and Administrative Structures Creation

Similarly, the creation of schools and administrative structures seems poorly controlled. The SECOPE has a key role in this process, as it is responsible for registering schools. The SECOPE is responsible for setting the official school map, and this despite an official annual process (the “promotion scolaire”) where all PROVEDs assess where new schools can open in their area based on needs assessments and local priorities. Currently, there is a MEPS-INC moratorium in place concerning the creation of new schools, although in practice this seems to be ignored. There are even documented reports of the creation of

³⁵ MEPS-INC. (2014). « Rapport d'état du système éducatif – République Démocratique du Congo (RESEN RDC) ». pp. 262-263.

“phantom” schools in some provinces, schools that are recorded in the SECOPE system and for which teachers are registered and paid, even if no school or teachers exist in reality.³⁶ At a minimum, the regulation role for creating schools is currently not effectively filled by the PROVEDs due to interference from other levels of the system in this process³⁷. It is also actually unclear whether there is even a process in place for regulating the creation of administrative structures. As the creation of schools and administrative structures and their registration later drives teacher and administrator recruitment, no effective regulation of recruitment will be possible without meaningfully addressing this issue.

3.4.4 Payroll Management

The issues noted on the recruitment of personnel, registration and inclusion on the payroll at MEPS-INC make it worthwhile to explore this aspect in more detail. In State schools, teacher recruitment is conducted at the school level, and it is the school director that is responsible for recruiting new teachers. The school director, in turn, is recruited at the Sous-PROVED level. In confessional schools, the Local Coordination instead of the school director is typically responsible for recruitment of teachers and school directors. However, the MEPS-INC has recently tried to remove the responsibilities for recruiting school directors from the local coordination, a contentious issue for confessional networks.

Formally, teacher recruitment is subject to certain norms, including minimum educational qualifications and a maximum number of students per class/teacher. The application and required evidence are prepared at the school level. The local head of the Sous-PROVED (or Local Coordination) approves or rejects the application for an official nomination (“commission d’affectation”), which confirms the recruitment and identifies the school the teacher will report to. Once approved, the application documents and the nomination are brought to the local branch of the SECOPE for validation and then forwarded to the provincial SECOPE office, which digitally transfers the file to the central SECOPE office. The central office then processes the request and issues a registration number and integrates the new teacher into the payroll database. Newly registered teachers then start to receive a salary upon budgetary availability as determined by the Ministry of Budget.

Despite this process, the registration and inclusion process into the payroll database followed by the central SECOPE after recruitment remains opaque and unclear. The process that used to be in place, with specific approval responsibilities, is now typically disregarded, while it is not yet clear whether the newly promulgated process is effectively implemented.³⁸ The result is that the few SECOPE officials who are responsible for the central database now have the de facto arbitrary responsibility for including, or not, registered personnel into the payroll. As a change in status of a teacher, whether to a different school, salary grade or for employment termination, follows the same process from the local to the central SECOPE, the same arbitrariness prevails in those cases. In addition, the SECOPE database is not secure and anyone with access to the database can change the status of individual personnel files or add new personnel to the payroll, and this without leaving traces as to whom and when those changes were made. There is also a significant delay, sometimes even years, between a request to include a registered teacher on the payroll and the day when he or she first receives a salary. In principle, registration requests are treated according to the order in which they are received, but in practice there seems to be a high variability and arbitrariness as to how and when requests are processed. An audit of the SECOPE conducted in 2011 revealed that the registration process or a change in the status of a teacher took on average about 6 months.³⁹

Interestingly, especially in light of the significant growth in the number of administrators, there does not seem to be effective procedures in place for regulating the recruitment of those personnel. The significant

³⁶ Integrity & Cambridge Education. (2016). Education Sector Political Economy Analysis in Kasai Oriental. USAID/UKAID ACCELERE! p. 28.

³⁷ For example, the PRISS project programs the construction of new schools without reference to the « promotion scolaire », some confessional schools get registered directly by the SECOPE, while some private schools benefit from direct political sponsorship at national or provincial levels to support their creation.

³⁸ MEPS-INC. (2014-2). « Guide de création, budgétisation et mécanisation des établissements scolaires publics, du personnel enseignant et administratif de l'EPSP ».

³⁹ Banque Mondiale. (2011). « Diagnostic Fonctionnel et organisationnel du SECOPE ». (Prepared by PARSE project) p. 31.

growth in the number of registered and paid administrators, as only 12% of those are unpaid compared to 28% to 39% for teachers (depending on the estimate), suggest that they benefit from an insider advantage with the SECOPE. Better documentation of actual procedures for those staff would be a first priority. Nonetheless, the arbitrariness of the payroll database inclusion process, and the lack of effective control and oversight seems to work to the advantage of administrators and the disadvantage of teachers, households and parents.

3.4.5 Salary Payment Arrangements

Since 2011, the DRC government has been gradually rolling out the “bancarisation” reform, which is resulting in a significant share of public sector employees receiving their salaries through the Congolese commercial banking system. Indeed, following the monthly approval of the overall government payroll by the Ministry of Budget and the Ministry of Finance, salaries now flow directly from the Congolese Central Bank (BCC) through electronic and traceable transfers to commercial banks. In turn, these transfer funds to the accounts of MEPS-INC staff with access to banks.⁴⁰ This is a significant improvement from the previous system where funds were transferred in cash from the provincial branches of the BCC. These were then routed through the local divisions of the Ministry of Finance and further down through a constellation of payment agents, resulting in significant leakage. In education, the SECOPE used to be responsible for distributing salaries to teachers after receiving them in cash from the provincial structures of the Ministry of Finance. Nonetheless, “bancarisation” remains a relatively recent reform, while commercial banks do not cover the entire territory. Since there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of this reform, it is still difficult to assess how effective this system is at getting salaries to all public employees, beyond anecdotal evidence.

A number of problems have been identified and chief among them is the fact that numerous state employees located in rural areas and small towns do not have effective access to commercial banks. Various alternate options have been implemented in these areas, such as banks sending their staff or payment agents to specific locations each month to hand out salaries, paying through local CARITAS offices or through mobile transfers. Lately, salaries have been paid mostly through CARITAS in these areas, as the other options were not successful.⁴¹ In this case, the money is wired directly from the BCC to CARITAS (instead of a commercial bank), who then distributes it to its local offices across the country. However, effective controls of salary payments in rural areas are much more difficult to undertake given the presence of intermediaries that are not integrated within commercial banks’ electronic payment systems. This is underlined by the fact that in these locations, salaries are paid in cash to individuals listed on the payroll upon presentation of a valid identification, and not to bank accounts. Public employees and teachers in rural areas also need to travel to predetermined sites to collect their salaries (whether to CARITAS or other payment agent sites), something that can require up to several days of travel every month. As a result, teachers in rural areas will be more frequently absent from schools, plus need to incur travel costs merely to collect their salaries.

“Bancarisation” represents a clear improvement over the previous system, however, more systematic monitoring and auditing of the process needs to be in place to ensure risks are identified and adequately managed, including within banks. Also, in rural areas, the reform delivered limited benefits compared to the old system, as the “last mile” for delivering salaries remains potentially affected by all the risks inherent in cash payment systems. This also highlights the need for more in-depth assessment of the issues surrounding salary payment to teachers.

⁴⁰ Teisserenc, N. (2013). RD Congo : La saga des salaires - JeuneAfrique.com. Retrieved from

<http://economie.jeuneafrique.com/regions/afrique-subsaharienne/20420-rd-congo-la-saga-des-salaires-.html>

⁴¹ There were network coverage issues that prevented mobile phone providers from being effective in rural areas. In addition, these companies had to advance salary payments and get reimbursed by the banks later, resulting in liquidity shortages for these companies and unpaid salaries. In addition, lack of cash on hand in small businesses in rural areas meant public employees could not cash their salaries upon reception of the SMS money transfer, a significant issue in a country with a very limited banking culture. Other payment agents have also not proven more effective than CARITAS in rural areas.

3.4.6 Data Collection and Information Management

As noted in previous subsections, the data in education highlights that information about schools and teachers that are currently available is partial and incomplete, and not very reliable. Specifically, some of the issues around the SECOPE database of teachers and administrators have been documented in a management audit of the SECOPE conducted by the PARSE project in 2011. It revealed that local and central SECOPE offices were overwhelmed with paper files that are often stacked to the ceiling in both central and local offices. This suggests ineffective filing methods and that documents can easily get lost, one potential cause of the delays around registration. In addition, a weak knowledge of official procedures at all levels and the physical distance between local SECOPE branches and the provincial SECOPE offices (given forms are transferred physically between these levels), also add to these delays.⁴² Weak overall information technology capacity, poor data integrity and security from an aging and unsecured database also play a role in this situation, despite the presence of a basic telecommunication and data transfer infrastructure in the provincial SECOPE offices and the central SECOPE.⁴³ Another significant point is the absence of a third-party audit of the SECOPE database that would ensure it contains only active teachers attached to the schools where they are effectively deployed. All these issues explain the significant problems with payroll management at SECOPE. A number of these were also raised in an audit conducted by the “Cour des comptes”.⁴⁴ As a result, these information management weaknesses raise serious doubts and risks to the accuracy of the teacher and administrator payroll submitted to the Ministry of Budget, and can explain reported cases of phantom schools. Similar issues affect the school map for DRC that is also under the responsibility of the SECOPE.

The preparation process of the annual education statistical yearbook, which remains the main data source for the total number of schools, teachers and students, is worth highlighting. The data it presents relies on a questionnaire prepared by the Directorate of Planning of the MEPS-INC. This questionnaire is printed in Kinshasa and sent out to all the schools across DRC by ground transportation, despite the poor road transportation network in the country. Once distributed to all schools and filled out, it is then sent back to Kinshasa where responses are compiled. Given the size of the country, limited transportation infrastructure and the large number of schools, this process is time consuming (the data is available years later), unreliable and expensive. Indeed, many schools never submit back their responses and others get lost on the long way back to Kinshasa. There are also data reliability issues with statistical yearbook. One is the absence of formal quality control process when processing thousands of questionnaires manually. Another is that it relies in many cases on “estimates” to derive its aggregated data, given the incomplete response rate. This data source should thus be used with a high degree of caution. Alternative means that could be timelier and more cost-effective for generating routine educational data should be explored.

A final issue on data quality is that there are few incentives for regular and accurate reporting of information at school level in the absence of an effective quality assurance process. For example, school directors tend to underreport the number of enrolled students to the supervisory structures (Sous-PROVED, inspection pools or local confessional coordination). This is explained by the fact they must pay them a share of the school fees they collect per student (the smaller the number of students, the smaller the amount they need to pay). On the other hand, when working with a donor-funded partner, which typically provides support based on the number of students, school directors tend to overestimate enrollments.⁴⁵ These points further compound the issues around data quality for the statistical yearbook.

As quality and timely information is key for the management of the education system, improvement in the exhaustiveness, accuracy, and timeliness of educational data should be prioritized. This is a foundational element toward better planning, budgeting and management, and ultimately stronger educational outcomes.

⁴² Banque Mondiale. (2011). « Diagnostique Fonctionnel et organisationnel du SECOPE ». (Prepared by PARSE project) pp. 122-131.

⁴³ Banque Mondiale. (2011). p. 86.

⁴⁴ Cour des comptes RDC. (2013). « Rapport d'audit de la gestion des écoles et des rémunérations des enseignants et du personnel administratif et technique par le SECOPE » pp. 12-13.

⁴⁵ Based on a discussion with the personnel of the Education Section of the IRC, which included former teachers who witnessed directly those situations.

3.5 School Fees and Household Payments

The current section will be looking in more depth at the issue of primary school fees in DRC. It will first examine the level of direct school fees based on the information currently available, before turning to quantifying what the relative burden from these fees on Congolese parents.

3.5.1 Direct School Fees in Primary Education

As noted earlier, the DRC constitution states that free primary education is a right and a constitutional obligation. However, school fees have been widespread across DRC since the 1980s. They were initially introduced to cover teachers' salaries and school operating costs following a drastic reduction in the public financing to education (from \$118 to \$21 per student between 1982 and 1986 due to structural adjustment policies) and repeated teacher strikes. These fees were later gradually formalized by the State and allowed the education system to partially function during the 1990s, in spite of the breakdown of the Congolese state. In recent years, notwithstanding increasing budgetary resources for the MEPS-INC, and especially higher and more regularly paid teacher salaries, high school fees still remain the main constraint cited by parents limiting access to primary education.

In an attempt to address high school fees, the MEPS-INC has been rolling out since 2010 the "Politique de gratuité" (free education policy). The SSEF also retains the objective of free primary education. However, the fees abolished as part of this policy represent so far about 1,750 Congolese Francs (CFs) per children per year (or \$1.80).⁴⁶ In parallel, the motivation and the punctual intervention fees, which are fixed at school level, remain and can represent up to an average of 43,000 CFs (or \$44), even if they can vary widely across provinces and schools. A number of additional fees fixed at central and provincial levels also remain.

Table 3.6—School Fees per Student in Katanga for 2014

Type of Fee	Grade 1	Grade 6
Fees fixed by provincial edict (in CFs)		
<i>Minerval</i>	"Gratuité"	100
<i>Assurances</i>	"Gratuité"	100
<i>Frais d'imprimés</i>	"Gratuité"	550
<i>Frais administratif / supplétifs au fonctionnement</i>	"Gratuité"	1 000
<i>Frais d'examen (TENAFEP, 6th grade only)</i>	N/A	9 500
Frais de promotion scolaire	100	100
Frais de formation	100	100
Frais de constitution des bibliothèques	1 850	1 850
Frais carnet de santé	3 000	3 000
Frais d'informatisation et identification des élèves	250	250
Frais d'appui à la construction	100	100
Sub-Total	5 400	16 650
Fees fixed at school level (in CFs)		
Frais d'Interventions ponctuelles	18 904	18 904
Frais de motivations	26 226	26 226
Sub-Total	43 150	43 150
Estimated total per student	48 550	59 800

Source: IRC Vas-y-Fille Database 2013-14, Provincial Edict for Katanga 2014

For better visualizing this situation, table 3.6 above provides the ventilation of the various school fees per student for grades 1 and 6 in Katanga for 2014. Since school fees can vary widely across urban and rural areas, across schools, across state and confessional networks, as well as across provinces, this table merely provides an illustrative example. The estimated total for a grade 1 student in Katanga, targeted by

⁴⁶ The fees targeted for abolition are the MINERVAL fee (100 FC), the impression fee (550 FC), the administrative fee (1000 FC) and the insurance fee (100 FC), but this targeted abolition did not apply to Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. These abolitions also started in grade 1 and were gradually extended to other grades.

fee abolition and not subjected to the TENAFEP⁴⁷ exam fee, was 48,550 CFs (or \$50). In turn, the estimated fee for a grade 6 student in the same province, not yet subject to fee abolition and subject to TENAFEP, was 59,900 CFs (or \$62).⁴⁸

Table 3.7 below illustrates the potential variations in the level of school fees across provinces in DRC. Reported average primary school fees are about 30,000 CFs (or \$31), with a minimum of 4,645 CFs (or \$4.8) in Kasai Oriental versus a maximum of 142,848 CFs (or 142.7 USD) in Kinshasa. The table also highlights the absence of systematic monitoring of fees from the MEPS-INC or any other Congolese education actor, as the data was all generated through various donor-funded surveys. This explains why the resources collected from school fees are neither budgeted nor systematically documented. This represents a serious transparency and management issue, and further explains why only fee estimates are currently available. Given resources from school fees dwarf the actual resources provided by the state for primary education, this is a very significant problem in terms of how, where and for what results these resources are used. This problem is only made worse given a significant share of those fees is captured by education administrators and redistributed upward across administrative structures.

Table 3.7—Alternate Estimated Sources of School Fees in Primary Schools

Province	Source				
	EADE 2012*	ENQ 123 (2012)	ESDD (2011)	ESDD (2012)	IRC (2013-4)
Bandundu	6 639	5 427			19 546
Bas-Congo	20 499	24 093			
Équateur	15 609	13 319	58 925	47 057	32 409
Kasai occ.	8 241	5 513	15 797	19 593	
Kasai or.	9 630	4 645			20 056
Katanga	49 527	33 588	17 124	18 144	
Kinshasa	115 801	142 848			
Maniema	13 617	15 061	36 864	38 310	
Nord-Kivu	36 882	25 256			
Orientale	20 564	22 506			33 210
Sud-Kivu	20 720	22 671			
Average	28 884	28 630	32 178	30 776	26 305

Source: UNICEF, Rapport sur la situation des enfants et des femmes en RDC, p.38.

One of the key effects of the education system's reliance on school fees is that the relationship between schools and administrative structures has turned from an administrative and pedagogical relationship to one that is almost exclusively financial. Personnel from the Sous-PROVED, Local Coordinations, Inspection Pools or local SECOPE branches, and other administrative structures, all primarily visit schools to collect the share of fees that support the payment of their salary bonuses ("primes") and operating expenses. They also redistribute another portion upwards, toward their own supervisory structures, including PROVEDs, Provincial Coordinations, Provincial Inspection, Provincial SECOPE, and up to the central MEPS-INC. There are even documented cases of provincial politicians collecting a share of those fees or else FBOs using proceeds from fees to finance non-school activities.⁴⁹ The significant growth in the number of administrative structures and the number of administrators reported previously has only increased this pressure on schools and parents. The institutionalization of this system has attained such a degree that the local SERNIE and SECOPE offices are now often formally tasked with capturing fees in schools and redistributing them across the system. This role and the resources associated likely explain the rapid proliferation of these structures.

As can be seen in Table 3.6 above, the fees contained in the provincial edict nearly entirely finance the operations of administrative structures. In turn, those fixed at school level primarily support teachers' salaries and school operations (though a portion of them are still captured by administrative structures).

⁴⁷ The TENAFEP fee is requested for letting grade 6 students write the final exam at the end of the primary school cycle.

⁴⁸ At a market exchange rate of 1 USD = 971 Congolese Francs on October 11th 2016

(<https://www.oanda.com/lang/fr/currency/converter/>).

⁴⁹ Integrity & Cambridge Education. (2016). Education Sector Political Economy Analysis in Equateur. USAID/UKAID ACCELERE! p. 31.

MEPS-INC officials estimate that 20% to 30% of the total amount collected through school fees were captured by administrative structures, though this percentage has been growing over time and can be as high as 40%.⁵⁰ Administrators in both the state and confessional administrative structures have also been creating and adding new ad hoc and illegal fees that keep building the financial pressure on schools and parents.

Some of those fees can be created under the cover of donor-funded initiatives (École assainie, Éducation pour tous, data collection fee, etc.). For some other fees raised by confessional networks, under the umbrella of the 1977 convention, they can be used to raise revenues that finance church activities as opposed to education. And yet in other cases, administrators use their positions and authority to request parallel and illicit fees from teachers for providing training, performing inspections or for the compulsory purchase of pedagogical documents. The combined authority concerning school fees in Kinshasa, the provinces (including decentralized and deconcentrated structures) and at school levels, combined with an absence of systematic monitoring or control, ultimately results in widely differing practices and fees across provinces and schools. The ultimate result remains that schools have been turned into both formal and informal taxation units for the government, the religious networks and their administrators. The presence of these fees also result in incentives that work against the interests of parents and a wider access to primary education.^{51,52}

On a day-to-day basis, this situation results in administrators exercising non-stop pressure (including intimidation) on school directors to collect school fees. This leads to similar coercion patterns on households by school directors. At all levels, this illustrates the presence of an informal yet well-oiled fee collection system with meticulously calculated quotas and disciplined bookkeeping practices to monitor the collection process. In parallel, there still remains a total absence of public accounting or accountability on the collection and use of those fees. This is also compounded by extremely complex and variable school fee practices at all levels of the education system. As discussed before, this results in a multitude of fees that varies by nomenclature, typology, interpretation and frequency, while administrators are judge and party in their application. Bringing a degree of order and transparency to this process would require a standard approach for measuring and monitoring the fee system, starting at school level. In a second step, adopting transparent and standardized fee guidelines would be required. Systematic and transparent tracking of the resources collected and how they are used in schools and in administrative offices at all levels of the system would further complement this.

3.5.2 The Financial Burden from School Fees on Parents and Households

A relevant metric to assess the financial burden from the costs of primary education is the share of overall education expenses covered by parents relative to that covered by the public sector. Table 3.8 provides a breakdown of those estimated figures expressed for an individual primary school student for the year 2012. It shows that parents were providing through fees on average about 38,971 CFs (or \$40) or 67.8% of total expenses per student. On the other hand, the share of the public sector provided through the national budget was 18,468 CFs (or \$19), representing 32.2% of total expenses. In other words, for every dollar spent by the Congolese state in primary education, parents were directly contributing more than two dollars through fees.

In DRC, 57% of households earn less than 540,000 CFs (\$556) and 81% less than 1,080,000 CFs (\$1112) per annum.⁵³ When further considering the average woman has up to seven children⁵⁴, this vividly illustrates why many Congolese families are unable to send all or even some of their children to school.

⁵⁰ For example, a provincial edict for the PROVED of Katanga 1 stated that the portion of the “frais de motivation” captured by administrative structures had been officially set at 40% for the 2014-15 school year.

⁵¹ Williams, G. (2012). *The Political Economy of Basic Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. DFID. p. 12.

⁵² MEPS-INC. (2015-2). Province du Katanga, PROVED Katanga 1, « Clé de répartition des frais scolaire exercices 2014-15 ». (Published September 29th 2015)

⁵³ UNICEF. (2013). National Survey on the situation of out-of-school children and adolescents. p. 64. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/education/files/DRC_OOSCI_Full_Report_\(En\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/DRC_OOSCI_Full_Report_(En).pdf)

⁵⁴ Ministère du Plan et Suivi de la Mise en œuvre de la Révolution de la Modernité (MPSMRM), Ministère de la Santé Publique (MSP) and ICF International. (2014). *Democratic Republic of Congo Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14: Key Findings*. p. 3. Retrieved from <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR218/SR218.e.pdf>

Indeed, for households earning less than 540,000 CFs per year, the cost of sending only one of their children to school can absorb more than 10% of their annual income. The burden of educational costs for parents is thus clearly unsustainable. This is one of the main factors explaining why an estimated 3.5 million Congolese children were out of school in 2013. This situation contributes to making the goal of universal primary education virtually unattainable in DRC.

Table 3.8—Share of Expenses in Primary Education by Source for 2012

<i>Public expenses per student</i>	<i>CFs</i>	<i>% of Public Expenses</i>	<i>% of Total Expenses</i>
Teachers' salaries	11 081	60,0%	19,3%
Administrative Personnel's salaries	4 802	26,0%	8,4%
Other operating expenses	2 586	14,0%	4,5%
Sub-Total	18 468	100,0%	32,2%
<i>School Fees paid by parents per student</i>	<i>CFs</i>	<i>% of Parent Expenses</i>	<i>% of Total Expenses</i>
School Fees	28 154	72,2%	49,0%
Punctual Intervention Fees	10 817	27,8%	18,8%
Sub-Total	38 971	100,0%	67,8%
Total for all expenses per student	57 439		100%

Source: Adapted from RESEN DRC study 2014

Ultimately, and despite a lack of systematic data and significant variations in school fees across DRC, the message from the data presented is clear: the “politique de gratuité” is only targeting so far a small portion of the overall school fees in Congolese primary schools. Moreover, the pressure to increase fees due to the growth in the number of unpaid teachers, in the number of administrators and in the share of school fees captured by administrative structures, is likely to have more than compensated these modest fee reductions. This highlights that much remains to be done to decrease the financial burden from school fees on Congolese households and further increase access to education. This conclusion is supported by an opinion survey that found 61% of parents who thought school fees were unaffordable.⁵⁵ In addition, about 86% of school directors reported difficulties in collecting school fees in 2012, while about 69% of those reported a high or very high degree of difficulty.⁵⁶

4. Governance Challenges in Education and Recommendations for Action

As reported in this paper, there are significant access and quality problems affecting the Congolese education system, and these are in large part caused by governance challenges, and particularly management and accountability problems. This last section regroups these challenges and the related recommendations according to five core dimensions that are key for improving both access and quality. These include: i) Oversight, accountability and incentives to perform; ii) Access to information and transparency; iii) Organizational capabilities; iv) Inclusion and participation; and v) Responsiveness. Improvements along each of the first four dimensions are necessary to ultimately result in increased responsiveness, the fifth dimension. This section refrains from recommending specific interventions. Instead, it aims to foster necessary discussions and consensus for action among Congolese stakeholders, which ultimately need to own and drive the necessary reforms. The paragraphs below thus provide an integrated framework for discussing and later articulating a concrete reform agenda for the Congolese education system aligned with the SSEF. This is provided with the hope that it will support and lead to the implementation of required incremental governance and system improvements in the sector. These improvements could in turn result in stronger performance, better quality and access, and stronger educational outcomes.

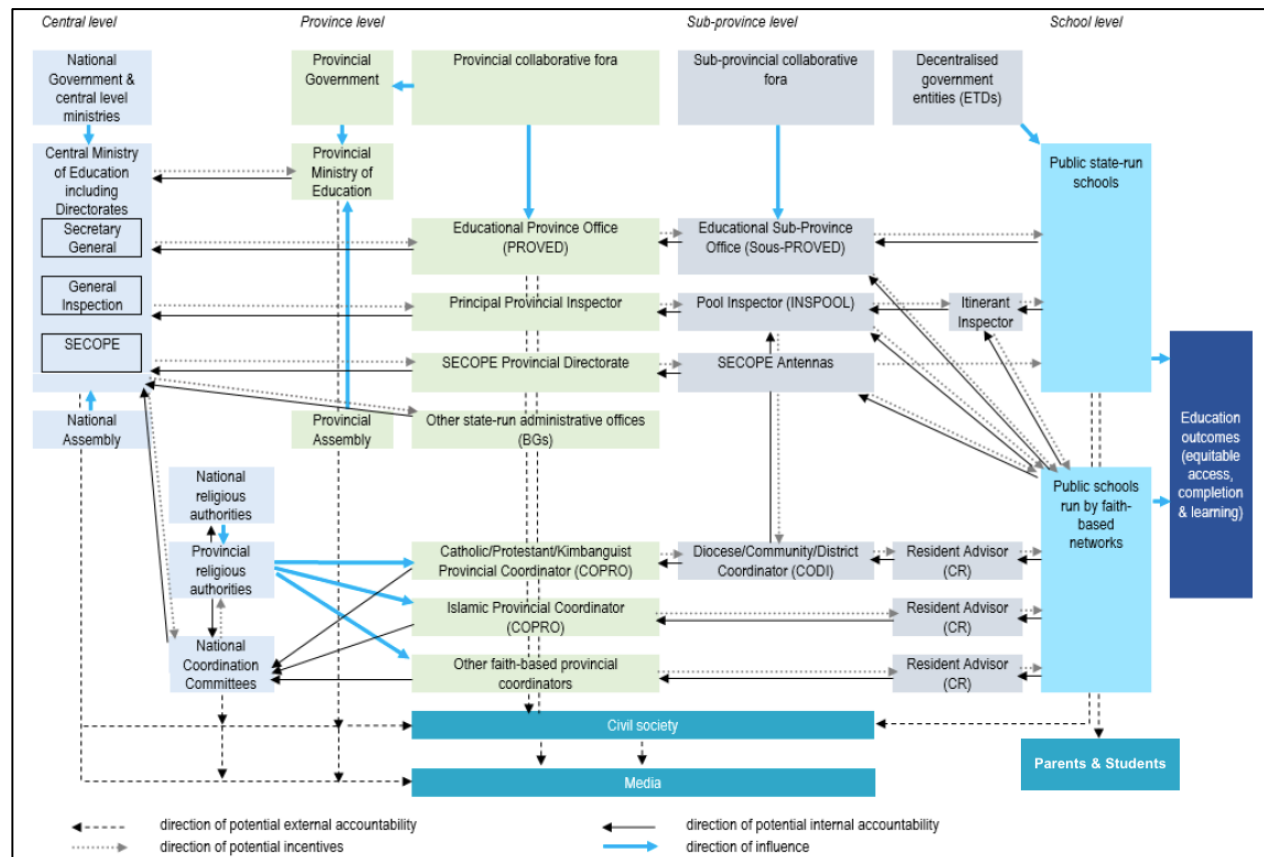
⁵⁵ Banque Mondiale. (2014). « Enquête de suivi des dépenses publiques à destination dans le secteur de l'Éducation en République Démocratique du Congo ». (Prepared by projet PARSE) p. 17.

⁵⁶ Banque Mondiale. (2014). p. 109.

4.1 Oversight, Accountability and Incentives to Perform

For accountability and incentive mechanisms to be effective in improving and maintaining education service delivery performance, the lines of accountability need to be clear, as short as possible, and pass through appropriate actors and structures. Furthermore, oversight mechanisms and performance incentives⁵⁷ need to be properly aligned with those lines of accountability. This is typically not the case in DRC. Figure 4.1 below provides a map of governance relationships in the education sector along with the direction of potential accountability and incentives between key education actors. Full black arrows in the figure show potential internal accountability, which involve public sector education actors and agencies being held accountable by other public sector actors through oversight. Dashed black arrows indicate potential external accountability through CSOs and citizen engagement. The potential direction of incentives is indicated using gray dotted arrows. In the current system, these could be primarily provided through the provision of salaries and benefits, as well as potential disciplinary mechanisms for cases of non-performance. The key point emerging from this figure, other than its plethora of administrative structures and actors, is how peripheral parents are to all these relationships and how far they are located from key decision makers located in the centre. Only external accountability relationships reach them as beneficiaries and clients of the system, but as discussed earlier, those accountability relationships are currently very weak in DRC.

Figure 4.1 Overview of the governance relationships in Education in the DRC



Source: ACCELERE

Although the DRC constitution outlines there are shared responsibilities between the central and provincial levels in education, in practice the education system remains highly centralized with the central

⁵⁷ Incentives are the different means and inducements, either remunerative, moral or coercive, which motivate individuals or groups to take action.

Ministry of Education and its structures responsible for managing primary education. Moreover, there are too many individual structures and units at all levels, as is readily apparent in figure 4.1. This is the case within the central MEPS-INC or at the levels parallel to the PROVEDs and Sous-PROVEDs. This makes *the distance between policymakers*, including local governments, service managers as well as service providers, *and parents very long*. This weakens the accountability chain in the education sector and undermines responsiveness. Given the size of the country and the scale of the sector, decentralization reforms could support the overhaul of the accountability framework for education in DRC. However, since much uncertainty remains about the decentralization process, a second-best solution would be to concentrate on a few key structures at the central and provincial levels to clarify responsibilities and lines of accountability in a manner that would support better performance.

Indeed, *the lack of clear roles and responsibilities* for both structures and personnel in the education system, and particularly in administrative structures, hinders effective internal accountability or oversight. Clear roles and responsibilities are the basis on which performance expectations are built and then monitored. *Defining clear performance standards* on the part of administrative structures, administrators, schools and teachers could be the basis upon which to build oversight and accountability for the whole system.

Finally, *in systems that lack internal accountability mechanisms, external accountability becomes even more important*. In the DRC, civil society participation in the education sector has historically been weak and CSOs have had inadequate capability to hold education policymakers, public sector actors, and service providers accountable for their performance. Stronger external accountability relying on a more capable civil society will also be key for improving the management, transparency and effectiveness of the sector, but will require meaningful support and mentoring toward Congolese civil society. Stronger external accountability is also crucial for bringing parents back at the centre of the education system as its primary clients.

4.2 Access to Information and Transparency

There is *no culture of transparency or minimum standards in terms of access to information* in the education sector. Decision-making on resource allocation, payroll registration and school or administrative structure creation remains opaque and prone to influence by vested interests. There is currently no ongoing dialogue between the MEPS-INC and its key stakeholders over information provision. Such a dialogue could be a first step toward defining commonly shared expectations and standards. Key steps toward a more transparent culture could include *ensuring the public availability of budgetary information, workforce statistics and overall education statistics*. These would need to be made available in formats that would be easy to access and analyze by education stakeholders. Moreover, managers and service providers' decisions and actions are not open to an appropriate level of scrutiny by other parts of government, civil society, or independent monitoring bodies. This situation often works against the allocation of resources in favor of the stated priorities of the sector. This also results in education stakeholders who do not have the information they need to engage and influence the decisions that affect them. A second step could therefore include *supporting stronger interface mechanism for information sharing and joint decision-making over issues of importance* to education stakeholders at various levels. This could build on existing provincial education commissions and be replicated at sub-provincial levels. It would also form the primary entry points for parents and civil society to present grievances and obtain redress. The establishment and management of school fees is one obvious topic that could benefit from such a transparent engagement mechanism at different levels of the education system.

4.3 Organizational Capabilities

Currently, and at all levels of the system, *the capability of personnel, from administrators to teachers, remains limited due to lack of competencies and in-service training, combined with an aging workforce. This is coupled organizationally with a lack of clear roles and responsibilities, coordination, operational resources and performance expectations*. The centralized nature of the Congolese education system also significantly constrains the power of key education actors to act, as decentralization remains more a statement of principles than a reality. Overall, the current system needs to shift from a dynamic of ever-

expanding numbers of personnel toward a system that prioritizes quality over numbers. A key part of this would be to ensure the definition of clear organizational and individual responsibilities, especially in administrative structures. In parallel, education stakeholders, starting with community structures and CSOs, also have limited organizational and individual capacities, particularly in terms of their ability to access, analyze and use information to advance their collective interests. Supporting key education stakeholders to develop the skills and abilities needed to perform their roles effectively should therefore be a key priority. Supporting more capable and representative CSO coalitions at provincial levels could be one fruitful mean for achieving this. However, building stronger capability is not an end in itself, but merely a means enabling broader behavior change as part of a sequence of interventions shifting incentives toward better performance.

4.4 Inclusion and Participation

Along with the availability of information, meaningful inclusion and participation are key enabling factors for ensuring the presence of functional accountability processes. This applies to school governance structures (COPAs, COGES), to CSOs, administrative structures or the Government. At school level, ensuring general parent assemblies take place and that committee members are chosen in a participative manner is fundamental to this process. It would also be crucial, in parallel, to ensure that these representatives are more capable and effective at advancing parents' interests. Similarly, CSOs active in education need to define their priorities in consultation with their members and constituents. This further requires that sub-provincial and provincial education commissions ensure all key stakeholders are represented and have opportunities to express their needs, priorities and grievances. At the central level, decision-making processes, notably around budget planning and resource allocation, should be more inclusive. This would allow these decisions to be informed by the priorities of a broader set of stakeholders. Ultimately, *at all levels of the education system, starting in schools, strengthening inclusion and participation would form a basis for establishing more effective accountability relationships.*

4.5 Responsiveness

There is currently a limited willingness and ability on the part of education administrators and teachers to respond to demands from parents and the public at large. *This reflects that the actors within the system are not directly motivated to improve their practices, despite existing problems and grievances. In this context, it is very difficult to meaningfully improve education outcomes for Congolese children.*

Indeed, parents and civil society are currently not enabled to provide feedback concerning the decisions and actions of key education actors. This is due to a *lack information and transparency on performance, combined with limited or non-existent feedback mechanisms*. A lack of accountability, poorly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as an absence of clear individual and organizational performance standards, contributes to poor responsiveness. However, *transparency and accountability are not sufficient conditions to result in responsiveness, which also requires the presence of adequate organizational capability to address problems*. In practice, addressing parent grievances concerning teacher behavior, poor management on the part of school directors or abusive school fees, requires enough capacity within the education system to address such problems. This further requires effective oversight and internal accountability to ensure problems are identified and corrective actions undertaken. Absent these conditions, if grievances are formulated, they will rarely be acted upon. Weak capability coupled with the absence of effective oversight is not conducive to performance. This is even more so in the absence of transparent decision-making and accountability mechanisms built on meaningful participation by parents and civil society.

In conclusion, *obtaining a culture of responsiveness to parents in schools and administrative structures will be a function of developing incrementally and gradually all the key components outlined in this section: oversight and accountability, information and transparency, organizational capability and inclusion and participation*. This is the overall framework this paper is recommending for analyzing, formulating and implementing reforms addressing governance challenges in education. As the title of this paper reflects, we argue addressing management and accountability problems is required to increase access and quality in education, and ultimately result in stronger learning outcomes for all Congolese children.

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