

PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE

Report No.: PIDA46617

Project Name	Education Sector Support Project (P152910)
Region	AFRICA
Country	Congo, Republic of
Sector(s)	Primary education (50%), Secondary education (45%), Tertiary education (5%)
Theme(s)	Education for all (100%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P152910
Borrower(s)	Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education, Youth and Civil Education (MEPSA-JEC)
Implementing Agency	MEPSA-JEC Proj Prep team
Environmental Category	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared/Updated	25-Feb-2016
Date PID Approved/Disclosed	01-Mar-2016
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	29-Feb-2016
Estimated Date of Board Approval	31-Mar-2016
Appraisal Review Decision (from Decision Note)	The chair authorized the team to appraise and circulate package for negotiations contingent upon clearance and approval of the required safeguards documents prior to appraisal which have been completed and are being disclosed on February 26; and the adjustments to the PAD including (i) revising the PDO; (ii) updating of results framework; (iii) clarifying IDA vs counterpart financing; (iv) updating macro-economic context of Congo and including demographic information; and (v) updating implementation arrangements which have been completed.

I. Project Context

Country Context

1. The Republic of Congo (Congo) is a lower-middle-income oil-dependent country in Central Africa with per capita gross national income of US\$2,720 (2014). Congo's recent growth trend was lower than the projected rate of growth in the 2012-2016 National Development Plan (NDP). From 2011 to 2014, Congo's annual growth rate has averaged 4.3 percent, which is lower than the 8.5 percent target set by the NDP to achieve the country's ambitions (become an upper middle income country by 2025) over that timeframe and was largely due to the poor performance of the oil sector. During the last four years, oil production declined by an average annual rate of 6.2 percent

essentially due to interruptions of oil production in some offshore wells. Because the oil sector accounted for more than 60 percent of GDP, 75 percent of government revenues and 90 percent of total exports from 2010 to 2014 additional years of weak growth, including an expected 1.3 percent in 2015, is expected to negatively impact human development indicators.

2. Congo has a relatively small population of 4.1 million, about 65 percent of whom live in the urban corridor between Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. The country has significant endowments of natural resources with extensive forests, arable land, and minerals, as well as a deep sea port in Pointe-Noire, all of which offer considerable opportunities for growth and development beyond the oil and gas sectors.

3. The high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality are significant threats to the country's economic development aspirations as captured in its National Development Plan. These challenges are outlined in the latest Poverty Reduction, Growth, and Employment Strategy Paper or PRSP for the period 2012-2016, the main objective of which is to stimulate inclusive economic growth and to diversify the economy away from its dependence on oil. Other objectives of the PRSP include improving governance, developing basic infrastructure, promoting social inclusion and equity, and reducing poverty from 46.5 percent in 2011 to 35 percent by 2015.

4. In the last decade, spending in human resources did not rise at the same rate as overall government spending; this was true even when oil prices and prudent spending had enabled Congo to accumulate large budget surpluses in the last decade. Recent developments leading to lower oil production and significantly lower oil prices caused the budget to run a fiscal deficit in 2014. This is of particular concern, as the oil sector accounts for more than 60 percent of GDP, 75 percent of government revenues and 90 percent of total exports from 2012 to 2014.

5. Congo faces persistent challenges during this period of relative socio-political stability after a lengthy period of fighting throughout the 1990s. The country continues to suffer from weak public institutions and limited implementation capacity in the public sector, thereby not capitalizing on the opportunities offered by its significant oil revenues and reserves. Congo did not meet the Millennium Development Goals related to universal primary completion, though it has achieved gender parity in primary and is close to parity in secondary. Moreover, with an estimated population growth rate of 3.2 percent per year, the demographic transition is not yet in sight even with Congo's middle-income status and relatively high rate of urbanization. The cohorts of youth entering the labor market are large, and would further increase in the coming years with limited prospects for gainful employment.

Sectoral and institutional Context

6. Congo has had a long history of supporting education. Early on, it had a relatively well-developed education system, with relatively high educational attainment of the population now in their 40s, as confirmed by the 2011 DHS (the median number of years of education is 8.2 for 25-29 year-olds compared with 8.5 years for 45-49 year-olds). More recent cohorts have not had the same opportunities: the quality of education is low, the equity challenges are significant, and the system dysfunctions are tangible. For example, only about one third of grade 5 students achieved higher than the 40 percent knowledge base mark on the 2007 PASEC2 assessment in French and mathematics. This means that most students leaving primary school do not have sufficient foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.

7. The update of the Education Sector Strategy is now complete. In an effort to address the gaps found in the earlier Education Sector Policy, the government has conducted a substantial revision of its Education Sector Strategy, which covers the post-MDG period of 2015-2025 and consists of the following 3 major themes : (i) providing quality education for all, (ii) responding to the need for quality human resources in an emerging economy, and (iii) creating a well-performing education system. Although the strategy has some data gaps it provides an important starting point, on the basis of which further system-wide improvements can be launched.

8. While Congo compares favorably with other low income countries for total spending on education as a share of GDP, it spends considerably less when looking at public spending per student. When measuring total spending as a share of GDP, Congo compares favorably to other middle-income countries in Eastern Europe or Asia (Armenia, Indonesia, Moldova, Sri Lanka, among others). However, as shown in the graphs in the economic analysis, Congo spends less per student than comparable countries. In fact, significantly poorer sub-Saharan African countries are able to perform better, including Niger and The Gambia, among others, which show up slightly above the line of best fit in the graphs.

9. The Republic of Congo was formally admitted into the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in September 2015. This important partnership has endorsed the Congo's Education Sector Strategy (2015-2025), and Congo will now join the 61 countries within GPE who hold a shared commitment to ensuring access to quality education for all children. The process of fulfilling the prerequisites for membership in GPE has been instrumental in catalyzing discussions around complex issues regarding equity, in particular; therefore, while GPE's financial support is unlikely to be provided to the Congo, the partnership has been able to leverage considerable policy measures that were difficult to reach and that may not have found sufficient traction without the global attention.

Snapshot of the Sector

10. Primary intake is high, growing from 90 percent in 2005 to 104 percent in 2011. Gender parity has been achieved in primary, though disparities can still be seen in some regions including Plateaux, Kouilou and Niari. Completion rates increased from 74 to 80 percent over that same period; however, this relatively high rates hides increasing repetitions which have gone from 180 percent in 2010 to 23 percent by 2012.

11. Lower secondary enrollments have been growing consistently going from 59 to 72 percent from 2005 to 2013, more than 49 percent of whom are girls (parity index of 0.96). A more recent survey (data still preliminary) show that gender parity has been achieved in secondary in 2015 (MICS5). Dropouts are still high at 17.6 percent, and the number of secondary school places is not sufficient to accommodate the increasing enrollment and completion rates in primary.

12. Senior secondary schools are relatively few in number and exist in the major towns and cities. Transition from lower to senior secondary schools have shown improvement over the years, rising from 40 to 52 percent from 2008 to 2013; as a result, the gross enrollment rate in senior secondary has gone from 24 to 32 percent over the period 2005-2013.

13. Physical infrastructure resources are deficient at the primary level. While 86% of schools

have an administrative office block, less than 5 percent have libraries, less than 6 percent have functioning water points, and only 37% of classrooms have a chair for the teacher. Figures on latrines are not yet available but few have been rehabilitated in recent years since rehabilitation programs focused on the need for additional classrooms without increasing the numbers of latrines, or rehabilitating the existing ones, despite the potential impact on school attendance of girls.

14. Learning materials are limited. Few students have all of the core textbooks or learning materials, and teachers rarely have updated instructional guides or lessons: in primary, each reading textbook is used by 5 students, each math textbook by about 10 students.

15. High shares of private provision in primary education suggest inadequate success in ensuring effective access and/or poor quality. Almost 29 percent of primary school-aged children enrolled in private schools in 2011, and another 3 percent in subsidized non-public religious schools (also called *Ecoles Conventionnées*, Type 1). Preliminary data from a recent Ministry survey (June 2015) paints a more dramatic picture, with only 4 percent of primary school students in subsidized *écoles conventionnées*, and more than 39 percent in private, non-subsidized primary schools.

Key Sector Issues

Quality remains the most significant challenge by all accounts, although rigorous measures of education quality remain ad hoc in nature.

16. Learning outcomes are not tracked in any rigorous way and curricula need updating. An evaluation of student learning at the beginning of the 6th grade of primary education (CM2) was conducted in 2012-2013, covering all regions of Congo and all types of schools including public, subsidized religious (*conventionnées*), and private. A total of 2,000 students were evaluated in French and mathematics. In French, the average score was 33 percent across the country, with a range of regional average scores from 21 to 61 percent. In math, the national average was 26 percent, with regional scores ranging from 18 to 49 percent. Boys outperformed girls in both French (35 vs 31 percent) and math (27 vs 24 percent), and in both cases the difference was statistically significant. Interestingly, there was little difference between the performance of rural and urban students (the differences were not statistically significant). Private schools received the highest scores (44 percent) with public and *conventionnées* receiving scores of 34 and 25 percent, respectively.

17. Repetition and dropout are persistent problems in Congo; however, those who repeat do not appear to gain any benefit from their additional and costly years in school. This is similar to results seen in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In the above-mentioned assessment, for example, students who had repeated did less well than those who reached grade six without repeating, and this difference was statistically significant. Repetition rates can be as high as 24 percent in grade 4, and 19.7 in grade 10 in lower secondary. Dropout rates are also of great concern, going as high as 16 percent in grade 6 in primary, and 12 percent in grade 10.

18. There is widespread use of double shifting, which is not surprising given the large majority of the population living in urban areas. This, in turn, further reduces the total number of instructional hours from which students can benefit. In addition, a disproportionately high number of exams and evaluations further reduce this time: a quick count showed that instead of a total of

29 school-weeks per year, students end up having classes for 23.5 weeks – or less than six months. These exams include the high-stakes end-of-cycle exams, where entire schools and teaching staff are assigned to cover the tests, leaving the other children with no option but to stay home. There are also quarterly exams (devoirs départementaux) which involve the teaching corps, the inspectors and students in week-long processes. There is little indication that the results from these quarterly exams lead to any systematic analyses and remediation, or are used as a way to target added support to teachers or to students. However, the disruptions that they introduce into the school year cannot be denied.

19. The last update of curricula took place 15 years ago, and the Ministry is in the process of discussing modifications in the curricula, including updated pedagogic approaches to reading, among others. There is concern among the officials in ministry that the curricula are no longer appropriate, and that the focus on rote memorization has resulted in major gaps in problem-solving capacities in both literacy (French) and mathematics, as noted above. The lack of adequate numbers of trained teachers and of laboratories has affected the ability to teach the sciences, and the curricula are not adapted to the realities of the society, or of the school environment, including the use of locally available and appropriate materials to teach core topics. In general, there are considerable challenges in the alignment between instructional time and expected learning outcomes, leading to discussions on refocusing the primary curricula on literacy and numeracy, and strengthening the teaching of science and mathematics across the entire primary and secondary cycles.

Human resource management, and teacher management in particular, is inadequate by any measure.

20. The education sector is one of the largest, if not the largest, employer in the government. However, data on personnel are inconsistent and outdated: various data sources list between 2,500 and 2,900 volunteer teachers or bénévoles in primary and between 4,700 and 6,900 civil service teachers in primary. Further, the same difficulties regarding accurate personnel numbers exist across the entire sector. Overlapping responsibilities among several central directorates and an ill-equipped Human Resources team have contributed to the ad hoc management of teacher recruitment, deployment, professional development, promotion, training or exit/retirement from the system. The lack of a functional in-service training body has led to the integration of this function into those of the pedagogical center (Institut National de la Recherche et d'Action Pédagogique or INRAP) charged with developing curriculum and selecting and distributing textbooks. The assignment of pre-service training institutions or Ecoles Normales d'Instituteurs (ENI) to the TVET Ministry has meant little or no input from the Ministry into any of the decisions regarding courses taught or trainers recruited for the ENIs, or the definitions of profiles of graduates from these programs. The same is true for the pre-service training institution for secondary teachers (the Ecole Normale Supérieure), which is under the Ministry of Higher Education.

21. Efficiency in the use of scarce resources should be given renewed attention given the current budget situation. Personnel costs within the education system consume more than 80 percent of the budget and has the potential to deliver or hamper the attainment of its objectives. Moreover, the human resources in education represent one of the largest, if not the largest, contributors to the overall personnel numbers in the public sector. Therefore, any major dysfunction in the way personnel are managed in education has an important impact on both the government wage bill and the efficiency of government recurrent spending.

22. In recent years, the education sector does not appear to have benefited from any evidence-based planning for determining its staffing numbers. On the demand side, poor data on actual student numbers, unreliable demographic information on incoming cohorts of school-aged children, and the lack of reliable sources of information on out-of-school children make it impossible for the MEPSA-JEC to clearly project how many teachers it would need in the coming years to reach universal primary enrollment. On the supply side, there is a lack of any rigorous application of deployment decisions (or sanctions against missing teachers), lack of any controls on movement of staff from one region to the next or from active teaching to administrative status, lack of systems to remove personnel from the MEPSA-JEC budget once they leave the sector, and lack of any decision-making power within MEPSA-JEC for recruiting or paying teachers. All of these make it impossible to do a rational human resource plan for the sector. Without significant attention to teacher demand and teacher supply, any personnel decisions made by MEPSA-JEC remain ad hoc in nature. Perhaps most importantly, MEPSA-JEC has little say over personnel decisions, which have set quotes for recruitment of teachers by the Ministries of Finance and Civil Service without input from MEPSA-JEC.

Equity and effective access require considerable attention

23. While Congo has relatively high enrollment rates, these hide considerable disparities. For example, wherever civil service teachers have not been willing to teach, the state makes no arrangements for ensuring school-aged children have access to good quality instruction. Therefore, even in public schools, parents are required to pay volunteer teachers or bénévoles out of their own means. Parents are often asked to pay 200 FCFA per child per month. This means that families in remote, rural areas, often with very limited means, are required to finance a large share of their children's education, while families that are better off and/or living in urban areas can benefit from government-paid teachers, who are often better trained and supervised.

24. While the Strategy makes a strong case for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, there is little systematic tracking of their challenges or of the progress made in addressing them. For example, while boys outperform girls across the entire compulsory cycle, this does not appear to have led to any concerted efforts to support the learning of girls, especially adolescents. The data on indigenous peoples is not readily available; nor do there appear to be successful public system efforts to provide them with better adapted and more accepting learning environments. The same can be said for children with disabilities.

Systems development is the key to sustainability beyond project completion

25. Discussions with key decision makers in the education sector bring up a series of organizational challenges. First, the teacher training institutions that provide all of the teachers for general education belong to the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education, which trains all primary teachers within the ENIs, and to the Ministry of Higher Education, which trains all lower and upper secondary teachers. Second, within MEPSA-JEC, a number of key functions are managed by units with limited resources or are not anchored within any existing units or directorates. For example, there is no single office charged with sector-wide human resource management, with finance and budget, or with communications. Units charged with education data management, in-service teacher training, strategic planning or school construction have neither the hierarchical weight nor the right expertise (in number or quality) to adequately fulfill their roles. Third, key outputs that would normally be part of the day-to-day tasks of the MEPSA-JEC, such as

data collection and analysis, or teacher career and professional development, or collaboration between different government entities, or school feeding programs, all appear to depend on external assistance or projects by development partners. Therefore, there are serious challenges with regard to the development of adequate systems and the sustainability of reforms or policy advances in the absence of external partnerships.

26. There are additional system-level challenges that need to be addressed. Recruitment into the teacher training institutions for both primary and secondary teachers has not been subject to any evaluation or assessment. There appear to be serious concerns regarding the selection of candidates to enter those institutions. In principle, they are required to pass an entry examination but in reality the quality and transparency of that recruitment process needs to be reviewed. There is an exit examination for those completing the primary teacher training institutions (les finalistes), however, again, there are concerns about the quality and transparency of the exam. The actual coursework for training institutions as well as the trainers have not been reviewed in recent years to ensure alignment with curricular goals and with quality standards for any teacher entering the system. There has not been a formal agreement between the ministries that house these institutions on the one hand, and MEPSA-JEC, on the other, which is the ultimate employer of their graduates, on the quantity or quality of candidates that are certified by those institutions.

27. The organization and management of the sector, and the alignment of its key functions, are in urgent need of overhaul. A number of functions within the Ministry are either missing or inadequately resourced including strategic planning, data systems, finance and budgeting, human resource management, construction, evaluation, communication and collaboration (with stakeholders and between ministries), and evidence-based decision making and accountability (further described in Annex 4).

28. There is considerable anecdotal evidence of rent-seeking in many aspects of the functions of the education sector including: in tests, especially the entrance exams or concours for entering both pedagogic and academic higher education institutions; in recruitment, in promotions, and in deployment, among others. The lack of systems for tracking data in a transparent manner (for example, dysfunctions in the sector with regard to ghost teachers, over-staffing schools with administrative staff, assignment of teachers to other ministries while paid under MEPSA-JEC budgets, and false declaration of student numbers) has contributed to this situation. While computerized systems are only a first step in addressing some of these issues, open access to data and information, and tracking of any arbitrary changes in policy, can help set the stage for far-reaching governance reforms in the sector.

II. Proposed Development Objectives

To improve education outcomes of primary and lower secondary school children and to increase the effectiveness of select management systems.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Providing quality education for all

Comments (optional)

Component Name

Improving scope, quality and management of human resources

Comments (optional)

Component Name

Improving system performance

Comments (optional)

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	70.00	Total Bank Financing:	30.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			40.00
International Development Association (IDA)			30.00
Total			70.00

V. Implementation

29. The success of this project will depend on the close collaboration between the government entities and the project activities, coordinated by the UGP. MEPSA-JEC would be responsible for the overall management of the project, and would provide guidance to the UGP.

30. Community and stakeholder involvement: The role of the communities and other stakeholders in the implementation of and reporting on each of these activities cannot be underestimated. The community organizations (CGDC, APE among others) would be asked to lend their full support and provide timely and relevant feedback with regard to the implementation of key steps. This will be especially important for the monitoring and evaluation of a certain number of school-level activities and indicators. For each school that is included in the construction and/or rehabilitation activities, the DDEPSA will make contact with the beneficiary community to ask them to ascertain that the contracted works and the supervision are both undertaken as planned. Each community will designate two persons who will be charged with this, based on a small training/briefing that is provided by the supervising firm. Until such a time as the government puts in place a sustainable maintenance program, the community will have to do this on the basis of a maintenance guide for works and furniture that will be written and distributed to each school and to each community partner (CGDC, APEE, etc.).

31. Construction and rehabilitation (i.e. all civil works) would be implemented as follows: within the UGP, there would be a Construction Head and an Assistant Engineer who will work with the DDEPSA to share criteria for selection; the DDEPSA will take the responsibility of selecting the areas in the two regions where new classrooms will be implemented. Construction firms will be hired to do the technical feasibility studies to: (a) ensure the site selection is consistent with criteria; and (b) ascertain that the choice fulfills the technical criteria that are necessary for construction to be concluded, including the presence of a title for the land and the respect of all safeguards (environmental, social). On the basis of these evaluations, the UGP team will put together the final construction plan; this plan, including the works planned for the first year, is to be made public.

Firms will be hired to conduct the supervision of the sites under construction.

32. Rehabilitations would be done along the same lines, but would be done on structures that require less than 50 percent of the cost of a new construction. This ensures that the cost of substantial rehabilitations will be judged against the efficiency and utility of doing replacements instead.

33. Involvement of the Ministry of Infrastructure: The project aims to work with technical staff who are under the Ministry of Infrastructure and who are assigned to each of the regions.

34. The following implementation arrangements would be put in place. No more than three months after project effectiveness, each relevant MEPSA-JEC director (as set out in the table above) would work with the UGP Component Head and the UGP Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to convene the appropriate government officials and finalize the work-plan for each component. These would be key contributions into the overall project work-plan to be developed by the Project Coordinator under the guidance of the Steering Committee, discussed below, which would be discussed with MEPSA-JEC senior officials and communicated to the Bank. Thereafter, once a quarter, the UGP would report on progress to MEPSA-JEC as well as key development partners within the Local Education Group, and would share the work-plan for the following three months. The Component Head for Component 1 (Quality) would include the work-plan for all civil works, which would be prepared by the Construction Head.

35. At the quarterly meeting, regional education officials (DDEPSA) would also share their regional reports. Not only would this enable all central and regional officials to share their reports, but this would offer opportunities for sharing good-practice experiences across disparate regions in a systematic manner. Any action research that is planned under the project would be presented as soon as its approval, and results would be shared at annual reviews.

36. A system-wide Steering Committee would be set up to provide guidance to the project on an annual basis. This Steering Committee would comprise, at minimum, Ministers or their delegated representatives from MEPSA-JEC, METPFQE, MES, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Civil Service, Ministry of Infrastructure and the Office of the President. It would also include representatives of civil society and private sector [TBD]. At an annual meeting, MEPSA-JEC with support from the UGP will provide results for the year, and will set out its intended results and necessary resources for the following year. The annual meeting will be done before the end of May of each year to ensure that the decisions taken by the Steering Committee are reflected in the budget submission for the following year. The first meeting of the Steering Committee is, therefore, expected to take place in April 2016.

37. Annual reviews will be held in November/December of each year, bringing together all key stakeholders in the system. At those reviews, MEPSA-JEC officials will provide updates on all results for the education sector (pre-university), including information regarding the start of the school year (enrollments, recruitments, trainings, etc.). Each functional/central directorate will present its results, and each regional directorate would do the same. Data for that review as well as any additional studies will come from the work of the Directorate for Studies and Planning (DEP), which would head this annual review effort, including field visits. This is not limited to project activities but also includes all activities carried out in MEPSA-JEC, including those financed by the budget.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	x	
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x
Pest Management OP 4.09		x
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	x	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	x	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	x	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x

Comments (optional)**VII. Contact point****World Bank**

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