

# PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID) CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC23656

<b>Project Name</b>	Education Sector Support Project (P152910)
<b>Region</b>	AFRICA
<b>Country</b>	Congo, Republic of
<b>Sector(s)</b>	Primary education (50%), Secondary education (45%), Tertiary education (5%)
<b>Theme(s)</b>	Education for all (100%)
<b>Lending Instrument</b>	Investment Project Financing
<b>Project ID</b>	P152910
<b>Borrower(s)</b>	Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education (MEPSA)
<b>Implementing Agency</b>	MEPSA Prep team
<b>Environmental Category</b>	B-Partial Assessment
<b>Date PID Prepared/ Updated</b>	03-Jun-2015
<b>Date PID Approved/ Disclosed</b>	04-Jun-2015
<b>Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion</b>	24-Jul-2015
<b>Estimated Date of Board Approval</b>	17-Dec-2015
<b>Concept Review Decision</b>	Track II - The review did authorize the preparation to continue

## I. Introduction and Context

### Country Context

The Republic of Congo (Congo) is a lower-middle-income oil-dependent country in Central Africa with a per capita gross national income of \$2,550 (2012). The economic prospects for Congo are broadly positive, though the latest drop in the price of oil has had an adverse impact revenues. 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, minerals, as well as a deep sea port in Pointe-Noire, all of which offer considerable opportunities for growth and development.

The high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality remain significant threats to the country's economic development aspirations as captured in the 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.

High oil prices and prudent spending had enabled Congo to accumulate large budget surpluses in the last decade, though spending in human resources did not rise at the same rate as overall government spending. But the budget is likely to run a slight fiscal deficit in 2014, due to relatively high spending despite a decline in government revenues.

Despite relatively good macroeconomic performance, 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. Congo is unlikely to 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 will further increase in the coming years with limited prospects for their gainful employment.

### **Sectoral and Institutional Context**

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.

In an effort to address the gaps found in the earlier Education Sector Policy, the government is engaged in a far-reaching revision of its Education Sector Strategy, which is now in the final stages. This Strategy, which will cover the post-MDG period of 2015-2025, will have three major themes: (i) providing quality education for all, with a focus on a basic education cycle of 10 years, on moving towards universal access to pre-schooling, especially in rural areas; enhancing access to informal education and literacy services for youth and adults, including second chance education; (ii) responding to the need for quality human resources in an emerging economy, with a focus on creating quality schools, establishing a newly reformed technical and vocational education and training system; and improving the relevance of higher education; and (iii) creating a well-performing education system, with a focus on improved institutional management, enhanced human resource management, better management of financial resources and of statistics, planning and strategy, and of crises and emergencies.

### **Snapshot of the sector**

Access to early childhood education is still very low, with less than 16 percent of the population having access despite the relatively high urban population, and with more than 66 percent of the

provision outside the public system.

Access to primary and secondary education is relatively good, though the numbers have to be confirmed against the findings from the latest census, which call into question some of the rates that had been in use in recent years. Gender parity has been achieved in primary, though disparities can still be seen in some regions including Plateaux, Kouilou and Niari. Primary intake is high, growing from 90 percent in 2005 to 104 percent in 2011, though these are figures from the earlier census that are likely to change with the new data. Completion rates increased from 74 to 80 percent over the same period; however, this relatively high rate hides increasing repetitions, which have gone from 18 percent in 2010 to 23 percent by 2012. Student:teacher ratios remain very high with a national average of 60, but with some regions registering ratios closer to 80, and even 86. Infrastructure in primary is deficient: while 86 percent of schools have an administrative office block, less than 5 percent have libraries, less than 6 percent have water points, and only 37 percent 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 negative impact this may have on school attendance of girls. Not all students have textbooks or learning materials: in primary, each reading textbook is used by 5 students, each math textbook by about 10 students. The private sector is particularly active in primary, with almost 29 percent of primary school-aged children enrolled in private schools in 2011, and another 3 percent in subsidized private religious schools (also called *écoles conventionnées*). Such high shares of private provision in primary education in a country where almost half of the population is poor is an indication of poor effective access and/or poor quality or relevance.

Enrollments in lower secondary schools 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). 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. Double shifts are often used in both primary and secondary schools, reducing considerably the instructional time but enabling larger groups of students to attend school.

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, going 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.

Human resource management, and teacher management in particular, is inadequate by any measure. The data are inconsistent and outdated, as will be discussed below; overlapping responsibilities among several central directorates and an ill-equipped Human Resources Department 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 (INRAP) charged with curriculum and 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.

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. These include:

- **Human resource management:** there is a small office charged with human resources but it has little capacity to effectively manage personnel at any level of the system. Career tracking, payments, promotions, sanctions, deployments, or training and professional development opportunities are addressed on an ad hoc basis, or are handled by other ministries (including the Ministry of Civil Service, and the Ministry of Finance) as will be discussed below;
- **Planning:** while a Planning Department does exist, it does not have any planners, economists, econometricians or statisticians, hampering its ability to conduct any strategic planning or to track progress on its intended target areas.
- **Data systems:** administrative data collection is done, again on an ad hoc basis, by the pedagogic departments, and although the Planning Department is charged with issuing official statistics, it has not been able to do so since 2011, when the data collection was done by the last IDA project. There is only one person in the unit for database management, and one person in the unit charged with school mapping; moreover, the existing education management information system is on an outdated computer system with little or no security or backup.
- **Finance and budgeting:** there is considerable disconnect in the financial management and oversight within the sector. While most education systems elsewhere would have a directorate-general for financial management, in Congo there is only a political appointee who advises in financial matters in the office of the Minister, and accountants in the different departments charged with payments for their Director-General; there does not appear to be clear oversight either for budget preparation or for financial management and control at the ministry or sector level.
- **Construction:** Despite considerable efforts to increase the number of school places in the past years, there is only a small unit charged with the activities around school construction.

In addition, there is no clear link between the targets set for the sector and the activities carried out by the Ministry. Data are not used for systematic decision making, and there is little evidence of accountability across the entire sector.

Inter-ministerial collaboration is, as with other functions, ad hoc in nature. This is particularly worrisome, as there are other ministries whose decisions directly affect the functioning of the education sector. The Ministry of Finance pays government salaries without any systematic input from the Ministry of Education to ensure that paid civil servants are actually working within the education sector (in fact, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that significant numbers of teachers who have since moved to other sectors or even outside the public service continue to be paid as education employees). The Ministry of Civil Service sets a recruitment quota each year of both pedagogic and administrative staff for the Ministry of Education without either setting those quotas based on actual needs in the sector or conferring with the education team to set priorities. In addition, the lack of a coordination mechanism between these three ministries leads to long delays in the payment of new teachers, especially those deployed in the regions, and in the payment of pensions for retirees, which can take up to two years.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence of rent-seeking in many aspects of the functions of the education sector: 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 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.

#### Prioritizing among challenges

There are many opportunities for Bank operations to contribute to the reforms in the education sector. While the data on the sector are both dated and incomplete, there are enough indications from administrative reports and from ongoing and past operations of areas where challenges are acute and where Bank operations can have an important impact. These challenges include: low learning outcomes and outdated pedagogic curricula; large variations in effective access based on geographic location, socio-economic status and other characteristics linked to vulnerable groups; inadequate support to teachers and to schools to ensure quality instruction; uneven coverage in textbooks and learning materials; and large gaps in management and decision making that should be aligned around key priorities set at the central and regional levels. Addressing the specific needs of vulnerable populations, including those of children with special needs, and those of indigenous populations, are a key contribution that this operation can make.

The Bank, because of its global experiences and its past work in Congo, is able to support the government in addressing these challenges through the proposed operation. The government has requested the Bank's support and has expressed its willingness to provide substantial financial resources for this operation. The team welcomes this initiative, and given the continued fall in the price of oil, expects to set out a base case and a high case scenario for Bank support. In both cases, the focus will be on ring-fencing the IDA and GPE contributions to ensure that core activities (to be defined during pre-appraisal) would be financed even if counterpart funds are not forthcoming. In the base case, the project would finance interventions that focus on primary education and lower secondary. In the high case, i.e. where government contributions are substantially higher than the \$80 million assumed at preparation, the team would be ready to move forward with additional activities, including those that cover senior secondary education, while still keeping the quality and human resources aspects in the forefront.

The following provides an overview of the challenges that this operation would help address:

#### Learning outcomes and curricula

An evaluation of student learning was conducted in 2012-13 at the beginning of the 6th grade of primary education (called CM2) covering all regions of Congo and all types of schools: public, subsidized religious (conventionnées), and private. A total of 2,000 students were evaluated in French and mathematics, with the following outcomes: in French, the average score was 33 percent across the country, with a range of regional scores from 21 to 61 percent. Scores on competencies related to understanding the concepts averaged about 37 percent; those on actual application were at 30 percent, and on problem solving were at 24 percent nationally. In math, the average was 26

percent, with regional scores from 18 to 49 percent. Scores for understanding were at 37 percent, for application were at 42 percent and for problem solving were at 16 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, rural children performed slightly better than urban ones, though 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.

Repetition and dropout are persistent problems in Congo; those who repeat do not appear to gain any benefit from their additional and costly years in school. 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 junior 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.

The last update of the curricula took place 15 years ago, and the Ministry is in the process of discussing modifications in the curricula, including pedagogic approaches to reading, among others. There is concern among the officials in the 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. The lack of laboratories has affected the ability to teach sciences, and the curricula are not adapted to the realities of the society, or of the school environment, including the need to use 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 ongoing discussions with regard to refocusing the primary curricula on literacy and numeracy, and strengthening the teaching of science and mathematics across the entire primary and secondary cycles.

#### Equity and effective access

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 benevoles out of their own means; parents are often asked to pay 200 FCFA per child per month. Thus 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 prepared. The project would also address gender disparities, geographic variations in access and completion, and the needs of vulnerable populations, including those of the indigenous peoples.

#### **Relationship to CAS**

Relationship with the World Bank Congo Country Partnership Strategy (CPS). Education operations are included in the work program agreed with the Government of Congo for FY13-FY16, as described in the CPS of September 2012. The main objective of the CPS is to help Congo use its large oil revenues to diversify its economy away from oil dependency and improve its social outcomes. The CPS also highlights the importance of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public investments and strengthening government capacity.

The proposed project would contribute to both Pillars 1 and 2 of the CPS, Competitiveness and

Employment, and Vulnerability and Resilience, by providing opportunities for all children to benefit from a quality education. It also aims to improve service delivery in education.

## **II. Proposed Development Objective(s)**

### **Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)**

The project development objective is to support the Education Strategy goal of creating a well-performing education system that offers quality primary and [lower] secondary education to all.

### **Key Results (From PCN)**

Improving access to primary education [increased net enrollments and tracking completion];

Improving quality of primary education [improvements in learning outcomes in primary];

Improving transitions to lower and upper secondary [improving enrollments in lower and senior secondary];

Improving quality of teachers, inspectors, pedagogic advisers and school directors [improve training for personnel and reform processes for recruitment, deployment and promotion]

Improving monitoring and assessment systems [creation of sustainable systems for data collection and analysis, teacher professional development, evaluation of student outcomes and system performance, and communication of results to stakeholders]

## **III. Preliminary Description**

### **Concept Description**

The project would help create a well-performing general education system able to support improvements in education quality, efficient use of human resources and effective sector management.

In the area of education quality, the project aims to (a) evaluate and revise, as needed, curricula and accompanying textbooks, teachers' guides, and additional learning materials; (b) help create a culture of transparent and good quality evaluations, including of the system as a whole, of learning outcomes and of processes; (c) improve the learning environment, including the rehabilitation and construction of schools within a vision of a "whole" school, i.e. one that includes classrooms, administrative offices, latrines, water points, multi-use spaces and fences (including living fences).

In the area of human resources in education, the project aims to support improved (and transparent) management of personnel, with a focus on teachers but also on school directors, pedagogic advisers, inspectors, regional directors, central directors, and including (a) their recruitment, deployment, remuneration, advancement and exit/retirement; (b) their training and professional development; (c) the appropriate balance between administrative and pedagogic personnel; and (d) the cross-ministerial coordination, including the alignment of objectives and targets between the government structures charged with education, finance and civil service. In order to address the increasingly important role of volunteer teachers/benevoles in the system, the project aims to create a unique ID number for this corps, enhance their quality through training and more direct support, and introduce equity measures through the gradual and sustainable integration of the payment of qualified volunteers into the government budget.

In the area of sector management, the project would support: (a) the creation and sustained functioning of an education information management system that goes beyond the setup of computerized systems to include the collection, analysis and use of data for informed decision

making; (b) a functional analysis of the key institutions in the sector, with particular attention paid to the functions of strategic planning, financial and budget management, human resource management, and training and professional development. In addition, the project would examine the status and capacities of structures charged with teacher training in other education ministries (i. e. Ministry of Technical Education, which is charged with the institutions for initial training in primary; and the Ministry of Higher Education, which is charged with the initial training for secondary), and the entity charged with curriculum reform and implementation (INRAP). Finally, the project would consider the advantages and disadvantages of creating a new evaluation institution; (c) the inter- and intra-ministerial coordination, which currently affects all aspects of sector management and takes place on an ad hoc basis if at all; and (d) the overall implementation of this project, including studies and technical assistance as needed to ensure alignment with higher/tertiary education and the labor market.

#### IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
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	

#### V. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	190.70	Total Bank Financing:	30.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
<b>Financing Source</b>			<b>Amount</b>
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			150.00
International Development Association (IDA)			30.00
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative			10.70
Total			190.70

#### VI. Contact point

##### World Bank

Contact: Meskerem Mulatu  
 Title: Lead Education Specialist  
 Tel: 473-2747  
 Email: mmulatu@worldbank.org



**Borrower/Client/Recipient**

Name: Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education (MEPSA)  
Contact: Philippe Claver Massez-Okemba  
Title: Coordonnateur  
Tel: 242069514686  
Email: praebase@yahoo.fr

**Implementing Agencies**

Name: MEPSA Prep team  
Contact: Philippe Claver Massez-Okemba  
Title: Coordonnateur  
Tel: 242069514686  
Email: praebase@yahoo.fr

**VII. For more information contact:**

The InfoShop  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20433  
Telephone: (202) 458-4500  
Fax: (202) 522-1500  
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/infoshop>