EVOLUTION OF THE BASIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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ABSTRACT:
The DRC's education system will play an important role in rebuilding the country's political institutions, stimulating growth and correcting inequalities. The DRC is emerging from a long economic and political crisis which has had serious consequences on the education system. The main objective of this study is to help us identify the priorities of educational policy; options for the development of the education system are presented in order to help the government to establish its educational strategy. This study presents the issues relating to the basic education system (primary and secondary education) of the DRC, in particular on its evolution, its characteristics, its organization and management as well as the difficulties encountered and challenges to be overcome.

Keywords: Congolese education system, basic education.
have had consequences both on enrollment and the quality of education, as well as on the motivations of teachers and administrators.

Taken together, these two trends - the continued growth of the education system and its financing by households under extremely adverse circumstances - testify to a long tradition of attachment to education and a strong demand for education. They also reflect the expectation of families that investing in their children's education is the best guarantee of reaping the benefits of future economic recovery and growth, although current wages in the labor market do not provide. not a satisfactory monetary return to education.

The education system in the DRC will play an important role in rebuilding the country's political institutions, stimulating growth and correcting inequalities. The articulation of an educational policy coherent with the general political and economic objectives is essential for the elaboration of a global policy in favor of the development of the country. The main objective of this report is to help the DRC to identify education policy priorities and develop an education strategy that is both technically and administratively feasible, but also financially acceptable. This report analyzes recent trends and the current state of school coverage, returns, costs and funding of different levels of education in the DRC; by highlighting both national characteristics and the differences between provinces and between social groups. It also presents a simulation of the financial implications of different education policy options, which may be useful for undertaking more precise planning of the sector.

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, this study has 5 points namely: (1) definition of concepts, (2) Evolution of primary and secondary education in DRC, (3) types and characteristics of primary schools in DRC, (4) organization and management of primary and secondary schools as well as (5) difficulties encountered and challenges to be overcome.

1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.1. Congolese education system
The education system of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is managed by three ministries namely: the ministry of primary, secondary and vocational education (EPSP); the Ministry of Higher and University Education (ESU) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS). The first two ministries deal with formal education; while the latter provides so-called informal education. The latter consists of teaching young people and adults to read, write and arithmetic who have not benefited from the education provided in the primary and secondary cycle, with a view to catching them up (Ministry of EPSP, 2014).

1.2. Basic education
It is the set of different educational activity programs aimed at meeting basic educational needs, as defined in the World Declaration on Education for All. According to the ISCED classification, basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage). It also covers a very diverse set of non-formal and informal educational activities, both public and private, which aim to meet the specific basic educational needs of groups of people of all ages (MURHEGA M., 2015, p. 52).
2. EVOLUTION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN DRC

The Congolese education system has undergone modifications during different periods which have marked the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

2.1 The Belgian colonial education system

It is very well known that Belgium had Burundi, Rwanda and the current DRC as colonies. In the Belgian education system, there have been four stages of educational development in all the colonies, corresponding even to the status of these territories. However, we note four stages in the evolution of the education system in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MURHEGA M., 2016, p. 27).

First the period of the Congo Free State from 1885-1909

This is the period when the Congo was the private property of Belgian King Leopold II. At that time, there was an attempt to educate children but which did not stick; the idea turned around on the death of its initiator. This is what led to the idea of the creation of schools in the colonies from the 1890s. There were colonies where free children were recovered, children abandoned by their parents to place them under the supervision of the State until ‘at the age of 25 to undergo military training. They taught religion, reading, local languages, the French language, writing and arithmetic. Later, there were schools created according to certain needs. In the missionary network, a religious program was given to train catechists. The goal was to prepare proselytes and subsequently for economic purposes.

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was an attempt to interfere as the state began to take an interest in these missionary schools. In 1906, there was the Concordat, that is to say the first document which stipulates the agreement between the State and the Church. In this document emerges an agricultural and professional orientation given to the official school and an inspection was foreseen. It was necessary to teach in the French language and the State granted missionaries land and other facilities for the installation and creation of schools.

Then the period of the colony of the Belgian Congo (1909-1914)

At that time two teaching networks were created. These are subsidized schools and non-subsidized schools. This last network was made up of schools which trained religious catechists and priests. This situation prevailed until 1914. At that time, there was the difference in the level of education between the towns and the countryside. In 1920, in the countryside, the curriculum included writing, arithmetic, manual work, and writing as subjects. In the cities, in addition to these disciplines, history, geography, hygiene, natural sciences and morals were planned.

A voluntary discrimination was also evident between the national missions and the Catholic missions, between the teaching given to the Belgians and to the colonized ones. There have been schools for indigenous people and schools adapted to African needs.

Also the period between the two wars

Changes were noticed between 1922 following the work of the FRANK commission which undertook to study the situation of Congo-Belgian education and proposed to make suggestions for a reform. The document which appears on this date is the...
report of the FRANK commission which reorganizes education in order to allow the public authorities to better control the education system. Here are some principles and recommendations of the work of the commission:

- adapt the program and methods to the indigenous environment
- Education must take place in the indigenous language
- Organize mass education.
- Create many normal schools and multiply many small schools for boys and girls.
- Solicit the collaboration of Belgian national missions (religious missions) to spread love for Belgians and Belgian influence with the help of the Gospel, even in the most remote corners of Africa.

In 1929, another document read "Organization of free education in Congo and Rwanda Urundi". In the new organizations, three types of schools were planned:

- Primary schools of the first degree: located either in rural or urban areas. Literary education was reduced there, schooling was two years. The teachers were made up of local monitors.
- Second-level primary schools: kind of schools located in Europeanized centers. Literary education was very developed there. Schooling was three years.
- Special schools: where teachers were trained (normal schools), clerks (vocational schools), etc.

**Finally, the period after the second world war**

During this period, there were no significant changes until the end of the 1950s. It should rather be pointed out that in 1948 a reform took place which would be applied ten years later. It is a reform developed to Europeanize the system to introduce Belgian programs in the colonies (tendency towards assimilation), to improve teaching and raise the level of teachers. Before 1948, education was adapted to the level of the colonies.

At independence, unlike other countries, where there was a trained elite, there were no academics or qualified executives to take over from the Belgians. In fact, the universities (like Lovanium and that of Elisabethville) opened in 1954 and 1956 were not open to the natives except in a few rare cases of the evolved.

**2.2 The postcolonial and contemporary period**

This second period is characterized by the establishment of national systems and school reforms. During this period, UNESCO has played a great influence on the development of education policy not only in the DRC but also in Africa in general, and throughout the world.
2.3 UNESCO's influence in improving education systems

According to the report of the Lagos conference (United Nations, 2005), it turns out that UNESCO has played a major role of partnership in the education system of African States in general and in particular the DRC. In May 1961, thirty-nine independent African states met in Addis Ababa, at the first conference of African states on the development of education in Africa. The conference was organized jointly by UNESCO and ECA (United Nations Economic Commission in Africa). The first objective of the conference was to provide a forum for African states to decide on their educational needs with a view to promoting social and economic development. The second objective was to establish an attempted short and long term plan for the development of education.

The conference focused on educational reforms, curriculum content, the importance of meeting the needs of skilled labor and managers to replace whites; hence the need to increase secondary schools and the development of post-secondary structures.

The concern to increase the number of secondary education was a primary objective before the structures of primary education in the event that the financial possibilities did not allow to receive both systems at the same time. For the primary level, it was a question of achieving generalized literacy and 100% schooling in 1980.

Around the 1980s, this period was characterized by a series of reforms. In the mid-1970s, African states sought to readjust or replace their education systems. The aim of these reforms was to reduce the unemployment of young people who leave school for the rural exodus, to enable them to contribute to national development.

During this period, our country had not succeeded in building school infrastructure or, one would say, public schools capable of receiving the entire school-age population. It is in these circumstances that an agreement was signed between the Congolese and Zairian State at the time and religious denominations in 1977, hence the name “Convented Schools”. Religious denominations had received legal authorization to establish and manage schools, and the state in turn should provide them with funds for their operation and support for teachers. It was under the same circumstances that the private schools were also created.

Wanting to gain control of the education system as a political means as part of the nation-building project, President Mobutu's regime nationalized schools in 1974, a measure known as the Stateization of Schools.

Three years later, that is to say in 1977, the schools were returned to their founders (Churches). For this, an agreement was signed between the State and the latter. In this convention, it is clearly stipulated that the first is the organizing power of the schools, the second simply enjoying the status of managers.

By virtue of this agreement, all Catholic, Protestant and Kimban MANAGEMENT approved schools, the governor exercises his authority in coordination with the provincial coordinators. The management board is the deliberative body of the school. The members of the management board are: the head of the establishment, the director of studies, the educational advisor, the discipline director, the teachers' representative and the parents' representative. The management board has the power to decide on the use of revenue from "operating costs" (parents' contribution to the regular running of the school) and "motivation costs".

It is clear that there is duplication, a lack of clarity and overlaps in the functions and responsibilities of many administrative units, even at the central level. For example, the Teachers' Payroll and Control Service (SECOPE), an administrative entity under the direct control of the Secretary General of the Ministry of EPSP was created in 1985 to clean up the teachers' pay system. Originally supported by Belgium, this service has grown throughout the
country (creation of regional offices, the Secoper, now Secopep), has seen its powers expand, and its effectiveness, although currently undermined by financial difficulties, is still widely recognized.

SECOPE thus occupies an important place in the administration of the system: management of staff, teachers and non-teachers, schools and decentralized administrative offices (control of standards, establishment of payment listings), power to propose class closures or schools, power to propose sanctions against schools. Thus, these missions have led him to establish a considerable database on personnel (individual data on civil status, career, qualifications, salaries), but also on schools (class and pupil numbers). However, all these responsibilities overlap with those of other MEPSP central services (UNESCO, 2003); for example, the database provides statistics which are not published.

The overlap of functions and responsibilities is not surprising in such a complex administrative environment, and the distribution of responsibilities in the field is determined in practice by access to and control over resources. The two largest contributors are parents (who fund the bulk of education spending: teacher salaries and the construction of new schools) and the central government, which, despite its limited financial resources, has the capacity to lead, deploying teachers and organizing exams.

The contributions of EAD and, to a lesser extent, of the Churches are modest. For example, the governor should play a major role in the administration of education and in principle the EADs should benefit from budgetary transfers from the Ministry of Interior, Security and Decentralization, which approves provincial budgets; the governor has the authority to execute the budget of the province, and to allocate the amounts required for the operation of the provincial offices of the ministry. In practice, central-level ministerial spending, including payments of salaries for teachers and officials in provincial and lower-level offices, is financed to a greater extent than non-salary expenditures of EADs, which has as a result that control over many schools, classes and teachers as well as on exams, is actually exercised by central administration. Among the Churches, only a few Catholic congregations have benefited from foreign funding during the last decade; most Protestant churches have not received external funding due to economic sanctions, while the Kimbanguist Church is funded entirely from domestic funds.

It follows that the majority of the institutions run by the Churches (the approved schools) are in exactly the same situation as the purely public schools (the non-approved schools): teachers' salaries financed mainly by the contributions of the parents, modest contributions of State, construction of schools financed by parents and scarcity of investments in improving the quality of education.

Teachers and religious coordinations exercise powerful control over the use of locally generated resources, while parental participation in the operation of schools remains marginal, despite the importance of their financial contribution. The motivation bonus is distributed to teachers by themselves or by the head of the school; however, the other funds collected are managed by the management board in consultation with the religious coordinations (in the case of approved schools) or administration officials (in the case of non-approved schools). Parents have little say in the use of these funds.

There is also legal confusion over the ownership of publicly funded religious schools. The approved schools include schools which have been built by the Churches on their own land with their own funds and those which have been built by the State and whose management has been entrusted to the Churches. Due to the state ownership and the retrocession of the 1970s, it is not clear who owns the land and buildings of schools approved by the Churches.
or the State and, consequently, who should undertake the new investments relating to these infrastructures. In practice, communities have contributed to the construction of schools and this lack of legal clarity has not been a major problem so far, Despite its complexity, the education administration system works in the DRC. The obvious complexity is in part due to the practical adaptation of the system to evolving needs and financing methods, an adaptation which has created gaps between the formal, legal framework and actual practice. several hundred thousand teachers continue to receive government salaries (albeit with delays and partially); the deployment of teachers is under control; the various tuition fees are collected in the schools; the examinations, in primary as in secondary, have been carried out every year, including in the eastern provinces and, a remarkable fact which testifies to a strong national conscience,

3. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED AND CHALLENGES TO BE MET

Encountered difficulties
For lack of money and means of transport. The majority of schools (especially those in villages) lack adequate buildings, teaching materials and even qualified staff. They prefer to work in the city where they find good working conditions. The linguistic obstacle, the difficult working conditions of the pupil and the teacher explains the mediocrity of the training at the nursery, primary, secondary, higher and university level. In the DRC, schools do not have good buildings, good qualified teachers, teaching materials. French and English pose difficulties for teachers and students. The Congolese State must improve working conditions in this sector (MOKONZI G., 2009, p. 148).

Challenges to overcome
The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the countries with the largest number of out-of-school children in the world. Indeed, 3.5 million children aged 6 to 11 do not currently have access to the school system, or nearly 3 in 10 children (26.7%) of primary school age. In addition, the lack of teaching material, the difficulties of school management and the poor training of teachers impact the quality but also the retention of students as well as their success in the current school system. Despite these many difficulties, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made significant progress in the education sector following free education at the primary level. However, the challenges remain numerous. The Congolese Government, which participates in the Global Partnership for Education, has adopted a sectoral strategy for education and training which aims to build by 2025, “an inclusive education system of quality, effectively contributing national development, the promotion of peace and active democratic citizenship”. This national plan focuses on three issues: promoting a more equitable education system, creating the conditions for a quality education system and establishing transparent and effective governance (www.wikipedia.org, 2021).

CONCLUSION
This study focused on:
- The context in which education in the DRC must develop is a challenge due to years of economic and political chaos, the country's large size, low population density, as well as its cultural and ethnic diversity. The wide range of local languages poses unique problems in primary education.
Revitalization of the education sector will largely depend on improvements in general policy and the economic environment, progress in implementing public finance reforms, as well as improvements in other sectors.

The creation of a stable and coherent political environment, including a reform of the education administration, is a necessary prerequisite for the development of the education sector.

The deterioration in the quality of primary and secondary education is obvious; this is clearly evident in the fact that most children in primary school do not acquire the basic language skills essential for definitive literacy or for further education.

The rejuvenation of primary school teachers and while most teachers have at least the lower secondary level.

The majority of primary students, and a significant proportion of secondary students, do not have a single textbook, and schools do not have basic teaching materials. Its main mission is to improve the basic Congolese education system for an increase of the Congolese elite.

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