



Education System Brief:

Democratic Republic of Congo



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Education System Brief: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

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1. EDUCATION SYSTEM: OVERVIEW

The DRC has a 6-2-4 educational structure where only the first 6 years (primary school) are **mandatory**. Even among primary-school-aged children, 3.5 million are out of school and 44% of those in school started their education after the age of 6. The language of instruction is French at all levels of the education system.

1.1 STRUCTURE



Pre-Primary Education

Grades: 0 Age: 3-5

Early Childhood Education is optional in the DRC and is majorly an **urban** phenomenon. Enrollment is the lowest among comparable countries with only **4.3%** coverage.

These figures are particularly alarming considering the significant disparity in primary school performance depending on pre-school attendance that was revealed in the **PASEC** assessment.

Primary School

Grades: 1-6 Age: 6-11

Primary education is compulsory in the DRC and split into three cycles: elementary, middle, and terminal.

Test national de fin d'études primaires

Junior Secondary School

Grades: 7-8 Age: 12-13

Junior Secondary Education is optional in the DRC.

Senior Secondary School

Grades: 9-12 Age: 14-17

At the upper secondary level, students can choose between a general education stream that prepares them for higher education, a pedagogical stream that is building up to teacher education, and a technical stream.

Vocational Training

Grades: 9-11 Age: 14-16

Instead of attending Senior Secondary Education, students can choose to enrol in Vocational Training and pursue a Diploma or Certificate.

Examen d'Etat



Higher Education

Higher education is on the rise in DRC: enrolments doubled between 2006 and 2012. However, drop-out rates remain high between 30% and 40%.

Academic degrees are offered at universities, technological institutes (for technical studies), and pedagogical institutes (for teacher training).

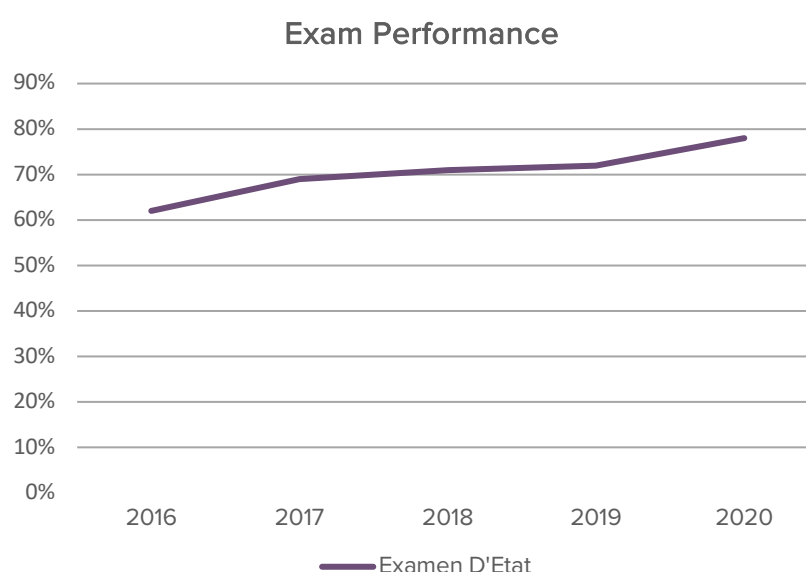
In 2014, the Bologna Process was adopted to align national universities with the international higher education system.

1.2 EXAMINATIONS

External exams are held after the completion of primary school to qualify for secondary school (TENAFEP), and after completion of secondary school to qualify for university (Examen d'État).

TENAFEP is designed at a provincial level and results are not collected centrally. This makes nationwide comparisons impossible. The responsible ministries aim to transform TENAFEP to function as a more effective selection tool for Secondary Education.

Examen d'état serves to certify school completion and select qualified students for higher education. These exams are held nationwide and are conducted by the National Exam Office – a unit within the Ministry of Primary, Secondary Education, and New Citizenship. Funding for examinations is largely gathered through examination fees. There is no significant performance variation between provinces. To access university, students must achieve a **minimum score of 50%** on Examen d'État. Students who fail the exam can decide to re-sit the examination or repeat the final grade.



1.3 CURRICULUM

The 2019 introduction of universal basic education also entailed a **curriculum reform**. The reform was focused on the maths and sciences curriculum in basic education. Next to changes in the content, the new curriculum also marks a transition to a situational approach. This entails engaging students in situations that are meaningful to them in their daily lives for learning purposes.

2. EDUCATION SYSTEM: REGULATORY FRAMEWORK & PROVISION

2.1. GOVERNANCE

High-level education governance includes four ministries: the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and New Citizenship (MEPS-INC), the Ministry of Technical and Professional Education (METP), the Ministry of Higher Education (MESU), and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Human Rights and National Solidarity (MASAHSN), that is responsible for literacy and non-formal education. Ministers are appointed by the president.

The **decentralization reforms** in 2006 significantly enhanced the role of regional institutions by entitling provinces to administer 40% of tax income raised in their territory as well as to collect their own taxes.

Public schools in the DRC are divided between faith-based and state schools which have parallel government structures at most levels. This results in a complex administrative hierarchy:

National Level	
<p>Secular institutions:</p> <p>Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and New Citizenship (MEPS-INC), the Ministry of Technical and Professional Education (METP), the Ministry of Higher Education (MESU), and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Human Rights and National Solidarity (MASAHSN)</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Setting norms, School inspections, National statistics, Appointment of university rectors.</p>	<p>Catholic Institutions:</p> <p>coordination conventionnées et catholiques headed by a national coordinator that is nominated by religious authorities.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Disseminate information and instructions from the Ministry of Education to provincial and sub-provincial administration.</p>
Provincial Level	
<p>Secular institutions:</p> <p>Provincial education bureau</p> <p>Responsibility:</p> <p>Administering education system according to national guidelines, recommend school heads to the provincial minister</p>	<p>Catholic institutions:</p> <p>Catholic provincial coordination offices headed by provincial coordinators</p> <p>Responsibility:</p> <p>Administer catholic schools on the regional level</p>
Local Level	
<p>Secular institutions:</p> <p>Sub-provincial Offices</p> <p>Responsibility:</p> <p>Supervision of local schools, decision power about recruiting, teacher promotion, and deployment</p>	<p>Catholic institutions:</p> <p>Catholic provincial coordination offices headed by provincial coordinators</p> <p>Responsibility:</p> <p>School management at the local level, decision power about recruiting, teacher promotion, and deployment</p>
School Level	
<p>Institutions:</p> <p>School heads, school-based management committees</p> <p>Responsibility:</p> <p>administrative and financial management of school funds</p>	

The DRC has experienced a surge in education expenditure as the share of education expenses doubled as a portion of the total government budget between 2010 and 2014. Nonetheless, households carry a significant share of the financial burden of education: in 2012 household spending on education was 73% of total education expenditure. Although tuition fees were abolished in 2019, the lacking income of schools and the complex federalist structure have resulted in fees and levies being collected at different levels. On average, these add up to around 43 USD per child every year.

2.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Teachers' [wage levels](#) are extremely low resulting in difficulties to recruit qualified personnel. Only 17.4% of public secondary school teachers are qualified (compared to 49% in private schools).

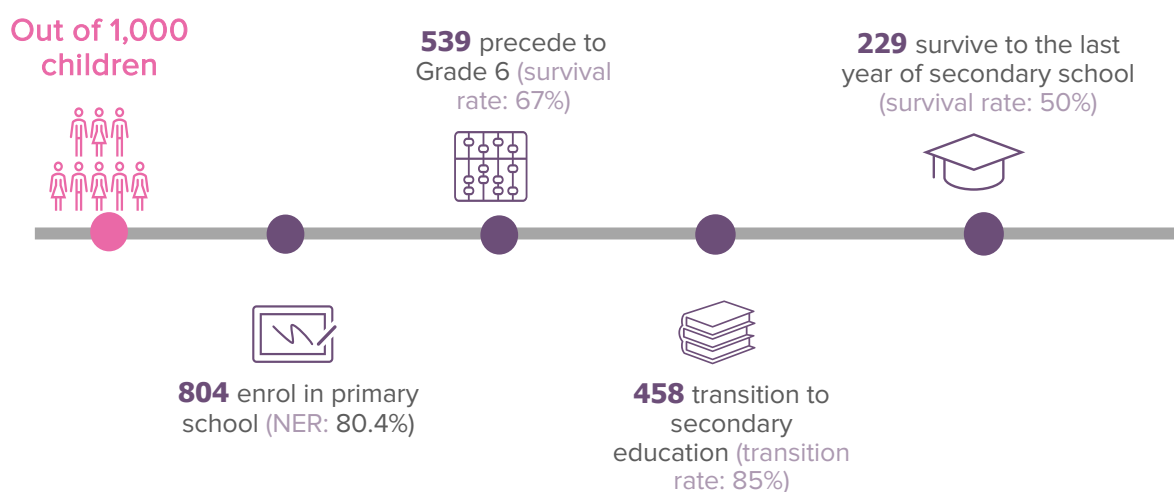
The [Inspection Generale](#) is a ministerial department and is responsible for school inspections. It employs officers on regional and central levels.

2.3. PRIVATE SECTOR

The DRC has both private schools and public schools. [Public schools](#) are further divided into state schools and confessional schools which are managed by faith-based organizations. Faith-based schools are state-supported but maintain a large degree of independence.

3. EDUCATION SYSTEM: PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGES

3.1. PARTICIPATION



3.2. TEACHING AND RESOURCES

Teaching

Student-teacher ratio



Before the introduction of free primary education, the Pupil-Teacher ratio in schools in DRC were strikingly low with **34** students per teacher in primary school and **13** students per teacher in secondary education. However, the abolition of student fees has significantly increased enrolment and overwhelmed many public schools.



Qualification

50% of teachers struggle with reading-comprehension questions that were placed to their students in the EGRA framework.

Learning resources & infrastructure

Student-textbook ratio (average)



On average, over **7 students** share a **textbook** in primary school French and Mathematics.

Drinking water (average)



Less than **40%** of schools have access to clean drinking water.



Infrastructure

12 out of 18 school facilities are in poor condition.

3.3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

While enrolment is slowly rising, learning outcomes in the DRC remain unsatisfactory: Only **47%** of students leaving primary school are literate compared to 59% in comparable countries. The DRC participates in international learning assessments that help to benchmark education system performance.

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGMA/EGRA) - 2012

Reading



47% of Grade 4 students and **23% of Grade 6** students are unable to read a single word within one minute.

Mathematics



Grade 4 students struggle to operate with 4 decimal numbers.

Grade 6 students fail to solve problems involving decimals, fractions, and percentages

Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) -2019

The DRC is among the worst performing countries of the PASEC Evaluation of francophone countries in Africa.



1/3

Less than one out of three students achieve at least sufficient competency levels in reading in the last grade of primary school.



1/3

Less than one out of three students achieve at least sufficient competency levels in Maths in the last grade of primary school.

3.4. EQUITY

Gender



9.23



10.68

Mean years of schooling

Performance - PASEC 2019:

Performance levels are fairly equal between genders at the end of primary education, although girls slightly but significantly outperform boys in both maths and reading.



8.27



11.22

Rural vs Urban

Mean years of schooling

Performance - PASEC 2019:

Differences in performance between urban and rural students are only significant in Mathematics at the entrance into primary education. However, these differences become insignificant once controlling for socioeconomic background. Further, the performance gap between rural and urban students closes at the end of primary education, presumably through schooling.

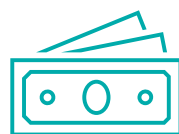
Socio-economic

Poorest 20%



7.67

Richest 20%



12.27

Mean years of schooling

Performance - PASEC 2019:

Students whose parents possess books (a good indicator of parental education and social status) significantly outperform their peers by roughly **10%** in reading and **6%** in mathematics.

4. EDUCATION SYSTEM: TRENDS AND DIRECTION

4.1. PAST TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS



Introduction of **free and mandatory** primary education



Between 2014 and 2021, the DRC received nearly 38 million USD from USAID to improve learning outcomes in Maths and French as part of the Project for the Improvement of Quality Education.

2010

2012

2014

2019

2021



Joining of the **Global Partnership for Education** and receipt of two grants worth a total of 200 million USD to support the implementation of the Education sector plans.



In 2019, **tuition free schooling** for all children was announced. However, financial shortages and overcrowded classrooms led to mixed responses.

4.2. POLICY DIRECTION

The 2016-2025 strategic education sector plan identifies the following key points as the policy focus for the upcoming years:

Objective

Developing Access and ensuring Equity

Changes

- Establish effective free primary school
- Prepare the extension of the basic education cycle to 8 years
- Adapt training to promote social integration of young people

Key Goals

- Increase % of employers satisfied with the training of TVET institutions from 40 percent to 65 percent
- Transition rate primary to secondary 85%. TENAFEP should be used as a selection instrument
- 40% of upper secondary enrolment in TVET
- More equal access to higher education

Objective

Improving the Quality of Learning

Changes

- Set up monitoring and quality assurance system
- Provide an educational environment conducive to learning

Key Goals

- Implementation of monitoring and evaluation policies
- Reform in- and pre-service teacher education
- Integration of cross-cutting themes (e.g., environment, gender, HIV, ...) in curriculum
- Improve and develop TVET curriculum

Objective

Improving Governance and Oversight of the Education system:

Changes

- Transparent norms and procedures for resource allocation and management
- Make management more efficient and equitable

Key Goals

- Set up broad effective and well-coordinated partnerships with education stakeholders (local authorities, religious representatives, NGOs, unions, etc.)
- Push forward decentralization of education management

Objective

Streamline/ emphasise STEI/STEM in the education system.

Interventions

- Provide early exposure of STEM/STEI to children (e.g., introduction of innovative science projects in primary schools)
- Provide the critical physical and virtual science infrastructure in all secondary schools and training institutions
- Adopt science project-based assessment in the education curricular
- Promote STEM/STEI focused strategic alliances between schools, training institutions, high calibre scientists and industry

Key Goals

- Increased ratio of Science and Technology graduates to Arts graduates from 2:5 to 3:5

Objective

Improve the foundations for human capital development.

Interventions

- Institutionalize training of ECD caregivers at public PTCs and enforce the regulatory and quality assurance system of ECD standards
- Equip and support all lagging primary, secondary schools, and higher education institutions to meet Basic Standards
- Roll out Early Grade Reading (EGR) and Early Grade Maths (EGM) in all primary schools to enhance proficiency in literacy and numeracy
- Implement an integrated ICT enabled teaching, school level inspection and supervision
- Develop and implement a distance learning strategy

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