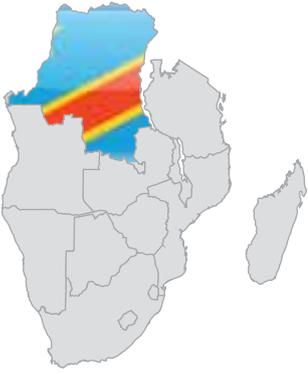


4

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Compiled by Beate Gadinger

COUNTRY CONTEXT STATISTICS	
	<p>Population: 67.8million (2011 est.)</p> <p>GDP per capita: US\$451 (2010 est.)</p> <p>Human development index: 0.286</p> <p>Unemployment: not available</p> <p>Key economic sectors: agriculture and forestry, services, mining, manufacturing</p> <p>Principal exports: diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt, wood products, crude oil, coffee</p> <p>HIV and AIDS prevalence: 1.6% (2009 est.)</p> <p>Gross primary enrolment ratio: 94% (2010)</p> <p>Gross secondary enrolment ratio: 38% (2010)</p> <p>Gross tertiary enrolment ratio: 6% (2009)</p>
	<p>Country context data were obtained from a variety of sources: CIA (2012), UNDP (2011), UNESCO (2011).</p>

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a former Belgian colony that gained independence in 1960. Since independence, the country has experienced recurring political unrest and socio-economic turmoil. The quest for access to and control over the huge mineral-rich areas of the country has been the focus of protracted war, which has been fuelled by internal and international interests. War has directly resulted in over 5.4 million deaths, while diarrhoea, malaria, pneumonia and malnutrition continue to take their toll on the population. Although the war has reduced significantly, more than 1.5 million people remain internal refugees among whom many thousands of deaths are recorded each month (Shah 2010). There are also more than 153 000 refugees from the conflict in surrounding countries.

Following a coup d'état in 1965, the country was ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko until his expulsion in 1995 (during which time the country became known as Zaire). Laurent Kabila became president in 1997, and the country was subsequently renamed the DRC. Laurent Kabila's reign as leader was not without attempts to oust him, which were often supported by other African countries. After his assassination in 2001 his son, Joseph Kabila, succeeded him as president. Joseph Kabila remains in power and has had many successes during his reign as president, including the withdrawal of occupying Rwandan and Ugandan armed forces, the establishment of a unity government, and the country's first multi-party elections in 2006 (Anon 2012).

The DRC held its second democratic election in 2011, with about 19 million voters taking part. Local elections are scheduled to take place in late 2012, but will most likely take place in 2013 (Anon 2012). The election of 2011 was accompanied by sporadic violence across the country. The internal situation in the DRC remains critical and is being closely watched by the UN. The provinces of North and South Kivu are stricken by internal conflict which has a 'negative effect on security and human rights' (Anon 2012, Dagne 2011).

While French is the main national language (inherited from the Belgian era), four indigenous languages also have status of national languages: Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba. When Joseph Kabila came to power, he identified five areas, known as the '*cinq chantiers*' (five pillars), where extensive action is needed to enhance national unity and development. These areas were identified as education, health, infrastructure, basic services and job creation (Bureau of African Affairs 2012). Details of the education pillar in relation to higher education will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Higher education landscape

The DRC has a relatively large higher education sector, which closely follows the Belgian system from which it was designed. As a signatory of the SADC Protocol on Higher Education and Training, the DRC has acknowledged the role of higher education in national and regional development and the importance of a regional higher education system.

The education system functions on a four-level principle. The first level is called the *Ecole Maternelle*, commonly known as kindergarten, which lasts two to three years and is closely followed by primary school, known as *Ecole Primaire*. Primary school, which can last up to six years, prepares students for *Ecole Secondaire* (secondary school), which is divided into lower and upper, ending with an entrance examination to university or a vocational school. This concludes basic education. Further education and training is carried out by public and private higher education institutes (*Universités* and *Instituts Supérieurs*) (Valinande 2000). The DRC national government states that primary education is mandatory for all citizens and it is free (Valinande 2000, Kotecha 2008).

Brief historical overview of higher education

The higher education system in the DRC is run by the Ministry of Higher and University Education, known by its French appellation *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et Universitaire (MESU)*. Higher education is divided into four cycles. The first cycle consists of three years to graduate, equivalent to a bachelors degree, followed by another two years to be granted *Maitrise*, which is similar to a masters (except for the medical professions, for which this cycle lasts three years). This is followed by the *Doctoral de Troisième Cycle*, which is equivalent to a doctoral degree (but not equivalent to a PhD) (Kotecha 2008).

Private higher education in the DRC was first established in the early 1990s, when the government authorised private institutions to operate. The first private university was Marien Ngouabi University. The number of private institutions has risen significantly over the years.

A note on methodology: In the case of the DRC, several new universities were identified during the course of this study. Access to contact details presented a major challenge, as many of the universities do not have websites, or if they have websites they do not have contact details or the information is outdated. Possible contact persons were finally identified through a helpful person in the Ministry of Higher and University Education, but some of the numbers did not correspond to the right universities, some were not functioning and some of the email addresses were not active. However, the majority of the universities were informed about the study and questionnaires were sent for completion. A total of 36 universities¹ were sent questionnaires, and six responses were received. Just before the finalisation of this report, one university submitted updated enrolment numbers for the 2011/2012 academic year. These figures have been included in this report, but not added to the totals due to the different time period represented and the fact that the national calculations had already been completed for the study.

¹ There were only six universities in the initial list at the outset of the study.

National higher education policy context

The policy currently governing higher education is the 'Academic Instruction Act No. 013/minesu/cabmin/mml/kob/2011 of 26/08/2011' (as noted in the Ministry Questionnaire). This new policy replaced the older policies 'Higher education and universities' (Decree no. 81-028 of 3 October 1981) and 'Academic degrees in technical higher education institutions' (Law no 82-004 of 6th February 1982) (Bloom et al. 2006). No information regarding statutory bodies was provided.

Another document that has influenced higher education in the DRC is the Vision 2020, which aims to develop a higher education curriculum able to respond to national development priorities through three key strategies:

- promoting entrepreneurship;
- developing technical and vocation skills; and
- providing the relevant human capital through improved teacher training.

The Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) of 2004 and 2005 also articulated the need for teacher training and the need to increase vocational and technical skills (Bloom et al. 2006). In the recent PRSP, in which the five pillars for national development are outlined, higher education is identified as a major role-player in meeting national development needs. The strategy seeks to align the higher education sector through the following objectives:

- improving quality education;
- promoting research and development;
- matching scientific and technological training with the socio-economic requirements of the private sector;
- identifying priority areas to be professionalised; and
- supporting non-formal education.

Although the Ministry of Higher and University Education is still developing policies for the sector, the national development documents show a close synergy between higher education development and national development, which is critical if higher education is to be sustained as an agent for national development (Cloete et al. 2011).

Size and shape of higher education

According to the data obtained from the Ministry of Higher and University Education there are 36 public universities and 140 accredited private institutions in the DRC with more than 61 500 students enrolled. In addition, the documentation provided by the Ministry indicated that the number of publicly-funded higher education institutions amounted to a total of 416 (although not all of them are accredited or operational).

As noted above, data were received from only six public universities. Due to the incomplete nature of the data collected, the percentage of students enrolled in private and public institutions could not be determined. Despite the missing data, it is hoped that this profile provides a more complete understanding of higher education in the DRC than is currently available.

Student profile, enrolment patterns and demand for higher education

This section presents an overview of public higher education in the DRC on the basis of the data provided by the six universities that submitted responses. Fewer than 40 000² enrolments have been recorded across all the major fields of study, and most of the current enrolments recorded are DRC citizens. Of the 17 261 new applications for undergraduate study recorded, 3 642 could not be accepted despite meeting the admissions criteria. The current process to establish more universities in the provinces could assist in reducing this number. The distinction between male

² Note that according to the Ministry of Higher and University Education, there are more than 140 000 students in the public higher education sector. Since data are not available from all of the universities, this section reports the trends for the six universities that submitted data.

and female shows an increase in favour of females, particularly in science, engineering and technology (SET) and business, management and law. According to the available data, the number of women students in the SET fields has increased from 127 to 450. However, this data cannot be accurately verified as the previous set of data could not provide the distinction in all cases reported on.

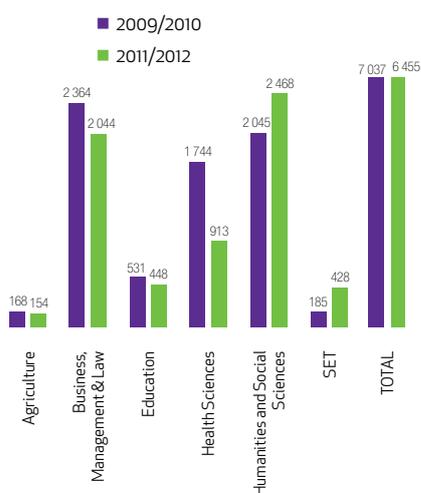
Enrolment data from the University of Kisangani between the 2009 and 2011 academic years show that there has been an overall decline in the number of enrolments. Business management and law, as well as the health sciences, showed significant drops, while there was a slight increase in the SET and humanities fields. While sufficient data from the other main universities were not available to validate this trend, the decrease could be attributed to the newly created universities which now provide access to higher education for students from regions which previously did not have universities and had to travel to Kisangani for higher education.

There was a decline in undergraduate enrolments, but a significant increase in the number of enrolments for postgraduate studies³. This could however be attributed to the difference in data labelling between the current study and the previous one. In the previous study, large enrolment numbers were recorded under the label 'other', but in the current data set no enrolments have been reported on in the label 'other', so it could be argued that the students previously under 'other' have been allocated to different fields, thus increasing the enrolment figures.

Figure 2 compares the number of postgraduate enrolments between 2006 and 2012, including the masters, doctoral and 'other' label, to indicate that a substantial increase has been observed between the two set of data for postgraduate enrolments.

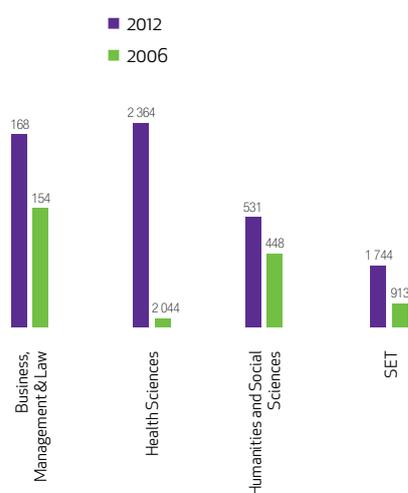
At this stage and with the available data it is difficult to report on the demand for higher education. Given the fact that 32 of the 36 universities have been established within the past three years, and keeping in mind that the current Ministry of Higher and University Education is trying to revitalise the education sector by publicly reporting on their progress (Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire Secondaire et Professionnel 2010–2012), it could be argued that the need for higher education exists and that it is being attended to. The decline in student enrolments does not indicate that the demand for higher education has grown since the previous study, but again it is necessary to stress that if more data were available, more complete information may show these assumptions to be incorrect.

Figure 1: Comparative analysis of university enrolment in one university



Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011) and additional data provided in 2012

Figure 2: Trends in postgraduate enrolment



Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011), SARUA (2009)

3 See Table 6 in the detailed data profile.

Staff profile

Several of the universities that provided data did not include staffing data, or major inconsistencies were found in the data. As a result, this chapter (and the accompanying data profile) does not include an analysis of the staff profile at public universities in the DRC.

National higher education outputs and alignment with policy imperatives

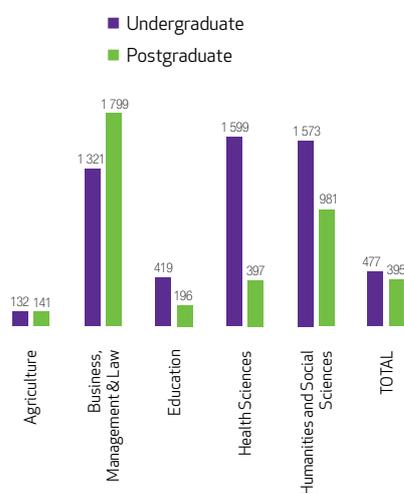
Continuing with the focus on the six universities for which data are available, at first glance more qualifications seem to have been awarded since the previous study (although this might also be as a result of more universities participating in the current study). Noteworthy is the fact that there has been an increase in the number of qualifications awarded at masters and doctoral levels, except in the field of health sciences (which only showed an increase in undergraduate qualifications). Figure 3 provides an overview of the graduation patterns at the six universities for the 2009/2010 academic year. Note that the postgraduate graduation figures include all postgraduate qualifications.

Universities have to report on quality assurance at national level. The participating universities indicated that the DRC has a quality assurance framework as well as a document outlining national specifications of quality assurance processes. Four of the six participating universities indicated that peer-review quality assessments are in place. Five of the universities do internal quality assurance as well, but only one university indicated having a quality assurance budget. To further enhance quality, five universities reported that they provide training opportunities for newly appointed staff members and four of them offer ongoing training and development opportunities to staff.

All six participating universities have research offices or units. Four universities are earmarked as research-intensive universities and have a research plan or strategy in place. Three universities have units specifically dedicated to higher education research.

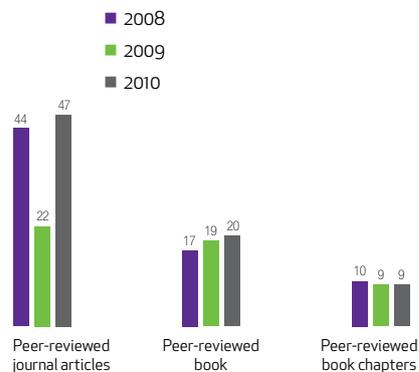
Regarding research output in terms of publications, the available data point to a possible increase in the number of peer-reviewed journal articles, while peer-reviewed books and book chapters remained stable. The research output numbers are very low for a higher education sector as large as that of the DRC, but are explained by the fact that data are only available for six of the 36 public universities. Figure 4 shows the number of publication between 2008 and 2010 according to type of publications.

Figure 3: Graduations per field of study (academic year 2009/2010)



Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

Figure 4: Research output 2008–2010



Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

Recent developments in higher education

Government documentation included some enrolment data, which showed that the public sector appears to have more than 140 000 students enrolled. Further investigation indicated that the large number of newly opened universities were part of a national initiative to create more universities in the provinces and that this was being published and tracked online by the ministry (Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire Secondaire et Professionnel 2010–2012). A report entitled 'Effective Delivery of Public Services in the Education Sector' recommends that the ministry regularly publish reports on interventions and progress (Mokonzi and Kadongo 2010).

The establishment of the University of Kisangani is partly linked to the huge mineral deposits and the rainforest in that part of the country. A recent development in the higher education landscape has been the establishment of a masters programme in sustainable environmental management. The programme, which is supported by the European Union, offers an example of the kind of education that could lead to change in the region (Mann 2010).

Regionalisation

The limited data obtained, and the difficulty of sourcing accurate data about higher education in the DRC, reveals a relatively low level of collaboration and engagement with other universities and higher education bodies in the SADC region. This could be attributed to two main issues. The first is the political instability that has characterised the country and continues to limit possibilities for regionalisation, and the second is the language barrier between the DRC and other higher education systems in the region. With no students from the SADC region (and only five international students) reported in this study, regional collaboration remains a major challenge. However, the DRC's participation in the study, despite all the challenges, is indicative of a desire to break down the barriers to regional collaboration as the country develops its higher education sector.

Conclusions

Higher education in the DRC (as in most parts of the world) has closely followed the socio-political climate of the country. The socio-political context of the DRC remains crucial in understanding the higher education landscape and has been provided to sketch a picture that is broader than the one the statistics have to offer. The fact that the ministry is publicly reporting on its endeavours to better the education and higher education sectors indicates that the country is moving towards a more structured higher education system in the future. The active efforts made by participating universities are an indication that higher education in the DRC is trying to situate itself in the broader regional and African context.

With a response rate of about 17 per cent it is not possible to argue that the current data provide a good statistical reflection of the current higher education landscape in the DRC. Nonetheless, given the dearth of information about higher education in the DRC, these numbers go some way towards improving regional understanding of higher education in this country. It can be argued that the higher education system in the DRC appears to be making significant strides, not only to increase access, but also to ensure a fair distribution of higher education opportunities across the country through the new universities that are operating in many different parts of the DRC. If adequate funding and quality structures are put in place, higher education in the DRC could meet the desired development expectations as stated in the PRSPs.

It is strongly recommended that for future research endeavours of this nature, the data collection process should involve local in-country researchers who would be better able to negotiate and make sense of the higher education sector in its national context. It proved difficult to obtain the needed information, to identify relevant persons who could assist in the data collection, and even to find contact details for the new universities.