

Producing Public Services in between State and Society: The Education Sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

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In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the state has to a large extent retreated from the public domain. The specific case of the education sector – a domain traditionally reserved for the state – allows demonstrating how public services continue to be provided, and how the Congolese state continues to survive and transform itself. By describing the ‘real governance’ of the education sector in the DRC from ‘within’, it is shown how the state is profoundly influenced by society and the powerful actors with whom it interacts. This has two consequences. Firstly, there is a *de facto* decentralization and fragmentation of the education sector. Secondly, the state has lost its regulatory power. Instead, the public sector is characterized by an opaque body of formal and informal rules which is constantly being adapted, negotiated and manipulated by different actors; and in which power plays a particularly important role: rather than formal rules and regulations, the power of the different actors guides this negotiation process.