

Package for Improving Education Quality (PIEQ)



Background

The Congolese education system faces tremendous challenges in terms of both access and quality. It is estimated that nearly 8 million children ages 5–17 are out of school for numerous and diverse reasons. Those who do attend school receive poor education, characterized by insufficient and inadequate learning aids and poorly trained teachers. For decades, the education system has neglected in-service teacher training. Although the Ministry of Education encourages self-driven professional development through local pedagogical cells and neighborhood clusters, results have been mediocre. In 2009, the United States Agency for International Development funded the Package for Improving Education Quality (PIEQ*) to improve education in 3,000 schools across three provinces. The project pursues three interconnected objectives:

1. Improve teachers' delivery of subject matter content (French and math) and pedagogy
2. Improve students' mastery of subject matter (French, reading, writing, and math)
3. Improve the school's learning environment by strengthening community capacity to support their school

* PIEQ is known as PAQUED in the Democratic Republic of Congo, according to its French acronym.

Our Story

EP Anolite is a primary school located in a suburb of Kisangani town. Unlike most other primary schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo, EP Anolite possesses basic infrastructure, including electricity and piped water. However, for several years, both water and power supplies had been disconnected due to unpaid bills. The result was sanitation and security hazards. Students would run to neighboring houses to beg for drinking water during breaks. During storms, the classrooms became dark, making it difficult for the students to read.



Under the community mobilization component, PIEQ encourages community members to actively participate in school governance through the Parents Committee (COPA) and School Management Committee (CGES). A popular training event involves teaching COPA and CGES members to critically assess and determine priority actions to improve their school environment.

After undergoing the training, COPA and CGES members assessed the school and determined that the lack of water and electricity was a critical issue. They agreed to mobilize community members, convincing parents that it was their responsibility and in their children's best interest to ensure the school had running water and power. To their surprise, parents responded by contributing funds to pay the bills. Since then, access to water and power has been restored.

Parents and school officials proudly highlight this success as a tangible result of training received from PIEQ.



PIEQ has taken the lead in helping the Ministry of Education improve the quality of their education system, which has suffered decades of neglect.

Professional Development Institute

Within the context of its first objective, PIEQ overcame tremendous logistical challenges to successfully organize and deliver a 10-day French Professional Development Institute (PDI) in August 2011. It reached over **27,000 primary school teachers** in three provinces (an area twice the size of France) with poor communication and transportation means.

The PDI was a resounding success for several reasons:

- Beneficiaries participated in the institute with unexpected enthusiasm. The mere concept of professional development was new to most. The institute spurred the desire and demand for more professional development activities.
- Through the PDI, the project formed a corps of facilitators who can be nurtured and used as catalysts for in-service training at the local level.
- The institute marked an important step in realizing the Ministry of Education's strategy to revitalize in-service teacher training through pedagogical cells and neighborhood clusters.
- Most importantly, a comparison of participants' pre- and post-training results shows an incredible 28% gain!



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Impact

The PIEQ PDI provides a vital tool for teachers to understand how students learn. Rather than encouraging mere memorization, teachers impart inquiry skills to students, letting them develop and test hypotheses through active learning.

Teachers have also developed their own and their students' writing skills by summarizing texts and writing short stories.



Despite rudimentary learning conditions, teachers enthusiastically and actively participated in the French professional development institute (August 2011).

