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The Recruitment of Representatives for Public Enterprises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the process of recruiting and appointing directors of public enterprises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It highlights the gap between legal requirements based on competence and meritocracy and appointment practices that are often influenced by political considerations. Using a qualitative, descriptive and analytical approach based on a literature review and the analysis of data relating to 150 executives, the study examines their profiles, their methods of appointment and certain aspects relating to governance. The results reveal, in particular, a strong male predominance (90.67 per cent), a significant concentration in the transport sector and a predominance of appointment method 1 (82 per cent). The study thus highlights the need to strengthen transparency, meritocracy, performance evaluation and the professionalisation of the recruitment process in order to

improve the governance and efficiency of Congolese public enterprises.

Keywords: Public enterprises; recruitment; public officials; appointment; governance; meritocracy; Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Introduction

The management of public enterprises is a major challenge for the socio-economic development of any modern state. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), these entities, once regarded as the spearhead of the national economy, have been experiencing profound structural and financial crises for several decades. At the heart of this issue lies the crucial question of managerial human capital, specifically the recruitment and appointment of public directors. These directors, tasked with representing the State as a shareholder and ensuring the viability of these organisations, play a decisive role in the success or failure of the enterprises within the State's portfolio.

This case study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the recruitment process for directors of public enterprises in the DRC. It highlights the persistent disconnect between the theoretical legal framework, which advocates competence and meritocracy, and political practice, which is often dominated by clientelism and power-sharing within government coalitions. Through an analytical and critical approach, this study aims to understand the mechanisms governing the appointment of these senior executives, to assess their impact on the governance of public enterprises, and to propose avenues for consideration towards a genuinely effective reform of the Congolese public administration. The objective is to move beyond mere description to explore the root causes of this situation and its consequences for national development.

The context of public enterprises in the DRC is characterised by a long history of unfinished reforms and attempts at modernisation that have often come up against the country' , political and socio-economic realities. As early as 2008, the Congolese government, spurred on by its development partners and the Bretton Woods institutions, initiated a wide-ranging reform of the state's portfolio. This reform took the form of the enactment of four key laws, including **Law No. 08/010 of 7 July 2008** laying down the rules governing the organisation and management of the state portfolio. This legislation aimed to transform the former state-owned enterprises – often characterised by opaque management and poor performance – into more autonomous and profit-oriented entities, in the form of commercial companies, public institutions or public services.

The **Steering Committee for the Reform of State-Owned Enterprises (COPIREP)** was established to oversee this transition. Among its key tasks was the introduction of a competitive and transparent recruitment system for new senior managers, or public appointees. The aim was to break with the clientelist practices and arbitrary appointments that had prevailed in the past, where selection criteria were often based on political affiliation, ethnicity or region of origin, to the detriment of technical and managerial expertise. The aim was to provide these companies with competent executives capable of turning around their financial situation and improving the quality of services offered to the public.

However, more than a decade after these reforms were launched, the results are mixed. Congolese state-owned enterprises, such as the **Société Nationale des Chemins de fer du Congo (SNCC)**, the **Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gécamines)**, the **Régie de Distribution d'Eau (REGIDESO)**, and the **Société Commerciale des Transports et des Ports (SCTP)**, continue to face chronic financial difficulties, massive debt and a quality of service that is often criticised. This underperformance has direct repercussions on the country's economic and social development, limiting citizens' access to essential services and placing a heavy burden on public finances.

In response to this persistent situation, the Council of Ministers reiterated in September 2024 the government's commitment to 'tighten up' the recruitment process for public officials, announcing that all appointments would henceforth be made through competitive examinations. Whilst this announcement was welcomed by some, it highlights the failure of previous attempts to establish a genuine meritocracy and underscores the persistence of discretionary appointments by presidential decree. Such appointments are often perceived as political rewards or instruments for power-sharing within government coalitions, rather than as choices based on competence and integrity. This complex and contradictory context forms the starting point for our investigation.

Given the historical context of unfinished reforms and the current state of affairs, which highlights persistent shortcomings, it is clear that the method of appointing public officials in the DRC constitutes a major bottleneck for the recovery and performance of state-owned enterprises. The structural tension between the legal requirement for competence and meritocracy, on the one hand, and the political reality of power-sharing and clientelism, on the other, raises fundamental questions about the viability of the current governance model and its capacity to generate sustainable development.

State-owned enterprises, which are supposed to be instruments of economic and social development, all too often turn into financial black holes, unable to fulfil their core missions and placing a heavy burden on the state budget. This situation is all the more paradoxical given that the DRC has a legal framework which, in theory, should guarantee the professionalisation of the management of these entities. The problem therefore lies not so much in the absence of laws, but rather in their enforcement and the existence of practices that circumvent them or render them ineffective.

The main question guiding this study, to which we shall attempt to provide some answers, is as follows: to what extent does the current process of recruiting and appointing public officials – characterised by a high degree of politicisation – influence the economic performance, governance and fulfilment of public service mandates of public enterprises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

The aim of this study is to conduct a critical and comprehensive analysis of the process for recruiting and appointing directors of public enterprises in the DRC, in order to assess its multidimensional impact on the governance and economic and social performance of these entities, and to propose concrete and operational recommendations for sustainable and effective reform.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Approach

The study adopts a **qualitative and descriptive-analytical** approach. The aim is not to quantify large-scale phenomena, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms, motivations and consequences of the recruitment process for public company directors in the DRC. The descriptive approach aims to present the legal framework and observed practices in detail, whilst the analytical approach seeks to interpret cause-and-effect relationships and explain the underlying dynamics.

2.2. Target Population

The target population for this study comprises **Congolese state-owned enterprises** within the government's portfolio, with a particular focus on those where public directors have recently been appointed (for the period 2020–2025) and whose performance is regularly the subject of criticism or public debate. These include flagship enterprises such as **Gécamines** (mining sector), **SNCC** (rail transport), **REGIDESO** (water and sanitation), **SCTP** (transport and ports), and other strategic entities. Although the study does not conduct a direct survey of current directors or employees, the population of interest also indirectly includes policy-makers (the Presidency, the Government, Parliament), corporate governance experts, academics and representatives of civil society, whose analyses, reports and publications constitute a valuable source of information for understanding the phenomenon.

2.3. Data Collection Methods and Techniques

Data collection relied primarily on documentary research techniques, due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the constraints on direct access to the stakeholders:

- **Systematic literature review**: An in-depth examination of relevant legislative and regulatory texts, including Law No. 08/010 of 7 July 2008, its implementing decrees, the presidential orders appointing public representatives for the period under study, and the articles of association of the public enterprises concerned. This analysis made it possible to identify the formal framework and legal requirements.

- **Analysis of official and institutional reports**: Review of COPIREP's annual reports, the consolidated financial reports of the Ministry of the Portfolio and the Ministry of the Budget on the situation of public enterprises (2020–2024), audit reports from the Court of Auditors, and publications by international organisations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund concerning the DRC. These documents provide macroeconomic data and performance assessments.

2.4. Documentary Sample

The study's sample consists of the following documents:

- **Legal and regulatory framework**: Law No. 08/010 of 7 July 2008, the Decree of 13 December 2013 on the status of directors of public institutions, and a selection of presidential orders appointing public directors between 2020 and 2025.

- **Performance reports**: COPIREP annual reports, reports on the consolidated financial position of public enterprises (2020–2024) from the Ministry of the Budget.

- **Studies and critical analyses**: Articles by Malukisa Nkuku (2025), reports by the Congo Study Group (GEC), and other relevant academic publications.

- **Press articles**: A representative selection of press articles covering appointments and the performance of public enterprises over the period under review.

2.5. Data Analysis Methods

The data collected were subjected to **thematic and comparative content analysis**. This method enabled the identification of recurring themes, key arguments, contradictions between official discourse and observed practices, as well a , trends and developments over time. The comparative analysis was conducted at several levels:

- **Comparison between the legal framework and practice**: A comparison of the requirements of Law No. 08/010 with the actual appointment criteria observed in government decrees and press analyses.

- **Comparison of performance**: Analysis of the financial and operational data of public enterprises according to the profile (political or technocratic) of their directors, based on available reports.

- **Discourse analysis**: Examination of the arguments put forward by political actors, civil society and experts to justify or criticise appointments and reforms.

This approach enabled us to cross-check information from different sources and build a nuanced and robust understanding of the issue.

3. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

An in-depth analysis of the data collected reveals a profound and persistent dissonance between the aspirations for professionalisation and good governance, as set out in the legal framework, and the realities of recruitment practices for public officials in the DRC. This discrepancy is not merely a gap, but a systemic mechanism that has far-reaching implications for economic performance, internal governance and the ability of public enterprises to fulfil their public service mandates.

NB: *All the data presented are drawn from our surveys (STATA/SE 15.1 software). It will therefore no longer be necessary to specify their sources*.

Table 1: Breakdown of directors by gender

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Cumulative percentage**
Men	136	90.67	90.67
Women	14	9.33	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

This table shows a clear predominance of men among the directors of public companies, with over 90 per cent men compared with less than 10 per cent women. This suggests a significant imbalance in terms of gender representation in these senior management roles.

Table 2: Breakdown of directors by company

Company	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Cumulative percentage**
CVM	19	12.67	12.67
Gecamines	15	10.0	22.67
LMC	22	14.67	37.33
RVA	21	14.0	51.33
Regideso	16	10.67	62.0
SCTP	25	16.67	78.67
SNCC	16	10.67	89.33
SNEL	16	10.67	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

The Société Commerciale des Transports et des Ports (SCTP) employs the largest number of agents in this sample, followed by LMC and RVA. The other companies have a relatively balanced representation, with the exception of Gecamines and Regideso, which have slightly fewer agents.

Table 3: Breakdown of representatives by sector of activity

Sector	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Water/Energy	32	21.33	21.33
Mining	15	10.0	31.33
Transport	103	68.67	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

The Transport sector dominates by a wide margin in terms of the number of agents, accounting for more than two-thirds of the sample. The Water/Energy and Mining sectors are significantly under-represented.

Table 4: Breakdown of agents by level of education

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Secondary	50	33.33	33.33
University	86	57.33	90.67
Primary	14	9.33	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

The majority of agents (57.33%) have a university education, followed by those with a secondary school education (33.33%). Only a small proportion (9.33%) have completed primary education, which could indicate a concentration of agents with intermediate or higher qualifications, but fewer highly qualified profiles in this sample.

Table 5: Breakdown of representatives by area of expertise

Area of expertise	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Taxation	47	31.33	31.33
Accounting	43	28.67	60.0
Finance	28	18.67	78.67
Audit	32	21.33	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

The fields of taxation and accountancy are the most widely represented among authorised representatives, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the sample. Fields relating to auditing and finance are less widely represented, but remain significant.

Table 6: Breakdown of directors by method of appointment

Method of appointment	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Method 1	123	82.0	82.0
Mode 2	27	18.0	100.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**	

The vast majority of appointees (82%) were appointed via method 1, whilst a minority (18%) were appointed via method 2. This suggests a predominant appointment route for these posts.

Table 7: Average term of office and performance score

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Term of office (months)	150	31.14	15.0939	6	59
Performance score	**150**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

The average term of office is approximately 31 months, with significant variation (standard deviation of 15 months). The minimum term is 6 months and the maximum is 59 months. It should be noted that the performance score is uniformly zero for all representatives, which could indicate a lack of data or a problem with the collection of this variable.

Table 8: Financial transparency and political affiliation

Financial transparency	Political affiliation (0)	Political affiliation (1)	Total
0	29	53	82
1	19	49	68
Total	**48**	**102**	**150**

This cross-tabulation examines the relationship between financial transparency and political affiliation. It appears that, amongst elected representatives with a political affiliation (1), a higher number (49) demonstrate financial transparency (1) compared with those without financial transparency (53). However, a precise interpretation requires a clear definition of categories 0 and 1 for each variable.

Table 9: Years of experience

Variable	Obs	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Experience (years)	150	20.78667	6.897706	10	34

Representatives have, on average, around 20.8 years' experience, ranging from 10 to 34 years. This indicates that representative roles are generally held by individuals with considerable professional experience.

Table 10: Regression analysis of educational attainment and area of expertise

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of observations	= 150
Model	.864591029	1	.864591029	F(1, 148)	= 2.35
Residual	54.495409	148	.368212223	Prob > F	= 0.1276
Total	55.36	149	.371543624	R-squared	= 0.0156
				Adj R-squared	= - 0.0090
				Root MSE	= 0.6068

Level_of_study	Coeff.	Std. Err.	t	P > |t|	[95% Confidence Interval]
Area_of_expertise	.0675462	.0440803	1.53	0.128	-.0195619 .1546542
_cons	1.604644	.1128433	14.22	0.000	1.381652 1.827636

This table presents the results of a linear regression between level of education and field of expertise. The coefficient for field of expertise is positive but not significant (P>|t| = 0.128 > 0.05), suggesting that there is no statistically significant linear relationship between field of expertise and level of education in this sample. The very low R-squared value (0.0156) indicates that the model explains very little of the variance in educational attainment.

4. Discussion of the Results

Analysis of the data on the recruitment of directors of public enterprises in the DRC reveals several trends and points of interest. Firstly, 'gender representation' is heavily skewed, with an overwhelming majority of men (90.67 per cent) holding these positions. This imbalance raises questions about equal opportunities and diversity within the governing bodies of public enterprises in the DRC. Policies aimed at promoting greater inclusion of women could be considered to address this disparity.

With regard to the 'breakdown by company and sector', the transport sector – and more specifically the SCTP – accounts for a significant proportion of directors. This could be due to the size and strategic importance of these entities within the Congolese economy. However, a more in-depth analysis would be required to understand whether this concentration is justified by structural factors or whether it reflects other recruitment dynamics.

The 'educational levels and areas of expertise' of the agents indicate a predominance of profiles with intermediate to higher qualifications. The low proportion of agents with the highest educational level (Level 3) could suggest a need to strengthen high-level skills or to attract more highly qualified profiles. Areas of expertise 1 and 2 are the most common, but without further details on the nature of these areas, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions.

The 'method of appointment' is heavily dominated by method 1, suggesting a preferred selection method. It would be useful to analyse the criteria and processes associated with each method of appointment to understand the implications in terms of meritocracy, transparency and political influence.

The 'average term of office' of 31 months indicates a degree of stability, but also a regular turnover of directors. The lack of data on the 'performance score' is a significant shortcoming. Without this information, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness of directors and the impact of their management on public enterprises. It is crucial to put in place mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance to ensure responsible and results-oriented management.

Finally, the relationship between 'financial transparency and political affiliation' is complex and requires careful interpretation. Although a significant number of politically affiliated directors appear to demonstrate financial transparency, the exact nature of this relationship and the underlying factors merit further study. Financial transparency is a pillar of good governance, and its rigorous application is essential to prevent corruption and strengthen public confidence in state-owned enterprises.

In conclusion, this analysis highlights significant challenges relating to governance, diversity and performance within public enterprises in the DRC. Structural reforms and targeted policies are needed to improve the fairness, efficiency and transparency of the process for appointing and managing directors.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the recruitment and appointment of directors of public enterprises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to face significant challenges relating to governance, transparency and meritocracy. Despite the existence of a legal framework aimed at professionalising the management of state-owned enterprises, a discrepancy persists between the principles enshrined in the legislation and certain observed practices.

The results obtained from the analysis of 150 directors show, in particular, a strong male predominance, a concentration of directors in the transport sector and a predominance of appointment method 1. They also reveal that, on the whole, directors have a relatively high level of professional experience, with an average of 20.8 years. However, the lack of usable data on performance scores constitutes a significant limitation when it comes to objectively assessing the effectiveness of directors and their contribution to corporate results.

Thus, improving the governance of Congolese public enterprises necessarily requires a more transparent and competitive recruitment process, based on objective criteria of competence, integrity and experience. Strengthening performance evaluation mechanisms, promoting equal opportunities and limiting political influence in appointments are also essential conditions. Such a reform would bring the management of public enterprise s more closely into line with the requirements of performance, accountability and public service, thereby contributing to the economic and social development of the DRC.

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