

## POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION IN ANGOLA AND BRAZIL: CHALLENGES IN SITUATIONS OF SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

## EDUCACIÓN POST-PANDÉMICA EN ANGOLA Y BRASIL: DESAFÍOS EN SITUACIONES DE VULNERABILIDAD SOCIAL

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### ABSTRACT

This article aimed to identify the national education policies in Angola and Brazil between 2020 and 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and point out trends for post-pandemic education in these countries, especially considering the inequalities that mark their social reality. The methodology consisted of documentary research on the websites of official bodies in both countries, and the data analysis was developed based on the theoretical framework of comparative education. The results highlight both dissonant and convergent aspects between the policies developed by Angola and Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic, considering their social and economic realities, particularly the difference in the political organization of these countries. In spite of the unitary character of the Angolan State and the Federative constitution of the Brazilian State that influenced the organization of national policies during the pandemic period, the trends for post-pandemic education in both countries point to policies that, despite the social inequalities that are reflected in school reality, place centrality on technologies as educational solutions, in a global movement, which presented an opportunity for Ed-Tech companies to enter new geographic areas, contributing to the control of school work and the privatization of public resources for education.

**Key words:** Post-pandemic Education; Education Policy in Angola; Education Policy in Brazil.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo tuvo como objetivo identificar las políticas educativas nacionales en Angola y Brasil entre 2020 y 2022, durante la pandemia de COVID-19, y señalar tendencias para la educación pospandemia en estos países, especialmente considerando las desigualdades que marcan su realidad social. La metodología consistió en una investigación documental en los sitios web de organismos oficiales de ambos países, y el análisis de datos se desarrolló con base en el marco teórico de la educación comparada. Los resultados resaltan aspectos tanto disonantes como convergentes entre las políticas desarrolladas por Angola y Brasil durante la pandemia de COVID-19, considerando sus realidades sociales y económicas, particularmente la diferencia en la organización política de estos países. A pesar del carácter unitario del Estado angoleño y de la constitución federativa del Estado brasileño, que influyó en la organización de las políticas nacionales durante el período pandémico, las tendencias de la educación pospandemia en ambos países apuntan a políticas que, a pesar de las desigualdades sociales que se reflejan en la realidad escolar, dan centralidad a las tecnologías como soluciones educativas, en un movimiento global, que presentó una oportunidad

para que las empresas Ed-Tech ingresen a nuevas áreas geográficas, contribuyendo al control del trabajo escolar y a la privatización de los recursos públicos para la educación.

**Palabras clave:** Educación pospandemia; Política Educativa Angola; Política educativa Brasil

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to discuss the challenges to education after the COVID-19 pandemic, in Angola and in Brazil, countries from different continents, marked by significant similarities and vast distances, from a historical, social, political, economic, and educational standpoint.

As members of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), Angola and Brazil share the same language and a political history of fragile democracy, despite their own characteristics. In Brazil, political independence from Portugal was promulgated in 1822, which only occurred in Angola in 1975. However, Angolan independence was followed by a civil war that lasted until 2002. Although that year is considered the beginning of the period of peace, since then one single political party has been at the head of the country's executive power, and electoral periods take place in moments of social tension, often faced with military force (Nguluve, 2019).

In Brazil, political transitions are marked by agreements and negotiations that, in general, maintain an authoritarian and oligarchic political culture, “interspersed with spasms of democracy” (Mendonça, 2001, p. 84) and coups d'état. The organization of the national political system differs completely between countries, taking a unitary form in Angola and a federative form in Brazil. Abrucio (2022) clarifies the difference between these two models:

Federalism is then a territorial political design of shared sovereignty (...) generating a combination between autonomy and interdependence of federative entities (...). Thus, it differs from the unitary State where power is distributed from the center to the parties, and even in the most decentralized unitarist nations the autonomy of sub national governments is a concession of central sovereignty, and not a territorial right. (Abrucio, 2022, p. 130).

The Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brazil, 1988) advanced the consolidation of the Brazilian Federative State, including more than five thousand municipalities as federative entities and seeking to develop a greater tax balance, decentralized, and negotiated between president, governors, and mayors, as noted by Abrucio (2022). This complex engineering, however, resulted in a situation of “great inequality in the capacity of local governments to effectively exercise their role as a full federative entity” (Abrucio, 2022, p. 137).

On this topic, Souza (2002) points out that Brazil is one of the most decentralized countries in the developing world, but this decentralization “presents contradictory results and creates new tensions for old problems, such as inter and intra-regional inequalities” (Souza, 2002, 433).

Table 1: Inequality Index – Angola and Brazil

	Inequality-Adjusted Development Index (IHDI) 2019*	Human Development Index (HDI) 2019*	Gini Coefficient 2018**
Angola	0.35		0.51
Brazil	0.57		0.53

Sources: Pnud (2019); Worldbank (2018)

\* Considers the distribution of income, health, and education among the population of a country.

\*\* Measure that indicates the degree of inequality in the distribution of income in a country. The closer to 1, the greater the inequality.

Social inequality is another element that brings Brazil and Angola together, as evidenced by Table 1. The data indicate that although Angola and Brazil are in different levels of human development, low and medium, respectively, inequality in income distribution, measured by the Gini Coefficient, brings them closer together, placing them among the most unequal countries in the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted social inequalities in different countries even more strongly. In the context of Angola, it emerged simply as a reminder of the social and educational

problems facing the country. In its history, Angola has experienced realities such as colonization and civil war, which are factors related to violence, suppression of rights, and the production of unjust societies. In the material reality of Angola, the scenario is one of poverty that generates a context of inequality and denial of the enjoyment of a series of rights, with emphasis on social, economic, and cultural rights.

Cassinela & Cacknazarof (2024), when reflecting on the reality of poverty and inequality in Angola, address the discussion on poverty mentioning Sen (1999), for whom poverty cannot be defined in a single universal manner, being then poverty a deprivation of basic human capabilities and that this deprivation stems from multiple sources. Of these, examples include poor health, lack of education, absence of empowerment, poor working conditions, and threats of violence.

For such reason, the authors draw their concepts from a government survey which applied a multidimensional poverty index that covered four fundamentals' dimensions, being i) health, ii) education, iii) quality of life, and iv) employment, other 16 indicators related to deprivation faced by the population. Thus, the poor are individuals who experience deficiencies in 30% or more of the sixteen aspects. Thus, 5 in every 10 Angolans faced multidimensional poverty; with 56% of these living in rural areas and 44% in urban areas.

If we understand that this scenario naturally produces inequality, and if we accept the Angolan reality marked by corruption and non-transparency, considering that in the Annual Report of the Non-Governmental Organization Transparency International 2023, Angola ranked 121 among 180 countries evaluated regarding the corruption and transparency index<sup>1</sup>, public policy must be informed by the values of social justice.

From an educational standpoint, according to Paxe & Brás (2021), in general, education in the country is marked by limited school coverage, inadequate operating conditions of educational institutions (especially with regard to overcrowding of classes, supply of drinking water, energy, bathrooms, small number of kindergarten teachers), the weak offer of public school services in preschool education, as the majority of the offer comes from private sector institutions. The authors highlight this last point, as “it becomes onerous for many families, considering that the payment of monthly installments of monthly fees in day-care centers and kindergartens tends to be above the national minimum wage, which makes it impossible for many families to afford the costs of their children’s education.” (Paxe & Brás, 2021, p.484), especially with the negative effects of Covid-19 on their socioeconomic lives.

In Brazil, 33.8% of the population between 6 and 17 years of age did not attend school in 2020, and 11.2% of enrolled students did not have access to school activities, according to information analysed by Scaff, Souza & Bortot (2021). The authors attribute these data to the absence of more effective educational policies aimed at mitigating social inequalities during the pandemic period, which resulted in the compromise of the right to education for many Brazilian students.

It should be noted that this event is not a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the authors emphasize, but is an integral part of the economic, social, and access to rights inequalities that characterize Brazilian society, “produced by institutional mechanisms of lack of accountability, discrimination and exclusion”. (Scaff, Souza & Bortot, 2021, p. 13). A study developed by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea, 2020) reinforces this perspective that the pandemic has increased inequality in the Brazilian educational system, which is endorsed by Senkevics & Bof (2022).

Considering this situation, this article aims to identify national policies for education in Angola and Brazil between 2020 and 2022, when the Covid-19 pandemic took place, seeking to point out trends

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/posicao-do-pais-e-indicadora-do-serio-combate-a-corrupcao/>. Accessed on 29th January 2024.

for post-pandemic education in these countries, especially considering the inequality that marks their social reality.

The theoretical-methodological framework of analysis is based on the principles of comparative education, aiming to identify similarities and differences across the historical, social, political, economic, and educational contexts of different countries, to uncover common trends that, beyond national identities, point toward the shaping of a supranational education agenda, as proposed by Caballero, Manso, Matarranz, and Valle (2016).

Studies in the field of supranational educational policies have developed in the context of globalization, which presents new epistemological challenges and introduces new elements for reflection within comparative education, as noted by Pronko (2003) and Caballero, Manso, Matarranz, and Valle (2016). The Covid-19 pandemic has further contributed to this debate by accelerating the adoption of digital technologies in both teaching and administrative processes within schools, thus reinforcing a global educational agenda that had already been taking shape. Therefore, it is essential for this study to examine how this agenda has been incorporated by countries from two different continents, whose educational policies are the subject of analysis by the authors.

Comparative education research is understood here as “a dialectical relationship between problems, data, and theory” (Pronko, 2003, p. 577), in which theoretical and empirical aspects are interconnected in the process of building arguments and explanations that seek to go beyond superficial analogies, juxtapositions, and correlations (Pronko, 2003, p. 579).

The methodological approach adopted involved documentary research, carried out on the electronic pages of official bodies in both countries and the national press of Angola and Brazil, with a view to listing documents that portray the educational policy developed by these countries to combat the Covid-19 pandemic shortly after the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) of Covid-19 as a pandemic. The documentary survey focused on the level of basic education<sup>2</sup>.

The theoretical methodological framework of analysis considers the comparative education principles, seeking to identify similarities and differences, based on the historical, social, political, economic, and educational contexts of the countries. It also grasps common trends that, beyond national identities, point to the configuration of a supranational agenda for education, as postulated by Caballero, Manso, Matarranz & Valle (2016).

The article’s structure presents the regulations implemented by the governments of Angola and Brazil in the first pandemic year (2020), to then analyze the trends that the policies developed in the following years point to education in these countries.

## **2. ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC**

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<sup>2</sup> Basic education, in Brazil, comprises early childhood education (0 to 4 years old), elementary education (5 to 14 years old) and secondary education (15 to 17 years old), and in Angola, under the terms of the Basic Law of the System of Education and Teaching (Law no. 32/20, of 12 August), comprises pre-school education (0 to 5 years old), Primary Education (6 to 12 years old) and I Cycle of Secondary Education (12 to 15 years old) and II Cycle of Secondary Education, corresponding to secondary education (15 to 18 years old).

In Angola, the normative-legal framework in response to the COVID 19 pandemic had as its initial milestone the declaration of a State of Emergency throughout the national territory, through Presidential Decree No. 81/20, of March 25, for a period of 15 days, taking effect on March 27, 2020. However, the suspension of basic education classes took place from March 24, by Executive Decree No. 01/20, of March 19 (Angola, 2020), from the Ministry of Education.

With the suspension of in-person teaching activities, nearly eleven million students from public, public-private and private general education institutions were left without classes. This number includes more than 895,576 children enrolled in the initiation class in Primary Schools (Angola, 2020e) and 87,589 children enrolled in daycare centers and kindergartens (MED, 2020b).

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the MED approved recommendations for the operation of schools during the period of suspension of classes through Executive Decree No. 02/20, of March 20 (MED, 2020b), and created by internal order an Education Sector Emergency Committee, which included national directors of the Ministry of Education - MED, provincial education offices, as well as national and international social partners, with emphasis on UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank. In summary, the political measures and sectoral actions taken by the MED were limited to the following:

1. Suspension of classes in all schools across the country.
2. Approval of activity recommendations for teachers, school managers, students, and guardians during the period of suspension of face-to-face classes.
3. Implementation of a distance learning program for classes from Initiation to 9th Grade through television and radio.
4. Approval and implementation of an Education Sector Response Plan for covid 19.
5. Preparation of technical, material, and human conditions for the return of face-to-face classes in all schools in the country.

Chart 1 summarizes the normative-legal production of the MED in response to the impact of the covid 19 pandemic on basic education in Angola.

Chart 1 - Normative instructions that regulate basic education teaching guidelines in Angola (2020)

Documents	Regulatory framework
Executive Decree no. 1/20 MED, March 19th	Suspension of teaching activities in all preschools, primary and secondary education institutions, public, private, and public-private, from March 24th for a period of 15 days, automatically extendable for the same period, if there is no provision to the contrary, depending on the global behavior of the pandemic COVID-19
Presidential Decree no. 81/20, March 25th	Declares a State of Emergency in Angola
Circular no. 26/2020, July 28th/MED	Establishes the adoption of alternative measures that allow the maintenance of pedagogical activities and minimum administrative services and the training, in services, of teachers in primary and secondary schools.
Circular no. 28/2 <sup>a</sup> /2.2/RE/MED/2020	Reflection meeting on the right to education and training in context of the Covid-19
Presidential Decree no. 229/20, September 8th	Exceptional Measures and temporary measures in effect during the public calamity situation declared in view of the Covid-19.

Presidential Decree no. 142/20, May 25th	Declaration of the situation of public calamity under the Covid-19 pandemic
Complementary Act no. 32/20, August 12th	Changes Act 17/16, August 12th – Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System
Angola, 2020	Emergency Plan of the education sector to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

Prepared by the authors. Source: MED (2020); Angola (2020); MED (2020a); MED (2020b); Angola (2020a); Angola (2020b); Angola (2020c); Angola (2020d).

It should be made clear that the pandemic crisis led MED authorities to adopt a set of measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on education. These include distance learning using tele-classes and radio classes, since April 2, 2020, broadcast on the country's main public television network, the *Televisão Pública de Angola (TPA)* and the *Rádio Nacional de Angola (RNA)*, in order to ensure that there was continuity in the teaching-learning process of students, benefiting nearly eight million (8,000,000), corresponding to students in Pre-School Education, Primary Education and I Cycle of Secondary Education (Angola, 2020e).

However, the country's technological barriers and social vulnerability undermined the effectiveness of this MED policy, as data from the National Statistics Institute showed, based on data from the 2015-2016 Multiple and Health Indicators, that only 42% of family clusters in Angola have access to electricity, mainly in rural areas. Access to television and radio is restricted to 51% of these. Regarding computer use, only 13% of households have a computer at home.

This situation is even worse when associated with insufficient access to quality Internet in several regions of the country and the low digital literacy of families, in which 40% of men and 20% of women have used the Internet at least once, with 37 % of men and 18% of women used the Internet at least once in the last 12 months (National Institute of Statistics of Angola, 2017).

Thus, according to a study by Brás (2021), 23.1% of the children to whom the tele-classes and radio classes organized by the MED jointly with TPA and RNA were aimed did not attend them for various reasons, as mapped by the author as follows:

Table 2 – Type of obstacle experienced by children during tele-classes and radio classes.

Obstacle	Frequency	Percentage
Distraction of parents and guardians	63	53.8
Frequent power cuts	21	17.9
Lack of knowledge of TV and Radio class schedules	14	12
Power outage	11	9.4
Lack of satellite television signal	5	4.3
Lack of TV set and radio	3	2.6
Subtotal	117	100

Source: Brás (2021).

In the data shown above, access to electricity should be highlighted, since 27% of the children were not able to follow due to frequent power cuts (17.9%) while others due to power outage (9.4%). Along the same line of thought, the Mosaiko Report (2020) mentions that only 22% of children (out of the 70 schools surveyed) watched tele and radio classes, with 26% not watching them due to lack of electricity (Mosaiko & Rede Etp-Angola, 2020, p.19).

On the other hand, the weak socioeconomic situation of families, worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic to the point of not having a television and radio set, represents the social vulnerability present in the Angolan societies. Finally, more than half of the children did not follow classes due to a possible lack of attention from parents and guardians. In the emergency plan for the education sector, the MED, based on data from the National Statistics Institute – INE, predicted that the low level of education of many could have implications for the implementation of tele-classes and radio classes “22% of women and 8 % of men aged 15-49 have never attended school and approximately a third (33%) of women 16% of men aged 15-24 cannot read. These aspects tend to limit the ability of parents and guardians to monitor students’ learning at home” (Angola, 2020e, p.4).

## 2.1 ONLINE AND BLENDED CLASSES: TRENDS FOR POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION IN ANGOLA

The Covid-19 pandemic proved to be a source of challenges for educational systems on a global scale, and local peculiarities that could not be ignored reinforced the need to adopt emerging policies to respond to the shutdown of schools and face-to-face teaching, as well as prospective policies, considering the emergence of a "new normal". In Angola, MED authorities and their national and international social partners concluded that distance and blended learning should be an alternative to respond to the impact of the pandemic on education (Angola, 2020e).

Thus, in addition to the tele-classes and radio classes program, the MED quickly approved specific regulations for Distance Learning, which despite being recognized as a different modality of education since the first Basic Law of the Educational System in the country (Angola, 2001) and a choice to in person classes, as provided in articles 81 and 82 of the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System (Angola, 2020) has never been standardized. Similarly, MED launched on July 22nd, 2022, the Angolan Virtual School “Xilonga”<sup>1</sup>, a platform that works as a learning instrument, where the student learns the program contents without the teacher’s in-person help (MED, 2022<sup>3</sup>).

Distance Learning, seen as the best alternative for education in Angola in times of crisis and uncertainty, led to the approval of a specific standard, through the Regulation of Distance and Blended Learning Modalities in Primary and Secondary Education, approved by the Presidential Decree no. 321/20, December 24th (Angola, 2020f). This regulation provides, among the specific principles of these teaching modalities, parity with face-to-face teaching, becoming recognized as teaching-learning methods in the country, and cross sectionality, making the application of Distance Learning a modality that crosses all subsystems of teaching and training in Angola. However, article 5 provides that the initiatives of creation of programs may be from public, public-private, or private teaching institutions, but will require authorization from MED (Angola, 2020f).

It should be stressed that the regulation opens the possibility of partnerships, as institutions providing education and courses in distance learning and blended learning modalities can "establish partnerships through protocols with national and international institutions specialized in specific training, technical-professional schools, companies and others duly certified and equipped to these teaching modalities"(Angola, 2020f, p.6947).

It is in this scenario that a partnership between the National Institute for Training Education Personnel (Infqe) and the National Institute for Education Assessment and Development (Inade), both of which connected to the Ministry of Education of Angola and the Institute of

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<sup>3</sup><https://xilonga.med.gov.ao/>



Telecommunications of Angola (Itel), in turn connected to the Ministry of Telecommunications, Information Technologies and Social Communication, Angolan technicians created the “Xilonga”, which assists the teaching-learning process, through the use of interactive tools and resources, with the central objective of offering resources and teaching materials for learning the programmatic contents of the Primary Education and I Cycle of Secondary Education curriculum (Infqe, 2022a).

On this platform, the student can access various resources, namely: (i) tele classes, (ii) student activities, (iii) student manual, activity notebook, (iv) methodological guides, (v) legal education regulations, (vi) radio classes, and (vii) news and information. These resources can be accessed by primary school students, parents or guardians and teachers, using an IOS or Android device, as indicated in the Strategic Plan for the implementation of this platform (Infqe, 2022a). By accessing the platform, (i) the student has access to the syllabus without the face-to-face help of the teacher and (ii) the teacher improves their professional skills.

Regarding the partnerships to implement “Xilonga”, the participation of non-state (private) institutions in their different implementation stages should be emphasized. Presently, “Xilonga” is in stage II of development for the 2022-2027 period, and relies on the following private partners:

Chart 2 – Non-state institutions partners to “Xilonga” (2022)

Institution	Domain or Industry	Scope
Dialungana	Graphic Design	National
Catholic University of Angola (UCAN)	Higher Education	National, connected to the Catholic, Church
Instituto Superior João Paulo II (ISUP)	Higher Education	National connected to the Catholic Church
UNITEL	Telecomm. And Mobiles	National
KPMG	Audit, Taxes and Consultancy	International
World Bank	Financing and technical assistance	International

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Infqe (2022a; 2022b).

As shown in Chart 2, to implement the online Angolan school as well as to “revitalize” Distance Learning, MED established multiple partnerships with non-state institutions (private), both national and international. At the stage of creation of Xilonga, the private company Dialungana participated with the responsibility for the platform design, contracted by MED (Infqe, 2022a). It should be said that the documents on the platform that we reviewed do not include costs related to such technical consultancy.

At the implementation stage of Xilonga, partnerships were established with two private higher education institutions, namely: UCAN and ISUP, mediated by the international audit, tax, and consultancy agency KPMG, assuming responsibilities in the field of education and training of teachers and platform managers.

However, among the MED partners in the implementation of Xilonga, we highlight the World Bank, which through the Projeto Aprendizagem para Todos – PAT (“Learning for All Project”), sponsored the I International Seminar on Distance and Itinerant Learning, held in November, 2019, with the technical partnership of the University of Minho, in Portugal, mediated by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which relied on the participation of South African, Rwandan, Zambian and Portuguese experts. (MED, 2020d).

This international organization also financed the acquisition of technological and support material for public schools of Angola, such as (i) 1,000 radios; (ii) 1,000 TV sets; and (iii) 1,000 solar energy panels, as well as the studio equipment for recording and editing audio and video classes for Xilonga (Infqe, 2022b).

“Xilonga” has the primary goal of expanding access to quality and equitable education for primary and secondary school students. Specifically, it aims to:

- a. Provide audio-visual content and material resources in digital format for student learning and ongoing training of teaching staff.
- b. Implement continuous training for teaching staff, in the Distance Learning modality.
- c. Strengthen the teacher's methodological skills and tutorial support for students.
- d. Provide pedagogical guidance to tutors to support their students' learning (Infqe, 2022b).
- e. Ensure distance training for students outside the education system, through radio, television, and other accessible resources.

Nevertheless, the adequacy of “Xilonga” and Distance Learning should be questioned, in general terms, considering three fundamental indicators: (i) the country's technological barriers, (ii) the poor conditions of schools, and (iii) the educational level of its application, in this case in primary education. Regarding technological barriers, as already mentioned, the country is marked by poor access to the internet and use of technological materials by families.

As to the poor conditions of schools, data from MED in 2022 indicate that 81.6% of the country's public schools, the majority of which are primary schools, do not have access to electricity and that 73% of them are in rural areas, marked by glaring social vulnerability (MED, 2023). As to the teaching level of Distance Learning application, in this case in primary education, Paxe & Brás (2021) warn about the care that must be taken in relation to the ages of the children who attend them.

Analyzing the context of early childhood education and the policy measures adopted for education during the pandemic, they identified the result of setbacks in relation to the alternative mechanism adopted by the education sector authorities to guarantee the continuity of children's learning, since distance learning through tele and radio classes did not have the desired reach considering the difficult socioeconomic situation of families and the deficient supply of electricity in the country, and due to the possible gap between the premises of the work developed and the demands of pedagogical work in basic education, fundamentally in primary education. This finding, from our standpoint, also requires attention in relation to the post-pandemic period, as policy measures that place distance learning at the center of alternatives to crises and uncertainties with face-to-face teaching continue.

### **3. BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS REGARDING BASIC EDUCATION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC**

The declaration of a public health emergency of national importance due to the New Coronavirus was established by the Brazilian government through the Ordinance no. 188 on February 3rd, 2020 (Brazil, 2020a). In the first half of March of the same year, Normative Instruction No. 19 (2020b) established guidelines for public bodies regarding measures to protect employees. Four days later, on March 16th, 2020, Normative Instruction no. 21 (2020c) amended those measures, determining the lockdown of all public bodies, except those that provide essential services.

Chart 3 briefly presents Brazilian legislation relating to the year 2020, specifically regarding basic education.

Chart 3 - Normative instructions that regulated basic education teaching guidelines in Brazil (2020)

Documents	Regulatory frameworks
Ordinance no. 343, March 17th, 2020	Provides for the replacement of face-to-face classes with online classes while the New Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic situation lasts.
Provisional Measure no. 934, April 1st, 2020	Establishes exceptional educational standards to be adopted during the state of public calamity
Act no. 13987, April 7th, 2020	Amends Act no. 11947, of June 16th, 2009, to authorize, on an exceptional basis, during the period of suspension of classes due to an emergency or public calamity, the distribution of food supplies purchased with resources from the Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar - PNAE (National School Feeding Program) for the parents of guardians of students in public elementary schools.
Act no. 14040 – August 18th, 2020	Establishes exceptional educational standards to be adopted during the state of public calamity recognized by the Legislative Decree no. 6, of March 20th, 2020; and amends Act no. 11947, of June 16th, 2009.

Prepared by the authors. Source: Diário Oficial da União (Brazil, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f).

The information in Chart 3 shows that the day following the publication of the Normative Instruction that establishes the lockdown of public bodies, the Ministry of Education publishes Ordinance no. 343 (Brazil, 2020c), which authorizes the replacement of face-to-face classes with online classes while the New Coronavirus - COVID-19 pandemic situation lasts.

It should be stressed that access to digital media is one of the elements marked by inequality in Brazil, both from an economic and from a regional perspective. The Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua), carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics in 2019 (IBGE, 2021) before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, provides the data expressed in Table 3:

Table 3 – Percentage of access to technological resources in Brazilian households (2019)

Type of Technology	Brazil	Urban Areas	Rural Areas
Television	96.3	97	92
Microcomputer	40.6	45	13
Cell phones	94	95.5	83.6
Internet	82.7	86.7	55.6

Prepared by the authors. Source: IBGE (2021)

From the data presented, there is a significant discrepancy between urban areas and rural areas, mainly about access to computers and the internet. As for television and cell phones, access to which is a little more equitable, the difference lies in the quality of access, that is, rural areas have less access to digital television signals and cell phone internet, especially if we consider fast internet, broadband. This disparity is also revealed in relation to the country's regions, an example of which is broadband internet connection, which reaches 81% of Brazilian homes in general, but only reaches 63% in the Northeast region. Also, regarding individual possession of a cell phone, the Ibge report (2021) records that 81% of Brazilians have a cell phone, but only 59% of residents in

rural areas, the biggest discrepancy being found in the northern region, where this percentage drops to 43%.

The inequalities intrinsic to the organization of Brazilian society were not considered in Ordinance no. 343, of March 17th, 2020 (Brazil, 2020c). In addition, the National Education Council (CNE)1 issued several opinions and guiding resolutions to Brazilian states and municipalities, as analyzed by Scaff, Souza & Bortot (2021). The preparation of these documents, however, “was carried out based on research and materials made available by multilateral organizations and private institutions operating nationally” (Minto & Galzerano, 2021, p. 45), giving second place to recommendations from researchers, social movements, entities, and scientific associations in the area.

It is possible to identify in the CNE guidelines, some attention regarding social vulnerability and the consequent disparity in access to technological tools by the Brazilian population. Scaff, Souza & Bortot (2021), when reviewing these documents, identify records about the need for states and municipalities to consider conditions of social vulnerability when planning school activities. The authors emphasize, however, that such documents attribute responsibility for the conditions of education provision to educational networks and institutions, pointing to “the innovation and creativity of networks, schools, managers, teachers and students to present more appropriate solutions in the facing the educational challenges posed by the pandemic.” (Scaff, Souza & Bortot, 2021, p. 12).

This creativity on the part of managers led to the publication of Law no. 13987 of April 7th, 2020, which authorizes the distribution of food supplies purchased with resources from the National School Meal Program (PNAE) to parents or guardians of students in public basic education schools. The change to this Law was the result of movements built by teachers and school managers themselves, who recognized school meals as the main meal for students. Since the PNAE is managed with resources from the federal government, the change in the law was necessary to legitimize the action that was already taking place in schools located in the poorest regions of the country.

Although the federative organization of the Brazilian State requires the Government to respect the autonomy of states and municipalities in the development of their policies, the lack of coordination from the federal government was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even Act No. 14040, of August 18th, 2020 (Brazil, 2020, f), which establishes exceptional educational standards to be adopted during the state of public calamity, was limited to dealing with the flexibility of the school calendar and compliance of curricular contents, through non-face-to-face activities, mediated by technological resources. Regarding access to information and communication technologies, the Law establishes, in Art 2:

§ 5 Education systems that choose to adopt non-face-to-face pedagogical activities as part of fulfilling the annual class hours must ensure in their rules that students and teachers have access to the necessary means to carry out these activities. (Brazil, 2020f, p. 4).

From the excerpt cited, we can infer not only respect for the autonomy of states and municipalities, but also the lack of coordination and federative cooperation on the part of the federal government. The government's lack of leadership in education during the pandemic is highlighted in studies developed by Gatti (2020), Minto & Galzerano (2021), Scaff, Souza & Bortot (2021), Freitas, Rodrigues & Pimentel (2022), among other authors.

The lack of positive action by the Brazilian State is further reinforced by negative action, evident for example in the cut of resources for national education, which can be exemplified in the Ministry

of Education's budget for 2020, which was “the lowest in almost a decade” (Freitas, Rodrigues & Pimentel, 2022, p. 59). This trend continues throughout 2022, in which the Ministry of Education was hit with the second biggest budget cut.

Still in the context of the federal government's negative actions, the suspension of the Ministry of Education's contract with TV Escola, a television channel founded by a social organization in the 1990s, with open national transmission, whose resource could be used by students who do not have internet access, as commented by Freitas, Rodrigues, and Pimentel (2022).

It can be inferred from the Brazilian national situation during the Covid-19 pandemic, that there was not just omission by the State, but a policy deliberately formulated with the aim of strengthening the advancement of a project to favor the educational market, which was already being built in national level, in dialogue with the supranational agenda.

This agenda is strengthened by the movement of the most conservative sectors of Brazilian society, especially the business community, for the reopening of schools and the return to classes in a hybrid format, understood as “a combination of face-to-face and distance learning modalities, made possible, above all, through the use of digital technologies” (Minto & Galzerano, 2021). This movement resulted in the founding of the National Hybrid Basic Education Association in July 2020. In this scenario, the federal government begins to act positively, establishing the Connected Education Innovation Policy, which will be analyzed below.

### **3.1 CONNECTED EDUCATION: TRENDS FOR POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION IN BRAZIL**

The Connected Education Innovation Policy (PIEC) was established through Act no. 14180, of July 1st, 2021 (Brazil, 2021), which establishes in Art. 2, the following objective:

Combine efforts between bodies and entities from the Government, the States, the Federal District, the Municipalities, schools, the business sector, and civil society to ensure the necessary conditions for the insertion of technology as a pedagogical tool for daily use in public basic education schools (Brazil, 2021, p. 1).

The objective of the policy highlights two trends for Brazilian education, which have marked the world scenario, namely: a) the development of instrumental changes, focused on technological tools as elements of innovation; b) the integration of the private sector as a subject of State policies.

Regarding the first trend, the relationship between technological tools and innovation stands out. Innovation is addressed by Quilabert (2022) in its classical sense and in new approaches, introduced in the 21st Century XXI. In the classic perspective, strengthened at the end of the 20th century, innovation is related to the set of elements that contribute to the effectiveness of the school. This debate places the school at the center of the change process and technological and methodological resources as elements that have the potential to improve or “transform” educational practices and results. (Quilabert, 2022).

According to the author, in the 21st Century, the concept of innovation is incorporated into the productivity and economic development of the State, a movement for which pedagogical and public management arguments are combined, to give it a positive character. The author analyzes the construction of this concept in the sphere of the global agenda, concluding that,

In general, among international organizations, innovation in education is constructed as a desired and necessary element to transform current educational systems. It largely becomes a magic formula, a concept that serves multiple political agendas, used to face contemporary challenges, a kind of 'one size fits all' that ranges from the personalization of student learning, moving away from traditional methods, to improve the productive efficiency of the public sector (Quilabert, 2022, p. 69).

In this scenario, the concept of innovation does not have an objective definition, but a broad and open one, to incorporate different policies and actions developed by education systems and schools, according to regional, national, or local particularities.

The Connected Education Innovation Policy (Brazil, 2021) corroborates this direction, when it announces as one of its principles the equality of conditions among public basic education schools for the pedagogical use of technologies. Thus, PIEC invests in educational technologies as a way of reducing the deep inter- and intra-regional educational inequalities in Brazil, placing technological resources at the center of this process.

Art. 4 of Act no. 14180, 2021, defines the actions to be developed with schools and basic education networks, within the scope of the PIEC, in six segments, namely:

- 1 – Technical support for preparing diagnoses and technological innovation plans in pedagogical practice.
- 2 – Technical and/or financial support for the acquisition of electronic equipment, devices, licenses, infrastructure services and digital educational resources.
- 3 – Offering training courses for teachers and education professionals to use and support the use of technologies in schools.
- 4 – Publication of technical and pedagogical parameters and references for the acquisition and pedagogical use of resources.
- 5 – Provision of freely accessible digital teaching materials, prepared with the participation of education professionals in their preparation.
- 6 – Promotion of the development and dissemination of digital teaching resources, preferably in an open format (Brazil, 2021).

It is observed that the actions listed only mention teachers as the target audience for training in the use of technologies. This same trend is evidenced by Zancajo, Verger & Bolea (2022) in the national recovery plans presented by European Union countries, which place teachers in the context of school digitalization strategies, strategies that require training in the use of technologies. In this sense, the authors add that,

Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic has served as a catalyst to accelerate preexisting digitization policies in education systems. The visibility of the shortcomings of education systems in terms of digital infrastructure during the Covid-19 crisis, the enthusiastic identification by IOs and policymakers of ICT as a policy tool to modernize education systems and address broader socioeconomic problems, and the interests of a growing Ed-Tech industry, with strong agenda-setting capacity, have worked together to align the interests of different stakeholders to favor this acceleration (Zancajo, Verger & Bolea, 2022, p. 119)

The quoted excerpt presents elements to review the second trend pointed out by Act no. 14180 of 2021 (Brazil, 2021), when it comes to the strong capacity of the private sector in defining the agenda of State educational policies, through new forms of articulation between international organizations

and technology industries with stakeholders in a process of heterarchical governance (Fontdevila, Verger & Avelar, 2023). The authors clarify that these new organizational configurations “resultan de la combinación de estructuras jerárquicas e intercambios de mercado, y que dan lugar a formas de gobernanza que, si bien son externas al Estado, están entrelazadas con él (Fontdevila, Verger & Avelar, 2023, p. 146).

The blurring of boundaries between State and market, embodied in the different configurations that governance assumes, has positioned Brazilian education as a profitable business, where fascination with technological solutions contributes to further consolidate the transfer of public resources to the private sectors. In this context, educational inequalities are sometimes used as an argument for expanding investments in technological resources, while 3,250 schools in the country do not have access to electricity, water, or bathrooms inside the building, as reported by Schneider, Frantz, and Alves (2020).

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results of the research developed highlight dissonant and convergent aspects between the policies developed by Angola and Brazil during the Covid-19 pandemic, considering their economic and social reality, and especially the distinct political organization between the countries.

Angola, as a Unitary State, highlights the central government's leading role in organizing national radio and television programs, mediated by experts in the field of education and media, although the population's access to these resources is limited and the families' level of education does not allow full monitoring of activities, which significantly compromised access to education for children and young people during this period.

The Brazilian Federative State exhibits less agency by the central government, limiting itself to issuing general guidelines and technical standards, to hold states, municipalities, schools, and teachers responsible for the organization of school activities. It was not possible in this article to size up the actions developed in the 26 states, 1 Federal District and 5,568 Brazilian municipalities. However, the absence of coordination from the Federal Government was registered by academic production in the area, as a crucial limitation to the right to education in Brazil during the pandemic of Covid-19.

Like Angola, a significant part of the Brazilian population, especially in rural areas, does not have access to quality information and communication technologies, one of the aspects that marks social inequalities in the country.

Although social inequalities, both in Angola and in Brazil, existed before the pandemic, their dimension and intensity were exposed during this period, becoming a reason for warning in the reports of International Organizations, which denounce that “The performance gap between socially advantaged and disadvantaged students has been framed as one of the main challenges for the education system in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis” (Zancajo, Verger & Bolea, 2022, p. 120).

Despite these complaints, among many others commented on by the countries' national press and studies developed by researchers in the field, the focus of post-pandemic policies is the introduction and strengthening of the use of technologies in teaching processes. In Angola, this trend is reflected by the Angolan Online School “Xilonga” (Angola, 2022) and in Brazil by the Connected School Innovation Policy (PIEC) (Brazil, 2021).

Although in different dimensions, the policies of both countries focus on forms of developing teaching activities mediated by technologies, which become an object of public financing and an object for establishing partnerships with civil society institutions, national organizations, and international companies, among other actors.

We conclude, from the data presented, that the trends for post-pandemic education, in Angola and Brazil, despite the social inequalities that are reflected in the school reality, such as the lack of infrastructure, access to basic services of water and electricity in schools and communities, place a central focus on technological tools as educational solutions, in order to accelerate educational policies that were already being designed before the pandemic, and which gained momentum with social distancing measures. This is a global process, which presented an opportunity for Ed-Tech companies to enter new geographic areas, as analyzed by Zancajo, Verger & Bolea (2022).

This trend is intertwined with other key elements of global educational policies today, such as the technological control of schoolwork, understood within the scope of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2021) and the privatization of public education, which has developed rapidly under the umbrella of heterarchical governance.

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