

ARTICLE

REMOTE EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID 19 IN MOZAMBIQUE: A LOOK AT THE CONDITIONS FOR ACCESS¹

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ABSTRACT: This article addresses the context of basic education in Mozambique and intends to interpret, based on the COVID-19 mitigation measures implemented by the education sector, the diverse realities emerging to analyze the viability of teaching activities, through remote classes in Mozambique. To achieve this, we utilized data from the General Population and Housing Census of Mozambique, from the 2007 and 2017 censuses, as well as the study carried out by the College of Education of the Eduardo Mondlane University, along with the Education for All Movement (Movimento Educação para Todos: MEPT). Among other results, the research uncovers the lack of schooling of a large part of the Mozambican population on school age, a reality more severely displayed in adults aged 20 or over and, in particular, women; associates lack of schooling and school dropout with marriage and early motherhood; and, it indicates, in women who continue schooling process, a significant decrease in the percentage of development in academic levels. Regarding compliance with COVID-19 mitigation measures, based on didactic pedagogical strategies, in the context of emergency remote education, the study reveals that the poor structural and infrastructural conditions available, whether in schools, teachers, or families, impact students' access and quality of learning.

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Keywords: Mozambique, COVID-19, basic education, remote education, conditions for access.

EDUCAÇÃO REMOTA NO CONTEXTO DA COVID 19 EM MOÇAMBIQUE: UM OLHAR SOBRE AS CONDIÇÕES DE ACESSO

RESUMO: O presente artigo aborda o contexto da educação básica de Moçambique e elege como objetivo compreender, a partir das medidas de mitigação da COVID 19 adotadas pelo setor de educação, as diferentes realidades decorrentes para analisar a viabilidade de atividades de ensino, por meio de aulas remotas em Moçambique. Para tanto, valeu-se dos dados do Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação de Moçambique, a partir dos censos de 2007 e 2017, bem como do estudo realizado pela Faculdade de Educação da Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, junto com o Movimento Educação para Todos (MEPT). Como resultado, dentre outros, a pesquisa expõe a falta de escolarização de grande parte da população moçambicana em idade escolar, cuja realidade se assevera em adultos com idade igual ou superior a 20 anos e, em especial, às mulheres; associa a não escolarização e o abandono escolar ao casamento e maternidade prematura; e, indica, nas mulheres que se mantêm no processo de escolarização, redução importante do percentual de elevação dos níveis acadêmicos. Quanto ao atendimento às medidas de mitigação da COVID 19, a partir de estratégias didático pedagógicas, no contexto da educação remota emergencial, o estudo revela que as precárias condições de ordem estruturais e infraestruturais disponíveis, seja por parte das escolas, dos professores e das famílias, impactam no acesso e qualidade da aprendizagem dos educandos.

Palavras-chave: Moçambique, COVID 19, educação básica, educação remota, condições de acesso.

EDUCACIÓN REMOTA EN EL CONTEXTO DEL COVID 19 EN MOZAMBIQUE: UNA MIRADA A LAS CONDICIONES DE ACCESO

RESUMEN: El artículo presentado aborda el contexto de la educación básica de Mozambique y busca, como objetivo, comprender, a partir de las medidas de mitigación del COVID 19 adoptadas por el sector educativo, las diferentes realidades que se presentan para analizar la factibilidad de las actividades de enseñanza, a través de clases en zonas remotas de Mozambique. Para ello, se utilizó la base de datos del Censo General de la Población y Habitación de Mozambique, de los censos de 2007 y 2017, así como el estudio realizado por la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad Eduardo Mondlane, junto con el Movimiento Educación para Todos (MEPT). Como resultado, entre otros, la investigación expone la falta de escolaridad de gran parte de la población mozambiqueña en edad escolar, cuya realidad se afirma en los adultos de 20 años y más y, en particular, las mujeres; asocia la no escolarización y la deserción escolar con el matrimonio y la maternidad prematura; y, señala, en las mujeres que permanecen en el proceso de escolarización, una reducción importante en el porcentaje de elevación de los niveles académicos. En relación al cumplimiento de las medidas de mitigación del COVID 19, con base en estrategias didáctico-pedagógicas, en el contexto de la educación remota emergencial, el estudio revela

que las precarias condiciones estructurales e infraestructurales disponibles, ya sea por parte de las escuelas, docentes y familias, impactan en el acceso y calidad de aprendizaje para los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Mozambique, COVID 19, educación básica, educación remota, condiciones de acceso.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 started in China in December 2019, and its speed of spread and underlying lethality constituted a challenge to human survival. Faced with a major health and humanitarian crisis, with a high number of deaths, governments in almost all countries were forced to introduce administrative measures with negative impacts on society: the limitation of civil rights, mainly freedom of movement, expressed by implementation of a State of Emergency, with the extreme situation of lockdowns.

In this context, as Gonçalves and Mangue (2020) state, the right to education, interpreted, firstly, as the right to access formal education through school due to the COVID-19 pandemic has become problematic given the rapid propagation capacity of the Coronavirus, the cause of the pandemic. One of the measures to contain the spread was the determination of the need for physical and social distancing, a fact that forced the closure of classes in educational institutions as they are places where a greater number of people move. For these authors, the COVID-19 pandemic with its characteristics, the challenge of guaranteeing the right to health, through measures that jeopardized, among the various rights, education. Thus, it has become difficult, especially in the so-called developing countries, to equate the right to health with the right to education.

Considering that school is the place where the central problems of life, societies, and governments are discussed, educational institutions around the world have sought alternative ways to guarantee the enjoyment of one of the dimensions of the right to education and the right to learn, under the conditions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic, such as using new information and communication technologies – teaching supported by virtual platforms – remote teaching, teleschooling, among other measures. The intention was to continue teaching (even without the physical presence of students) and that they should continue to learn, even if they were not physically attending school.

However, the performance of the dimension of the right to education, through alternative means to face-to-face teaching and within the school, does not find consensus and acceptance, especially in developing countries, characterized by profound socioeconomic inequalities that also translate into unequal access to technological resources. Part of the population in developing countries lives in technological apartheid, as stated by Manuel Castells (1999), without the technological infrastructure to connect in the network society. Therefore, the ideological discourse aimed at guaranteeing the right to learning in times of COVID-19 contrasts with the socioeconomic reality of some citizens who lack resources to access virtual platforms or tele-classes, a fact that may have worsened school-based inequalities, combined with digital illiteracy²!

² The term digital literacy refers to the social and cultural use of technological resources and means of communication such as digital technologies, including the internet. Digital illiteracy, in a similar way, as an inability to deal with digital platforms,

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale reached Mozambique at the end of March 2020. Following the protocols of the World Health Organization, as a measure to contain the spread of Coronavirus, on March 20 of that year, the suspension of classes throughout the National Education System (SNE) was announced which would come into effect on March 23rd. The suspension of face-to-face classes and the consequent closure of teaching activities in school establishments affected the efforts of the State and the government of Mozambique to implement the Right to Education: a total of 8.5 million students, 101,000 at pre-primary level, 6.9 million in basic education, 1.25 million in secondary education, more than 85,000 students in Technical and Vocational Education, and 213,930 university and higher education students, as well as 370,000 literacy and adult education students were forced to stay at home.

To guarantee the continuity of the right to education, that is, the right to learn, also avoid idleness among students, the Ministries that oversee education in Mozambique – the Ministry of Science, Technology, Higher and Professional Technical Education and the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) – issued directives to ensure that the teaching and learning process continued, mitigating the effects of COVID 19. They advised Higher Education Institutions and Schools to use alternative means to face-to-face teaching, through the teaching platforms already available both in each educational institution and those for general use, the creation of support sheets for students, and the reactivation of tele-classes, through *Televisão de Moçambique* and radio classes.

According to Gonçalves and Mangue (2020), MINEDH also made its distance learning database available to support general education students, mainly from public schools. Although technological mediation in education is a practice already consolidated in other quarters, some public and private schools in Higher Education Institutions in the country, in general, were guided by the traditional teacher-centered teaching model, the paper-based.

Thus, in general, some teachers had pedagogical difficulties in the preparation and administration of non-face-to-face teaching activities, facing difficulties in quickly adjusting to the wide range of tools that must be complemented when conducting non-face-to-face teaching. Part of the students come from families with low socioeconomic levels, with a lack of access to and possession of technological devices to be able to follow classes assisted by technological platforms. The reality is similar for the Teachers. Not everyone has the technological resources to guarantee the continuity of the teaching-learning process assisted by platforms (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020). In other words, COVID-19 uncovered the veil in which the country's education operated, becoming the biggest challenge imposed on educational institutions to fulfill their mission.

Given the high levels of poverty in families that characterize Mozambique, with a predominantly rural population, the lack of preparation of schools and teachers to deal with technologies in education³, and the precarious infrastructure available, it is worth questioning the measures

that is, the lack of mastery of codes, passwords and languages, characterized as a challenge in the field of digital technologies in education in different countries around the world, such as Mozambique.

³ It is important to highlight that such lack of preparation does not characterize negligence by the teachers and schools, but a production of the socioeconomic and historical context of Mozambique. We reiterate that, despite the official discourse affirming the importance of Technologies in education and the teaching-learning process and the existence of a policy on Information and Communication Technologies in Education, this discourse is more pamphleteering than realistic. The daily life of schools does not reveal the implementation of the Technology in Education policy, a fact that has repercussions on teaching work which, not challenged to use Technology as a pedagogical mediation, ends up joining the ranks of digital illiteracy.

implemented by the Mozambican government announced in an attempt to continue learning by guiding the use of alternatives: what the impacts of these COVID 19 mitigation measures were adopted by the Education sector. How were these alternative measures to face-to-face teaching inclusive, guaranteeing everyone's right to learn? What lessons can be learned from the experience? Were these measures worth it, considering the concrete socioeconomic conditions of most Mozambican families?

This text analyzed the feasibility of teaching activities through remote classes in Mozambique as a measure to face the challenges imposed by COVID-19 on the country's education system and, in addition, considering the conditions of part of the population, relating to access to resources listed as alternative mediations to in-person classes: smartphones, television, radio, and support sheets. To achieve this objective, in addition to the bibliographical research that appears as a theoretical reference - from the socioeconomic and historical perspective of Mozambique, we highlight: Macamo (2015); Castiano and Ngoenha (2013); Ramijo (2017), Mário and Nandja (2006); as for cultural, technological and educational aspects, we are based on: Muara and Werle (2020), Couto (2002; 2005a; 2005b; 2012), Matsinhe (2021), Gonçalves and Mangué (2020), Castells (1999) and Charlot (2008); for the pandemic context, we brought Antunes (2020) and Santos (2020) -, we used documentary research, such as research reports carried out on Mozambican education in the context of COVID 19 and reports on connectivity and use of electronic devices in the country, available on the National Statistics Institute (INE) page – among the documents analyzed, we highlight Law 18/2018 of the Ministry of Education and Human Development of Mozambique, Presidential Decree 11/2020, ratified by Law 1/2020 and regulated by Decrees 12/2020 and 14/2020, in addition to population data from the National Institute of Statistics of Mozambique-INE Censuses from 2007 and 2017. We present, below, the result of our reflection.

SOCIOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

With Mozambique's independence, officially achieved in 1975, education was chosen as a priority for the country's development (MACAMO, 2015), given that, during this period, the illiteracy rate reached 98% of the national population (CASTIANO; NGOENHA, 2013).

Education, from Ramijo's (2017) perspective, had the mission of decolonizing the mentality of people historically oppressed by the colonizer.

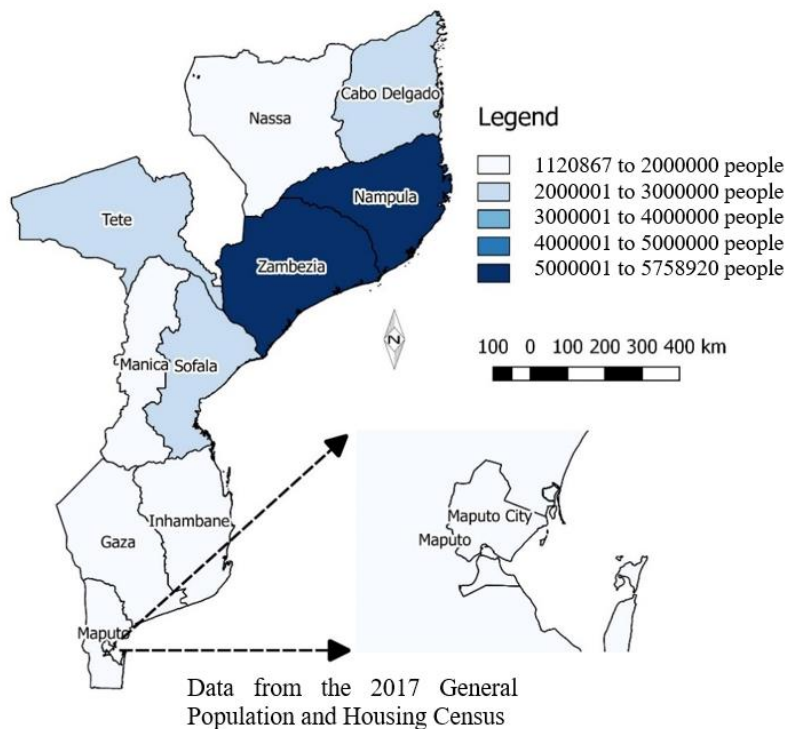
The “decolonization” of Mozambican mentalities that corresponded to their “cultural remozambicanization”, presupposes, on the one hand, political emancipation and, on the other hand, the “cultural revolution” that should translate into the valorization and inclusion of the native language and culture in the education system (p. 8).

Education in Mozambique, historically, according to Mário and Nandja (2006), can be understood through three periods or stages. The first, which was created from independence (1975) until the mid-1980s, presents Adult Education as a pillar of the National Education System. The second, covering the period from 1980 to 1995 – when the civil war intensified, which led to the deaths of thousands of people, part of the Mozambican population took refuge in other countries, and the destabilization of educational structures – was marked by discontinuity of educational processes being implemented. This period, according to Ramijo (2013, p. 3), “[...] culminated in the extinction of the National Directorate of Adult Education (DNEA), whose activities and personnel were integrated into the National Directorate of

Basic Education”. Finally, the third stage, characterized by the period from 1995 to the present day, consists of a period of the country's social stability, a factor that enabled important advances in the field of Mozambican education, a field that presents many ongoing challenges.

According to data from the 2017 Census, Mozambique has a total population of 27,909,798 inhabitants. Of this total, 33.4% live in urban areas and 66.6% in rural areas (MOZAMBIQUE, 2019). The most populous regions of Mozambique, comprised of provinces, are Nampula and Zambezia, with 5,758,920 and 5,164,732 inhabitants, respectively. Next come the regions of Tete, with 2,648,941; Cabo Delgado, with 2,320,261; Sofala, with 2,259,248. Map 1, below, shows the population distribution by province.

Map 1. Distribution of the Mozambican population by province



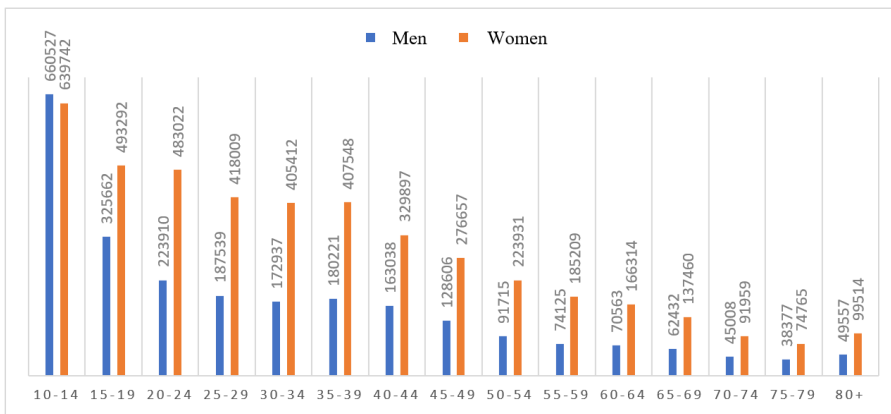
*Nassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

** Maputo and Maputo City (or Cidade de Maputo) are presented as separate provinces

Source: 2017 Census. Prepared: authors.

Of the population of Mozambique aged 5 years or over (22,243,373), 51.6% can read and write, 47.2% cannot read or write and 1.2% have unknown conditions. Of the people who do not know how to read or write, selected by sex and age group from 10 years old, which in our assessment, non-reading competence is characterized as an emergency, Graph 1 shows that, except for the first age group (10 to 14 years), women are the majority in the other age groups.

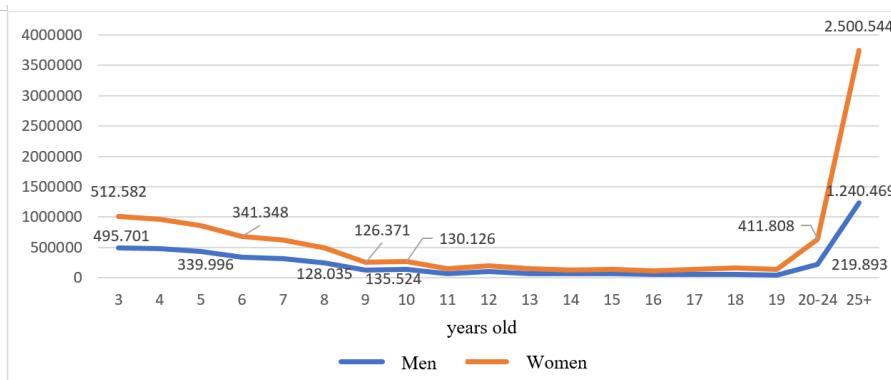
Graph 1. They do not know how to read or write, by gender



Source: 2017 Census. Prepared by the authors.

From the age group of 3 years or more, to cover the largest volume of enrollments (24,269,150), 23.4% attend school, 31.9% have already attended and 44.7% have never attended school. Of those who have never attended school, 57.3% are women and 42.7% are men. Graph 2 shows the number of people who have never attended school, by gender and age/age group.

Graph 2. People aged 3 or over who have never attended school

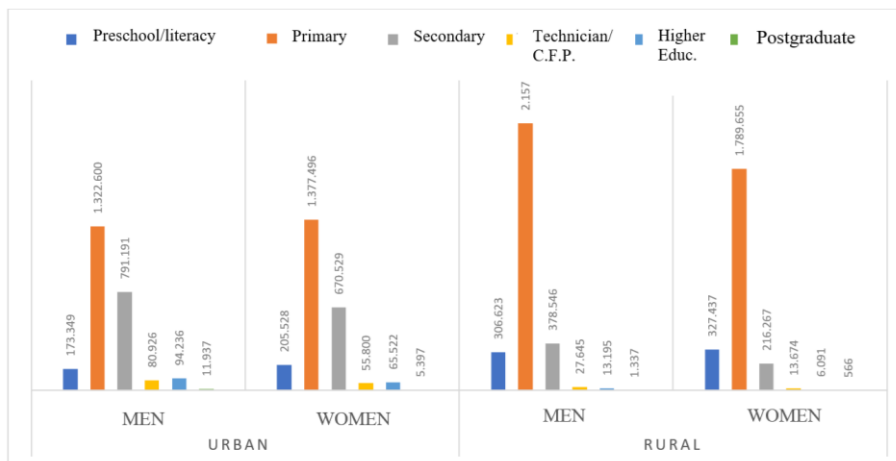


Source: 2017 Census. Prepared by the authors.

The gender issue is evident in the age range of 3 to 9 years and from 20 years old or older, being more pronounced in the last age group. If we consider the age group of 20 years or more, this number of women is double the number of men (in the age group of 20 to 24 years old the ratio is 1.87 women for every man; in the age group of 25 years old or more, the ratio increases to 2.02 women for every man).

The data helps us analyze that, of the women who remain in school, the higher they reach school levels, the lower their representation is, compared to men. Graph 3 expresses this occurrence in both urban and rural areas.

Graph 3. Educational levels of students in Mozambique, by gender and area of residence



Source: 2017 Census. Prepared by the authors.

The issue of gender is treated by Mia Couto in all her works as a historical problem that has strong repercussions on today's society, in our case the issue of access and permanence in the educational context. The author seeks, in his works, to portray and bring to reflection the image of Mozambican women, victims of the current structural machismo, inherited from the period of Portuguese colonization and the civil war. She brings to the literary scene stories of characters who experience social invisibility, subordination, and violence against women reproduced in culture, religion, and traditions.

In the work, *A confissão da leoa* (COUTO, 2012), these issues are highlighted through reports of events experienced by the author in Kulumani, a village in rural Mozambique. Using mainly the characters Mariamar, Hanifa, and Naftalinda, he exposes how much the women of Kulumani have to say, but are silenced by oppression, violence, and invisibility. It also shows how strong, resilient, and socially important they are.

The reflection of the issues highlighted by Mia Couto is demonstrated in a survey carried out by UNICEF (2018) on gender in the population of Mozambique. Among the different aspects, it exposes early marriage as a latent reality. From a study carried out with women aged 20 to 24, it shows that 14.3% were married before the age of 15, with 48.2% before the age of 18. Premature marriage results in premature motherhood, a factor that can have an important relationship with school dropout. In an analysis contained in the study, it is inferred that around 30% of Mozambican women who did not marry before the age of 18 will have completed primary education, while only 5.7% would achieve such success for those who married before 15 years old.

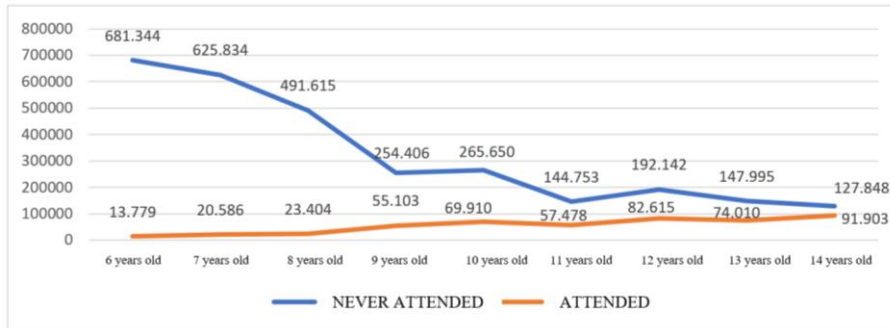
Muara and Werle (2020) present the existence of culture in different African contexts regarding the determined conditions of women in society, with the role of serving men, marriage, and taking care of the home being the most recurrent in indigenous cultures. They indicate the presence of Initiation Rites, from 8 to 13 years old, as a practice of initiation into marriage. According to the authors,

The culture persists in many Mozambican communities that girls must marry properly according to local customs, and, therefore, should not continue their studies, since they are responsible for caring for their husbands, children, and home, in addition to not receiving due support from their family about student education (MUARA; WERLE, 2020, p. 972).

Considering Law 18/2018, which indicates, in art. 7th, the obligation of school from the 1st to

the 9th grades (primary education and the first cycle of secondary education, according to art. 6th), from the age of 6 in the 1st grade, and projecting up to 14 years old as a normal flow to 9th grade, Graph 4 shows the following scenario of school-age students out of school (MOZAMBIQUE, 2018).

Graph 4. School-age children out of school - never attended or attended (no longer attending)

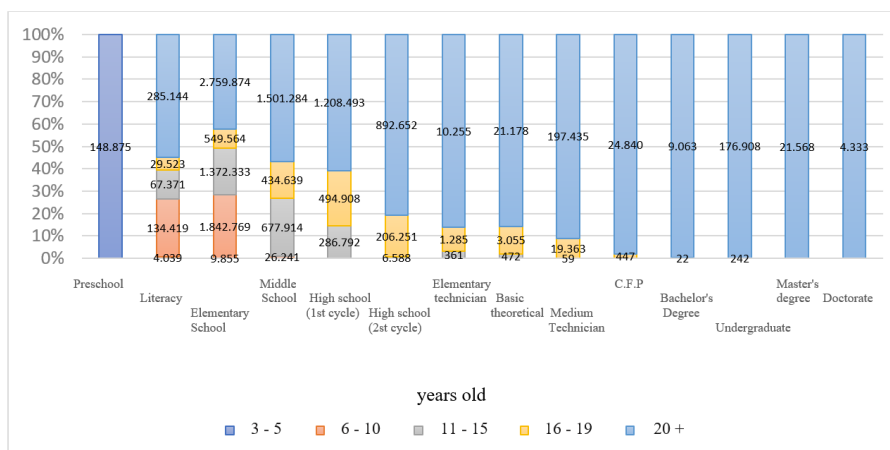


Source: 2017 Census. Prepared by the authors.

The studies by Muara and Werle (2020) on inequality and gender in the educational context recognize the advances in reforms implemented in Mozambican basic education in recent decades but expose access to school and school dropout as one of the greatest challenges faced by the system of education. They indicate that such problems arise from a set of situations, including some linked to the context of the educational system: long distances from schools to housing areas, precarious school infrastructure, lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, lack of teachers, sanctions disciplinary measures that lead to the mass expulsion of students; and others from the socio-family context, including economic conditions faced by families, and cultural aspects of each community.

In terms of the level of education of the population aged 3 years or over (13,430,414), Graph 5 shows the distribution by age group.

Graph 5. Distribution of education level by age groups.



Source: 2017 Census. Prepared by the authors.

Except for the pre-school level, there is a recurrence of the age group of 20 years or more in all other educational levels, being a factor of attention in the literacy, primary, secondary, and technical levels as an age-grade distortion. On the other hand, although in small numbers, there is a presence of young students, aged between 16 and 19, in Professional Training Courses (C.F.P), bachelor's and undergraduate degrees.

The graph also shows the variations between the level of training in Higher Education. In other words, the country has trained few graduates (just over 9 thousand), while graduates make up the vast majority (176.9 thousand), which seems to indicate that the country's higher education policy is aimed at teacher training for basic levels of education. However, it is not like that. The concept of bachelor's degree and Undergraduate differs from the context of Brazilian higher education, for example. Undergraduates, in Brazil, are aimed at training teachers for basic education, and in Mozambique, it is the completion of the first cycle of higher education for all courses, while the Bachelor's degree is just a stage that precedes the Undergraduate. Having a bachelor's degree in Mozambique means that you have not yet completed Higher Education. The same relationship can be evaluated in the field of Postgraduate Studies (locus of training for scientists). Mozambique has few doctors and masters, and there is a long way to go in this area.

EMERGENCY REMOTE EDUCATION IN BASIC EDUCATION IN MOZAMBIQUE

The new Coronavirus pandemic, ongoing since 2019, has brought fear and social instability, in addition to enormous social, economic, cultural, and political impacts across the planet. Due to the high contagion power and lack of drug treatment, the most viable strategy was social distancing, the use of face masks, and hand hygiene, in addition to social distancing of symptomatic people. As extreme measures, actions such as geographic barriers and lockdowns were adopted in several countries around the world.

Boaventura Souza Santos warns that the seriousness of COVID-19 is not necessarily recognized worldwide due to its severity or even the volume of deaths, as other epidemics have not received global attention, such as AIDS or malaria that claimed hundreds of thousands of people in Africa. For the author, the issue has its origins imposed by racial or sexual discrimination. In his analysis, "The epidemics of the new coronavirus, the most recent manifestation, only become serious global problems when those in the richest countries in the global North are affected" (SANTOS, 2020, p. 26).

The closure of schools was also characterized as a common measure among different countries. The dilemma arising from maintaining school activities in favor of student development or closing school units in the face of contagion problems becomes evident. Ricardo Antunes analyzes the issue from the perspective of poor school-age children who, as he points out, "if they don't go to public schools because of the pandemic (which is fair and necessary to restrict the spread of the Coronavirus), they have no way to feed themselves. If they go to schools, they run the risk of becoming infected and transmitting the disease to their families. The working class, then, is under intense crossfire" (ANTUNES, 2020, p. 2).

In Mozambique, following the same path, on March 20, 2020, the Head of the Mozambican State announced the suspension of classes throughout the National Education System, from pre-school to higher education, covering technical-professional education institutions, with effect from March 23. The legalization of the suspension of classes was made through Presidential Decree 11/2020, ratified by Law 1/2020, and regulated by Decrees 12/ 2020 and 14/2020 of April 1, 2020, which institutionalized the first State of Emergency in the country, valid for 30 days. On April 28, the first extension of the State of Emergency is announced. On May 28th, the second extension was announced, and, on June 26th, the third extension of the State of Emergency was announced and then the State of Public Calamity was

declared, which is in force until the drafting of this article⁴. On July 7, the Council of Ministers set the date for the return of in-person classes in 171 secondary schools to July 27, 2020, a fact that only took place at the end of August.

In a letter sent to the Provincial Directorates of Education, the Minister of Education and Human Development, Carmelita Rita Namashulua, presented that the resumption of face-to-face classes was only to meet the need to prepare students in the general education subsystem, whose classes⁵ had final exams for carried out, leaving a large part of the students out of school, a fact that hindered the development of skills required by the SNE. This time, in 2021, when the resumption of face-to-face classes for students of all classes was announced, teaching programs had to make curricular adjustments to include content from previous classes (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2021).

With the option of interrupting face-to-face classes, some pedagogical strategies were adopted as alternatives or means of learning, in the context of emergency remote education, including resources for remote/virtual classes (via the internet, radio, or television) combined with the so-called study or support sheets for students.

Regarding students' conditions for virtual classes, we propose to understand, sociodemographically, the context of families in terms of access to material resources and services. This is not an analysis of the quality of the materials themselves, but conditions of access to them.

To access classes remotely/virtually, through online platforms, use of information resources, mobile devices, or even television, via tele-classes on Television of Mozambique (TVM) or radio classes, homes must have compatible energy support for the use of such devices. Of the 6.3 million private homes in Mozambique, 67.2% are in rural areas while 32.8% are in urban areas, a percentage very close to the population distribution (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2017). Only 22.2% of private homes have electricity and 3.2% have a generator/solar panel, factors that, in summary, indicate that potentially only 25.5% of homes can receive/support TV sets, computers, or similar devices.

It is important to highlight that the most common source of energy in homes is small batteries (41.1%) and the other sources present are firewood (12.2%), oil/paraffin/kerosene (7.6%), battery (5.9%), candle (4.0%) and other/unknown (3.9%).

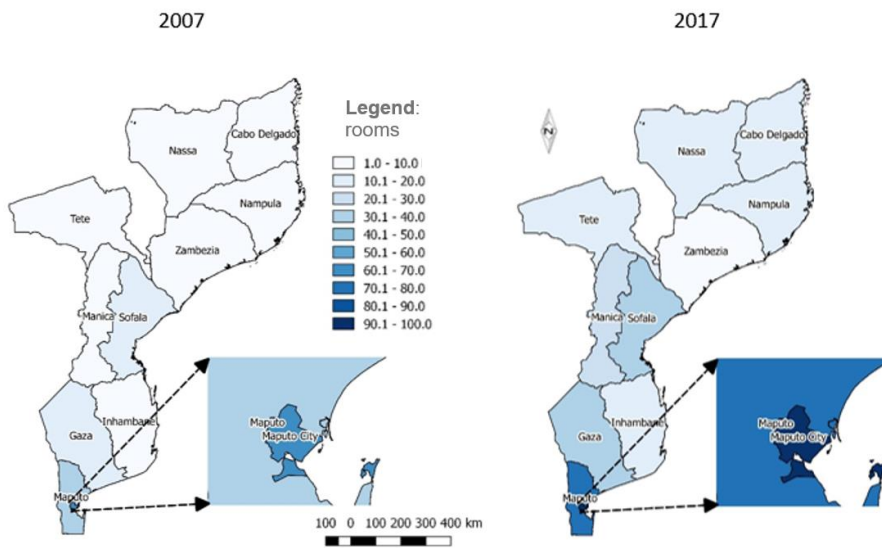
Inversely to the proportion of houses, 2/3 of the houses that have electricity, or a generator/solar panel are in urban areas, with 1/3 in rural areas.

Two issues are important to highlight regarding the distribution of electrical energy. The first concerns the significant average advance of 135% in the distribution in the period from 2007 to 2017, with Inhambane, Tete, and Cabo Delgado having growth variations of 201.7%, 184.7%, and 181.6%, respectively. The second concerns differences in residential coverage by province. Map 2 presents the different realities in the composition of electrical energy distribution. Data from 2017 show that, while the City of Maputo and Province of Maputo have, respectively, 95.9% and 70.1% of electricity coverage in homes, differently, in provinces such as Zambézia, Nassa or Niassa, Cabo Delgado, and Nampula coverage does not reach 15% of homes (9.3%, 12.9%, 13.8%, and 14.7%, respectively).

⁴ Due to the Constitution, it was not possible to extend the State of Emergency for the fourth time, as the maximum period that must be in force is 90 days. The Assembly of the Republic approved the Public Calamity Law, the validity of which will be determined by whether the factors that led to the same calamity are observed.

⁵ In Brazil, the class corresponds to the grade. In the National Education System of Mozambique, final exams are carried out in learning cycles from primary to secondary education. Thus, in primary education, exams are carried out in the 5th and 7th grades. For Secondary Education, exams are held in the 10th and 12th grades. In-person classes have resumed for students who attended these grades.

Map 2. Comparison of the percentage of rooms that have electricity, by provinces of Mozambique, from 2007 to 2017.



*Nassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

** Maputo and Maputo City are presented as two separate provinces

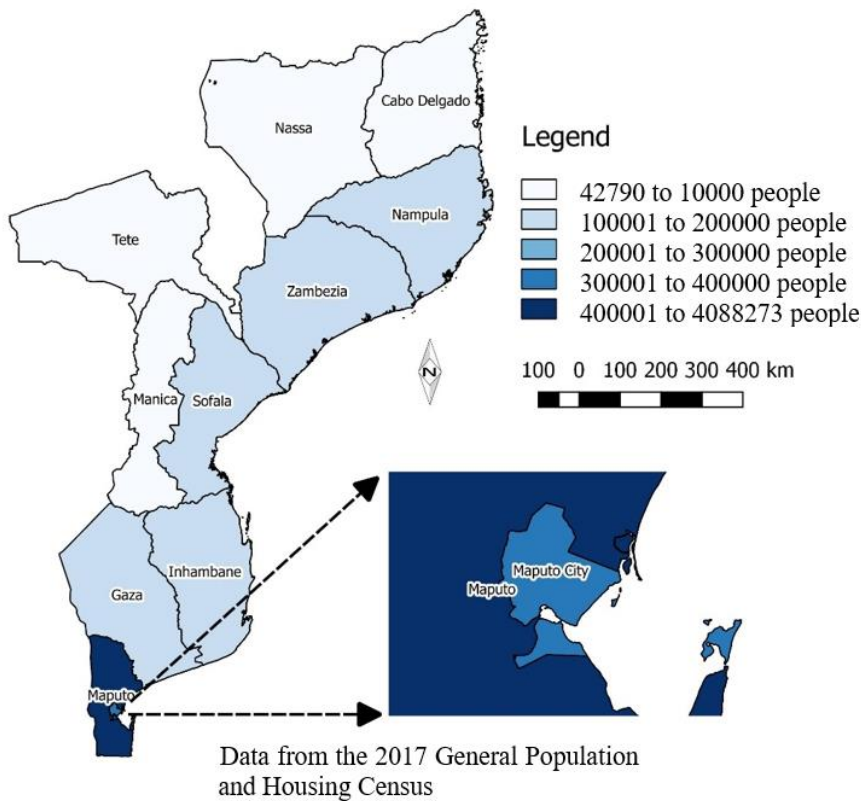
Source: 2007 and 2017 Census.

Preparation: the authors.

Projecting internet use by the total population, 5.8% of the 27,909,798 inhabitants of Mozambique have access to the internet (here including access in a broad way – at home, work, shared or others), 64.3% of those who access are over 50 years old, 19.3% are between 10 and 50 years old, 8.3% are under 10 years old and 8.1% are of unknown age. It is important to understand that, although the number of internet access is low, there are evident differences in the distribution across the provinces of Mozambique.

Map 3 shows the distribution of internet use across the provinces of Mozambique. Returning to the age distribution of the provinces (Map 1), low internet use is observed in populated provinces (Cabo Delgado, Nassa or Niassa, Manica, as well as Nampula and Zambezia) and a greater concentration of access in less populated provinces (Maputo and City of Maputo).

Map 3. Distribution of people who use the internet by provinces of Mozambique



*Niassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

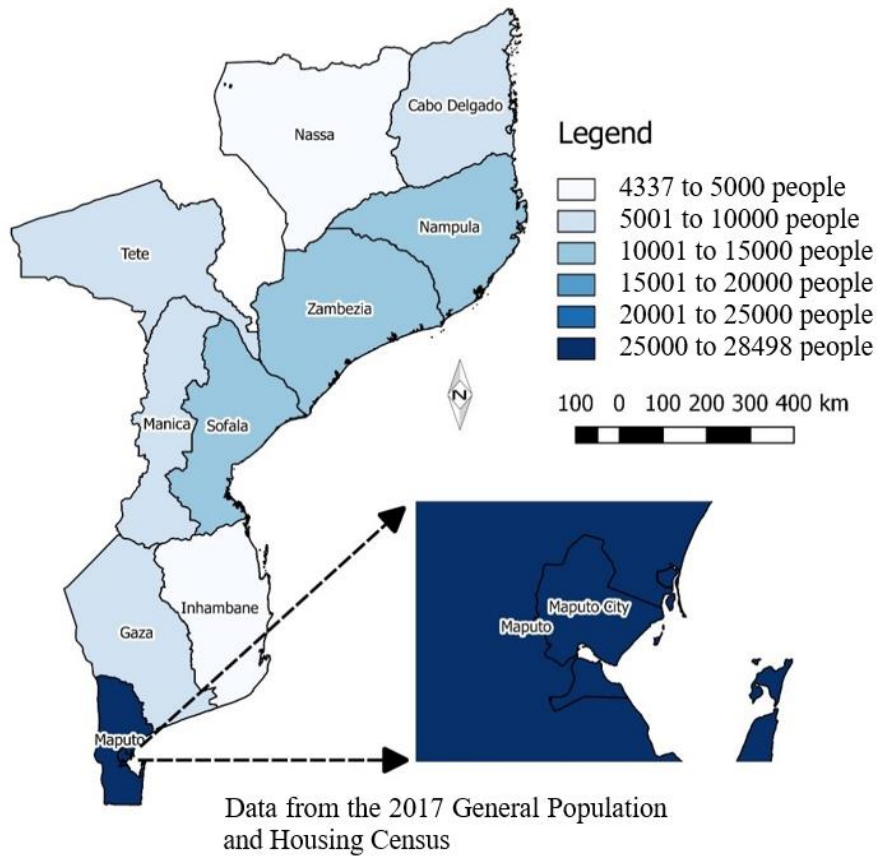
** Maputo and Maputo City are presented as two separate provinces

Source: 2017 Census.

Preparation: the authors.

Regarding internet use in homes, which has a more restricted number of accesses, again (Map 4) there is a greater concentration in the provinces of Maputo and the City of Maputo, with the regions of Niassa or Niassa and Inhambane being the ones with the least access.

Map 4. Distribution of internet access in homes by provinces of Mozambique



*Nassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

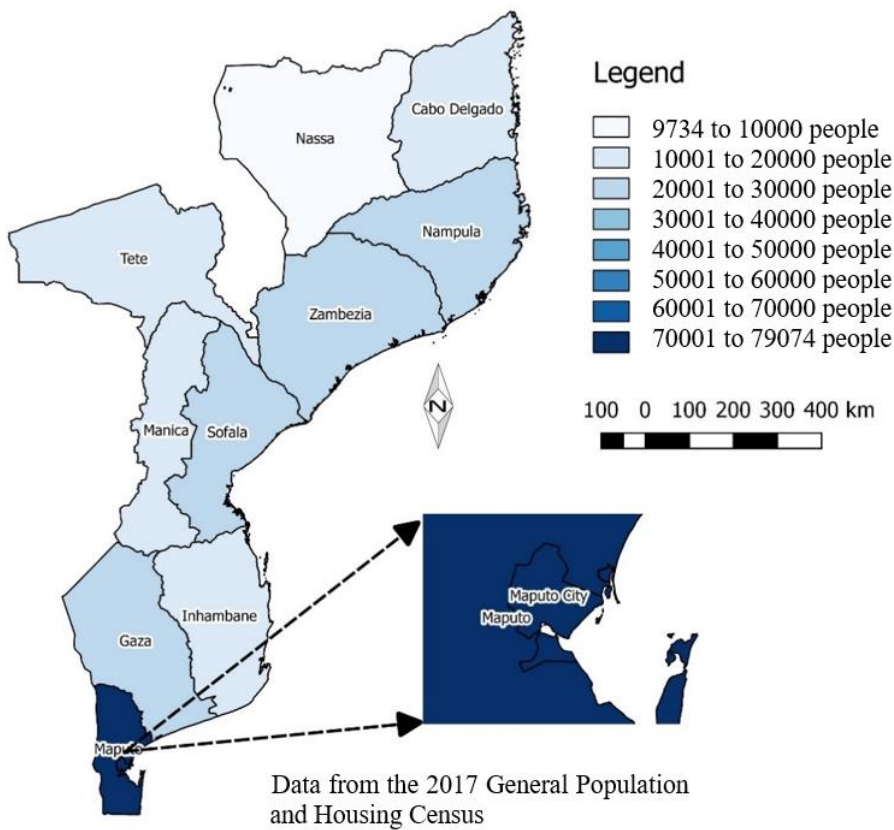
** Maputo and Maputo City are presented as two separate provinces

Source: 2017 Census.

Preparation: the authors.

Map 5 records the distribution of ownership of IT resources such as tablets, computers, or laptops. The equipment is distributed in greater volume in the districts of Maputo and Maputo City, with a smaller presence in Nassa or Niassa, Cabo Delgado, and Manica.

Map 5. Having a tablet, computer or laptop in their home, by provinces of Mozambique



*Nassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

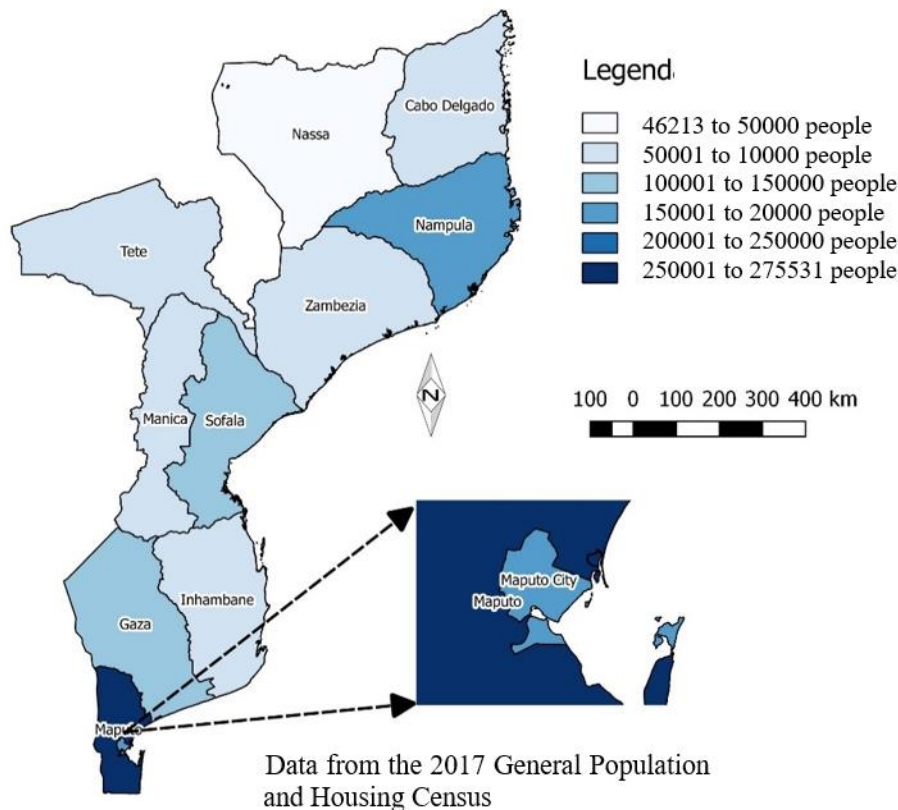
** Maputo and Maputo City are presented as two separate provinces

Source: 2017 Census.

Preparation: the authors.

Map 6 shows TV ownership per household. The provinces with the highest volume of TV ownership in homes are Maputo, Maputo City, and Nampula, with 275,531, 192,070, and 179,731, respectively. Those with the lowest number of devices are Nassa or Niassa, Cabo Delgado, and Tete, with 46,213, 60,616, and 79,832, respectively (MAP 6).

Map 6. Having a TV in their home, by provinces of Mozambique



*Nassa or Niassa region, depending on the base provided.

** Maputo and Maputo City are presented as two separate provinces

Source: 2017 Census.

Preparation: the authors.

In addition to issues of access to technological and informational resources by students and teachers, according to Matsinhe (2021), the new Coronavirus pandemic revealed serious technological and social problems in educational institutions, whether public or private. Even recognizing the structural and infrastructural limitations, no matter how great the political will for change, there would not be enough time or resources available to radically change the educational scenario in Mozambique, especially in the perspective of remote education, of an emergency nature.

Aiming to understand the impacts of COVID-19 containment measures on Basic Education in Mozambique, the Faculty of Education of the Eduardo Mondlane University carried out a study in 2020 at the request of the *Movimento Educação para Todos* (MEPT) (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020).

To carry out the research, a statistically representative sample was used, using an (online) survey aimed at teachers, parents and guardians, and basic education students, in a population universe of approximately 135,881 teachers and approximately 7,824,480 general education students, of which 65,346 have special educational needs. Linking parents to students, the total universe was 15,784,841 people, with a 3% margin of error and 90% confidence ($z=1.65$), with a heterogeneous sample that participated in the study by completing a survey was about 752 people. A semi-structured interview was carried out with this sample with 1 MINEDH Technician; 5 Presidents of School Councils; 7

representatives of the National Organization of Teachers (ONP) at the country level (by province); 2 representatives for the area concerning Special Educational Needs, 2 individuals from Civil Society; and 2 MINEDH cooperation partners who participated in the interviews.

Regarding the means of learning, the study showed that worksheets were the most used teaching resource during the State of Emergency: 56.6% of students took classes through worksheets that their parents picked up at school; 17% combined, between internet and cell phone use; and 10.6% through TV; 73% of teachers stated that they guaranteed the teaching-learning process through the worksheets. However, 12.5% of students reported that they have not been taking classes during the State of Emergency. Remote platforms or classes through social networks are used by 14.8%. Most teachers (53.3%) who teach via remote platforms are in private schools, compared to just 9.1% in public schools. Around 41% of students do not have technological tools (smartphone or tablet) available. We are talking about basic education students (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020, p. 21)

However, the use of tokens or even digital platforms during the State of Emergency had a greater incidence in urban centers and in towns or district headquarters where there is electricity and the areas surrounding these towns, that is, in rural areas. Regarding the forms, Matsinhe (2021) points out several problems, including the lack of clarity in the guidelines, which led to recurring adaptations and improvisations. The production and distribution of the forms were also characterized as problems, due to the logistical inability to collect them, and the technological and resource limitations for producing material in sufficient quantity, quality, and agility.

The study by the Faculty of Education and MEPT (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020) also revealed some of the problems highlighted by Matsinhe (2021) regarding the use of study sheets or support for students. He pointed out that some schools, as they were unable to bear the costs of printing/reproducing the forms, passed on the costs to the students' parents or guardians.

During the State of Emergency, ensuring continuity of learning for students represented additional costs for both teachers (68.5%) and parents (85%) and for the students (50.2%) who most personally bore these costs. Some parents in rural areas do not have the financial means to cover the costs of the cards and not even schools have the means to multiply the cards and distribute them to students.

In addition to financial conditions, mastery of the Portuguese language by parents and guardians was highlighted as another factor that may explain the low effectiveness of this teaching instrument, leading to children not assimilating the content (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020, p.28). The effects of socioeconomic inequalities in the field of education seem to be evident, in which the real operating conditions of some schools, challenged to respond to the COVID-19 mitigation measures issued by MINEDH, proved to be less than desirable (GONÇALVES; MANGUE, 2020, p.23).

According to this study, regarding class attendance, although there are contradictory answers among teachers, most of them still do not have an accurate assessment of their students' participation, considering the significant rate of 29.8% of undecided students. For students, only 22.8% are categorical about satisfactorily confirming their participation in classes, compared to 36.2% who do not participate frequently and 41% consider their participation to be non-regular. In rural areas, staying at home simply meant not going to school, and switching to other domestic activities, such as taking children to the farm, a fact that contributed to students not continuing with their learning during the State of Emergency.

The research also revealed that among the students who participated in the classes, the assimilation of the content was not satisfactory for the majority. Parents' dissatisfaction regarding the

poor assimilation of content by their students is related, according to them, to the poor preparation of teachers to deal with the alternative learning modalities that were adopted during the State of Emergency. The poor preparation of teachers was also mentioned by members of Civil Society Organizations interviewed. When it came to teaching children with special needs, the lack of preparation of teachers was most notable, as the teaching method was more descriptive and not analytical. Most teachers (70%) stated that they had no training to teach during the State of Emergency. Another fact to highlight about the poor assimilation of content by students is the poor command by parents and guardians of the Portuguese language, that is, in rural areas, a fact that made it difficult for students to have support from their parents in case of doubts.

Despite the guidelines issued to guarantee learning during the suspension of classes, the socioeconomic reality of the country, in which several Mozambicans live, did not guarantee the right to education in the strict sense of the word learning. The challenge that the pandemic posed to education, in general, and to the teaching-learning process, in a specific way, was the fact that teachers tried to teach without students present and they tried to learn, but without being at the school.

Even though efforts to continue school activities are recognized, some reflections are necessary. The first concerns the remote emergency teaching format that outsources the possession and use of technological resources to families, which requires that homes have minimum structures that are not available, such as electricity, especially in urban areas. The second, consequently, is part of the country's socioeconomic realities and contexts, which have shown, for a large part of families, the non-fulfillment of the right to education: some teachers without adequate training, whether in the use of technologies or for tele-classes and radio classes, which were unable to teach. The students were accustomed to the presence of the teacher and the four walls were unable to learn. Finally, we point out, in Charlot (2008), that the relationship with knowledge is one of the factors that explain students' interest in school and learning. Weak interest in learning, whether due to the structural conditions of the school, the quality of teaching, or even family conditions, is a fact that also occurs in so-called normal periods. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this process.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mia Couto, in *Terra Sonâmbula*, denounces the progressive loss of sovereignty and domestication of the bold spirit of the Mozambican people, using the story of *Junbito (Vinticinco de Junbo)*, a character who represents the independence process of 1975, in which, for Protection from the death felt by his father, due to the war, he went to live in a chicken coop, in the backyard. Isolated and living with the chickens, he began to recognize as such and not respond to his humanity, whose disappearance during the civil war provided him with a new process of humanization, conceived as a spirit of peace and justice (COUTO, 2002). Thus, for Couto (2005a; 2005b), the long-awaited peace in Mozambique, announced in *Terra Sonâmbula*, is characterized as a collective achievement, not a gift offered for merit.

The author recognizes the country's countless problems, abuses, and delays resulting from the period of colonial domination, indicating, however, after 30 years of independence, the need to stop “pointing accusing fingers” as it is not a productive act. In *Os sete sapatos sujos*, Couto (2005a) invites us to question and reflect on a new attitude of the nation. It also explains, critically, that, as an action to build Mozambique's sovereignty, in a process of growth, it is necessary to recognize the paths taken and not blame the Europeans, as if Mozambicans were not capable of assuming their position.

I have long argued that the biggest driver of delay in Mozambique is not located in the economy but in the inability to generate productive, bold, and innovative thinking. A thought that does not result from the repetition of common places, formulas and recipes already thought up by others. Sometimes I wonder: where does the difficulty in thinking of ourselves as subjects of History come from? It comes above all from having always left the design of our identity to others. First, Africans were denied. His territory was absent, his time was outside of History. Afterward, Africans were studied as a clinical case. Now, they are helped to survive in the backyard of History (COUTO, 2005a, p. 157).

The purpose of this study, as announced, was, based on the COVID-19 mitigation measures adopted by the education sector, to understand the different realities to analyze the feasibility of teaching activities through remote classes in Mozambique.

It is important to state that, based on data analysis, it was not intended to “point accusing fingers” about the educational situation in the country, which was heavily affected by the context of the new Coronavirus pandemic, or by the historical context marked by the colonialist period, from of the legacies left by the Portuguese, as announced in the works of Mia Couto, or even raising alleged culprits such as government officials, educational managers, teachers, parents/guardians or even Mozambican students. We sought to present scenarios and reflections on the direction of policies implemented by the SNE.

Far from the backyard that turned Junhito into a chicken, after “meek slowness”, and “accusing fingers”, in response to the proposed objectives, this study, like Muidinga sets out on a journey of better worlds and new perspectives (COUTO, 2002), presents results and analyzes about the different socio-educational realities of Mozambique to provoke deep reflections, in our view, with the potential to support more effective public policies and more directive actions in the didactic-pedagogical field.

Among the results achieved in the study, as a summary, the following are presented:

- the lack of school for a large part of the Mozambican population of school age (47.2%), the reality of which affects adults aged 20 years or over and, in particular, women;
- concerning the female gender, it presents the association between lack of school and dropping out of school, marriage, and premature motherhood; for women who continue in the school process, the study shows a reduction in the percentage when they advance to academic levels, data representative of both urban and rural areas;
- the significant representation of adults aged 20 or over at different basic educational levels, which denotes high age-grade distortion;
- the analytical scenario of precarious electricity infrastructure, which, although covering only 25.5% of homes, indicates an uneven distribution across the different Mozambican provinces;
- the relationship between the availability of electricity and the low use and low availability of internet, with substantial differences between the provinces, a factor also observed in the possession of equipment such as computers, tablets, laptops, and others, which, in addition to the issues of inaccessible cost, depend on basic infrastructures for use;
- that, although many teachers said that most of the students were able to complete the pedagogical monitoring, using the support sheets, they proved to be ineffective for a

portion of the student population (12.5%), presenting organizational problems and distribution, in some cases generating costs for students' families;

- that student participation in the emergency remote modality, in general, was effective in 22.8% of cases and not regular for 41.0%, with 36.2% saying they were unable to follow classes frequently;
- the perspective of content assimilation, which only occurred in 22.8%, a factor, according to parents or guardians of the students, related to the precarious preparation of teachers to deal with the strategies adopted by the SNE.

The COVID-19 pandemic cannot be blamed for Mozambique's socio-political and educational crisis. In our view, existing historical problems were exposed, highlighted, or even worsened.

We can see the same crisis from two perspectives, the one that weakens, overthrows, or destroys us, or the one that allows us to bring about new paths, restructuring, or changes. What must be understood in this context, according to Santos (2020), is whether the nature of the crisis is permanent or temporary. In a temporary crisis, as the author points out, we are led to understand the factors that cause it, which, in theory, comprises possibilities for course corrections and improvement of processes or systems; on the other hand, if the crisis is permanent, it tends to be characterized as the cause in itself, which explains the rest, that is, which seeks to legitimize the socio-historical-cultural asymmetries of a society.

In the historical narrative of Mozambican post-independence, in the middle of the civil war, in search of a denied dream, Couto (2002) offers us the sad death of Kindzu (junhito's brother, who wrote twelve texts or notebooks in his diary) to transform Muidinga (a young boy who, inspired by Kindzu's notebooks, courageously faces a world of war and uncertainty in the incessant search for a better world) in Gaspar (who Kindzu was looking for in promise to Farida) and makes his return to his mother, Farida (woman who inspired Kindzu to enjoy life more) for a new beginning.

We place our hopes on the end of the pandemic and on controlling the disease, which has claimed so many lives and revealed so much pain. As in the death of Kindzu, whose pain brought new paths and perspectives, we hope that our pain and losses give way to learning, awareness, and social transformations. As expressed in the popular African saying, until lions invent their stories, hunters will always be the heroes of hunting narratives. Thus, there is an invitation to, collectively, invent our stories.

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Author 1 - Project coordinator, active participation in organizing and analyzing data, writing the text, and reviewing the final writing.

Author 2 - Participated in the project by organizing and analyzing data, writing the text, and reviewing the final writing.

Author 3 - Participated in the project by organizing the data, and reviewing the writing of the text.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.