

# COVID-19 Education Response Webinar

## COVID-19 challenges and curriculum related actions in African Portuguese speaking countries (PALOP)

Wednesday 2 December 2020  
14h00 – 16h00 GMT+1,  
Geneva Time

**CONCEPT NOTE  
AND AGENDA**

### Context and justification

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The COVID-19 crisis presents unprecedented challenges to education systems across countries and regions. It not only tested the resilience of education systems, but also led to massive school closures, directly affecting over 1.6 billion students from pre-primary to higher education. Today, around 1 billion of them are either facing the physical impossibility of going to school or are uncertain whether their school will be open the next day.

Faced with the global outbreak of COVID-19, UNESCO immediately engaged in supporting Member States, in light of its mandate for education and the assignment to act as the global coordinator of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Education 2030 Agenda, the implementation of which is crucial for the achievement of the other SDGs. UNESCO has supported the continuity of learning by organizing ministerial meetings as well as a series of webinars (on reopening of schools, teachers, curricula, assessment, etc) dedicated to policy makers and practitioners. UNESCO also launched the Global Coalition for Education in March 2020. This is an unprecedented partnership involving United Nations organizations, civil society, the private sector as well as academia and media which aims to help countries in need, to offer inclusive and equitable distance education. In the meantime, UNESCO conducted

recently the Global Meeting on Education (GEM) to examine education responses related to the crisis as well as advocate for the protection of education and the safeguarding of the future of all learners.

The six African countries of Portuguese official language (PALOP) including Equatorial Guinea which has Spanish as their official language are equally affected by the on-going COVID-19 induced crisis. Social and economic life were deeply disturbed and the education systems were also deeply disrupted. The prevailing health conditions and uncertainties and the digital divide in the continent pose a threat to the continuation of delivery of relevant, quality and inclusive learning. The pandemic has emphasised the limits of face-to-face teaching but also revealed the unpreparedness of the Education Ministries to deploy distance and digital learning solutions to the massive school shut down across the continent as viable alternatives to classroom teaching. In doing so, it has revalorized the role of parents, and reinforced the importance of empowering learners' autonomy within their learning process.

Thus, and despite multiple constraints, the PALOPs have tried to take advantage of communication technologies (radio, television, internet, etc.) to preserve learning, without excluding face-to-face teaching with the partial and gradual reopening of schools. The alternative modalities (distance education via radio, television, online or in hybrid form) have revealed the socioeconomic precarious situation of a large number of families which did not allow them to benefit from those solutions. To make distance and / or hybrid education strategies viable, it was and is still necessary to engage in a structural transformation of the education systems, to strongly invest in measures to reduce this digital divide, in its technical and socioeconomic aspects.

This transformation requires educational and technical resources and skills that were not necessarily available. In this sense, it must be recognized that the pandemic has offered the opportunity for governments, educational leaders and other actors in education systems to reflect and invest in innovative and more effective strategies that has an impact to social inclusion.

### **The place of the curriculum in COVID-19 response strategies.**

The decisions and measures implemented by countries to reconcile continuation of education delivery while adhering to health security guidelines, illustrate the central importance of the curriculum. In most cases, these measures have resulted in a reduction in teaching time, either face-to-face or in distance. This implied the need to define teaching priorities, the adaptation of pedagogical approaches including evaluation of learning, the formulation of guidelines for stakeholders (school directors, teachers, students, families, etc), as well as the production of new tools adapted to new teaching / learning methods. To process this, in a reasoned, efficient and relevant way, mastery of the curriculum and the process of its development is crucial. All of these concerns relate to the what (content), how (pedagogy) and when (agenda) of education, which are key pillars of curriculum development.

Reiterating that the curriculum defines what students must learn, for a given citizen profile and a given social project, and for this purpose it should reflect the knowledge, skills and values that schools must teach. The curriculum is available in various instruments that guide the work of the diverse actors in the education system, whose, combined action should lead to the best possible learning conditions for learners. These instruments are as follows: (i) the curriculum framework which condenses the vision, mission, goals, objectives, principles, pedagogical models and approaches, guidelines for teachers, etc. , (ii) fields or disciplines (iii) textbooks, (iv) teacher's guides and (v) other support materials or teaching aids.

COVID-19 has highlighted the need to renew and intensify dialogue and consultation with institutional (health, civil protection, etc.) and social (teachers' unions, parents of students, media, etc.) stakeholders in order to avoid that the laudable efforts of the education systems would fail due to possible resistance of the actors, which would lead to further delays in the delivery.

The engagement of PALOPs to achieve Agenda 2030 and, specifically, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the African Union's continental education strategy (CESA 16-25) require the strengthening of understanding, mastery and the management of the curriculum as an instrument of political, civic, cultural, technical and educational consensus. Undoubtedly, the curriculum is the basic foundation and the pillar of educational action, which, together with the training of teachers, are the guarantors of educational quality and academic success, if we want to give ourselves the means to meet the requirements expectations of societies at all levels - local, national and global. That said, it should be remembered that the disruptions undergone by the educational systems of the PALOPs due to COVID-19 crisis, aggravated the weaknesses and challenges most were facing long before the outbreak of the pandemic. The PALOP strategies for achieving the SDG 4, and particularly interventions at the curriculum level, must be reassessed, readjusted or even redefined.

It is in this perspective that the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO) has decided to support the PALOPs by creating the opportunity to deepen the reflection on the challenges of teaching and learning created by the crisis, to formulate adaptation and / or curriculum related actions strategies to project education into the future. To start the process, it plans to host two webinars, the first at the end of 2020 and the second at the start of 2021. The first webinar being scheduled for 2 December 2020.

## Main objectives

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**The main objectives of the first webinar are as follows:**

- (i) Create a joint PALOP platform for the dialogue of the challenges and opportunities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to their education systems.

- (ii) Share the experiences and lessons of the strategies and actions implemented by the different countries to guarantee the continuation of the teaching and learning process in the context of a pandemic.
- (iii) Discuss the priorities and support needs to be considered for future actions relating to the curriculum in light of COVID-19

## Participants

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This first webinar will bring together senior officials from the education ministries of concerned PALOPs countries with expertise in curriculum, including:

- National or General Directors, DNE / DGE;
- General Inspectors of Education;
- Managers / heads and experts of departments or teams of curriculum in ministries of education;
- Coordinators and trainers of teacher training institutions and universities;
- National, regional and international partners.

In collaboration with UNESCO Headquarters, field offices, institutes and National Commissions, IBE-UNESCO will send the invitation to ministries of education and related institutions, universities and teacher training institutions, networks / communities of specialists / program designers, researchers and practitioners as well as intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations working in the field of education and curriculum-related issues.

## Format and Language

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The webinar will be held through Zoom, with a live broadcast on social media (Facebook and YouTube).

Contributions and questions for speakers will be made in writing, via the Zoom platform in the area dedicated to Questions & Answers.

Simultaneous interpretation in Portuguese, French and English will be available.

## Registration

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Those interested in participating in the webinar should register through the following link: [https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_EfX0fa4XQCSyklusrcDzA](https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EfX0fa4XQCSyklusrcDzA)

## Provisional agenda

<b>Wednesday 2 December 2020</b> <b>14:00 - 16:00 GMT+1, Geneva Time</b>		
<b>14:00 – 14:10</b>	<p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <p>Ms. Stefania Giannini, Assitant Director-General for Education, Education Sector, UNESCO</p> <p>H.E. Carmelita Rita Namashulua, Minister of Education and Human Development, Mozambique</p>	<p>Moderation</p> <hr/> <p>Mr. Yao Ydo, Acting Director, IBE- UNESCO</p>
<b>14:10 - 14 :40</b>	<p><b>Session 1 : Les systèmes éducatifs des pays PALOPs face à la COVID-19 : expériences et leçons</b></p> <p>General considerations on Curriculum by Ms. Amapola Alama, Education Specialist, IBE-UNESCO</p> <p><b>Intervention (7 minutes each)</b></p> <p>Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic education responses. The interventions will focus on curriculum and learning processes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experiences and lessons (by a Director of Education: Angola)</li> <li>2. Experiences and lessons (by a Director of Education: Cape-Verde)</li> <li>3. Experiences and lessons (by a Director of Education: Guinea Bissau)</li> </ol>	<p>Ms. Zulmira Rodrigues, Chief of Section for Cooperation with Regional organization in Africa, Priority Africa and External Relations (UNESCO)</p>
<b>14:40 – 15:00</b>	<p><b>Session 2: Priorities and challenges to consider for future curriculum related actions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Priorities (by a Director of Education: Sao Tome and Principe)</li> <li>2. Challenges (by a Director of Education: Mozambique)</li> </ol>	<p>Mr. Paul Gomis Head UNESCO Office at Maputo</p>
<b>15:00-15:40</b>	<p><b>Q&amp;A 40 minutes</b></p> <p>Contributions and questions from participants; Reactions and answers from panelists</p>	<p>Ms. Zulmira Rodrigues, Chief of Section for Cooperation with Regional organization in Africa, Priority Africa and</p>

		External Relations (UNESCO)
<b>15:40-16:00</b>	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p>Review of the main issues raised and conclusion</p> <p><b>Vote of thanks:</b></p> <p>Mr. Yao Ydo, Acting Director, IBE-UNESCO</p>	Mr. Victor Borges

## Keep in touch



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