

## HELPING STUDENT SUCCEED

## PROMOÇÃO DO SUCESSO ACADÉMICO

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**Resumo** Há anos que o governo angolano se debate com a superlotação de salas de aulas, fracas competências dos professores, infraestruturas inadequadas e falta de recursos de ensino que influenciam no desenvolvimento das competências de escrita, leitura e numeracia dos alunos. Assim sendo, o presente estudo, baseado na abordagem étnica, identifica como oito escolas públicas do ensino básico, da província de Cabinda, promovem o sucesso académico dos alunos. Os dados coletados indicam: (1) Na superlotação de salas, as escolas selecionaram os jogos e questionários. Contudo, constata-se o quadro e o manual escolar como os recursos usados na partilha de informações. Assim, sugeriu-se a formação de pequenos grupos de alunos, uso de narrativas pessoais ou locais e jogos típicos; (2) Nas fracas competências dos professores, registam-se ausências nas ZIP, por razões familiares ou domínio do conteúdo. Sugeriu-se que, em grupo, os professores planificassem aulas e exercitassem os jogos; (3) No aspeto das infraestruturas inadequadas e falta de recursos de ensino, os livros infantis e jogos permanecem encaixotados. A pesquisadora sugeriu que, nas revisões de aulas, se dê espaço para a leitura e prática dos jogos.

**Palavras-chave** Superlotação de salas, Competências dos professores, Infraestruturas inadequadas e falta de recursos, Angola

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**Abstract** For years, the Angolan government addresses the overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, lack of proper facilities, and supplies challenges that impact the students' writing, reading, and mathematics proficiency. Based on that, this emic approach study reflects on the strategy that eight Cabinda public primary schools implemented to promote students' academic success. The finding indicates (1) to address overcrowded classrooms challenges; the schools selected games and quizzes to improve students' proficiency. However, in-classroom, teachers mainly use the blackboard and the textbooks to share information. So, the researcher suggested the usage of grouping strategies, personal or local stories and games; (2) Related to teachers' poor qualifications, the teachers skip the biweekly Zones of Pedagogical Influence meetings for family reasons or already knowing the content. To change that, in a group, teachers can discuss and lesson plan, as well as practice games; (3) Related to proper school facilities and school supplies, the schools keep supplies, such as storybooks and games inside closed boxes. So, to revise the content, the researcher suggested taking aside some time for the students to read the storybooks or play games.

**Keywords** Overload classroom, teachers' qualifications, lack of school facilities and supplies, Angola

## Introduction

For years, the Sub-Saharan African countries take actions to build schools for 59 million children out-of-school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2019) and to reduce high levels of illiteracy, with over 193 million children lacking minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics (United Nations, 2021). To improve the education system, the Sub-Saharan African governments implement equal and inclusive education programs for children, Continuing Professional Development [CPD] training programs for teachers, improve school facilities, make proper school supplies, adjust education policies, make school communities accountable for students' learning process and creating opportunities to remain in school (Gomes, Cardoso, Santos & Rodrigues, 2018) to attain relevant academic and professional qualifications and lifelong skills.

For example, in 2002, the Angolan Ministry of Education [MoE] improved primary school enrollment from 1.8 million to 4.2 million students (Agostinho, 2020). In 2017, 50, 2% of the students graduated primary school (Plano de Desenvolvimento Nacional [PDN], 2018) compared to 47% in 2010 and 35% in 2007 (Agostinho, 2020).

With the covid-19 widespread pandemic and forced lockdown, the Angolan government and partners invested more funds to improve school facilities, such as handwashing spots to prevent the spread of the virus (Ministry of Education of Angola [MoE], 2021), increase the number of classrooms, reduce class size, create laboratories and Information Communication Technologies – ICT facilities capable of encouraging teachers to use active learning strategies and meaningful content to increase students' school attendance (MoE, 2021) and provide them with better opportunities for academic success.

In terms of legislation, international education policies agreements also encourage countries like Angola and Mozambique to offer to all students at least six years of free compulsory basic education, regular continuing professional development training programs for teachers, and to equip schools with resources, such as programs, guides, library, technology, laboratories, textbooks, and others with effective learning outcomes for students (Amended Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System number 17, 2016; National Education System Law Norms number 18, 2018; UNESCO, 2017).

Regardless of the latest changes in public education policies, like establishing at least six years of free compulsory primary school education, recognizing the value of sign language (Bras, 2019), including mother tongue as instruction language, increasing students' enrollment, making available funds to improve and build proper schools facilities, implementing a range of teachers and school leadership CPD training programs, and making available school supplies, such as textbooks and other materials (Evans & Acosta, 2021; Paxe, 2017; Xie & Zhang, 2020; Zau, 2012). Still, the Angolan ministry of education controls a high level of students with low reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency, mainly exacerbated by schools' environmental conditions.

So, this study based on the emic approach reflects on the strategies implemented by eight Cabinda public primary schools to overcome the negative impact of the overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, and lack of proper facilities and school supplies on the students' academic success.

## Academic Success

As a public good, education should be accessible to everyone and help individuals become better citizens, foster their understanding, strengthen their sense of community, promote respect for diversity, and allow the acquisition of lifelong learning skills (Silva, 2020; UNESCO, 2017). Implementing effective public policies can assure equal access and the best conditions to deliver quality education to all students, opportunities for academic success (Silva, 2020; UNESCO, 2017), and to overcome learning barriers, such as reading, writing, and mathematics' low proficiency constraining students' active participation in school and community.

Knowing that every student has a personal goal, interest, motivation, and experiences a unique living situation that instills the way students perceive academic success. For example, from primary school to college, the student can perceive academic success differently, from answering correctly a question to attaining a diploma.

This study describes academic success as attaining summative goals, knowledge and skills about someone's environment (Cachia, Lynam & Stock, 2018; Saidi, 2020).

### • Overcrowded Classrooms

According to Angolan education system norms, a single teacher should handle a classroom with 35 students (Paxe, 2017). In a reduced classroom, a teacher can more easily use diverse and interactive student-centered strategies and school supplies, such as storybooks or games. Moreover, a reduced classroom size also encourages the teacher to give students more opportunities to express feelings or ideas (Polirstok, 2017), increases tasks time, and provides immediate performance feedback.

In contrast, because of a shortage of qualified teachers and proper school facilities in overcrowded classrooms, the teacher feels mentally and physically exhausted from working with over than 35 children (Baxe et al., 2016; Krzykawska & Zur, 2020; West & Meier, 2020). That leads the teacher to offer to students fewer opportunities to express ideas, to group work, to walk around the classroom, to rearrange sits, and used more frequently teacher-centered strategies.

Besides teaching strategies, in overcrowded classrooms, it is less likely for a teacher to implement activities, such as modeling students' behaviors or offering individual attention (Fatima, Mushatq & Fatima, 2019; Kewaza & Welch, 2013; West & Meier,

2020) which leads students' to low academic achievement and increases the dropout school rates.

Adding to that, many public schools from Sub-Saharan countries handle overcrowded classrooms situations mainly caused by their attempt to prevent children out of the education system (Baxe, Fernando & Paxe, 2016; Souck & Nji, 2017). Unfortunately, that same education system rarely implements CPD training programs that encourage the teacher to apply effective teaching strategies to reduce the negative impact of overcrowded classrooms on their diverse ethnic backgrounds students (Agostinho, 2020; Paxe, 2017) or encourage the school community, such as students, parents, and stakeholders' active involvement in the school management council.

So, to reduce teacher exhaustion and increase students' academic success, the CPD training programs for teachers should encourage the content reduction and include meaningful content, implement group assignments or use a range of school supplies, such as storybooks, biographies, games, photos, or maps.

#### • Teacher's Poor Qualifications

To improve Sub-Saharan African education systems, the governments invest funds in CPD training programs to help teacher renew, foster knowledge and improve qualifications and teaching skills (Menezes, 2010; Peterson, 2003; Xie & Zhang, 2020; Zau, 2012).

Although the Angolan MoE invests a significant amount of funds in CPD training programs for nearly 200.000 teachers, the system includes a higher number of unqualified teachers that own 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>-grade diplomas (Peterson, 2003); and 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> grade without a teaching vocational secondary school diploma (Baxe et al., 2016; Piaget Agency for Development [APDES], 2017). For example, in a research study with 165 primary school teachers, 80% of the participants stated they lack knowledge and professional competencies to teach primary schools education subjects, such as Music, Physical Education, and Arts (Baxe et al., 2016).

In another research with 803 primary school teachers from Cabinda, Luanda, and Lunda-North provinces, 18.9% of the participants stated they own a vocational secondary school diploma in primary education, while the remaining participants own high school and higher college diploma degrees in other areas of science (APDES, 2017).

When schools have qualified teachers, the teachers can more easily create environments that meet students' needs, provide individualized learning, and use proper school supplies and after-school support.

Unfortunately, many CPD training programs lecture broader topics for both qualified and unqualified teachers (Morgado, 2004; Peterson, 2003) and offer few opportunities to observe or discuss a class performed by a teacher (Table 1).

**Table 1. Continuing Professional Development programs implemented by the MoE**

Program	Attained Goal
Physical Education and Arts Classes	March 2020, 30 middle school teachers and 30 primary school teachers obtained knowledge on teaching Physical Education and Arts teaching (Instituto Nacional de Formação de Quadros da Educação [INFQE], 2020b).
English Language Teachers Training financed by The English Connects Project	January 2020, 40 teachers obtained knowledge on selecting Active English Teaching Strategies (INFQE, 2020a).
Project Learning for all ( <i>“Projecto Aprendizagem para Todos” – PAT</i> ) financed by the World Bank	November 2016 to November 2019, 15.000 primary school teachers and Vocational Secondary School of Education Trainers gained knowledge to teach Portuguese, Mathematics, and use Differentiated Instructions (Duarte, Matias, Figueiredo & Augusto, 2018; MoE, 2019b).
Primary Teachers' Training ( <i>“Capacitação para Professores Primários” – CAPRI</i> ) –financed by the Foment Bank ( <i>“Banco de Fomento de Angola-BFA”</i> )	From October 2018 to January 2019, 623 primary school teachers acquired knowledge to teach Portuguese, Mathematics, Physical Education, Arts, and Culture (MoE, 2019a).
Project Learn More ( <i>“Saber Mais”</i> )	From 2009 to 2018, 985 Vocational Secondary School of Education Trainers and 1500 pre-service teachers acquired knowledge in Differentiated Instructions, Classroom Evaluation, Pedagogical School Project Management, School Leadership, ICT, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Physical Education, Arts, Reading and Writing strategies (INFQE, 2020c).
CPD for Vocational Secondary School of Education Trainers – PREPA – financed by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation	May 2016 to 2017, 356 primary school (1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> grades) teachers improved their teaching skills (INFQE, 2017).

In education, the teachers that engage among themselves in professional learning communities have more opportunities to cooperate, to share best practices (MoE, 2016), understand and recognize their and students' skills, and make the required classroom adjustments to ensure students' academic success (Schunk, 2016).

As a result, the Project Learning for all – PAT', a 167 Zones of Pedagogical Influence – ZIPs, and several resource centers started in different public schools to support teachers to build lesson plans, reflect their competencies, and assess their personal and professional development needs (Baxe et al., 2016; Duarte et al., 2018; MoE, 2016; MoE, 2019).

For instance, the teachers with low qualifications who offer to students few or no opportunities to apply skills in different contexts (Schunk et al., 2014), and teachers who are absent several days from their schools for personal and professional reasons, such as family crisis, a second job (Karamperidou, Brossard, Peirolo & Richardson, 2020; Zau, 2012), or arrive late and leave school early certainly would benefit most from the zones of pedagogical influence.

Ideally, the ZIPs also should encourage the teacher to develop researcher attitudes, and the schools principals to identify, through classroom observations, the teachers' difficulties and best practices (Baxe et al., 2016; Rosa 2016), that promote students' academic success in reading, writing, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics – STEM, and other areas.

However, in research with 628 school principals, 48,2% of the participants stated that they supervise activities, such as lesson planning, 3,8% prefer to observe classes, and only 2,4% have in-depth knowledge and skills to guide teachers' subject content (Rosa, 2016).

Although the project provides CPD training programs and school supplies, such as storybooks, maps, educational games, blackboards, computers, printers (Bambi, 2019) to support teacher, the school community also should learn effective strategies to be accountable for their student's academic success, identify and use the school supplies, or select low-cost school supplies to address overcrowded classrooms negative effect on the students' academic success.

In this way, an effective CPD training program can help the teacher organize an engaging lesson, to encourage student participation and the usage of meaningful learning content



(Evans & Acosta, 2021; Xie & Zhang, 2020; Peterson, 2003) instead of just selecting teacher-centered strategies, the blackboard or the textbook to share information.

To finish, the combination of qualified teachers and proper school supplies encourages the selection and implementation of a range of cooperative and individualized teaching strategies (Morgado, 2004; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015), such as dialogue, grouping, project-based, round table, games, inquiry-based or independent study that creates several opportunities for the student to acquire and apply skills. Lastly, it also improves students' school enrollment and retention (Evans & Acosta, 2021; Paxe, 2017), and increase parents' and teachers' communication.

- **Lack of proper school facilities and school supplies**

A proper school facility should be safe and provide quality education (UNESCO, 2017) through spaces like a playground, classroom, library, offices (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2016; Souck & Nji, 2017), hygienic facilities to help to reduce students' absence rates, and diseases risks, such as diarrhea, (Baxe, 2016; Vally, McMichael, Doherty, Li, Guevarra & Tobias, 2019) urinary tract infection or covid-19. It also should include physical education fields, green areas, canteen, laboratories, and ICT facilities to encourage students' academic performance. For example, many Angolan public schools lack a canteen or playground (APDES, 2017), so various students buy outside the school food made by unknown people or spend recess on the schools' sidewalk that result in food intoxication or cars accidents.

Related to school personnel, a proper school facility can increase teachers' retention and motivation (Baxe, 2016). On the other hand, an inappropriate school facility can reduce teachers' intrinsic motivation to attend CPD training programs because they cannot replicate the content and exchanged experiences in school (Baxe et al., 2016; Paxe, 2017) due to overcrowded classrooms or lack of proper school supplies.

Unfortunately, in most urban and remote public schools, it is difficult to find proper facilities with tap water, sanitation, electricity, fences, libraries, blackboard, and laboratories (Baxe et al., 2016; Mojapelo & Fourie, 2014; Plessis & Mestry, 2019). For example, 80% of the Niger and Angolan public schools operate without access to drinking and tap water, and hygienic facilities for students (APDES, 2017; Krzykawska & Zur, 2020).



So, to renovate and preserve school facilities, the school community, like the administration personnel, teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders, needs to be equipped with proper knowledge and skills to improve the school environment. So, it is important that CPD training programs for teachers include topics that address best practices that encourage school community active participation in school, such as donating sports supplies, books, creating and taking care of a school vegetable garden, painting the school, or increasing the number of classrooms.

To enhance students' reading and writing skills, the school community can share biographies and family stories, provide reading, writing, and mathematics support through theater, dance, games, or other after school activities.

In this article, addressing the overcrowded classroom, teachers' poor qualifications, and lack of proper school facilities and school supplies issues help to identify strategies that public primary schools can implement to facilitate student's academic success.

#### • Research Question

Over the years, the MoE and partners implemented a range of public CPD training programs for teachers. However, the review of the literature shows that most national CPD training programs (Baxe et al., 2016; INFQE, 2020b, MoE, 2009; MoE 2019; MoE 2016; Paxe, 2017; Peterson, 2003) experience few local adjustments to address schools adversities, such as overcrowded classrooms, teacher's poor qualifications, lack of proper school facilities, and school supplies negative effect on the student's academic success.

Although, the review of the literature suggests that the Angolan Ministry of Education builds, renovates school facilities and provides school supplies that facilitate students' learning (Bambi, 2019; Duarte et al., 2018; MoE 2016; MoE 2019; Paxe, 2017; Xie & Zhang, 2020) there is no public information on the impact of these actions on the students' academic success.

To finish, the literature review also indicates that improving students' writing, reading, and mathematics proficiency is one of the public schools' concerns. However, there is a lack of public analytic data that would offer schools communities opportunities to reflect and share best practices that facilitate student's academic success (APDES, 2017; Baxe et al., 2016; Paxe, 2017; Peterson, 2003; Rosa, 2016) Based on that, the following question proposed:

Research question: What strategies do Cabinda public primary schools identify as important to overcome the negative impact of the overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, lack of proper school facilities, and school supplies challenges on the students' academic success?

#### • Method

Ethnographic research allows the investigator to reflect and comprehend how individuals perceive and interpret their environment, activities and what they do (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). This ethnography research, with emphasis on the emic approach, allows the education specialist to observe, reflect, and acquire an in-depth understanding of the procedures or attitudes (Paxe, 2017; Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013) Cabinda public primary schools implement to facilitate student's academic success.

A public educational supervisor responsible for designing and supervising public continuing professional development training programs for teachers conducted data collection in 2019.

#### • Setting and Participants

The study occurred in Cabinda province's four municipalities: Cabinda, Cacongo, Buco-Zau, and Belize. The Cabinda province is an enclave sited in the northern part of Angola, sharing borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo-DRC and the Republic of Congo countries. Adding to that, as part of the Republic of Angola, the Cabinda population speaks Portuguese and 'Ibinda or Fiote' as a regional language (Instituto Nacional de Estatísticas, 2014).

Data came from a random sample of eight public primary schools (Table 3) that attend the Project Learning for all ("*Projecto Aprendizagem para Todos*"-PAT). Although the referred project offers twice a year continuing professional development training programs for teachers and equips centers with supplies, such as storybooks, educational games, maps, computers, printers, tables, chairs, and other resources (Bambi, 2019; Duarte et al., 2018; MoE, 2019), the schools address a higher number of students from year 3 to 6 with low reading and mathematics skills and lack monitoring and evaluation tools to adjust the project to their needs.

## • Procedure and Measures

This ethnography research consisted on identifying the strategies that Cabinda public primary schools believe as important to address overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, lack of proper school facilities, and school supplies problems occurred from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019, during the National Agency for Teachers Training Continuing Professional Development supervision plan.

Before conducting the study, the researcher collected from the local education government information on the primary school students' academic success, teachers' training, visited 4 schools and engaged in conversation with school principals, teachers and students. That work lead the design of the checklist and its application on the remaining 8 visited schools (Table 3).

In the Angolan education system, two groups of primary schools' students attend classes in two different periods, the first from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m, and the second from 1 p.m. to 5: 0 p.m. This aspect allowed the researcher to spend at least 4 hours on each school, to observe its routine, such as students' arrival in school, and school principals and teachers' procedures and behaviors. Therefore, in this study, the researcher followed three stages, namely Initial, Observation, and Engagement (Table 2) to collect detailed descriptive field notes.

**Table 2. Study Stages**

Stage 1 – Initial	Stage 2 – Observation	Stage 3 – Engagement
It introduced the researcher to a Cabinda local education government representative that supervises local CPD training programs. The local guide identified and provided to researcher access to public primary schools.	In the schools' settings, the researcher visited the schools' facilities, and collected additional information, such as photos, videos, and analyzed reports, memorandums, school report cards, and school pedagogical project	After assuring to teachers that the study would omit their personal information, the researcher through informal consent observed classrooms, analyzed lesson plans, collected school principals and teachers' comments that permitted offering guidance to select and implement strategies to help students achieve academic success.

In July 2020, the researcher revised the interviews, the descriptive field notes, videos recordings and pictures and the collected documents, like minutes, school pedagogical projects, school report cards and lesson plans (Table 3).

After, the researcher categorized and coded the data from the first to the last school visited. For example, the first school visited became School-A, Principal-A1, and Teacher-A1. Lastly, researcher triangulated data.

In November 2020, the researcher requested the National Agency for Teachers Training consent to include the collected information in this article.

**Table 3. Schools Settings Checklist**

Categories	Items	Cabinda		Cacongo		Bucu-Zau		Belize	
		School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G	School H
Facilities	Accessible area	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Principal's office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓
	Teacher's office	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
	Fences and gates	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	—	—
	Classrooms with 35 students	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	✓	✓
	Tap water	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Canteen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Playground	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Resource Center	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	✓	—
	Physical Education Fields	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
CPD	Blackboard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Desks and chairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	—
	Biweekly meetings	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Supplies	Student's Textbooks	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	✓	✓
	Storybooks, games, maps	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	✓	✓

## Results

The study identified the strategies believed as important by eight Cabinda public primary schools to overcome the overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, lack of proper school facilities, and school supplies negative impact on the students' academic success. To answer the research question, the study collected from the eight public primary school's descriptive field notes, setting photos and videos, informal interviews, and documents, such as school report cards, school pedagogical educational projects, memorandums and reports.

### • Overcrowded Classrooms

To address the overcrowded classrooms aspect, the participants answered the following question: *What teaching strategies do you apply in your overcrowded classroom?* The data demonstrates that school-E and school-F (25%) have classrooms up to 48 students to a single teacher and two (25%) schools that own 35 students; the teachers develop students reading and writing skills by presenting all the subject content on the blackboard and guiding them to copy information to their notebooks. Four (50%) schools that own 35 students mostly use the textbook to support students learning. In overcrowded classrooms, the teacher is less likely to apply active teaching strategies and to encourage students' participation in class (Fatima et al., 2019; Kewaza & Welch, 2013). For example, through a classroom window, it was visible that 4th graders students sat quietly on the floor and copied content from the blackboard to their notebooks. After requesting the teacher's permission to observe the class, Teacher-E2 stated:

“Normally, we have up to 48 students in class. As you can see, some of my students are sitting on the floor because the school does not have enough materials for all the students ... I, myself do not have a desk... I write everything on the blackboard and them [students] read and copy it. ...”

Nevertheless, the overcrowded classroom data collected indicates that the eight (100%) public primary schools and local education government selected reading and numeracy games or quizzes to improve students' reading and mathematics proficiency, but they never implemented these activities. For example, the Principal-C1 declared:

“In the school pedagogical project, we [school community] indicated that we want to improve student’s literacy and numeracy through games.”

Guided by the school principal and some teachers through School-C facilities, we observed a group of two ears impairment students attending classes in the corridor. Asking why were they in the corridor, Teacher-C<sub>3</sub> stated:

“...We do not have a classroom to accommodate the two students. So... we provided this space for them... Unfortunately, I’m the only teacher that knows sign language...”

To avoid the overuse of the blackboard, the teachers could group students and encourage them to collect from the local people storytelling and biographies, describe local ceremonies or play games that improve students’ reading, writing and mathematics skills. Adding to that, the sign language teacher could teach an inclusive classroom with both the two impairment students and other students.

#### • Teacher’s poor qualifications

Related to teachers’ poor qualifications aspect, the participants reflected on the following questions: *Locally, what continuing professional development training programs do you attend? How often do you attend the training?* According to data, 4 (50%) of the year coordinators and school principals stated that dedicate time to lesson planning and summarize the content. While, four (50%) school principals and eight (100%) schools reports and memorandums indicated the teachers skip the local continuing professional development training programs. An effective continuing professional development training program allows the teacher to exchange and acquire teaching skills and to improve academic qualifications (Baxe et al., 2016; Menezes, 2010; Peterson, 2003; Xie & Zhang, 2020).

Analyzing the schools documents, the school principals discussed CPD training programs attendance with their teachers. After a long deep breath, the Principal-H<sub>1</sub> declared:

“We encourage our teachers to attend the ZIP, but on Saturdays, they prefer to go to RDC or to visit their relatives.”

Adding to that, the Principal-G1 stated:

“It is difficult to get teachers involved. They always have an excuse to not attend the meetings... like family issues, take care of their belonging, or they say that they already know the content.”

Teacher-H2 pointed:

“... Biweekly, we have the ZIP meeting...but there's no one to take care of my vegetable gardening...”

To encourage teachers' participation in Zips' meetings, the school principals can suggest activities, such as language and mathematics school training, practice the reading and mathematics games and building low-cost resources.

- **Lack of proper school facilities and school supplies**

Related to the lack of proper school facilities and school supplies, the participants examined two questions. First, *How do you use school facilities to support students' academic performance?* The data collection shows that the eight (100%) schools lack drinking and tap water, hygienic facilities for students, a canteen, a playground, and a physical education field, but teachers meet in a regular classroom or school principals' office to lesson planning or discuss teaching strategies. Proper school facilities allow students to spend more time in school and teachers actively engage students in meaningful learning (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2016; Baxe et al., 2016; Krzykawska & Zur, 2020; Mojapelo & Fourie, 2014; Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Vally et al., 2019). The below statements indicate participants' procedures:

Principal-F1 affirmed:



“...the teachers meet in a classroom and we allocate the resources in my office because there’s not enough space.”

The next question was, *How do you use the available school supplies to improve students’ reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency?* Unfortunately, the data indicates that in the eight (100%) schools, the teachers mainly use maps to support 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders students’ learning.

According to Teacher-B2:

“...Together [teachers], we plan and discuss our lessons. We also use maps, like the Angolan map, to help the student understand...”

The data also indicates that four (50%) schools are focusing on improving facilities and preserving school supplies. The remaining four (50%) already improved their resource center facilities. For example, the School-D had fences but not gates or post guards. Tall grasses and water covered the backside of the school.

According to Principal-D1:

“...We have just come back to school...for days, we could not get in. Water completely covered it. “We had to clean our offices and classrooms... fortunately this year; other schools temporarily accepted our students. ... As you can see, we have saved some textbooks...We cannot have a resource center, so we only use the textbooks...”

In the School-G, Principal-G1 stated:

“We are putting bars on the windows and doors because the community is constantly assaulting the school... that’s the main reason we have the storybooks, games, and other materials in closed boxes.”

During the visit, the researcher observed that, to revise the content, most teachers orient the students to spend over than 15 minutes reading repeatedly the same text or

practice exercises. So, the teachers and schools' principals thought on the possibility of bringing to school some storybooks and games and dedicate this revising time for students to individually or in group explore other school supplies and to improve their reading and numeracy skills.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study aimed to identify the strategies implemented in 2019 by eight Cabinda province public primary schools to overcome overcrowded classrooms, teachers' poor qualifications, lack of proper facilities, and school supplies challenges that negatively impact students' academic success.

### **• Overcrowded Classroom**

Related to the overcrowded classrooms, the results showed two (25%) schools have classrooms up to 48 students to a single teacher to handle, two (25%) schools that own classrooms with 35 students and some textbooks support students learning by using the blackboard to share information and to orient silently readings and four (50%) schools mainly use the textbooks.

Although eight schools mainly use the blackboard or the textbooks to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills, in an overcrowded classroom it is important to combine the usage of blackboard with active teaching strategies, model student's behaviors, and effective classroom time management (Fatima, Mushatq & Fatima, 2019; Kewaza & Welch, 2013; Morgado, 2004; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015; Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2014; Paxe, 2017; Polirstok, 2017; Zimmerman, 2013). For example, the teacher can reduce the classroom content to offer more practicing time, assign flexible groups of students to work on small tasks, provide after-school activities, such as reading, writing, mathematics or science centers, and theater and music clubs. the data indicates the schools did not implement any of these strategies because the teachers lack the skills, knowledge, and the resources to adjust the teaching strategies to address student' needs.

### **• Teachers Poor Qualifications**

Considering teachers' poor qualifications, the collected data indicates that eight (100%) schools attend national and local CPD training programs.

In the education system, school CPD training programs that address teacher's needs, such as updating teaching skills, reflect and provide solutions to classroom problems (Baxe et al., 2016; Menezes, 2010; MoE, 2016; Paxe, 2017; Peterson, 2003), include regular classroom observations, adjust the classroom environment to students' needs, such as Multilanguage or disability (Agostinho, 2020; Brás, 2019; Rosa, 2016; Schunk, 2016;) supported by proper school supplies, such as maps, storybooks, games, or other materials, encourage teachers to attend training and implement best teaching practices.

- **Lack of Proper School Facilities and School Supplies**

Regarding lack of proper school facilities and school supplies, the setting observations indicate eight (100%) schools lack basic conditions, such as drinking and tap water, hygienic facilities, canteen, playground, a physical education field, and a library. For example, the lack of a playground leads students to spend recess outside schools' gates leading to car accidents.

For instance, as part of the Project Learn for All, the school should protect school facilities and school supplies, so the eight (100%) public primary schools communities should use barriers on the classrooms' doors and windows and keep secure the school supplies, such as storybooks and games. Whatsoever, the teachers are allowed to use freely in-classrooms any supply and not the only the geography and science maps.

So, a CPD program that encourages the teachers to create activities, such as reading, listening, and writing stories (Polirstok, 2017), or projects, as well as science centers for practicing mathematics supports students to improve their critical thinking skills, and the acquisition of lifelong skills.

To help students' academically succeed, it is important that government, partners, and schools start creating proper school facilities and school supplies, and CPD training programs that address teachers' and students' needs instead of just ensuring student's writing, reading, and mathematics proficiency without additional facilities, supplies, and qualified personnel. Adding to that, the schools should design monitoring and evaluating tools that helps to measure the impact of the implemented strategies on students' academic success.

## Limitations and Recommendations

The data observation came only from eight public primary schools that attend the Learning for All Project– “PAT” in Cabinda. Future studies should collect information from other public schools, including topics related to gender inequality and schools located far from a student’s home.

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