

DISTANCE EDUCATION BY DECREE

A Threat to the Right to Education



The announced transition from evening classes to distance education, starting in 2026, has been presented in public discourse as a measure of modernization, administrative efficiency, and a response to security concerns. However, when examined against Mozambique's socio-economic realities and the principles underpinning the right to education, this decision raises serious concerns regarding equality, non-discrimination, and effective access to learning.

Replacing face-to-face instruction with digital platforms, without first ensuring universal access to the necessary material conditions, risks excluding precisely those groups the education system is meant to protect: young people from poor households, working students, and families in situations of vulnerability.

A simple example—one that reflects the lived reality of thousands—illustrates the problem clearly: a 12th-grade student with no access to a computer, smartphone, stable internet connection, or reliable electricity. This is not a question of lack of motivation or ambition, but of the absence of material means. The 12th grade is a decisive stage in the educational trajectory, critical for access to higher education and social mobility. Requiring such students to follow distance learning without adequate resources is, in practice, to push them toward dropping out. When the State creates condi-

tions that are impossible to meet, exclusion ceases to be an individual failure and becomes an administrative and structural one.

1. Technological Neutrality and Social Discrimination

Distance education, when implemented without guarantees of universal access, is not technologically neutral. It advantages those who already possess resources—devices, connectivity, digital literacy, and suitable study environments—while disadvantaging those who do not. In this way, economic inequality is transformed into institutionalized educational inequality, in violation of the principle of equal opportunity.

2. Administrative Efficiency Versus Fundamental Rights

Invoking the high costs of evening education as justification for shifting to distance learning reflects a reductive approach. Administrative efficiency cannot be achieved at the expense of fundamental rights. Financial calculations that ignore human and social costs—such as increased dropout rates, diminished prospects for young people, the perpetuation of poverty cycles, and reduced social mobility—are deeply flawed. A State committed to human rights does not measure efficiency by removing opportunities from those who need them most.

3. Public Security and State Responsibility

If there were legitimate security concerns associated with evening classes, the appropriate response would have been to strengthen school security and organizational conditions, not to eliminate the modality altogether. Shifting the risk to students' homes amounts to an abdication of the State's responsibility to ensure a safe environment for the exercise of the right to education.

4. State Obligations Regarding the Right to Education

The right to education, enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique and in international instruments ratified by the State, requires effective access, non-dis-

crimination, and adequacy of learning conditions. Whenever an educational model depends on technology, it is the State's obligation to guarantee universal access to that technology. Otherwise, the right exists only on paper, becoming a barrier in practice.

5. Evening Education as an Instrument of Social Inclusion

Historically, evening education has served as a vital gateway for workers and young people from low-income families, enabling them to combine study with subsistence. Its elimination or hollowing out, without robust in-person alternatives, effectively closes educational opportunities for a significant segment of the population, with profound and lasting social consequences.

Final Considerations

If this measure advances without effective safeguards, it risks being remembered as a public policy that, under the banner of modernization, deepened exclusion and inequality. Digitizing the education system without guaranteeing universal access shifts the cost of public policy onto poor families and later labels as "school failure" what was produced by a State decision.

The central question is not whether the policy is modern, but whether it is just, equitable, and compatible with the right to education. Under current conditions, the answer is clear: it is not.

A responsible education policy must be grounded in the principle that no one is left behind—not as a slogan, but as a concrete and operational obligation of the State.



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