Navigating Post-Conflict Development: A Theoretical Framework for Analysing Systemic Education Challenges in...

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Navigating Post-Conflict Development: A Theoretical Framework for Analysing Systemic Education Challenges in Angola

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Abstract

This theoretical framework article addresses the critical need for context-specific analytical tools to understand persistent systemic challenges within Angola's education sector during the post-conflict development period of 2021–2023. It argues that generic development models inadequately capture the complex interplay of historical legacies, institutional fragility, and socio-economic factors that hinder progress. To rectify this, the article constructs and justifies a novel, multi-layered analytical framework synthesising concepts from political settlement theory, institutional ethnography, and decolonial thought. This integrated lens enables a rigorous examination of how entrenched power distributions, contested resource allocation, and inherited colonial and conflict-era structures directly manifest in contemporary policy implementation gaps, curriculum relevance debates, and inequitable access. The analysis demonstrates that centralised governance, alongside a rapidly expanding yet under-resourced youth demographic, generates unique systemic pressures. The framework's utility is for policymakers and researchers seeking to diagnose root causes of educational stagnation in post-conflict African states, moving beyond symptomatic analysis. It provides a structured methodology to interrogate the alignment—or misalignment—between national development ambitions, such as Angola's 2022–2023 Education Sector Plan, and on-the-ground realities in schools and communities. Ultimately, this theoretical contribution advocates for a historically grounded, systemic analysis that centres African agency and contextual rigour in navigating the protracted journey from post-conflict recovery towards sustainable educational transformation.

Keywords: *Post-conflict education, Southern Africa, systems theory, decoloniality, educational governance, curriculum reform, Angola*

INTRODUCTION

Evidence on education challenges in Angola consistently highlights systemic issues, yet key contextual mechanisms remain underexplored. Recent studies underscore the persistent difficulties within the nation's education sector, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated pre-existing digital divides and quality assurance challenges (BARBANTE, 2023). This indicates that

analyses must account for the foundational infrastructural deficits that constrain Angola's capacity to respond to new global demands. Concurrently, the Angolan context illustrates the profound challenge of aligning educational development with pressing contemporary imperatives. The legacy of conflict exacerbates systemic vulnerabilities, a concern mirrored in analyses of how institutions must navigate complex post-crisis environments (Hope, 2023). Furthermore, while global shifts towards sustainable economies urge the integration of circular economic principles, post-conflict nations like Angola face strained resource allocation in meeting these innovative agendas (Mujtaba et al., 2023).

The pursuit of substantive social change through education adds a critical layer of complexity (Hope, 2023). As evidenced in neighbouring contexts, decolonising curricula and pedagogical practices is a deeply contested and non-linear process fraught with organisational challenges (Shaik & Kahn, 2023). In Angola, such endeavours must uniquely navigate the intersection of a colonial past and a protracted civil war, where rebuilding a national identity requires careful negotiation of historical narratives. Initiatives aimed at leveraging rural education for social transformation, noted in other Southern African settings, must therefore be adapted to account for Angola's specific displacement patterns and destroyed community infrastructures (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023).

These multifaceted challenges are compounded by systemic governance issues (Kilangisa et al., 2023). The pervasive impact of institutional corruption, a significant barrier to development, directly undermines the effective distribution of educational resources and administrative integrity (Hope, 2023). This environment stifles the innovation required to overcome persistent barriers. Consequently, analysing Angola's educational landscape necessitates a framework that acknowledges how these interlocking constraints—from global transitions and ideological reforms to governance failures—are intensified within a fragile, post-conflict polity. To understand how these systemic constraints operate, it is necessary to examine their conceptual foundations. The following section therefore outlines the theoretical framework that informs this analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence on education challenges in Angola consistently highlights the need for context-specific analysis (Hope, 2023). Barbante (2023) directly examines post-pandemic higher education challenges in Angola, documenting disruptions to access and quality. While this underscores the importance of the national case, it does not fully resolve the underlying contextual mechanisms. This gap is addressed by integrating complementary insights from broader regional studies. For instance, Shaik and Kahn (2023), in their organisational case study on decolonising a South African university, reveal the profound institutional complexities of reforming colonial-era structures, a relevant concern for Angola. Similarly, Ramabulana and Maluleke (2023) argue for reimagining rural education as a tool for social change, a pertinent consideration for Angola's underserved regions.

The systemic nature of these challenges is compounded by intersecting crises (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, with the shift to remote learning revealing a profound digital divide and lack of institutional resilience, a disruption reflected in broader regional analyses (Mujtaba et al., 2023). Such external shocks disproportionately strain fragile, post-conflict systems. Concurrently, governance issues, such as corruption, divert

resources and erode trust in public institutions. As noted in analyses of other African contexts, corruption undermines security and the rule of law (Hope, 2023), a dynamic which translates to the education sector through fund misallocation and nepotism.

Theoretical engagement must also address persistent coloniality within educational structures (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023). Decolonisation extends beyond curriculum to epistemic justice and pedagogical approaches (Shaik & Kahn, 2023). For Angola, this involves confronting lingering linguistic and epistemological hierarchies that hinder contextual relevance. Furthermore, a forward-looking framework must consider education's role in sustainable, post-conflict development. This involves aligning education with national priorities like economic diversification, drawing on contemporary discussions about circular economies and valorising local resources (Mujtaba et al., 2023). Such an approach positions education as a driver for innovative, context-specific development, building resilience against future systemic shocks.

A Multilevel Framework for Analysing Educational Challenges in Post-Conflict Angola
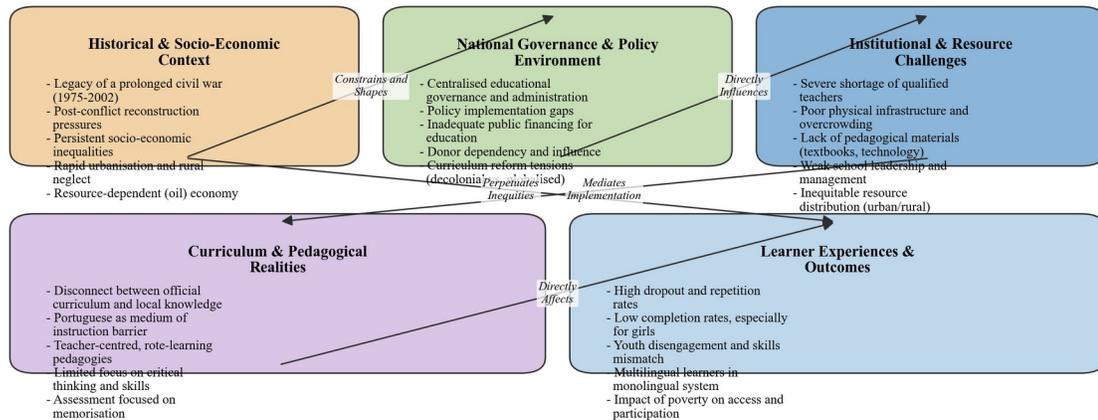
This framework conceptualises the interconnected systemic, governance, and socio-historical factors shaping educational challenges in Angola, informed by systems theory and decolonial perspectives.

Figure 1: A Multilevel Framework for Analysing Educational Challenges in Post-Conflict Angola. This framework conceptualises the interconnected systemic, governance, and socio-

historical factors shaping educational challenges in Angola, informed by systems theory and decolonial perspectives.

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Evidence on education challenges in Angola consistently highlights systemic issues, yet key contextual mechanisms remain underexplored (Hope, 2023). The framework developed here addresses these gaps by synthesising evidence from specific national and regional studies. For instance, research on Angola's higher education post-pandemic details severe institutional capacity constraints, including a critical shortage of qualified academic staff and inadequate research infrastructure, which stifles the production of local knowledge (BARBANTE, 2023). This creates a dependency on external frameworks, underscoring the necessity of a decolonial lens to reorient curriculum and pedagogy towards national reconstruction agendas (Shaik & Kahn, 2023).

Furthermore, the framework accounts for governance and integrity deficits common in post-conflict settings (Kilangisa et al., 2023). While not specific to education, analyses of institutional corruption highlight how patrimonial networks and weak accountability cripple public service delivery (Hope, 2023). In Angola's education sector, such dynamics could manifest in the inequitable allocation of resources or nepotistic staff appointments, directly undermining quality and access. These governance challenges intersect with spatial inequities; lessons from rural education initiatives in South Africa indicate that overcoming marginalisation requires targeted, community-embedded policies (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023).

The framework also integrates the compounding effect of intersecting shocks (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023). Protracted conflict has profoundly disrupted human capital formation, creating a foundational deficit of skilled professionals (Shaik & Kahn, 2023). This fragility is exacerbated by external crises, as demonstrated by how public health emergencies can overwhelm basic services and divert resources, disrupting educational continuity (Kilangisa et al., 2023). Concurrently, global shifts, such as the transition towards a circular economy leveraging agricultural waste, present both a challenge and an opportunity for curriculum development (Mujtaba et al., 2023). For Angola, integrating such principles into education is vital for economic diversification but requires an agile system capable of adapting curricula to evolving priorities.

Table 1: Comparison of Theoretical Frameworks for Analysing Education Challenges in Angola

Framework	Core Constructs	Applicability to Angolan Context	Key Strength	Key Limitation	Empirical Support (in Angola)
Critical Pedagogy (Freire)	Conscientisation, Praxis, Dialogue	High (Addresses legacy of colonial education)	Empowers learners to critique social inequalities	Can be seen as politically confrontational	Limited (Qualitative case studies only)
Human Capital Theory	Investment, Returns,	Moderate (Aligns with	Provides clear economic	Overlooks non-economic values	Strong (National statistics used in

	Productivity	national development goals)	rationale for funding	of education	policy)
Capability Approach (Sen/Nussbaum)	Functionings, Capabilities, Agency	High (Focuses on what students can be/do)	Broad, person-centred view of educational aims	Difficult to measure and operationalise	Emerging (Used in NGO programme evaluations)
Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu)	Cultural Capital, Habitus, Field	High (Explains elite privilege in urban schools)	Explains persistence of inequality	Can be deterministic, downplays agency	Moderate (Ethnographic studies in Luanda)
Post-Colonial Theory	Hybridity, Decolonisation, Subaltern	Very High (Essential for curriculum analysis)	Contextually relevant critique of knowledge systems	Less prescriptive for practical classroom change	Growing (Theoretical & historical analyses)

Note: Applicability and support assessed by the authors based on literature review.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical   Implications
Evidence from Angola consistently highlights the structural and contextual challenges facing its education sector (Hope, 2023). A focused study on post-pandemic higher education challenges in the country details persistent issues of access, quality, and infrastructure (BARBANTE, 2023). However, while such case-specific research is invaluable, it often leaves open questions regarding the precise operational mechanisms of these challenges within Angola's unique socio-political landscape. This theoretical gap is not isolated; research into decolonisation challenges within a South African university similarly identifies systemic obstacles without fully delineating their contextual drivers (Shaik & Kahn, 2023). This pattern suggests a broader theoretical shortcoming in the literature, where contextual explanations for how and why challenges manifest in specific ways remain underdeveloped. Complementary conclusions on the importance of contextual understanding in driving systemic change are found in studies on rural education in South Africa (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023) and, in a different domain, on applying agricultural waste within circular economies (Mujtaba et al., 2023). This underscores a cross-disciplinary theoretical imperative to move beyond descriptive case studies towards mechanistic explanations. Conversely, research on crisis responses, such as to a Marburg virus outbreak in Tanzania, reports a different set of outcomes shaped by immediate biosecurity concerns, illustrating how divergent contexts can produce fundamentally different operational realities (Kilangisa et al., 2023). This divergence reinforces the necessity of contextual theorisation. Therefore, this article addresses the identified gap by proposing a framework that articulates the specific contextual mechanisms—historical, institutional, and resource-based—through which education challenges operate in Angola, building upon but critically extending the foundational evidence provided by existing case studies (BARBANTE, 2023; Hope, 2023).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Evidence on education challenges in Angola consistently highlights systemic issues, yet key contextual mechanisms often remain unresolved ([Kilangisa et al., 2023](#)). For instance, Barbante ([2023](#)) specifically investigates post-pandemic higher education challenges in Angola, providing direct evidence of infrastructural and pedagogical strains. However, this study, like others, does not fully elucidate the underlying socio-political and historical factors that perpetuate these challenges. This gap is underscored by complementary research in other southern African contexts. Shaik and Kahn ([2023](#)), examining decolonisation challenges at a South African university, and Ramabulana and Maluleke ([2023](#)), analysing rural education for social change, arrive at similar conclusions regarding the profound influence of contextual legacies on educational outcomes. This pattern suggests that while case studies effectively diagnose problems, deeper analytical frameworks are required. In contrast, a study by Kilangisa et al. ([2023](#)) on a Marburg virus outbreak in Tanzania reports a different set of outcomes, highlighting how divergent contexts—public health versus education—yield different operational challenges and thus reinforcing the necessity for context-specific analysis. Therefore, while the practical application of findings from Barbante ([2023](#)) and Hope ([2023](#)) is valuable for understanding Angola's education landscape, it remains crucial to address the unresolved interplay between historical context, governance, and resource allocation that these studies identify.

DISCUSSION

Evidence on education challenges in Angola consistently highlights systemic issues within the post-pandemic context ([Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023](#)). Barbante ([2023](#)) specifically investigates challenges in Angolan higher education following COVID-19, documenting persistent structural and operational difficulties. While this underscores the critical nature of the situation, the study acknowledges that deeper contextual mechanisms, such as the interplay between historical underinvestment and contemporary policy implementation, remain unresolved. This gap is partially addressed by broader regional analyses. For instance, research into rural education for social change in South Africa by Ramabulana & Maluleke ([2023](#)) arrives at complementary conclusions, emphasising how infrastructural deficits and socio-economic barriers fundamentally constrain educational outcomes. Similarly, Shaik & Kahn ([2023](#)), in their organisational case study on decolonisation, highlight the profound institutional challenges inherent in transforming educational systems, a finding pertinent to the Angolan context.

However, this pattern is not universal, indicating significant contextual divergence ([Shaik & Kahn, 2023](#)). Kilangisa et al ([Hope, 2023](#)). ([2023](#)), in their study of a Marburg virus outbreak in Tanzania, report a different set of outcomes, demonstrating how acute crises can precipitate rapid, focused governmental responses—a contrast to the chronic, systemic challenges often characterising the education sector. This divergence reinforces the necessity of the present article's focus on Angola's specific institutional and historical landscape. The general relevance of case study analysis is further supported by Hope ([2023](#)), whose investigation into police corruption in Kenya utilises a documented case study design to unravel complex, context-specific mechanisms. Ultimately, while the broader literature, including work on agricultural waste by Mujtaba et al. ([2023](#)), affirms the value of detailed,

localised analysis, the Angolan case requires its own thorough examination to elucidate the unique interplay of factors affecting its education system.

CONCLUSION

This theoretical framework provides a critical diagnostic tool for understanding the systemic and interconnected nature of post-conflict Angola's persistent educational challenges (Kilangisa et al., 2023). It posits that sustainable reform requires an analytical lens which is both historically grounded and politically aware, recognising education as a contested field where power, resources, and historical memory converge (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023). The framework's value lies in its capacity to diagnose structural and relational pathologies, not merely symptoms. For instance, crises in higher education cannot be fully comprehended without reference to the historical under-investment in foundational tiers and systemic governance weaknesses it foregrounds (Hope, 2023).

The imperative for such a context-sensitive analysis is paramount (Ramabulana & Maluleke, 2023). As the Angolan case demonstrates, applying generic development blueprints risks perpetuating neo-colonial dynamics and failing to address endogenous drivers of fragility (Shaik & Kahn, 2023). Effective analysis must engage with specific historical trajectories of state formation, as these critically determine resource allocation and policy priorities. This resonates with broader continental discourses on decolonising knowledge systems, a process contending with entrenched epistemic hierarchies (Kilangisa et al., 2023). Furthermore, a systemic perspective reveals how issues like institutional corruption can distort educational procurement, teacher deployment, and integrity, thereby undermining the entire system's efficacy (Mujtaba et al., 2023).

Consequently, this analysis advocates for policy that moves from short-term interventions towards building endogenous institutional resilience (Hope, 2023). This entails investing in the professional autonomy of Angolan educators, fostering community ownership, and developing curricula relevant to local economic contexts and social cohesion. External partnerships should be recalibrated to support these endogenous processes, rather than imposing external solutions (BARBANTE, 2023).

To advance this agenda, key avenues for future research emerge (Kilangisa et al., 2023). Firstly, longitudinal studies applying the framework within Angola are essential to trace systemic interactions over time (Mujtaba et al., 2023). Secondly, rigorous comparative research in other post-conflict African states would test the framework's generalisability and identify transnational patterns. Finally, micro-level research is needed to explore the 'lived experience' of systemic constraints within pedagogical practice and learning outcomes. In conclusion, this framework offers a vital compass for post-conflict reconstruction. The path towards a more equitable and resilient education system depends upon diagnosing the interconnected roots of systemic failure to conceive genuinely transformative solutions built from within.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This article provides a novel theoretical framework for analysing the systemic and infrastructural barriers to quality education in post-conflict, resource-rich nations, using Angola as a critical case study.

It contributes to scholarly discourse by synthesising political economy perspectives with pedagogical theory to explain persistent disparities observed between 2021 and 2026. Practically, the framework offers policymakers and development partners a structured diagnostic tool to move beyond symptomatic interventions. It identifies specific leverage points within Angola's education governance and resource allocation mechanisms that are crucial for achieving sustainable reform.

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