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IB World Schools in the lusophone world: an exploratory field study in São Paulo, Lisbon and Maputo

Anne Schippling^{a*} and Pedro Abrantes^{a,b}

^aIscte – University Institute of Lisbon, CIES-Iscte, Lisbon, Portugal; ^bCentre for Global Studies, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal

Anne Schippling, Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte), Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon, Av. das Forças Armadas, 1649-026, Lisbon, Portugal. Email: anne.schippling@iscte-iul.pt

ORCID

Anne Schippling <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8794-5554>

Pedro Abrantes <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9572-9563>

Dr Anne Schippling is an integrated researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte), part of Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon and research associate at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, where she obtained her doctorate in educational sciences in 2007. Currently she is directing a research project on IB World Schools in countries with Portuguese as the official language (Portugal, Brazil and Mozambique), promoted by the Foundation of Science and Technology (FCT), Lisbon. Her main research interests include international education in schools and in higher education, transnationalisation in education, elite research, social and educational inequalities and transition research.

Dr Pedro Abrantes is professor at Universidade Aberta and at Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon, developing research in the Centre for Global Studies (UAb) and in the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte). He holds a bachelor's degree (2002) and a PhD (2007) in sociology, focusing his work on education, socialisation, social inequalities and life pathways. He lived in Mexico for some years and collaborates regularly with international agencies on education development. From 2016 to 2022 he worked for the Portuguese educational administration, as a ministerial advisor and deputy director of the statistics department.

IB World Schools in the lusophone world: an exploratory field study in São Paulo, Lisbon and Maputo

The article provides a global comparison of IB World Schools in the lusophone space, including countries in three different world regions, in response to a lack of research on international education in Portuguese-speaking countries.

Following an introduction to the literature on this topic, focusing on a widely known typology of international schools, we present the first results of three case studies of the IB school field in the metropolitan regions of São Paulo, Lisbon and Maputo based on an analysis of school websites, databases and public documents. The study is based on a global comparative approach that enables an analysis of the complex interrelation between global and local actors in education, primarily addressing the school level. We aim to provide some insights on the implementation and development of the IB World Schools in Portuguese-speaking countries, in the light of existing studies on international schools.

Keywords: International Baccalaureate; Brazil; Portugal; Mozambique; school websites

Introduction

In recent decades we have observed globally not only an impressive growth of international schools, but also an internal diversification of this field (Bunnell, 2022), including a transformation of the profile of users of these schools: 30 years ago, 80% of the students came from expatriate families whereas today 80% of the school population is autochthonous (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013, p. 29). Meanwhile, a steady expansion of transnational educational actors that provide international programmes and diplomas in the school sector, such as International Baccalaureate® (IB) and Cambridge Assessment International Education, was apparent (Yemini et al., 2022, p. 2).

The purpose of our study is to map the IB World Schools in Portuguese-speaking countries, conceived as international schools¹ that offer the IB programmes

and diploma. The IB World Schools encompass a very diverse group of schools, as Gardner-McTaggart et al. (2023, p. 2) locate the IB '[...] in a variety of school types, whether national or international, state or private, established or start up, Anglo-Western, Chinese, and American-Spanish, etcetera'. Our research question regards how the implementation of IB programmes has developed in the Portuguese-speaking countries, to understand what the current situation is and to know its challenges. Thus, we carried out explorative field studies on IB schools in three metropolitan regions where such schools are concentrated: São Paulo, Lisbon and Maputo.

To analyse the field of IB schools, we apply a typology developed by Hayden and Thompson (2013) and adapted by other researchers to national contexts or world regions (for schools in China, see Poole, 2021; for schools in Africa, see Bunnell, 2016). Such typology classifies international schools in three main profiles: (A) traditional international schools; (B) ideological international schools; and (C) non-traditional international schools.

The international schools of type A were founded during the twentieth century, primarily to cater for children of globally mobile expatriates that demanded an international education for their offspring, so their foundation was a pragmatic reaction to a market demand. The student body is highly mobile, mostly native or at least with family ties to the country of the school founders. These schools are fee-paying and function on a not-for-profit basis.

The schools of type B were founded for ideological reasons, so as to support the development of global peace and intercultural understanding. A paradigmatic example is the United World Colleges (UWCs) which are based on the philosophy of Kurt Hahn. The general mission of these schools is to bring together different nations for learning together, and to develop an understanding and empathy between cultures. They have a

not-for-profit character and their foundation responds to ideological movements rather than an existing market demand.

This field was reconfigured with the appearance and rapid growth of type-C non-traditional schools, especially since 2000. These schools are often organised in a for-profit rationale, increasingly part of large enterprise networks. They were predominantly founded in reaction to the demand of the local ‘non-mobile’ families that wish an international education for their children. For that reason, the student body of these schools is often relatively homogeneous (e.g. Bunnell et al., 2016).

We aim to provide new insights in this emerging field of international education in Portuguese-speaking countries, revising and developing existing typologies, in dialogue with studies in other countries and regions. In this article, we present: (1) a sketch of IB expansion in the Global South, focusing on the lusophone space; (2) a characterisation of the context of international education in São Paulo (Brazil), Maputo (Mozambique) and Lisbon (Portugal); and (3) an exploratory analysis of IB schools in those three lusophone metropolitan areas. Subsequently, we discuss the existing typologies of international schools considering data collected as well as opportunities for further research.

The global impact of the International Baccalaureate in the Global South and in Portuguese-speaking countries

The International Baccalaureate® is a non-profit educational foundation that offers international programmes and diplomas, recognised by most countries in the world. Since its foundation in the 1960s, the IB has continually created a global network of IB World Schools, and its growth was notably intensified in the 21st century: from 1,052 schools in 2000 to 3,035 schools in 2010, and 5,600 schools in 2023, spread across 159

countries (IB, 2023a). Between 2018 and 2022 there was an increase of 34.2% of IB programmes offered worldwide.

The expansion of IB in recent years has been impressive in the Global South, both in the private sector and through its adoption in state schools, in South America, the Middle East and South East Asia (Resnik, 2015; Bunnell, 2022; Gardner-McTaggart et al., 2023). There is a growing demand from local wealthy families – ‘the burgeoning middle classes of the South’ (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016, p. 1) – who want their children to get an international diploma to promote their access to global business and expert labour markets. Ayling (2021, p. 464) observes that ‘non-westerners do attach high value to the “Western” dispositions and education credentials’ as cultural and also symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which means that there is an increase of ‘international schools using international/Western curriculum in non-Western societies’ (Ayling, 2021, p. 463). This growing demand for international schooling is linked to a process of increasing massification of secondary and higher education, generating a pressure for new circuits of social and cultural distinction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Bathmaker et al., 2016).

In our study, we analyse IB World Schools located in Portuguese-speaking countries that are part of regions of the Global South – Brazil and Mozambique – characterised by different ‘post-colonial legacies’ (Gardner McTaggart et al., 2023, p. 2), with Portugal as the former colonial power that has shaped their educational systems, but often located in a semi-peripheral Southern Europe. Despite some expansion during recent years in the lusophone world, the IB World Schools presence is still modest in comparison with other countries. According to IB public data (IB, 2023b), the number of IB World Schools are: 57 in Brazil; 14 in Portugal; and four in Mozambique. The remaining countries have a lower presence: one school in Angola and

East Timor and none in São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde or Guinea-Bissau. This modest expansion of IB can be explained by the fact that in the lusophone space the IB has not yet reached the state school system, as in Latin American countries such as Ecuador, Mexico and Argentina (e.g. Resnik, 2015; Maire & Windle, 2022; Bittencourt, 2023). All IB schools in Portuguese-speaking countries are privately organised and funded, so they are exclusively accessible to wealthy families and, therefore, a segment of elite education.

The state of research on international schools – especially IB World Schools – in the lusophone world is actually very limited. For the Lisbon region, after some sparse references in studies on private (elite) education, a recent project provided a first sociological mapping of international schools, including IB World Schools (e.g. Schippling & Abrantes, 2018, 2024; Schippling et al., 2020). As regards Brazil, some studies analysed the appearance of internationalisation processes and international schools in the segment of elite education (e.g. Almeida, 2015; Aguiar & Nogueira, 2012; Nogueira & Alves, 2016; Windle & Nogueira, 2015), but specific studies on IB schools are lacking (see an exception by Luciani, 2022). For other Portuguese-speaking countries, there are not yet studies on international schools, as the presence of IB schools is still weak and recent.

Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo: three case studies in the lusophone world

There are many reasons for our interest in examining the development of IB schools in Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo. Firstly, there is the situation of very little academic research on international schooling in the lusophone countries, despite an increasing number of schools and students, especially in their main cities.

Secondly, these three metropolitan areas are ‘nodes’ of the global economy, characterised by a high growth during the recent decades, attracting both high- and low-

income populations from different population movement flows, turning into ‘global cities’ (Sassen, 2002). Such large urban landscapes (and their different territories) are privileged scenarios of education ‘marketisation’, characterised by complex patterns of school provision and choice, where diversity thrives alongside great inequality (Gewirtz et al., 1995; Broccolichi & van Zanten, 2004; Henry & Hankins, 2012).

Although the dimension of Lisbon or Maputo metropolitan areas (with around 2.5 million inhabitants each), is hardly comparable with the 30 million of São Paulo,² they are the most populated areas and the economic centres of their respective countries, increasingly tied to world politics and the global economy. The aforementioned education differentiation regarding the rest of their countries is also evident in the IB expansion pattern. There are 24 IB schools in the São Paulo Macrometropolis, out of the 57 in Brazil. The Lisbon region has 11 IB schools, more than in all the other regions of Portugal put together, and of the four IB schools in Mozambique, three are located in the Maputo region (IB, 2023b).

Thirdly, the three metropolitan regions are in Portuguese-speaking countries. On the one hand, this means some historical similarities, particularly a highly centralised, conservative and underdeveloped education system, in mostly poor and rural countries, until the second half of the 20th century, converging in high retention and dropout rates from primary education onwards (Nóvoa et al., 2002). On the other hand, in the present times, besides the strong political, cultural and economic ties and population mobility movements between these countries, they share the seventh most-spoken language by native speakers in the world, but still not a working language of the IB organisation, a fact that may be a challenge to its development in these countries.

Fourthly, our choice also respects diversity criteria. Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo are located in three different continents and therefore integrated in distinct

world regions. Their education patterns diverge in some key factors, providing a global scope to our research.

Lisbon is the capital of a European country with an impressive development of schooling rates and quality assessments during the last twenty years. Currently, less than 10% of the young people leave education before completing upper secondary education, less than 10% do not attend pre-schooling, and more than 80% of pupils attend public schools (OECD, 2022). Many immigrants arrive to the city from all over the world (mainly from Brazil), and this metropolitan area is economically within the EU average, well above the other regions of the country. The Portuguese elites have a long tradition of investing in private education, divided between more traditional Catholic schools and international ones. At the same time, an increasing demand for international schools is apparent, as an effect of the arrival of many rich immigrants, as well as a new strategy from local high- and middle-class families to provide their children higher opportunities in the global economy (Schippling et al., 2020). The Ministry of Education published recently a report on international schooling, although it does not distinguish between those adhering to IB from those offering foreign curricula (Ministério da Educação, 2023). Since 2005, the IB has been recognised as equivalent to Portuguese primary and secondary education programmes (DGE, 2005).

São Paulo, one of the biggest metropolitan areas in the world, experienced a recent expansion of secondary and higher education, yet is riven by major concerns with inequality. Based on both safety and quality arguments, privileged classes in Brazil are increasingly investing in private education and, particularly, in international programmes, previously oriented towards high-class immigrants (Cantuaria, 2004; Aguiar & Nogueira, 2012; Almeida, 2015; Nogueira & Alves, 2016; Luciani, 2022). The federal universities are now more open to black and poor students, so upper-class

families look to the international circuit as a path for distinction. Still, such ‘internationalisation’ occurs through multiple strategies, from direct partnerships with US universities to independent bilingual schools, so that integration in the IB World Schools network is still a minor path.

Maputo is the capital of one of the poorest countries in the world, Mozambique, located in south-eastern Africa. The impressive increase in school attendance rates has not been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality of learning, especially due to a weak state capacity, excessive dependence on external aid and poor community involvement (Mário et al., 2020). In spite of a discourse focused on social development and inclusion, education policies appear considerably detached from local conditions and cultures, as well as dominated by international (neoliberal) concerns (Amâncio & Gasparetto, 2018). A growing number of private schools emerged in Maputo, especially due to the low offer of pre-primary and secondary education, but they are mainly managing to cope with the low (and uncertain) ability of parents to pay the tuition fees and low investment abilities, as well as low qualification levels of staff (Härmä, 2016).

Methodology and field structure

This analysis provides a characterisation, general development tendencies and institutional orientations of the IB World Schools in lusophone metropolitan regions. Employing a global comparative approach, we compare the impact of IB in countries with different social and cultural contexts taking the IB as *tertium comparationis*, as ‘the common global actor’ (Resnik, 2015, p. 4). The global comparative approach is based on the approach of actor-network theory (ANT) and enables us ‘to analyse the connections and interactions between global actors and the plurality of national, regional, municipal actors in a common conceptual frame – the IB network’ (Resnik,

2015, p. 4). ANT is based on research on laboratories in natural sciences and argues that the success of a scientific approach depends on the capacity of researchers to build a network (Latour, 1987). Applying ANT to educational contexts (Feenweek & Edwards, 2010) allows us to understand the IB organisation and its network as an assemblage of heterogeneous human and non-human actors, for example, IB schools, IB school associations, universities that recognise IB, school directors, students, teachers, parents, IB curricula, textbooks, etc. Such actors ‘work together’ as ‘a functional entity’ that gains force as it is always getting new actors and connections (Resnik, 2015, p. 5). This approach can be understood as a fruitful analytical tool in light of the lack of theoretical and methodological tools to analyse phenomena of international education (Resnik, 2012; Maxwell et al., 2021).

In this exploratory analysis we focus on IB schools as the principal actors of the IB network, as well as the ‘the point of departure for understanding the development of the IB’ (Resnik, 2015, p. 6). That approach is built on data on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include data of all school websites in these regions and other public documents as well as databases provided by IB (2023a, b) and others on international schools (John Catt Educational Ltd., 2023; ISD, 2023), considering aspects such as school foundation and introduction of IB, programmes and diplomas, membership in organisations, admission criteria and school fees, as well as mission, vision and values. We understand the school websites as ‘communicative documents’ that are at the same time the ‘bearer of process-produced data’ and have an ‘inherent communicative function’ (Schünzel & Traue, 2022, p. 1295) that can offer an empirically rich access to schools as actors of transnationalisation (Szakács-Behling & Keßler, 2023, p. 49). Our secondary sources are scientific studies on social, cultural and educational contexts of the development of IB at these different regions. Our analysis of

the primary sources is based on the documentary method of interpretation (e.g. Bohnsack, 2010, pp. 134–139), a reconstructive qualitative method that distinguishes between a content reconstruction in a ‘formulating interpretation’ and an analysis of implicit knowledge in a ‘reflecting interpretation’. We analysed the empirical data at the level of the ‘formulated interpretation’ that includes the reconstruction of the topical structure and a reformulation of the contents related to these topics.

The analysis is also based on the typology of international schools (see Introduction) for discussing the general developing tendencies of IB in these different regions in a comparative way.

In the region of São Paulo, there are currently 24 IB World schools, 22 of them offering all school levels (from 1st to 12th/13th school year) and two schools only offering primary education. All schools are privately organised, half of them regulated by companies and sometimes organised as chains of a franchise. All schools are co-educational. Three schools are denominational schools, two Catholic and one Jewish. Most of the IB World Schools in São Paulo are bi- or trilingual (15 schools) with English and Portuguese as the languages of instruction (12 schools). The vast majority (19 schools) have English as at least one instructional language, so the IB schools in the region of São Paulo are predominantly English-based.

Eleven IB World Schools are located in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, all of them offering primary and secondary education. All of them are private and two schools are Catholic schools with a mono-educational system. The more recently founded schools are often organised in private chains. The dominant language of instruction is English. Five schools are bilingual with English and Portuguese as languages of instruction.

In the Maputo region there are three IB schools, two of them with all school levels and one that only offers secondary education (8th to 12th grade). All schools have English as instruction language and one also is bilingual (Portuguese-English). The three schools are private, two schools are members of private network of schools, one being part of an asset management firm and the other steered by a private non-governmental foundation. All schools have a denominational character and are co-educational.

Results

A) School foundation and introduction of IB

Most IB schools in the regions of São Paulo and of Lisbon are schools with a long tradition, in São Paulo even dating back to the 19th century. These schools are mostly foreign British or American schools that offered educational programmes for the families of expatriate workers that, in the case of Lisbon for example, built the Salazar Bridge (today 25 de Abril Bridge) and in São Paulo the construction of the British-owned São Paulo Railway. These traditional foreign schools gradually adopted the IB programmes since the 1980s. In São Paulo, the Chapel School, an American Catholic school, was the first school in Brazil to introduce IB, in 1980. In Lisbon, a British school, St. Julian's School, adopted the IB programmes in 1986, the first school in Portugal to do so.

In both regions, Lisbon and São Paulo, there is another group of traditional schools that are national private schools (four schools in the Lisbon region, nine schools in the São Paulo region), with a majority of native students, often with a confessional character (Catholic religion). In the Portuguese case these Catholic schools are mono-

educational. These schools introduced the IB programmes more recently, mostly after 2010.

We also observe in the regions of Lisbon and São Paulo a tendency of founding new schools. After 2000, in São Paulo 11 schools were founded, and four in Lisbon. They were often incorporated in the IB network a few years after their foundation, especially after 2010 or they opened as IB schools. In the region of São Paulo, the new schools were primarily founded due to a growing demand from the local, non-mobile population that wanted their children to get an international school diploma, whereas in the Lisbon region, the schools are attended more by a growing expatriate population that invested in this region or work for multinational companies.

In the Maputo region the foundation of the traditional foreign schools happened more recently than in the other regions: in 1990, the American International School of Mozambique was launched by the US Embassy for American expatriate workers at embassies, NGOs and multinational corporations. It was the first school in Mozambique that introduced IB, in 2005. The other two schools were only founded after 2010, providing IB diplomas since its foundation or a little time after. These schools are organised in networks across Africa.

B) Curricula, diplomas and membership

Almost all IB schools in the regions of São Paulo and Lisbon offer two or more curricula in parallel. In the case of São Paulo, we find more traditional schools that offer the curricula and diplomas of their foundation country, mostly US-American and British, and the IB ones, in some cases combined with other international curricula such as the Cambridge International General Certificate in Secondary Education (IGCSE) (five schools). Additionally, these schools also tend to provide the Brazilian national programmes (two schools). This group of foreign British or US-American schools is

also found in Lisbon although to a lesser degree than in the region of São Paulo. These schools combine foreign national curricula with the IB Diploma Programme (DP) for the upper secondary level (two schools) and, only in one case, also with the Portuguese national curricula. In the Maputo region, there is only one foreign US-American school that exclusively offers the IB programmes from the primary to the upper level of secondary education. The British and US-American IB schools in the three regions are often members of international organisations, for example, the American International Schools in the Americas (AMISA), Council of British International Schools (COBIS) or the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA).

The group of the traditional Portuguese and Brazilian private schools that adopted the IB diploma more recently, especially after 2010, includes firstly Catholic schools, for example, two schools of the Opus Dei's cooperative Fomento-Cooperativa de Centros de Ensino (Promotion-Cooperative of Education Centres) in the Lisbon region or, in São Paulo, a school of the Federação Latino-Americana de Colégios da Companhia de Jesus (FLACSI) (Latin-American Federation of Colleges of the Society of Jesus). Secondly, we find in these two regions traditional national private schools often having a membership in internationally branded school networks, for example, the Inspired Education Group in Lisbon or the SEB (Sistema Educacional Brasileiro) (Brazilian Educational System) group in São Paulo. These schools – two in Lisbon and eight in São Paulo – offer Portuguese/Brazilian national programmes and at the same time, in many cases, the IB DP diploma for the upper secondary level, sometimes as well as other international diplomas, for example the Cambridge IGCSE.

Among the schools founded after 2000, in the regions of Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo, we find a series of schools that exclusively offer IB programmes (sometimes combined with IGCSE programmes) (Lisbon four schools, São Paulo six schools,

Maputo two schools), often offering the IB curricula from the primary level to upper secondary level. Especially in the São Paulo region, we find, in addition, various newer schools that combine the national Brazilian curriculum with IB programmes (four schools). In the three regions, we observed among the new schools a trend of belonging to commercially organised networks of international education, for example the Enko education network in the Maputo region or Nord Anglia Education in São Paulo. Often these schools cooperate with companies such as Apple or Google.

C) Admission and school fees

All IB schools in the regions of São Paulo, Maputo and Lisbon are academically selective. Their admission procedures often combine standardised tests in mathematics and languages, especially English, former school records and teacher recommendations from previous schools and interviews with students and their parents. Some schools, especially the Catholic ones, additionally highlight family alignment with the values and the educative project of the schools as admission criteria. Especially in the region of Maputo, the IB schools explicitly sustain a policy of inclusion and diversity as, for example, a school characterises itself as ‘open to all students without regard to race, sex, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation or national or ethnic origin’.

In all regions, the schools are economically selective as they charge tuition fees.³ These fees increase successively according to the education level. Among the traditional foreign schools in São Paulo, Lisbon and Maputo, the US-American and British schools have the highest fees, varying between ca. 16,500 and 22,500 GBP per year. In Maputo, the school fees of one IB school are even higher (ca. 27,000 GBP per year). The fees for other foreign schools are slightly lower in São Paulo, those religious schools and traditional private Brazilian schools that have adopted the IB (ca. 11,500 to 15,000 GBP

per year). The group of traditional private Portuguese schools, including the Catholic ones in the Lisbon region present lower tuition fees (ca. 5,500 to 12,000 GBP per year).

The younger schools founded after the year 2000, increasingly organised in branded networks in the three regions, also have high school fees (ca. 11,500 to 22,000 GBP). Especially in the São Paulo region, we found that these schools justify the high fees with their exceptional educational quality as a British school points out: '[...] we firmly believe that our fees reflect the outstanding education we provide for each and every student'. Comparatively low school fees (ca. 5,000 GBP per year) were found at an IB school in Maputo, managed by a private business company, outlining that the school is able to offer an international education 'at a fraction of the cost charged by other international schools in Africa'.

There are schools in the three regions that offer a reduced number of scholarships for students with outstanding academic performances that do not have the financial resources to pay the school fees. An IB school in Maputo assures financial aid to academically successful candidates in cases where they demonstrate a need.

D) Mission, vision and values

Across the three regions, Maputo, Lisbon and São Paulo, we observed that the traditional foreign schools emphasise their link to the respective country of their foundation and related values and, at the same time, an attitude of openness for the international community and an education of global citizenship.

The more recently founded IB schools are characterised, in the region of São Paulo, by a growing tendency of identification with the Brazilian nation, culture and language, sustaining their status as 'international school' and as 'a space previously occupied by foreign schools', as an IB school highlights in its presentation. This can be explained by the fact that, especially in South America, these new schools particularly

attract local families who search for an international education. In the regions of Lisbon and Maputo, in contrast, the observed IB schools founded after 2000 have a culturally mixed population of expatriate families and local families and do not present a particular identification with the national culture of the countries where they are located.

In an analysis of mission, vision and values of the IB schools in these three lusophone regions, we found five central topics appearing with varying connotations: ‘excellence’, ‘holistic education’, ‘international mindedness and (global) citizenship’, ‘multiculturalism and peace’ as well as ‘success and leadership’ and ‘best universities in the world’. In Table 1 are some examples of the presentations of the IB schools in the three regions, that illustrate these central topics:

Table 1. Mission, vision and values.

Discussion

The recent development of IB Schools in Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo will be related to the expansion of global capitalism, considering also its variations across countries and regions. Thus, the expansion of IB was faster and more diversified in São Paulo, a commercial and financial centre of a huge national market, increasingly converted into a business capital of the Global South and also highly connected with the other world trade nodes. It was less impressive (but consistent) in Lisbon, a capital of a small country, integrated within the European market and working today as a mediation platform with other parts of the world, especially (Portuguese-speaking) America and Africa. And it is slightly emerging in Maputo, the capital of an African country beleaguered by poverty and security problems, but with a promising market, especially regarding natural resources.

Like Bunnell (2020), we assume that the field of IB Schools as a subfield of international schooling is going through a ‘transitionary phase’, where a restructuring of traditional power relations and identities takes place. The transformation tendencies that we observed in the lusophone regions require a revision of existing typologies of international schools that adequately consider the specificities of IB schools, especially in the Global South. We understand our study as a contribution in this direction.

Our analysis confirmed the accuracy of Hayden and Thompson’s (2013) typology of international schools, since most IB World Schools in these three regions fit well into one of the above-mentioned types. While type B was hardly found, the differences between a group of traditional foreign schools (type A), mostly with a US American or British origin, who have successively introduced IB programmes in parallel to their national curricula since the 1980s, and a growing number of new commercial schools providing IB curricula (type C) were particularly pervasive.

Still, these types should not be conceived as rigid and in opposition, since intense isomorphic relations and some hybridisation were also apparent. For instance, some type-A schools have recently adapted their mission, vision and values to also attract local families, assuming some features of type-C schools. Moreover, if only a few schools correspond to the type-B definition, being mostly characterised through an ‘ideological basis, bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated together with a view to promoting global peace and understanding’ (Hayden & Thompson, 2013, p. 5), multiculturalism and peace are part of the vision and values embraced by a few of the remaining schools.

The recent growth of the type-C schools in these three regions can be explained, in part, by the fact of the foundation of new schools after 2000 that in most cases combine national curricula with the IB and British or US American programmes. In the

Maputo region, we were able to observe that these schools have lower school fees than type-A or type-B schools with the purpose of making international education accessible also to a less wealthy population.

Moreover, for the Lisbon and São Paulo regions, we identified another group of traditional schools with different characteristics than the type-A schools in existing typologies. These are traditional national private schools, often with a confessional Catholic binding, that have adopted the IB programmes, especially after 2010, in addition to Portuguese or Brazilian curricula. Against this background, we propose an introduction of a type-D category, those being traditional national schools recently offering international curricula. We call them ‘internationalised schools’ (see also Poole, 2021). These schools have a local school population that can be considered as part of the traditional national elites as these schools, already before the introduction of the IB, belonged to the segment of elite education in these countries. The adoption of the IB may be seen as a strategy to ‘secure’ these families, since they are increasingly detached from national frameworks and oriented towards the global markets, but this hypothesis will need to be confirmed by further research. These schools have generally lower school fees and they are more embedded in local networks. In the Maputo region, we could not identify this school type.

Our observations of the development of IB in Portuguese-speaking countries indicate an expansion of this type of international education, especially after 2010, and through private schools that respond to a demand of socio-economic affluent local non-mobile families. This pertains to all researched lusophone regions to the non-traditional type-C schools, increasingly supported by franchising networks. Additionally, in the regions of São Paulo and Lisbon, we also found the raising of type-D ‘internationalised schools’, that is traditional private (often Catholic) schools primarily oriented towards

local families adopting IB in parallel to the national curriculum. Both the increase of private (paid) education and the ‘detachment’ of the elites from the national educational systems – tendencies that imply a ‘marginalisation of underserved communities’ (Jaafar et al., 2023, p. 538; also Maire & Windle, 2022; Wright, 2024) – tend to reinforce social and educational inequalities. With Wright (2024, p. 14) we assume in this context that international schooling for a local population can generate ‘a new layer of stratification in education systems’ that comprises ‘highly educated professionals working for multinational companies and organisations across global cities’.

In terms of the mission, vision and values of the IB World Schools in all three regions, we can observe a strong orientation in education for leadership and success that is coupled with the values of excellence and a holistic education on the one hand, and international mindedness, global citizenship and an education for peace, on the other. Notably, despite the vague references to multiculturalism, only in São Paulo did we find a concern with promoting also the national identity and culture, but even in that case, it was only in a minority of schools.

While the reference to excellence – which in many schools was understood as the idea ‘to achieve the best in everyone’ – is a central topic of the school mission and vision of all school types (e.g. Torres & Palhares, 2017; Schippling & Abrantes, 2018), the traditional type-A schools focus primarily on providing an education to ‘nurture people and cultivate international mindedness and a sense of global citizenship’ and the few type-B schools are oriented towards ‘the desire for peace’ and ‘enhancing multiculturalism around the world’. The non-traditional type-C and the traditional national type-D schools are more oriented to leadership and success as well as also being ‘a launchpad to the world’s best universities’, linked to the topic of excellence

and holistic education. A school in the region of São Paulo characterises their students as: ‘confident ethical leaders who make a positive difference to our global society’.

These results of the analysis of school missions and visions refer to the ‘astonishing similarities’ of the predispositions of global managers and the IB learners that Resnik (2008) has shown in her reflections on the construction of a global worker through international education. For Resnik (2008, p. 162) the attributes of an IB learner ‘are at the heart of the new capitalism representing basic characteristics needed to succeed as a global manager’. Against this background the IB can be seen as ‘an agenda of global capitalism within the education space’ (Jaafar et al., 2023, p. 538).

Final remarks

The global expansion of international schooling has been impressive during the last few decades and research on this topic is still limited, especially for the lusophone space. This article provides a first characterisation of this movement in three main Portuguese-speaking areas, located in different world regions. Although slower, for instance, than in many Spanish speaking countries, the growth of this kind of education is impressive. As Thompson and Hayden (2013) observed in other countries, such movements appear to be leveraged by three different types of international schools: traditional foreign schools; ideologically-motivated schools; and new commercial schools. Still, besides seeing a scarce presence of the second profile, in our analysis we also observed in Lisbon and São Paulo a fourth type of school, one that we called ‘internationalised’: national (sometimes Catholic) private elite schools that have introduced IB in the last decades. Since there are many schools of this type in Portuguese-speaking countries, this could be a ‘game-changer’ in the field of international education, so it will be interesting to observe over the following years if this trend will be pursued by others.

The information available in public databases and institutional websites has obvious limitations. Still, it provides an overview of international schooling trends and generates some key questions, as a first step of a wider research, paving the stage for the fieldwork to be carried out during the next few years in these three regions. Three main promising clues to guide further research on this topic were raised.

First of all, it is important to understand the slower growth of international schooling in the Portuguese-speaking space, in comparison with other countries of the same regions (namely, Southern Europe, Latin America and Southern Africa). A more centralised and public-based education system, as well as the fact that Portuguese is not an official language of the IB system are possible explanations. Interviews with IB representatives, school leaders and members of educational administration may be useful in order to understand institutional, cultural, economic and political factors associated with this pattern. For instance, the embeddedness of IB in national education systems is a key issue to explore in these three contexts, highly centralised by the state during the 20th century, but increasingly permeated to private (global) interests, in a post-colonial (or neo-colonial) era.

Secondly, it is important to explore schools' motivations, strategies and challenges of using the 'international' brand, and particularly why they become a member of IB. The economic rationale (expenses and profits) is obviously a key dimension, but ideological and social processes are also fundamental. The social embeddedness of international schools is a paramount issue for its growth, and it may vary considerably in time and space. Additionally, as the process is being expanded and embracing different kinds of schools, one may wonder what the meanings of 'internationalisation' in each school are and what effects will follow on curricula.

Similarities and differences between schools in Lisbon, São Paulo and Maputo should be very interesting to explore.

Finally, research is missing on family strategies and students' pathways, especially in relation to global capitalism development and the reconfiguration of class relations. For instance, if the increase in international schooling may be associated both with the circulation of a global elite and the expectations of a local wealthy class, ambitious to become part of such a global elite (or at least to be otherwise well connected), one may wonder if such a path is being provided, and if it means a disconnection regarding the national structural and cultural frames. Moreover, the primacy of English culture and language in the international schooling movement – and particularly in IB World Schools – must be also examined, since the hegemony of United States (and of the English language) has been apparent since the turn of the millennium, but has also been challenged by perspectives on a multipolar frame, including new nationalist and regionalist movements.

Notes

1. Following Hayden and Thompson (2013, p. 4), our research is grounded on a broad concept of international schools, including all schools that provide at least one 'curriculum that is not of the "host country" (the country in which they are located)'.
2. In the case of São Paulo, our study refers to the expanded metropolitan complex, also known as the São Paulo Macrometropolis, which includes the metropolitan regions of São Paulo, Baixada Santista, Campinas, Vale do Paraíba and Litoral Norte and Sorocaba, as well as the urban agglomerations of Jundiaí and Piracicaba and the Bragantina region (Tavares 2018, p. 2).
3. Some schools do not have an indication of school fees in their (online) presentation documents. For that reason, the indicated values are average values. Our indications are based on the values of the upper secondary level, which has the highest fees.

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Table 1. Mission, vision and values.

	São Paulo	Lisbon	Maputo
excellence	‘to achieve the best in everyone’	‘we challenge ourselves and each other to do our best’	‘excellence by empowering learners to achieve mastery of self, advance their communities, and flourish in an ever-changing world’
holistic education	‘a collective exercise, which for us must integrate intellectual, social, emotional and physical development’	‘the integral and global development of the human person’	‘holistic education to young leaders’
international mindedness and (global) citizenship	‘making them citizens of the world, capable of dreaming, creating and performing’	‘nurture people and cultivate international mindedness and a sense of global citizenship’	‘unlock learners’ potential across Africa to enhance the global future’
multiculturalism and peace	‘citizens who are the dawn of Hope, who awaken in	‘promote and enhance multiculturalism	‘a pluralistic tradition in which other views,

	themselves and in others the desire for peace'	around the world'	ethnicities, religions and perspectives are valued'
success and leadership	students as 'confident ethical leaders who make a positive difference to our global society'	'guiding and inspiring students to be successful and happy in their adult lives'	'to prepare them for leadership, service and lifelong learning – and to succeed in a globally competitive world'
best universities in the world	'a first-rate education, which enables graduating students to enter excellent Brazilian and international universities'	'a two-year programme recognised by the best universities in the world'	'provide our students with a launchpad to the world's best universities'