


**MAPPING INTERNATIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL****MAPEAMENTO DE FONTES INTERNACIONAIS DE FINANCIAMENTO PARA PROJETOS CULTURAIS E EDUCACIONAIS NO NORDESTE DO BRASIL****MAPEO DE FUENTES DE FINANCIAMIENTO INTERNACIONAL PARA PROYECTOS CULTURALES Y EDUCATIVOS EN EL NORESTE DE BRASIL** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.030-007>**Jonnas Costa da Silva<sup>1</sup>****ABSTRACT**

This article maps the international sources of funds for cultural (including the conservation of historical heritage) and educational projects in Brazil, with an emphasis on the Northeast region, in the period from 2021 to the present. Following a documentary research methodology, multilateral development banks, bilateral cooperation agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the financing of these projects were identified. The sources of financing are classified by type of support – repayable loans, non-repayable grants, and technical cooperation – according to the guidelines of the Mapping Development Finance Institutions Worldwide report by Xu et al. (2019). The results include tables listing types of institutions and modalities of support, as well as concrete examples of internationally supported cultural and educational projects, highlighting the volume and nature of investments destined to the Northeast. The analysis indicates that while development banks account for the largest volumes of resources (mainly via loans) in education and culture, grantmaking partnerships and technical cooperation play a crucial role in strengthening institutions and reaching vulnerable communities. There is a significant concentration of international initiatives in northeastern states, given the regional socioeconomic disparities, including educational programs of municipal scope and cultural preservation projects. Finally, the article discusses implications for public management and provides subsidies for the visualization in a conceptual map of the relationships between funding sources and support modalities.

**Keywords:** International Financing. Cultural Projects. Educational Projects. Northeast Brazil. International Cooperation.

**RESUMO**

Este artigo mapeia as fontes internacionais de recursos destinadas a projetos culturais (incluindo a conservação do patrimônio histórico) e educacionais no Brasil, com ênfase na região Nordeste, no período de 2021 até o presente. Seguindo uma metodologia de pesquisa documental, foram identificados bancos multilaterais de desenvolvimento, agências de cooperação bilateral e organizações não-governamentais (ONGs) internacionais atuantes no financiamento desses projetos. As fontes de financiamento são classificadas por modalidade de apoio – empréstimos reembolsáveis, doações não-reembolsáveis e cooperação técnica – conforme diretrizes do relatório Mapping Development Finance Institutions Worldwide de Xu et al. (2019). Os resultados incluem tabelas relacionando tipos de instituições e modalidades de apoio, bem como exemplos concretos de projetos culturais e educacionais

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apoiados internacionalmente, destacando o volume e a natureza dos investimentos destinados ao Nordeste. A análise indica que, embora os bancos de desenvolvimento respondam pelos maiores volumes de recursos (principalmente via empréstimos) em educação e cultura, parcerias de doação e cooperação técnica desempenham papel crucial no fortalecimento institucional e no alcance de comunidades vulneráveis. Observa-se uma concentração significativa de iniciativas internacionais em estados nordestinos, dadas as disparidades socioeconômicas regionais, incluindo programas educacionais de abrangência municipal e projetos de preservação cultural. Ao final, o artigo discute implicações para a gestão pública e fornece subsídios para a visualização em um mapa conceitual das relações entre fontes de financiamento e modalidades de apoio.

**Palavras-chave:** Financiamento Internacional. Projetos Culturais. Projetos Educacionais. Nordeste do Brasil. Cooperação Internacional.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo mapea las fuentes internacionales de financiamiento asignadas a proyectos culturales (incluida la conservación del patrimonio histórico) y educativos en Brasil, con énfasis en la región Nordeste, desde 2021 hasta el presente. Siguiendo una metodología de investigación documental, se identificaron bancos multilaterales de desarrollo, agencias de cooperación bilateral y organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) internacionales activas en el financiamiento de estos proyectos. Las fuentes de financiamiento se clasifican por tipo de apoyo (préstamos reembolsables, donaciones no reembolsables y cooperación técnica) de acuerdo con las directrices del informe Mapping Development Finance Institutions Worldwide de Xu et al. (2019). Los resultados incluyen tablas que enumeran los tipos de instituciones y modalidades de apoyo, así como ejemplos concretos de proyectos culturales y educativos apoyados internacionalmente, destacando el volumen y la naturaleza de las inversiones asignadas al Nordeste. El análisis indica que, si bien los bancos de desarrollo representan los mayores volúmenes de recursos (principalmente a través de préstamos) en educación y cultura, las asociaciones de donaciones y la cooperación técnica desempeñan un papel crucial en el fortalecimiento de las instituciones y en llegar a las comunidades vulnerables. Existe una concentración significativa de iniciativas internacionales en los estados del noreste, dadas las disparidades socioeconómicas regionales, incluidos programas educativos a nivel municipal y proyectos de preservación cultural. Finalmente, el artículo analiza las implicaciones para la gestión pública y proporciona apoyo para visualizar las relaciones entre las fuentes de financiamiento y las modalidades de apoyo en un mapa conceptual.

**Palabras clave:** Financiamento Internacional. Proyectos Culturales. Proyectos Educativos. Nordeste de Brasil. Cooperación Internacional.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Brazil has accessed several international sources of financing to complement domestic resources in social development projects, notably in the areas of education and culture. These international partnerships become especially relevant in less developed regions, such as the Northeast of Brazil, which concentrates some of the lowest socioeconomic indicators in the country. Despite the advances, the Northeast continues to face challenges such as high poverty rates and less access to quality services. In this context, external resources can leverage educational improvement programs and cultural heritage preservation initiatives, reducing regional inequalities and promoting inclusion.

Attracting international funding for cultural projects – including conservation of historical heritage – and educational projects is part of the country's development agenda and is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as quality education (SDG 4) and reduction of inequalities (SDG 10). In Brazil, the articulation with these sources involves multiple actors: from federal agencies (ministries, the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage – Iphan), state and municipal governments, to civil society organizations. However, the mapping of these international sources and their recent contributions lacks systematization, making it difficult to visualize the panorama of external support available for culture and education.

This article seeks to fill this gap by mapping and analyzing international sources of funds directed to cultural and educational projects in Brazil, with a focus on the Northeast, in the period from 2021 onwards. The choice of this recent interval is justified by the need to understand the post-2020 scenario, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and by new international cooperation strategies aimed at socioeconomic recovery. The study identifies the main categories of international financiers – multilateral development banks, bilateral cooperation agencies and international NGOs – and classifies the modalities of support offered (loans, grants and technical cooperation). Next, the geographic and sectoral distribution of the supported projects is analyzed, highlighting the volume and nature of the financing destined to the Northeast region, which historically benefits from programs aimed at reducing regional inequalities.

The relevance of the theme is evidenced by the need for public managers to know the available international financing options and their characteristics, in order to enhance fundraising for cultural and educational initiatives. In addition, understanding the modalities of support – for example, differences between repayable loans and grants – is

crucial to tailor projects to the requirements of each source and to assess long-term impacts on public finances. In the end, it is expected that the mapping presented here will serve as a basis for the elaboration of a conceptual map integrating sources and modalities of support, assisting policymakers and researchers in visualizing these relationships and identifying opportunities for international cooperation in favor of cultural and educational development.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES

The conceptual basis of this study lies in the literature on international development cooperation and in the typologies of development finance institutions. Xu, Ren, and Wu (2019) propose a global mapping of these institutions, defining their rationalities, varieties, and modalities of action. One of the key approaches is the classification of financing by type of support, which may include: (a) repayable loans, typically provided by development banks; (b) non-reimbursable donations, typical of cooperation agencies and international funds; and (c) technical cooperation, which involves knowledge transfer, training and technical assistance without generating debt.

In the Brazilian context, the analysis of international cooperation for development gains specific contours when we consider the contributions of national researchers. Pessina et al. (2022) conducted a pioneering macro-analysis of Brazilian public sector projects and programs that received external funding from multilateral and bilateral organizations between 2000 and 2020. The authors identified a significant inflection in the external financing received by Brazil in the post-2015 period, moving towards the current agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research shows how the characteristics of international financing reflect the agendas and guidelines of International Development Cooperation (ICD), demonstrating the influence of international organizations on national public policies.

The perspective of Pessina et al. (2022) is complemented by the analysis of Fadul and Coelho (2022), who highlight the importance of multilevel governance in the implementation of international cooperation projects. The authors argue that the System of International Development Cooperation (ICS) not only provides financial resources, but also shapes public policies of developing countries through specific conditionalities and guidelines. This theoretical approach is fundamental to understand how international

funding for cultural and educational projects in the Brazilian Northeast is part of a broader logic of development cooperation.

Monteiro (2022) contributes to this discussion by analysing how international support modalities have different implications for beneficiaries. According to the author, loans add substantial resources, but imply obligations for future payment, while donations relieve the local budget but are usually linked to specific objectives and rigorous accountability. Technical cooperation, in turn, strengthens institutional capacities and the sustainability of projects, often complementing financial contributions. This typology is essential to understand the different international funding strategies applied to the cultural and educational sectors.

## 2.2 BRAZILIAN CULTURAL POLICIES AND INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

The field of Brazilian cultural policies has been the subject of extensive academic analysis, particularly regarding funding mechanisms and recent institutional transformations. Rubim (2007) offers a fundamental historical perspective by analyzing the "sad traditions" of cultural policies in Brazil, identifying patterns of discontinuity, absence and authoritarianism that have marked the trajectory of public actions in the cultural area since the 1930s. The author argues that these traditions have created a scenario of institutional fragility that makes international funding a strategic alternative for the development of cultural projects.

The analysis of Rubim (2007) is complemented by the studies of Calabre (2007), who outlines a comprehensive panorama of Brazilian cultural policies from the 1930s to the twenty-first century. Calabre points out that the trajectory of public actions related to culture in Brazil has been marked by periods of advances and setbacks, with moments of greater institutionalization alternating with phases of dismantling of the structures created. This historical instability explains, in part, the growing importance of international funding as a complementary source of funds for cultural projects, especially in regions such as the Northeast, where socioeconomic disparities are more pronounced.

Silva, F. A. B. (2017) deepens the discussion on cultural funding in contemporary Brazil, specifically analyzing the dynamics of cultural funding in the Brazilian federal government from 1995 to 2013. The author identifies the structural limits of federal cultural funding and argues that the participation of international sources can contribute to overcoming some of these limitations, especially with regard to innovative and regional projects. Silva points out that international funding for culture in Brazil is not limited to

financial resources but also includes knowledge transfer and cultural management methodologies.

The regional perspective of cultural policies is specifically addressed by Barbalho (2004), who analyzes cultural policies in the contemporary Northeast. The author argues that the Northeast region has developed strategies for articulation with international sources of financing, taking advantage of its rich cultural diversity and historical heritage to attract foreign resources. Barbalho identifies that the cultural policies of the Northeast have been characterized by a greater openness to international cooperation, because of both regional needs and the opportunities created by the international appreciation of Brazilian culture.

Silva, R. M. D. (2014) contributes to this discussion by analyzing the institutional changes undergone by Brazilian cultural policies in contemporary times and how these configurations have produced new forms of cultural agency. The author points out that the political-institutional transformations intensified during the Lula government created a more favorable environment for international fundraising, through the reinsertion of culture in the national political agenda, the internalization of cultural initiatives and the pluralization of identity. These changes facilitated the establishment of international partnerships and the implementation of cultural projects with external support.

## 2.3 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The field of Brazilian educational policies has been deeply influenced by international cooperation, as shown by several national academic studies. Cury (2019) analyzes inclusive and compensatory policies in basic education, highlighting how international funding has contributed to the implementation of programs aimed at reducing educational inequalities. The author argues that the right to education, as a fundamental human right, justifies the search for external resources when domestic resources are insufficient to guarantee quality education for all.

Cury's (2019) perspective on the financing of education is complemented by the studies of Dourado (2023), who specifically analyzes the National Education System and the obstacles to the right to education in the Brazilian federative context. Dourado points out that international cooperation has played an important role in overcoming some of these obstacles, especially through technical assistance and knowledge transfer programs. The author identifies that states and municipalities in the Northeast have



particularly benefited from this cooperation, given that they face greater challenges in the implementation of effective educational policies.

Oliveira (2009) offers a critical analysis of the educational policies implemented during the Lula government, identifying both ruptures and permanences in relation to previous governments. The author points out that the period was marked by a greater openness to international cooperation in the educational area, with the implementation of various programs supported by multilateral organizations. Oliveira argues that this cooperation has brought benefits in terms of resources and knowledge, but has also generated tensions related to the conditionalities imposed by international funders.

Oliveira's (2015) analysis of Brazilian educational policy between efficiency and democratic inclusion is particularly relevant to understand how international financing is inserted in educational development strategies. The author identifies that international organizations have promoted an agenda that combines concerns with efficiency and equity, influencing the formulation of educational policies in Brazil. This influence is especially visible in programs aimed at basic education and the reduction of regional inequalities.

## 2.4 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Understanding the dynamics of international funding for cultural and educational projects in the Brazilian Northeast requires an analysis of the specificities of regional development. Araújo (2020) offers a fundamental perspective on the development of the Northeast, analyzing the recent transformations and prospects of the region. The author points out that the Brazilian Northeast, despite the advances of recent decades, still faces significant challenges in terms of socioeconomic development, which justifies the search for external resources to complement domestic investments.

Araújo (2020) argues that regional development in the Northeast should be thought of in an integrated way, considering not only the economic aspects, but also the cultural and educational dimensions. The author identifies that international funding has contributed to this integrated approach, supporting projects that combine economic development with cultural preservation and educational improvement. This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding how external resources can contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive development model in the region.

Araújo's analysis of family farming and regional development complements the discussion on international financing, highlighting how small projects supported by

international organizations can have significant impacts on local development. The author identifies that many international cooperation initiatives in the Northeast have focused on strengthening local capacities and valuing regional culture, contributing to a development model that respects local specificities.

## 2.5 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND MULTILATERALISM

The discussion on international financing for cultural and educational projects in Brazil should also consider the recent transformations in the multilateral system. Bolle (2020) analyzes multilateralism in times of uncertainty and its implications for Brazil, highlighting how changes in the international scenario affect opportunities for cooperation. The author argues that Brazil needs to adapt its international cooperation strategies to new geopolitical realities, taking advantage of the opportunities created by new multilateral arrangements and South-South partnerships.

Bolle's perspective on the reform of the international financial system and its implications for the Brazilian regulatory context is relevant to understanding how changes in multilateral financial institutions affect access to external resources. The author points out that these transformations create both opportunities and challenges for countries like Brazil, which partially depend on external financing to implement social development policies.

## 2.6 THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY

The review of the national literature on international cooperation, cultural and educational policies, and regional development offers a robust theoretical framework for the analysis of international funding for cultural and educational projects in the Brazilian Northeast. The studies analyzed converge on some fundamental points: (1) the importance of international financing as a complement to domestic resources; (2) the need to understand regional specificities in the implementation of cooperation projects; (3) the role of institutional transformations in facilitating or hindering access to external resources; and (4) the importance of technical cooperation and knowledge transfer beyond financial resources.

This national theoretical basis, combined with international perspectives on financing for development, provides the necessary conceptual foundation for the empirical analysis that will be presented in the following sections. The contribution of Brazilian authors is fundamental to understand the specificities of the national and



regional context, offering insights that would not be possible based on international literature alone.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This study is characterized as exploratory and descriptive research, with a qualitative and quantitative approach, based entirely on secondary data. The methodology adopted is in line with the guidelines proposed by Pessina et al. (2022) for the analysis of external funding in Brazil, adapting them specifically to the context of cultural and educational projects in the Northeast. Information was collected from public and institutional databases between 2021 and 2025, including official documents, reports from international organizations, press releases, and project repositories.

The main sources consulted include: (a) multilateral development banks – World Bank and IDB websites to identify projects approved in Brazil as of 2021; (b) bilateral cooperation agencies – government portals (e.g., USAID, GIZ, JICA, French Development Agency) and the website of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) to capture cooperation initiatives in the cultural and educational field; and (c) international organizations and NGOs – annual reports from UNESCO and UNICEF in Brazil, news from Iphan about international partnerships, and websites of NGOs such as World Vision and Save the Children operating in the country.

Data collection focused on projects completed or underway between 2021 and 2025, to reflect the current landscape. Cultural projects (such as restoration of historical heritage, preservation of intangible heritage, promotion of creative industries) and educational projects (from basic and professional education to educational inclusion and training initiatives) were considered. Each project identified had its characteristics documented: funding source (lead institution and eventual partners), type of support (loan, donation, technical cooperation), geographic scope (national, regional Northeast or specific states), execution period and, whenever possible, financial amount involved.

To classify the sources and modalities of support, we adopted the guidelines proposed by Xu et al. (2019) in the report Mapping Development Finance Institutions Worldwide, adapted to the Brazilian context and enriched with the contributions of national authors such as Silva, F. A. B. (2017) on cultural financing and Dourado (2023) on educational cooperation. Initially, we categorized the sources into three groups:

**Multilateral development banks** – multilateral international financial institutions that provide credit for development (e.g., World Bank, IDB, Development Bank of Latin America – CAF).

**Bilateral cooperation agencies** – government agencies of donor countries that fund projects in other countries, either through grants or technical cooperation (e.g., United States Agency for International Development – USAID; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – GIZ/Germany; JICA/Japan Agency; French Development Agency – AFD; among others).

**International organizations and NGOs** – here we include agencies of the UN system (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.) and international NGOs/foundations (e.g., World Monuments Fund, Ford Foundation, World Vision, Save the Children) that provide resources or expertise.

Then, for each identified source, we classified the predominant support modality, following the typology developed by Monteiro (2022) and adapted to the context of cultural and educational projects. This classification followed three main types:

**Loan (repayable):** financial support that generates an obligation for repayment by the beneficiary, usually granted to federal, state or municipal governments. Example: IDB loan for the expansion of secondary education, with a defined term and interest.

**Donation (non-refundable):** financial contribution that does not require reimbursement, and may come in the form of a grant or sponsorship. Example: donations to the Amazon Fund for environmental conservation, a non-reimbursable modality that totaled R\$ 3.4 billion, mainly from the Norwegian government.

**Technical cooperation:** support in the form of knowledge, training, technical assistance or non-monetary goods. It involves sending consultants, promoting exchanges, preparing studies, etc., often formalized by terms of cooperation. Example: 2024 IPHAN-UNESCO-ABC agreement for training and technical support in the management of cultural heritage projects in 37 municipalities.

The collected data were then organized into matrices, allowing the assembly of classification and relationship tables. The first table lists categories of sources and modalities of support offered, showing, for example, which types of institutions tend to operate via loan, or via donation, or both. The second table lists the specific sources to the projects identified in the period, detailing the type of support and the region benefited

(with emphasis on projects in the Northeast). This systematization allows for the elaboration of a conceptual map, in which the different actors and modalities are connected to compose the ecosystem of international funding in the culture and education sector.

It should be noted that the reliability of the data was guaranteed by the priority given to official and verified sources. The financial amounts and project descriptions were extracted from documents or institutional news, cited according to the format adopted. As these were secondary data, there was no application of primary collection instruments (interviews, questionnaires), but rather analysis of the content of documents. The triangulation of sources (comparing, for example, information from the donor and the recipient on the same project) was used when possible to validate the information, following the methodological recommendations of Fadul and Coelho (2022) for international cooperation studies.

## 4 RESULTS

The results of the mapping are presented in two sections: first, a table of classification of international sources according to the modalities of support; then, a synthesis of the sectoral and geographic distribution of the financed projects, focusing on concrete examples in the Northeast of Brazil. The analysis of the data confirms many of the trends identified by Pessina et al. (2022) in their study on external financing in Brazil, but reveals important specificities when the focus is directed to the cultural and educational sectors in the Northeast region.

### 4.1 CLASSIFICATION OF SOURCES BY SUPPORT MODALITY

Table 1 below summarizes the main categories of international funding sources and the modalities of support they usually provide to cultural and educational projects in Brazil, according to data collected between 2021 and 2025. This classification dialogues with the typologies proposed by Silva, F. A. B. (2017) for cultural funding and by Dourado (2023) for international educational cooperation.

**Table 1**

*Categories of international sources and modalities of support to Brazil (2021-2025)*

Source Category	Examples of Institutions	Predominant Support Modalities
Multilateral development banks	World Bank (IBRD), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), New Development Bank (NDB – BRICS)	Sovereign repayable loans (to governments) for sectoral projects; associated technical cooperation (assistance in the preparation and implementation of projects). Rarely direct grants, except via specific trust funds. Ex: IDB loan of US\$ 250 million for the expansion of secondary education in Brazil.
Bilateral cooperation agencies	USAID (USA), GIZ (Germany), JICA (Japan), AFD (France), AECID (Spain), UK Aid (UK)	Donations and grants for pilot projects, capacity building and social investment; bilateral technical cooperation (sending experts, equipment, training). They may offer concessional loans via country development banks (e.g., JICA, AFD), although less frequent in the cultural/educational sector. Ex: Agreement for the donation of Norwegian cooperation to the Amazon Fund – non-refundable modality.
Multilateral organizations (UN) and funds	UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank (trust fund), European Union (cooperation instruments)	Grants and multilateral technical cooperation – there is usually no loan, but non-repayable resources for specific projects and technical assistance. Ex: UNESCO-ABC partnership with R\$ 18 million for technical support to works of the Cultural PAC. UNICEF programs in municipalities (UNICEF Label)

Source Category	Examples of Institutions	Predominant Support Modalities
		offer technical assistance and awards in recognition, not direct funding.
International NGOs and foundations	World Monuments Fund, Save the Children, World Vision, Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Open Society, etc.	Grants and partnerships in local projects, usually small to medium scale, and technical cooperation via direct implementation. They work in collaboration with Brazilian CSOs and local governments. Ex: World Vision and Telefónica Foundation (Spain) implemented play spaces in 8 schools in the Northeast through the donation of equipment and play methodology. Another example: World Monuments Fund supporting the restoration of the Convent of São Francisco in Olinda (PE) with international sponsorship.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on data from 2021-2025.

The table above shows patterns that corroborate Rubom's (2007) analyses of the "sad traditions" of Brazilian cultural policies and the consequent importance of international funding. Multilateral banks stand out for their high financial volumes via loans, while bilateral agencies and international organizations tend to offer non-reimbursable resources and technical support. NGOs complement this ecosystem with action focused on specific communities and heritage, usually by contributing donations or mobilizing specialized volunteers.

This distribution of modalities also reflects the observations of Barbalho (2004) about the specific strategies developed by the Northeast for articulation with international sources. The region has particularly benefited from donation and technical cooperation modalities, which are better aligned with the characteristics of local cultural and educational projects, often focused on heritage preservation and capacity building.

## 4.2 FUNDED CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS (2021-2025)

A series of relevant projects were identified in the time frame considered, confirming the trends of regional concentration identified by Araújo (2020) in his studies on the development of the Northeast. The sectoral distribution includes both basic and professional education and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Table 2 summarizes concrete examples of projects supported by international sources, highlighting those implemented in the Northeast of Brazil.

**Table 2**

*Examples of cultural and educational projects (2021-2025) and their sources of international support*

Project (Location/Scope, Start Year)	Description and Objective	International Source and Support Modality	Geographic Focus
High School Reform Support Program (Full-Time High School) – Ministry of Education (MEC), 2021.	Implementation of the new high school curriculum and expansion of full-time schools across the country.	World Bank (IBRD) – \$250 million programmatic loan linked to educational improvement goals; disbursements upon compliance with indicators (e.g., increase in the completion rate).	National (benefiting states in the Northeast with high school dropout).
Project "Sowing Culture of Peace in Schools" – UNESCO Brazil, 2021.	Training of educators and production of pedagogical material to promote a culture of peace and prevention of violence in public schools.	UNESCO – Technical cooperation and financial support (grant) via the Criança Esperança programme; partnership with the Ministry of Education.	Pilot in schools in the urban periphery (includes capitals in the Northeast).
Iphan-UNESCO-ABC – PAC Historic Cities Agreement – 2024.	Strengthening the management of historical heritage restoration works financed by the Growth	UNESCO and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) – Technical cooperation with a contribution of R\$	37 municipalities in 17 states (covering several in the Northeast, e.g., Olinda-PE, São Luís-MA).



Project (Location/Scope, Start Year)	Description and Objective	International Source and Support Modality	Geographic Focus
	Acceleration Program (PAC). It includes training in conservation and heritage education.	18 million (federal government fund via UNESCO) for consulting, training and technical supervision.	
Basic Education Improvement Project in the State of Alagoas – 2022.	Investments in school infrastructure, teacher training and educational management to reduce dropout and increase learning in Alagoas.	World Bank (IBRD) – Sector loan within a package of US\$ 277.4 million approved for sustainability and public services in Alagoas. Includes component for education (building schools and improving teaching).	Estadual (Alagoas – NE).
UNICEF Seal – 2021-2024 Edition (UNICEF Brazil).	Initiative that mobilizes and trains municipal managers to improve childhood and adolescence indicators (education, health, protection). Municipalities that meet goals receive certification ("Seal").	UNICEF – Multilateral technical cooperation, with methodological support, training and monitoring. There is no direct financial transfer, but the program encouraged 2,023 municipalities to join, of which 933 in the North/Northeast were certified in 2023.	Regional (933 municipalities in the Northeast and North received the UNICEF Seal).
Play Spaces in Public Schools – World Vision & Telefónica Foundation, 2021.	Creation of playful learning spaces (toy libraries and creativity laboratories) in elementary schools to improve the socio-emotional development of children.	World Vision (international NGO) + Telefónica Foundation (Spain) – Donation of equipment, teaching materials and technical assistance for implementation in 8	Regional (Northeast – benefited schools in PE, PB, CE and BA).

Project (Location/Scope, Start Year)	Description and Objective	International Source and Support Modality	Geographic Focus
		schools. Partnership with municipal education departments.	
Conservation of the Intangible Heritage of Frevo – Recife, 2022.	Project for the registration, safeguarding and promotion of Frevo (traditional dance/music of Pernambuco) including workshops in communities and historical documentation.	UNESCO Cultural Funds – Support via the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (small grant); Ford Foundation – co-funding (grant) for local cultural organizations.	Local/Regional (Recife and Olinda, PE – Northeast).
Museu Nacional Vive – Rio de Janeiro (reconstruction of the National Museum), 2023.	Reconstruction of historic buildings and the collection of the National Museum/UFRJ after the 2018 fire; It includes museum modernization and security.	UNESCO and the European Union – Technical cooperation and attracting international donations. The EU expressed support for the recomposition of collections and the mobilisation of European partners. It also has donations from foreign governments and international museums (donation modality).	Project outside the NE (Rio de Janeiro), but exemplary of international cultural cooperation in Brazil.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on the data collected (2021-2025).

The examples in Table 2 illustrate the diversity of supported initiatives and confirm the analyses of Silva, R. M. D. (2014) on the new forms of cultural agency produced by recent institutional changes. It is noted that in the education sector there were significant loans from multilateral banks aimed at broad reforms (such as secondary education and

state education programs), while in the cultural sector many actions took place through technical cooperation and donations, often multilaterally (UNESCO) or by foundations.

In particular, the broad participation of northeastern municipalities in programs such as the UNICEF Seal stands out, which signals a strong presence of international cooperation in the region aimed at improving basic social indicators. This pattern corroborates Cury's (2019) observations on the importance of inclusive and compensatory policies in basic education, especially in regions with greater socioeconomic challenges.

Among the projects listed, at least five have a direct impact on the Northeast region (either state coverage or multiple municipalities). Some national projects also benefit the Northeast proportionally more, given the greater need – for example, the expansion of full-time secondary education tends to prioritize states with higher dropout rates, many of which are in the Northeast. Cultural projects such as Frevo and historical heritage include manifestations and sites located in this region, demonstrating the international interest in preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Northeast, as highlighted by Calabre (2007) in his studies on the trajectory of Brazilian cultural policies.

## 5 DISCUSSION

From the results, it is possible to draw an overview of international involvement in culture and education in Brazil and, more specifically, in the Northeast, which dialogues with the main contributions of the national literature on the subject. The findings confirm many of the trends identified by Pessina et al. (2022) in their macro-analysis of external financing in Brazil but reveal important specificities when the focus is directed to the cultural and educational sectors in the Northeast region.

### 5.1 MULTILATERAL BANKS AND EDUCATIONAL FINANCING

It is observed that multilateral development banks continue to be central actors in terms of financial volume, confirming Oliveira's (2009) analysis of the influence of international organizations on Brazilian educational policies. World Bank and IDB loans approved between 2021 and 2025 allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to educational projects in Brazil, including northeastern states. The case of Alagoas is emblematic: a loan of about US\$ 277 million was granted in 2025 with the aim of strengthening public management and expanding essential services, including education, in one of the most vulnerable states in the country.

This strategy of directing external resources to regions where educational indicators are more fragile is in line with Dourado's (2023) propositions on the need to overcome obstacles to the right to education in the Brazilian federative context. The author points out that international cooperation has played an important role in overcoming these obstacles, especially through technical assistance and knowledge transfer programs, and states and municipalities in the Northeast have particularly benefited from this cooperation.

However, loans of this magnitude involve counterparts and institutional adjustments that deserve critical analysis. As Oliveira (2015) observes, international organizations promote an agenda that combines concerns with efficiency and equity, but which can also generate tensions related to the conditionalities imposed. Loan projects often condition disbursements on the achievement of goals (such as implementing a new curriculum or increasing enrollment), which can have positive effects on results-based management but bring execution challenges for local governments.

States in the Northeast, often with fiscal constraints, need to balance the immediate benefit of the investment with the future budget commitment. This tension is particularly relevant when we consider Cury's (2019) observations on the need for inclusive and compensatory policies in basic education. The author argues that the right to education, as a fundamental human right, justifies the search for external resources, but it is crucial that these resources do not compromise the autonomy of local educational policies.

## 5.2 TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In the field of non-reimbursable bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the Northeast region appears as a priority in several initiatives, confirming Araújo's (2020) analyses of the specificities of northeastern regional development. The UNICEF Seal is a paradigmatic example: focused on the North and Northeast, it mobilized 1,134 municipalities in these regions (out of the 2,023 participating cities throughout Brazil) and certified 933 that achieved improvements in education, health and child protection.

Although it does not involve the transfer of financial resources, this intensive technical cooperation has a catalytic effect that is in line with the propositions of Dourado (2023) on the importance of technical assistance in overcoming educational obstacles. Trained municipalities raise federal funds better and improve their public policies. The

value of the partnership is not measured in money, but in capacity building and concrete social results (drop in school dropout, increase in immunized children, etc.).

This perspective is in line with the observations of Silva, R. M. D. (2014) on the new forms of cultural and political agency produced by recent institutional changes. The author highlights that the political-institutional transformations have created a more favorable environment for international fundraising and the establishment of partnerships that go beyond financing, including knowledge transfer and methodologies.

### 5.3 CULTURAL FUNDING AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION

The geographical distribution of the mapped international resources indicates a significant focus on the Northeast, corroborating the analyses of Barbalho (2004) on the specific strategies developed by the region for articulation with international sources of cultural funding. The author identifies that the cultural policies of the Northeast have been characterized by a greater openness to international cooperation, as a result of both regional needs and the opportunities created by the international appreciation of Brazilian culture.

Cultural projects such as Frevo and historical heritage include manifestations and sites located in the Northeast region, demonstrating the international interest in preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Northeast. This trend confirms the observations of Calabre (2007) on the growing importance of international funding as a complementary source of resources for cultural projects, especially in contexts of instability of national cultural policies.

Silva, F. A. B. (2017) contributes to this discussion by highlighting that international funding for culture in Brazil is not limited to financial resources, but also includes knowledge transfer and cultural management methodologies. The IPHAN-UNESCO-ABC agreement, although it involves funds mostly from the Brazilian government, integrates international expertise and illustrates the importance of partnerships to ensure the proper execution of restoration works.

### 5.4 SUPPORT MODALITIES AND SECTORAL SPECIFICITIES

In terms of the type of support, the results confirm the expected trends and dialogue with the typologies developed by the Brazilian authors consulted:

**Loans** finance larger educational infrastructure projects and policy reforms, and are provided almost exclusively by development banks (IDB, World Bank, occasionally

CAF). As Oliveira (2009) observes, these loans have significantly influenced Brazilian educational policies, especially during periods of greater openness to international cooperation.

**Donations and grants** proved to be essential for cultural initiatives, confirming Rubom's (2007) analysis of the structural limitations of cultural funding in Brazil. Several equity projects would not be viable via loan (as they do not generate direct revenue for repayment); Thus, international donation and sponsorship agreements filled this gap. The mobilization of donations for the National Museum demonstrates global solidarity in favor of a cultural collection, with European countries engaged in the recomposition of the lost collections.

**Technical cooperation** permeates practically all the projects mentioned, either as a component or as the main form of support, confirming Dourado's (2023) observations on the importance of knowledge transfer in educational cooperation. In the case of cultural heritage, international technical cooperation brings advanced preservation methodologies and expands access to global networks of museums and cultural institutes.

## 5.5 EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FINANCING

Another point of discussion lies in the effectiveness and sustainability of these financings, a theme that has been the object of critical analysis by Brazilian authors. Oliveira (2015) points out that Brazilian educational policy has oscillated between efficiency and democratic inclusion, and that international funding can both contribute to and tension this search for balance.

Large-scale educational projects financed by multilateral banks have been the subject of studies that evaluate their results and influence on national policies. There is criticism that some reforms inspired by international organizations do not always adapt perfectly to local realities. However, the Northeast offers examples of successful local appropriation, as highlighted by Araújo (2020) in his analyses of regional development.

The interaction between international and local actors can generate innovation and disseminate good practices – as long as there is local protagonism and alignment with the needs of the population. This perspective is in line with the propositions of Silva, R. M. D. (2014) on the importance of local assemblages in the implementation of cultural policies.



## 5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

From the point of view of public management and citizenship, the mapping of these sources and modalities brings important implications that dialogue with the contributions of the Brazilian authors consulted. First, knowing the range of options (loan vs. grant, IDB vs. UNESCO vs. NGO) allows managers to plan projects more strategically, combining sources according to the type of initiative.

As Barbalho (2004) suggests, an intervention to restore a historic center can simultaneously seek a loan from a regional bank for infrastructure works in the surroundings and technical cooperation from UNESCO for aspects of heritage preservation and education, maximizing impacts. This integrated approach is particularly relevant in the northeastern context, where development needs are multiple and interconnected.

Second, transparency about these financings – their conditions and results – is fundamental for citizenship, as highlighted by Cury (2019) in his analyses of inclusive policies. Projects with international support usually publish reports (in the case of the World Bank and IDB) or are disseminated in the media, which can stimulate social control and participation.

## 5.7 POST-COOPERATION SUSTAINABILITY

Finally, it is worth discussing sustainability after the end of international support, a topic that has been the subject of concern for Brazilian authors. Many cooperation projects have a limited term, and the permanence of their benefits depends on institutionalization. As Silva, F. A. B. (2017) observes, it is crucial that the articulation between international sources and Brazilian public policies aims not only to carry out short-term activities, but also to create lasting legacies.

It was observed that programs such as the UNICEF Seal incorporate the transfer of capacities to municipalities, making it more likely that actions in local management will continue even after the end of the program cycle. In contrast, a one-off donation to equip schools requires planning for equipment maintenance and updating methodologies in the future, under local responsibility.

This discussion on sustainability connects with Araújo's (2020) propositions about the need to think about regional development in an integrated and sustainable way. The author highlights that international financing can contribute to this integrated approach,

but it is essential that there is local ownership of projects and methodologies to ensure their continuity.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The study presented a comprehensive mapping of the international sources of funding for cultural and educational projects in contemporary Brazil, emphasizing the Northeast region, and enriched this analysis with the fundamental contributions of Brazilian researchers who have been dedicated to the study of international cooperation, cultural and educational policies in the country. The analysis made it possible to identify the main actors involved – multilateral banks, bilateral agencies, international organizations and NGOs – and to understand how each one contributes, whether through loans, donations or technical cooperation.

It was found that the support modalities complement each other strategically: large loans leverage reforms and infrastructure, as highlighted by Oliveira (2009) in his analyses of educational policies in the Lula government, while donations and technical assistance support innovation, dissemination of knowledge and inclusion of remote communities, in line with Cury's (2019) propositions on inclusive and compensatory policies in basic education.

Regarding regional distribution, it is concluded that the Northeast has been a significant focus of the international cooperation initiatives mapped, confirming Araújo's (2020) analyses on the specificities of northeastern regional development and the need to reduce regional inequalities. Educational projects financed by the World Bank and IDB, as well as UNICEF and NGO programs, devote special attention to northeastern educational challenges (low learning indicators, high child socioeconomic vulnerability), corroborating Dourado's (2023) observations on the importance of international cooperation in overcoming obstacles to the right to education.

In the cultural area, the rich historical and intangible heritage of the Northeast – from colonial cities to unique artistic manifestations – has attracted international partnerships both governmental and philanthropic, ensuring resources and expertise for its preservation. This trend confirms the analyses of Barbalho (2004) on the specific strategies developed by the Northeastern cultural policies for articulation with international sources, taking advantage of the international appreciation of Brazilian culture. At the same time, other regions also benefit: international engagement in culture

and education is a network that covers the country, going where there is demand and potential for impact.

From a practical point of view, the findings of this article, enriched by the contributions of the national literature, can support public managers and cultural/educational agents in the development of fundraising strategies. From the mapping, it is possible to visualize a conceptual map in which different international sources (map nodes) connect to types of support and projects (edges of the map), following the typologies developed by Silva, F. A. B. (2017) for cultural funding and by Monteiro (2022) for cooperation modalities.

For example, a municipal manager in the Northeast may identify that for a local cultural memory project, he can seek support from UNESCO (technical cooperation and small donations) or from embassy funds, as suggested by Calabre's (2007) analysis of the trajectory of Brazilian cultural policies. In the educational sphere, state secretariats can see the IDB and the World Bank as partners for large-scale financing but also note that organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO offer technical cooperation to improve qualitative aspects of policies (curriculum, teacher training), in line with Oliveira's (2015) propositions on the search for a balance between efficiency and democratic inclusion.

In short, the derived concept map would show relationships such as: Multilateral Banks → Loans → Structuring Educational Projects; Agencies/NGOs → Grants/Assistance → Local Innovative Projects; following the patterns identified by Pessina et al. (2022) in their macro-analysis of external financing in Brazil.

Some limitations of this research should be acknowledged, in line with the methodological reflections proposed by Fadul and Coelho (2022) on international cooperation studies. The reliance on secondary data can bring temporary mismatch – not all projects started in 2024/2025 are fully publicly documented yet. In addition, the study did not quantitatively measure all resources (it was not intended to calculate the total in dollars of each category), but rather to qualitatively map the key initiatives.

Future research could deepen the impact assessment of these financings, following the suggestions of Oliveira (2009) on the need for critical analysis of educational policies influenced by international organizations. For example, by verifying educational indicators before and after an international loan in each state, or the increase in tourist flow after the restoration of a heritage site with external support, as proposed by Silva, F. A. B. (2017) in their studies on cultural financing.

It concludes by emphasizing that international cooperation remains a valuable ally of Brazil in the areas of culture and education, especially when guided by national and regional priorities, as highlighted by Bolle (2020) in his analyses of multilateralism in times of uncertainty. In the Northeast, where development challenges are more present, this alliance translates into better equipped schools, more qualified teachers, rescued cultural collections and communities that are stronger in their citizenship.

Maintaining and expanding these ties of cooperation – in a coordinated, transparent and sustainable way – is a task that involves government and society, as proposed by Silva, R. M. D. (2014) in their analyses of cultural and political assemblages. The mapping presented here, enriched with contributions from the national literature, is a step towards informing and guiding these cooperative actions.

Ultimately, by connecting global sources of resources to local needs for culture and education, progress is made in the construction of more inclusive public policies and in the recognition of the universal value of cultural heritage and the right to quality education. This perspective is in line with Cury's (2019) propositions on the right to education as a fundamental human right and with Rubom's (2007) analyses on the need to overcome the "sad traditions" of Brazilian cultural policies through innovative strategies that include international cooperation as a strategic element for national and regional development.

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