

## Social Research Call

*Title:*

### *Breaking Inequalities in Digital Education*



**Acronym:** BRIDGE

**Project leader:** Joana Martinho Costa

**Host organisation:** Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

**Main purpose of the project:** The BRIDGE project explores how digital inequalities in education are shaped by families' access to digital cultural capital. It goes beyond device access to examine how home life, classroom dynamics, and teaching methods affect learning. With 3,000 students and 100 teachers over 24 months, it tests whether innovative pedagogies can reduce digital divides.

**Design/methodology/approach:** BRIDGE uses a mixed-methods design combining surveys, digital skills tests, interviews, and classroom observations. It compares standard, culturally responsive, and critical pedagogies through a randomized trial in 12 school clusters. Data includes 200 hours of observation and interviews, analyzed using advanced statistical and computational tools to identify practices that best promote digital equity.

**Potential results:** The project will deliver tools to assess digital engagement at home and in classrooms, plus evidence-based teaching guides. It aims to boost family involvement by 20% and reduce digital skill gaps by 25%. Results will be shared via publications, policy briefs, and open-access materials, including all validated tools and anonymized datasets for future research and application.

**Social relevance of the research:** Digital inequalities affect nearly one in three low-income families in Portugal, and public investment alone has not closed these gaps. BRIDGE responds by showing how education can adapt to students' real-life digital experiences, ensuring digital transformation benefits all learners. The project is especially timely as COVID-19 exposed how digital divides have worsened educational inequality.

**Originality/value of the project:** BRIDGE introduces the concept of digital cultural capital to show how digital skills are shaped by family and social contexts—not just school infrastructure. It is one of the first projects in Portugal to systematically study classroom digital interactions and link them to broader inequalities. Its findings offer new insights for inclusive digital education policies and support national strategies like INCoDe.2030.