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The Historical and Political Contexts that Led to the Educational Reforms in Angola

Abstract

Educational reforms in Angola have emerged from changing political contexts in the country's history. The last three stand out: the Veiga Simão reform, which was approved in 1973 (colonial period) but did not come into full force; the 1978 reform (post-independence) coming from the third constitutional revision and the reform begun in 2004 (after national peace) instituted with the publication of Law 13/01, of 13 December. These reforms brought the innovations and measures considered relevant to the necessary changes in the education sector. They aimed to improve the current educational situation and brought guidelines that sought other levels of quality crucial to the country's development. Education being a basic pillar of society, all other sectors have benefited from these reforms, especially the economic, social and cultural ones. The aim of this paper is to show the different historical and political contexts that led to the last three educational reforms in Angola and the consequent changes. In order to achieve this objective, a bibliographical research was carried out, which allowed the authors to know the different contexts of the reforms implemented in education in the country. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the reflection on how these contexts, with specific outlines, led to the educational reforms in question and cooperated in the necessary educational changes in this African country.

Keywords: historical context, political context, educational reforms, education, Angola

Introduction

The reforms always bring changes to the current system in order to improve it. Thus, there is no sustainable economic growth or evolution in societies in terms of human resources and management policies, without an education system that guarantees quality education within a country.

There is talk of reforms at all levels and sectors of social life. For evolution, in all senses, happens from reflections that are made and that lead to new positions taken in favor of improving the functioning of a nation

Thus, educational reforms are implemented with the purpose of improving the future of societies. This fact involves decision made, taking into account the situation of each nation, to overcome their needs, that is, to guarantee the quality of education in the context in which societies live together.

The objective of this research is to show the different historical and political contexts that led to the last three educational reforms in Angola and the consequent changes. Thus, the methodology used to achieve this objective was bibliographic research, which allowed the authors to know the different contexts of the reforms implemented in the country's education.

Our research focuses on the three educational reforms experienced in Angola beginning with the last of colonial times.

Veiga Simão Reform

Veiga Simão (Portuguese Minister of Education who implemented the educational reform in 1971) aspired to produce a just society, based on human and spiritual principles, which would enable mankind to control the progress, making himself free.

Before independence, Angola also lived through a period of educational debate with the discussion of the Veiga Simão Reformation, which was approved in 1973 but was not fully implemented.

In this sense, Veiga Simão's perspective when creating the reform in the 70s was to implement an education for all Portuguese (at that time, Angola was one of the provinces of Portugal) as there was a shortage, in terms of human and material resources. To do this would be a huge challenge in a conservative country (Simão, 1970). The solution to its evolution plan was education, as it was the indispensable means that granted dignity to human life. In this way, he encouraged the nation to adopt new procedures such as valuing science, new techniques and intellect. "The interventions made in the National Assembly during the presentation, debate and general discussion of Law Proposal nº 25 / X were favorable to him. The proposed Law established the general reform of the Portuguese education system, according to the principles of the Minister of Education, Veiga Simão." (Stoer, 1982, p. 28).

In this way, Veiga Simão showed that the social sciences were dynamized in order to free man from the state of total domination by technology. Education had to be authorized for all citizens, in a meritocratic way, so that inclusion in the nation's elite was based on the capabilities of each person, separately from their socioeconomic status (Stoer, 1982). Thus, the concept of democratization was included in the context of a conservative and nationalist political regime and "it became frequent in his speeches, and there were many alarm signals that his words raised" (Carvalho, 1986, p. 808). In this way, there was an enormous social participation and mobilization in the teaching sector, which led to some considerable changes, especially linked to the modification of learning content at all levels of education.

According to Cardia (1971), the educational system would include:

- Preschool education;
- Schooling;
- Permanent Education.

School education would include basic, compulsory education, being primary and preparatory, lasting four years each. The first four years of primary education were structured, starting from the 1974-75, in periods lasting two years and operating on an experimental basis.

Similarly, secondary education underwent enormous changes. In 1975, the 1st year of the general unified course was created, consisting of the 7th, 8th and 9th years of compulsory education, which combined high school and technical education and showed a similar trunk in the first two years (Reis, 1971).

In terms of higher education, the main changes were analyzed in curricular plans and access conditions. Universities would have scientific, pedagogical and financial autonomy. In this sequence, the industrial institutes of secondary education were converted into higher institutes, identically provided with administrative autonomy and legal personality. Educating all Portuguese was an essential principle of

advancement. In the modern standard of living this principle had an absolute value (Simão, 1970).

According to Veiga Simão “the degree of our education most in need of reform was the university” (Carvalho, 1986, p. 808). The teaching of the university introduced into the life plan of the people, as an indispensable driver of their progress; this being the trainer of technicians and scientists, who study and carry out development programs. The university is the driver par excellence of teachers at secondary and high school levels who propagate education, and is also the driving force for permanent and humanistic culture.

In summary, the Veiga Simão Reform, for some authors mentioned above, emphasizes the control function with the motivation to reduce the opposition’s force. To others, however, the Veiga Simão Reform appeared as a democratic constituent of the Portuguese community, that improved the system in a social way. Thus, the process of restructuring the system allowed access to citizenship, at an economic level, that is, the willingness to expand education in order to evolve the economy. Material and human, factors were applied and the education system was standardized, being called OECD (Miranda, 1978).

1978 Reform

According to Mangens (2016, p. VII) the objectives of educational reforms are “to improve the performance, efficiency and capacity of educational systems to adapt to the scientific, technical and socio-economic life of the nation-states”. After independence, seeking national development, the government of Angola materialized reforms to implement educational policies considered crucial for the sector.

In this sense, Angola’s independence had immediate objectives in the new regime which proposed the destruction of the landmarks of the colonial regime and the immediate construction of a new social, political and economically different country, in order to serve the Angolans who had been excluded and exploited by this regime (Vieira, 2007).

One of the first measures to be carried out in national terms was the fight against illiteracy. According to the Ministry of Education (ME) Indicators, they showed that about 85% of the population of Angola was illiterate. Because literacy was a priority task, the Angolan authorities created the National Literacy Commission in 1976, under the tutelage of the ME.

Thus, the Educational Reform of 1978 took place after the 1st Congress of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), in 1977 and after the 3rd Constitutional Review of Angola. “According to the country’s political, economic and social system, the First Reformation (as an independent country) tries to respond to the real needs of the young Nation: consolidating independence and popular power, ending the class struggle, implanting society communist socialist with Marxist-Leninist ideologies; integration and coherence of Education with the needs of society; provide the integral and universal development of the human personality, ‘creation of a new man’ and promote a better future for the new generation” (Mangens, 2016, p. VII).

According to Zau (2011): After 1978, Angola applied an educational system, which, at the time, reflected the cold war environment, internal conflict and the legacy of a historic past characterized by the slave trade, by shameful racial

discrimination and for the compelled work of the 'contract'. Based on a broad sense of free teaching, the first educational system sought to respond to the high rate of illiteracy and the low rate of schooling, with a view, in the medium and long term, to the training of human resources capable of supplying the stark lack of middle and senior technicians, who, with the onset of the civil war, had, many of them, left the country, as did the vast majority of Portuguese technicians residing in Angola.

The post-national civil war hampered the intended advance of educational reform. According to the Ministry of Education (2008), the context at that time was the destruction of educational infrastructures; decrease in school institutions; migratory flow from rural to urban locations and from inland to coastal areas, thus causing the consequent overcrowding of schools in the main cities as well as in their peripheries; with a sharp reduction in education budgets and staff in the education sector.

In 1977 the adult education subsystem (as presented in the 2004 reform) had a core task and objectives. The recovery of school backwardness based on the triggering of formal, non-formal and informal educational processes in the fields of the elimination of illiteracy and, as a result, the raising of the educational and instructive level of the active community, forming literacy and post-literacy.

In this sequence, Law n° 4/75 of December 9, 1975, enshrined the nationalization of education. In political terms, the nationalization of education had as its immediate objectives to make the education system an instrument of the state and replace the entire colonial apparatus of education and teaching, advancing within the community an education aimed at the people *Escola para todos* (Vieira, 2007).

Angola, lacking the capacity to intervene, especially for the middle and higher levels of education, asked to the socialist bloc countries, of which it had a coalition for support. Thus, Bulgarian, Cuban, Russian, Vietnamese teachers and others came to Angola, in addition to the few Portuguese who resided in the country.

In the 1978/1980 period in the Republic Popular of Angola, the decisions that emerged from the 1st MPLA Congress on educational policy explained the following as objectives of the education and teaching system (Vieira, 2007):

- Stimulating the people's physical and intellectual capacities;
- Conceiving the new generations and all the working people based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology;
- Boosting national unity;
- Boosting national perception and respect for traditional values;
- Stimulating the love of study and collective work; and
- Ensuring socio-economic development.

Making a comparative analysis, in relation to the number of school enrollments, in the period of 1976/77, according to references of the ME, the enrolled students were 1,032,854 in all levels of basic education, significantly surpassing the colonial period (ME, 2008).

Nguluve (2010) affirms that the educational system developed in the first reform (1977), was based on the increase of educational opportunities, free basic education (from 1st to 4th grades), the obligation to attend the first education level and the pedagogical improvement of the teachers. So it was from the year 1990, when Angola left the single-party system and followed the multi-party political system that it needed to make changes in educational policy. Thus, the Ministry of

Education decided to embrace the intervention strategies, enunciated in the following reform.

2004 Reform

In this context, the first steps began to prepare for the second reform of the education system (in independent Angola). In 2001, the National Assembly of the Republic of Angola approved the Basic Law for the Education System (Law 13/01 of December 31), as already mentioned. This law includes the outline of the new system, so the structure includes the following subsystems:

- Pre-school education subsystem;
- General education subsystem;
- Technical and professional education subsystem;
- Teacher training subsystem;
- Adult education subsystem;
- Higher education subsystem (Chivela et al., 2003, p. 6).

Thus having peace in Angola from 2002, all sectors of society benefited from this achievement. As the end of the armed conflict brought favorable conditions for the implementation of the reform of the education system, since the previous education system “was not profitable and the Ministry of Education started (...) to feel the need to stabilize it and to proceed (...) to its reform” (Zau, 2011, p. 7). This reform was approved by the Law 13/01, of December 2001 (Basic Law for the Education System, referenced above), however implemented only in 2004.

The climate of greater security and the freedom of movement of the population allowed an increase in the numbers of students. However, the war left school infrastructure destroyed or seriously damaged, as well as an insufficient number of active teachers. Therefore, there were difficulties in welcoming more students with the minimum conditions required for this purpose. To respond to these needs, the government has gradually taken steps to increase the budget for the education sector and invest in building schools and employing more teachers.

For Mangens (2016, p. VII) the reform “is required by the new political ideologies of State organization: responding to the free market economy, political mobility, improving the quality of teaching and learning, favoring accessibility and equity in the education system”.

In this context, the Angolan Minister of Education (Pinda Simão, referred by the Agência Lusa in 2004) explained that “the educational reform aims to improve the quality of teaching through a strong educational structure and a new educational project, based on recent curricular instruments” (Ernesto, 2016, p. 4).

In 2017, Cabral mentioned in an interview to Angop, that “the reform was carried out according to 4 fundamental objectives, namely: the expansion of the school network, the improvement of the students’ learning, the equity of the education system and the internal effectiveness of the system” (Cabral, 2017, p. 14).

The Global Assessment Phase of this reform was carried out in 2012 and the results are diverse, namely: the expansion of the school network and the expansion of the admission capacity for new students. There was also an increase in the numbers of teachers hired and trained and they were more highly valued. The gross enrollment rate was seen to increase (Cabral, 2017). Another positive result was the

achievement of universal primary education by complying with the principle of compulsory education for children from 7 to 14 years of age (Zau, 2011).

It is hoped that this communication has contributed to the reflection on how that particular contexts, with specific outlines, led to the educational reforms in question and cooperated in the necessary educational changes in this African country.

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