How Far Will the Autocratic Model of Governance in Education System Prevail?

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INTRODUCTION

Much has being discussed about autarchies in Angola lately. If it was not for the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 would be the year of either gradual decentralization, proposed by the political party in power, or the totalitarian decentralization as proposed by the political party at opposition. The debate about autarchies seems pertinent due to the fact that locals are to have political, economic and administrative freedom in some way. The same figurine should be enhanced in education system. However, nowadays, Luanda detains an absolute power over the policies of education and the local counterparts are simply ignored and left under a laissez faire pace in detriment of an autocratic model, which clearly denies the development of Angolan Education at some point. In this position paper, we present a clear example of how this autocratic model of governance in education prevails, not only in terms of leadership, but also at the level of methodological sphere. Then some line caps as remedy are suggested. To attain such a desideratum, we first present a scenario, followed by some mismatches, first in terms of leadership, then academic and finally methodologically

SCENARIO

April the 30th of 2020, the state of emergence was still on when coordinators, at least, Secondary schools' in Lubango, were assembled, by the local bureau of education in one of the local schools to redesign, or if you prefer to select a set of topics to back up the eventual restarting of classes (next July the 13th), equivalent to two terms.

Before we were disjointed into specialities, a briefing took place and we were informed of:

1. The core reason for the meeting;

2. The 3 possible scenarios classes should adopt and;

3. Selection of some key topics to be taught (for grades 10; 11 and 12).

Already by specialities, 4 coordinators of English Language (Lubango, Nambambe, Escola de Sargentos and Humpata) studied the grades 10; 11 and 12 manuals, iniciação and decided on the some topics subdivided into grades (displayed on the left side of table1). Surprisingly in June 2020, we received a document from INIDE, named *Minimal Programs (MP)*, containing topics for grades 10, 11 and 12, as seen in table 1(right side):

Table 1: topics from Local coordinators and INIDE (https://drive.google.com/file/d/11cj7dlDLZ-Y1JupxVNdB_4JgPjAcpYSW/view?usp=sharing)

Grades	Topics from local coordinators	Topics from INIDE
Grade 10	i. The English Alphabet and numerals; ii. Schools (subjects and objects); iii. House or Home; iv. Family Occupations v. Pets; vi. Talking about Whether; vii. Colours; viii. Likes and Dislikes; and ix. Food and Drinks.	i. Food and Health; ii. Fighting for Freedom; iii. Family Life; iv. Celebrations; v. Recreation and Entertainment; vi. Our Environment
Grade 11	i. Family Relationships; ii. Childhood; iii. Celebrations; iv. Education; v. Jobs and Occupations; vi. School Systems; vii. Hobbies and interests viii. Penfriend	i. The world of Work; ii. Childhood; iii. African and Other People's Culture Stories; iv. Travelling; v. Education Life
Grade 12	i. Family Relationships; ii. A female Role Model; iii. Science and Technology; iv. African Culture and Historical Events; and v. Fighting for Freedom	i. African Cinema; ii. Telecommunications and Media; iii. Science and Technology; iv. Feelings and Achievement; v. Traditional and Modern Medicine

At a cheap glance, although there can be found some match, mainly for grades 11 and 12, there seems to

have a great discrepancy for grade 10 topics. Additionally, if one dives deeper discrepancies in operationalization of topics seem evident.

LEADERSHIP

The art of leading is almost in every area of expertise, not excluding in education. Those who detain the chair of education need to realize that top-down decisions can be harmful for the all system. They need to start involving stakeholders—teachers, parents, students, employers, not in a superficial, theoretical and predetermined debate, but from a more practical and meticulous perspective, if the intention is to improve the education system. Tomaševski (2001) presents four pillars serving the corner stone of education: availability, accessibility, *acceptability*, and adaptability. When debating about *acceptability*, we understand that only if the content of education is relevant, culturally suitable, non-discriminatory, with safe infrastructure and qualified teachers, that education is considered acceptable. If we attempt to the Angolan context, as far as education is concerned, perhaps only in one aspect we have a crescendo—qualified teachers. I am referring to those who after reading the *MP* rise up a number of questions. For example, is the content in *MP* relevant? Is it culturally suitable? Is it discriminatory? The content in *MP* is far from being relevant because stakeholders (teachers) were not taken into consideration, they were not even acknowledged in the *MP*. This attitude resembles to what Cacumba (2015) referred to as Mass Communication in detriment of Institutional Communication. For the author, although inclined to Higher Education sea, while the former is seen from a one-way landscape, with almost no retro-information from stakeholders (for example the *MP*), the latter, more institutional, with which we comply, can be established for small or bigger groups, with reference to feedback among stakeholders. Because voices were not heard across the country, the content in the *MP* cannot not be considered cultural suitable as it discriminates the various contextual factors apart from Luanda.

Similarly, a well-known Guru in Human Resources—HR, Chiavenato (2006) discusses, but not restricted to this, the *autocratic* and the *democratic* leaderships styles. Following the author, the difference between these two types of leadership relay on the *modus operandi*. Put it otherwise, while the democratic leader confers before the final decision, the autocratic thinks on the shoe of stakeholders (this is what we are living). One should defend the need for autocracy, evoking the hardship we are through due to the pandemic. However, very few professional practitioners would not acknowledge to have been part of staff that selected the course books and the syllabus in use at least in Huila for instance. Furthermore, the vast majority of ELT of professional practitioners would not even know how INIDE works. It is still time to reverse the *status quo*. One way would be to use free soft devices like zoom WebEx or Google Meet—attached to Gmail. Another way would be to have INIDE represented in different provinces. These representations should act as point of connection between Luanda and the 17 other provinces.

ACADEMIC

Written institutional documents usually are formal, as the example of the *MP*. Added to that we are dealing with an institute attached to the Ministry of Education, therefore most of the documents from either the Ministry of INIDE in this case, are subjected to academic scrutiny. However, when reviewing the document, we came across some pitfalls:

1. There is only one in-text citation, which is (Afonso & Agostinho, 2019, p. 40), which by the way is not part of the Bibliography Section;
2. If one reviews the Bibliography Section, hardly finds a single Course Book in use at least in Huila—the references by Porto Editora, mainly for secondary schools;
3. The MP brings new references that are found nowhere in the extended program of English –Iniação;
4. Some bibliographic references seem to be repeated and incomplete;

5. Nowhere is found bibliography references justification, for instance, how did Doff, A. contribute in the paper? To mention but these few.

Strict academician would not tolerate poor referencing skills in crediting a document of this calibre. In fact, and as observed by Wallace (2004), adequate referencing helps the reader in various ways: firstly, it helps the reader in building new knowledge. A reader is more likely to recall information if stored along with the protagonist/s. secondly, a reader can also automatize new knowledge and rapidly relate with the previous reading. From there seems easier for the reader to either concord with what is being red or simply refute. Furthermore, the next task of any reader of expansion becomes easier.

METHODOLOGICALLY

Not all schools are using the same course book. We at least are using the course books from Porto Editora. Luckily, as said, most of the topics for grades 11 and 12 in the *MP* are found in our course books. However, most of grade 10 topics are nowhere found in the references in use. One would wonder what is going on here.

Indeed, the debate on the role of course books in a language course started long ago (Cunningsworth 1984; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; McDonough and Shaw 2003; Richards 2001, to mention but these few). While the debate is far from its end, Cunningsworth (1984) calls our attention that course books will not be effective if they are not in accordance with the state of learners' knowledge or needs. However, we seldom see students being assembled to spell their own needs. Furthermore, it becomes even hard for teachers to accommodate unknown references, since we know not yet where the topics for grade 10 came from, since they rarely are consulted too.

Are we in presence of *adoption* (a complete new set of teaching material in replacement of the previous used)? or are we simply *adaption* (the act of performing substantial changes to the course book in use with the main aim of improving content sequencing, contextualization of topics) ?(Cunningsworth 1984). Absence of answers will always push any reflective teacher to wonder. However if there are answers, they— the answers ought to be provided by INIDE and backed up with the criteria for selection (Graves 1996; Richards 2001).

TOWARDS A SMOOTH ATMOSPHERE

We are no longer living in the medieval era, nor we are in the renaissance era. We are however in the enlightenment era, where states and governments are elected and laws are created to protect and promote the freedom and happiness of the individual and the community, positioning the individual at center stage (starrat, 1993). Despite that, this vision of enlightenment sometimes crashes with oppressor political systems where most of the deliberations are implemented from a top-down perspective irrespective of consultations. Even (good leaders) are prevented from performing freely. For starrat (1993) principals are called upon to perform three main tasks. Firstly principals should have a sense of the dramatic in their lives. That dramatic sense grows out of an awareness of involvement with other stakeholders, with their lives, in other words, through context analysis— interviews, questionnaires, informal meetings, visits and others, principles will have a better picture of the community in which he/she works. Besides being aware that their work is dramatic, principals will frequently talk about what that drama is, what it involves, how people in that drama would be playing their parts. This would imply that from time to time, the various stakeholders and the Ministry to sit together and collegially discuss about the contemporary philosophical, ethical, and anthropological issues, as well as learning theory, social theory, and political theory affecting education.

According to Kezar (2001) discussing with stakeholders promote communication and through

communication resistors are more likely to see the need for change as well as the logic behind it. With communication resistors are more likely to be turned from passive recipients to active participants. As active participants, resistors are more likely to express their view on the change, indicate potential problems, and suggest modifications. In addition, if resistors participate actively in planning and implementing of local policies, they are less likely to resist it. Furthermore, the principals need to understand that despite the commercial, political or technological ends that are being served by the drama, the drama is a human construct, made by humans to serve human purposes (starrat 1993). These tasks, will enable principals to diagnose and categorize stakeholders on the basis of three stages by which critical consciousness is attained— *semi-intransitive*, *naïve transitivity* and *critical consciousness* suggested by Freire (1974) and from there, elaborate on ways to prepare students to become good and active citizens of the actual world who use their knowledge in the service of the community and of a wider humanity.

SUMMARY

It is evident that there are some issues needing to be pondered either from top-don and bottom-up directions, if we are to improve the teaching of English across the country. That will happen if a benchmark is after all created—a space(s) where stakeholders encounter and after discussing get into more informed decisions, that will benefit all.

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