



It's Time to Decolonize the Curriculum: A Case Study of Primary Schooling Textbooks

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Abstract

The Angolan Government has introduced two significant educational reforms which, among other goals, sought to liberate the education system from the colonial epistemologies and Eurocentrism. Though allegedly progress has been made in some sectors such as building school infrastructure and reducing illiteracy, the same cannot be claimed with regard to the curriculum, and in turn the textbooks, which seem unaltered. This paper examines one potent source of cultural politics, namely Portuguese language teaching, that is a compulsory subject at primary schooling level. The article traces semiotic representations in four randomly selected primary schooling textbooks by focusing on anthroponomy, ethnicity/race and occupation, using the postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework. In terms of methodology, the paper makes use of qualitative content analysis.

Keywords: Textbooks, Primary Schooling, Post-Colonial Theory, Angola

Introduction

Since independence, calls to decolonize the Angolan curriculum have fallen on deaf ears. Whilst its education system has already gone through two significant reforms since independence from the Portuguese colonial empire in 1975, textbooks continue exhibiting, to borrow words from Gilmartin and Berg (2007), new forms of colonial epistemologies and colonial hierarchies, while destabilizing their older forms. As a consequence, a number of our institutions are teaching obsolete forms of knowledge with obsolete pedagogies (Mbembe, 2015) centered on cultural knowledge alien to Africa and to Africans. In this regard, some scholars (see Olukoshi & Zeleza, 2004; Laakso & Hallberg, 2024) ask why African Studies do not feature strongly and prominently in the curriculum of post-colonial Africa. Furthermore, the studies should serve Africa and Africans and “place them on an equal footing with the currently hegemonic Eurocentric canon”(Heleta, 2018, p.60). This conundrum, incontestably highlights the urgent necessity to decolonize the Angolan education system and focus on: “knowledge in order to rewrite histories, reassert the dignity of the [...] colonized and refocus the knowledge production

and worldviews for the sake of the present and the future of the country and its people” (Heleta, 2018, p.56-57).

This paper examines the content of four textbooks used for teaching the Portuguese language, which is a core subject in the primary schooling system. The paper focuses on anthroponomy, ethnicity/race and occupation. It employs the postcolonial theoretical framework. The interest in conducting this research is captured by Engelbrecht (2001) who comments: “If a negative image [...] is inculcated at an early age, particularly in systems that do not encourage critical thinking”, we must admit, the Angolan education system is a grand example of this matter, then “these perceptions can exacerbate hatred and be an indirect cause of violence and war” (Engelbrecht, 2006, p.1). We hope the paper closes the knowledge gap and opens up an inquiry into the issue of textbook analysis in the context of Post-colonial Lusophone studies. In short, the research strives to search for answers as to what extent primary schooling textbooks, and of course the curriculum, are still “influenced by European colonialism and Euro-American imperialism” (Hickling-Hudson, 1998, p.327), even after the institution of the educational reforms. We hope that through this experience we will nurture “pedagogical strategies based on this understanding” (Hickling-Hudson, 1998, p.327).

The Angolan Educational Reforms

As previously stated, the Angolan education system has experienced two educational reforms since independence. Among the various reasons for the reform, we stress the pursuit for a liberation of education from the Portuguese-European epistemic system. Zau (2002) acknowledges that the colonial education system in Angola served to disseminate the colonial project and the teaching content was hardly concerned with teaching the Angolan or African reality (Zau, 2002). In Antonio and Pereira's (2024) words, the curriculum did not represent the sociocultural reality of the Angolan people. Whereas substantial progress has been made, there is still a great deal to accomplish.

The first educational reform occurred almost two years after independence (1977-1991); it centered its attention on the conception and introduction, without experimentation of the new curricula and programs, without taking into account available resources. This determined a huge mismatch between the proposed objectives and the resources and means mobilized for its implementation (Zau, 2002). The nationalization of education and its democratization led to the first school explosion in the country during the academic year 1980/81 (Balanço da Implementação da 2a Reforma Educativa em Angola, 2011, p.7). Therefore, the system inherited schools which were manifestly insufficient, including the number of available teachers and materials. In this context, the war factor and political instability of the military (Zau, 2002) had its share of the failure of the reform. One of the most important aspects of this reform, the Education and Teaching System, besides being

based on principles of democratization, is that it was backed by the idealism of free education (Balanço da Implementação da 2a Reforma Educativa em Angola, 2011, p.8). In addition, one of the first measures to be carried out in national terms, was the fight against illiteracy (Quinta & Patatas, 2020).

The implementation of the second reform was divided into five phases as per each period namely, (i) Preparation (2002 - 2012); (ii) Experimentation (2004 - 2010); (iii) Assessment and Correction (2004 - 2010); (iv) Generalization (2006 - 2011) and (v) Global assessment (from 2012). Remarkably, the various activities related to these phases encompassed the following: preparation, editing, acquisition and distribution of manuals and school books, school equipment and furniture, the rehabilitation of existing school infrastructure, the construction of new school infrastructure, the training of teachers in the use of new programs and new teaching materials, and the training of school managers, to mention but a few (Balanço da Implementação da 2a Reforma Educativa em Angola, 2011, p.8).

It is worth paying attention to phase one, which technically started in 2003. It focused on elaboration of school manuals and textbooks and ended with phase three (2004-2010) – the Assessment and Correction of these materials (Balanço da Implementação da 2a Reforma Educativa em Angola, 2011). However, as Antonio and Pereira (2024) reckon, no matter how much progress has been made, for the Angolan regime, an education intended to liberate colonial minds, is far from being the nation's priority. This implies that an education capable of meeting the needs and challenges of that society, is yet to be achieved, due to the strong Portuguese influence on local cultural values (Antonio & Pereira, 2024).

The Role of Textbooks in the Classroom

The role of textbooks in teaching and learning cannot be taken for granted. They are indispensable commodities of the classroom because “learning in schools is synonymous with textbooks” (Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2012, p.1). Engelbrecht (2006) notes that by nature, textbooks tend to control knowledge as well as transmit it, reinforcing selected cultural values in learners. As Bateman and Mattos (2006) remark, teachers rely heavily on the content of a textbook to compensate for their own lack of knowledge. The scholars further observe that even the most knowledgeable teachers often use the book as a primary resource, and for the students it represents an authoritative source of information whose truth value often goes unquestioned. Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2012) wraps up by arguing that a learner who enters a classroom to learn without textbooks should be likened to a farmer who goes to his farmland without a cutlass. This argument is reinforced by Kemp (1977) who avows that textbooks are part of an appropriate system of education on which the social, cultural, scientific and mental growth of learners depend.

Certainly, textbooks communicate the dominant political and philosophical ideals of the day, but why should these ideas be accepted as they are? The use of textbooks is liable to lead to unforeseen translations, diversions or interpretations. The educational uses of textbooks have also undergone considerable evolutions: from initially being a lesson book, the textbook has become a reservoir of exercises and documents that the teacher selects as he wishes (Pierre Moeglin, 2005, p.19). The conceptualization of school textbooks as vehicles for teaching, transmission, reinforcement and internal development of (particular) emotions, through the use of language and illustrations (Foster, 2005, p.173), can surely not be undermined.

Theoretical Framework

If one of the most spectacular events or series of events of the twentieth century was the dismantling of colonialism, in the shape of the European overseas empires, then one of the less immediately perceptible - but ultimately more far-reaching in its effects and implications, has been the continued globalising spread of imperialism (Williams & Chrisman, 2013). Williams and Chrisman's argument is not only unsettling, but also a warning sign regarding the implication of imperialism for domestic politics, the economy, and the socio-cultural environment, to mention but a few. To be frank, imperialism has "substantial implications for the process of cultural production which is one of the particular concerns of post-colonial theory" (Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 4).

For the sake of this paper, we employ the term, postcolonial theory, from the perspective of Shohat (1992), who upholds it is a new designation for critical discourse which thematizes issues emerging from colonial relations and their aftermath, covering a long historical span, including the present. In addition, the view of Mapara (2009) argues that postcolonial theory focuses largely on the way in which colonizer literature distorts the experience and realities of the colonised; it inscribes the inferiority of the colonised while at the same time promoting the superiority of the coloniser. Most essentially, this paper acknowledges postcolonial theory as the colonised announcing their presence and identity, as well as reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being othered by colonialism (Mapara, 2009, p.141).

Undoubtedly, the last argument by Mapara is parallel to the focus of this paper. This is because postcolonial theory, to a certain extent, urges decolonization and in turn, decolonization embraces, in the words of Mbembe (2015), demythologizing certain versions of history with regards to whiteness. It requires the combatting of any idea of colonialism which upholds and reproduces present-day inequalities. Further, it entails epistemic reconstitution and reparation, that is, the erasure of colonialism by drawing on and centering alternative knowledge systems to reimagine the categories of thought and knowledge that underpin our social, economic, and political structures (Duvisac, 2022). These alternative ways of resistance, including "an epistemological break" (de Sousa

Santos, 2016, p.ix) from the West, will help us challenge any sort of systematized discrimination, domination, oppression and marginalization which, rest assured, is endemic in the education system.

We are indebted to Viruru's (2005) view, which points out that postcolonial theory is not limited to the study of how nations have recovered from colonization, but is more concerned with adopting an activist position, seeking social transformation. We suppose this paper also attempts to do just that. In fact, this work also draws its stimulus from this perspective. Post-colonial theory, to a certain extent, emerged from the colonized peoples' frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture, and their fears, hopes and dreams about their future and their own identities (Sawant, 2012). This quest for identity and representation makes it clear that *certain social and cultural elements, such as ethnicity/race, occupation and anthroponomy*, and the postcolonial theory, are not just interwoven, but are two sides of the same coin (Mapara, 2009, p.143; *emphasis added*).

In an attempt to draw the theory to the African context, Ahluwalia (2001) avers that in the case of Africa, the term, post-colonial, does not mean 'after independence' but rather, it is a concept which takes into account the historical realities of the European imperial incursions into the continent from the fifteenth century onwards; the incursions manifested themselves in the transatlantic slave trade, which formally lasted until the decolonisation processes were complete. These processes began in the 1950s and culminated in the 1990s, with the liberation of South Africa. Nevertheless, the enduring legacy of colonialism continues to be characterised by its neo-colonial practices (Ahluwalia, 2001).

Though a number of issues on the matter (critiques of post-colonialism) have been identified, it is not the goal of this paper to list or debate them exhaustively. On the contrary, our engagement with this theory is channelled towards offering opportunities to comprehend the roots of neo-colonialism discourse, prevalent in the Angolan Portuguese textbooks at a time that the Anglophone and Francophone ex-colonies are firmly engaged in the project of the decolonization of the curriculum. Of course, this plan aims to provide alternatives to Eurocentric epistemic. As Ashcroft (2001) aptly asserts, a common strategy of post-colonial self-assertion has been the attempt to rediscover some kind of authentic pre-colonial cultural reality, in order to redress the impact of European imperialism. From the Ashcroft perspective, we wish to say, that it is our purpose to address contemporary colonial issues identified in the textbooks, in the post-colonial period.

However, bodies of research that have successfully employed post-colonial theory to examine textbooks are numerous, including Kim et al. (2013), Qazi and Shah (2019), Hickling-Hudson (2010), among other scholars. The former, with the title, 'Elusive Images of the Other: A Postcolonial Analysis of South Korean World History Textbooks', conducted by Kim et al. (2013), discussed how Eurocentric colonial hegemony was

reproduced. The paper advocated, among others, the pluralisation of historical consciousness, reflection on the contributions of the East to world history, and the rethinking of curricula and teaching practices. Hickling-Hudson's work probed the relations of power in the curriculum, which is highly influenced by the aftermath of European colonialism. It also examined various aspects of the curriculum which are problematized by postcolonial perspectives, and explored ways in which curriculum decolonization is advocated in terms of social equity, race, cultural and gender identity, language and knowledge paradigms. These enquiries point to the same direction as this study. They all attempt to dismantle the colonial legacies which are embedded in the curriculum and textbooks in the countries researched.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that post-colonial theory has specific uses in helping us think about the nature of societies shaped or influenced by European colonialism and Euro-American imperialism. We should also consider the groups in these societies which have experienced these forms of domination as subject peoples. It contributes to the understanding of identity, ideology and cultural practice in specific contexts (Hickling-Hudson, 1998). Such post-colonial analyses open up thinking about the material and cultural conditions in which science education is produced, circulated, interpreted, and enacted (Carter, 2004).

Methodology

This work examined four textbooks used for teaching the Portuguese language. They are primary school manuals from grades 2, 4, 5 and 6 and were randomly chosen. The qualitative content analysis focused on three culturally loaded themes viz., anthroponomy, ethnicity/race and occupation/profession. The choice of these topics was deliberate. During colonialism, the Portuguese regime used these elements of socio-cultural identity as a means to divide ethnic groups by creating subservient roles for blacks in order to facilitate dominance and show white superiority (see da Costa, 2016). Thus, this study seeks to understand whether or not textbooks continue to be shaped by colonial experiences of Eurocentrism and subservience roles, despite Angola having gone through two Educational Reforms. The paper mainly attempts to appraise the dynamics of colonial epistemologies in the primary schooling system of Angola.

Procedures

In terms of procedural measures, the study first examined the textbooks by tracing all the names (anthroponomy), it then considered pictures that depicted various races (ethnicity/race) and lastly, the occupations (professions) held by both white, black and coloured folk. These features were then analysed using qualitative content analysis. The main findings are in Table 1 and 2, subsequent section.

Methodological Challenges

The selection and validation process of some pictures tantamount to a complex task. It was the case with certain pictures which were poorly drawn or photographed making it hard to establish whether or not they described black, white or coloured ethnic group. Further, it was also demanding to decide whether to count some pictures or not which seemed deliberately repeated in the subsequent pages with a larger size compared to the previous one. Nevertheless, for the latter example, we decided to count them as different units. In addition, to avoid ambiguities, and to easy interpretation due to several professions depicted, we decided to draw a single table (Table 2) to represent the category 'professions' and to single out professions assigned to whites or coloured; these two ethnic groups were less represented compared to their black counterpart. Finally, some pictures were excluded, particularly those that were not clear enough on elucidating the image.

Discussion

Table 1: Represented names and ethnic groups

CATEG ORY	TEXTBOOKS			
	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Anthropo nomy (as per number of names)	40 names (8 African vs. 32 Portuguese names)	25 names (7 African vs. 18 Portuguese names)	24 names (4 African vs. 20 Portuguese)	38 names (11 African vs. 27 Portuguese)
Ethnicity /race (as per number of pictures)	65 pictures (47 black vs. 18 white)	49 pictures (47 black vs. 1 white & 1 coloured)	37 pictures (35 black vs. 2 white)	29 pictures (22 black vs. 7 white)

Source: Author

Table 2: Represented professions

CATEGORY	TEXTBOOKS			
	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Occupation	<p>-Student, medical doctors, nurse, teacher, cleaner, farmer, saleswomen labelled as <i>quitandeiras</i>, they do informal business) / (representing black ethnic group)</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>-Student (1 picture with two people, one is black), fisherman (1 picture with one person), veterinarian (1 picture with one person), baker (1 picture with one person), farmer (1 picture with one person) / (representing white ethnic group)</p>	<p>-Nurse, firefighter, engineer, tailor, teacher, mechanic, carpenter, cleaner, farmer, fisherman, sapper (minefields clearing personnel) / (representing black ethnic group)</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>– Fishermen (1 picture with four people), communication system operator (1 picture with one person) / (representing white ethnic group)</p>	<p>-Medical doctor, Engineer, driver, electrician, teacher, farmer, train-driver, astronaut (without denomination) / (representing black ethnic group)</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>-Engineer (1 picture with one person), medical doctor (1 picture with one person) nurse (1 picture with one person), designer (1 picture with one person), communication operator (1 picture with one person) / (representing white ethnic group)</p>	<p>-Student, journalist, businesswoman, blacksmith, saleswomen (informal business), student, dancers, teacher / (representing black ethnic group) vs.</p> <p>-Inventors (1 picture with six people), potter (1 picture with one person) / (representing white ethnic group)</p>

	vs. Nurse (1 picture with one person) (representing coloured ethnic group)			
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Source: Author

Anthroponomy

A name is a cultural marker of identity. In the African context, Batoma (2006) confirms this argument by saying that African culture is embedded in African names. Guma (2001) points out that in the definition of "personhood", names given to individuals refer to historical events, experiences, emotions, status relations, clan and kinship relations, as well as authority. In this vein, Maestro (1973), asserts that (as cited in Batoma, 2006, p.3) "one of the most shameful occurrences is when an African person is given a European name".

According to the textbooks appraised, unexpectedly, only 30 names are drawn from the African cultural identity, while the remaining bulk of 97 names celebrate a Portuguese European cultural identity; thus overall, 127 names were analysed. Mensah, et al. (2020) state that personal names are symbolic resources that reflect the ideological and social systems of societies. Interestingly, the stereotypes, which elevate European names at the expense of local ones, seem to start from an early school age as noted in the case of the grade 2 textbook. The book contains forty names, of which only eight express African identity whereas others expose Portuguese culture. As anticipated, Christian names predominate, which also happen to be common names for the Portuguese cultural group such as Paulo (from Saint Paul), Mateus (from Saint Mathew), and José (from Saint Joseph), to provide but a few cases. This tendency, having more Portuguese names than local ones, appears to send a negative message to African children, particularly those from rural areas, who hardly understand the Portuguese language and culture. They might interpret it as if names drawn from the African cultural identity are of secondary ranking or even worthless, opposed to those of their white ethnic group counterparts.

In a country where more than nine ethnic groups (see Livamba, 2017; <https://www.britannica.com/place/Angola/People>; da Costa, 2021) co-exist, it is unacceptable to portray this image in nationwide textbooks. It may endorse prejudice against indigenous names and as a consequence, (re)emphasize the narrative of the assimilationist policy, which created various categories in terms of socio-economic power based on stereotypes. Hence the choice of having more Portuguese names over African

names, seems to be ideologically driven, perhaps with the following purpose: “to obliterate African memory and instil a sense of shame within the African community” (Fitzpatrick, 2012, pp. ii-iii). The act “reproduces Eurocentric colonial hegemony” (Kim et. al., 2013, p.213) and of course, inscribes the inferiority of the colonised, while at the same time promoting the superiority of the colonizer (Mapara, 2009).

Pathetic as it is, even now in Angola the right to have a child named in an indigenous language, and culturally chosen by the parents, is still rejected at some civil registry offices; it is replaced with a European, biblical name and by a fusion of names whose meaning is inaccessible to us (Serrote, 2015). The rejection of the name in Kimbundu or in any indigenous language, from various ethnic groups, is the result of mental shame. Such individuals think that Kimbundu names belong to times gone by. They forget that anthroponyms in Kimbundu have meanings that are highly evocative of the Kimbundu cultural richness and that their entire attribution process is a cultural ritual (Serrote, 2015). Furthermore, each culture has its own way of assigning anthroponyms, therefore, at the time of attributing a name to a child of the Kimbundu people, European anthroponymy is adopted, there may be a risk of trampling on the principles that govern the Kimbundu language and culture (Serrote, 2015). The individual's name must carry meaning, which implies knowledge of the language of the community to which he belongs (Livamba, 2017).

It should be pointed out that during the colonial milieu, European colonizers attacked and defiled African names and naming systems to suppress and erase African identity – since names not only aid in the construction of identity, but also concretize a people's collective memory by recording the circumstances of their experiences. Thus, to annihilate African collective memories and identities, the colonizers assigned new names to the Africans or even left them nameless, as a way of subjugating and committing them to perpetual servitude (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p.ii). This is the case of the Portuguese names exhibited in the textbooks, to emphasize once again, Paulo, Miguel, Mateus, etc. They were imposed on school children from the various Angolan ethnic groups, however the symbolic meaning and apparent identity attached to these names, do not speak to the spirit of their ancestors. Certainly, this is as opposed to the names, *Makiese* or *Maquiesse* (as seen in the grade 4 textbook); the name is from the Kikongo cultural group which is the third largest ethnic group in Angola, behind Umbundu (see Censo Geral, 2016). The meaning is 'happiness', or better, 'a child that brings happiness to the family'. Sadker (2010), terms the phenomenon as a 'linguistic' bias against non-speakers, specifically non-Portuguese speakers, in the context of Angola. Linguistic bias, says Sadker, can impact race/ethnicity, gender, accent, age, (dis)ability and sexual orientation. Elevating Portuguese anthroponomy at the expense of Umbundu, Kikongo, Umbundu and others, disenfranchises these ethnic groups making them and its languages vulnerable to all sorts of bias. As Hooks (1992) puts it, the systems of domination, imperialism, colonialism, and

racism, actively coerce black folks to internalize negative perceptions of blackness, to self-hatred.

It is important to note that the Angolan Law No. 17/16 on the Basic Education and Teaching System, (Article 29 is in respect to specific objectives of the Primary Education), recommends that the system should, (i) Improve habits, skills, capabilities and attitudes towards socialization; (ii) Provide knowledge and opportunities for the development of mental faculties; and (iii) Stimulate the development of patriotic, labour, artistic, civic, cultural, moral, ethical, aesthetic and physical capabilities, skills and values (Lei no. 17/16: Lei de Bases do Sistema de Educação e Ensino, 2016). These endorsements are defied by biased content in the textbooks, which, instead of promoting cultural diversity and values in order to facilitate socialization of various ethnic groups living in Angola, rather opt for sanctioning divisionism.

Ethnicity / Race

The issue of race/ethnicity in textbooks is worrisome, and though most of the times implicitly implied, its magnitude in disseminating ideologies and propagating negative stereotypes is a fact, and consequently cannot be ignored. On analysis, it was discovered that the overall representation of various ethnic groups in textbooks, is unsettling. White folks are virtually concealed, compared to their black counterparts, whose visibility is expressive. In the universe of 180 pictures that were appraised, only 29 depict the former cultural group and curiously, in the grade 5 textbook, only two pictures represent the white ethnic group. Additionally, in the grade 4 textbook, the scenario is equivalent. The whole scenario makes us assume that the strategic scheme used is similar to that which the colonizer employed, namely to establish an essential symbol of the 'other', and to clearly disengage races and establish various social classes based on skin colour.

The significance of portraying a specific cultural group inconspicuously in textbooks and its negative implications are captured by Sadker (2010). In his work 'Seven forms of bias in instructional materials', the author argues that 'What You Don't See Makes a Lasting Impression'. Sadker goes further by saying that the most fundamental and oldest form of bias in instructional materials is the complete or relative exclusion of a group. In addition, he explains that the practice was common in textbooks published prior to the 1960s, which largely omitted some ethnic groups from both the narrative and illustrations. Finally, the author notes that though today's textbooks have improved, they are still far from being bias-free.

Remarkably, pictures depicting blacks and whites together are unusual, except in the grade 2 and 6 textbooks, in which one picture show white and black school boys on the playground for the former textbook and four teenagers hugging for the latter. Most pictures portray them separately. In the grade 5 textbook, five white folk, two ladies and three

gentlemen, are depicted with hands outstretched; blacks are excluded from the scenario and interestingly, the picture, which covers the entire A4 size page, is duplicated on the subsequent page. Grade 6 textbooks show a similar scene, where five inventors, all whites, are illustrated. Among them is the German physicist, Heinrich Rudolf Hertz, the French chemist, pharmacist and microbiologist, Louis Pasteur, and the Scottish engineer, John Logie Baird, to cite a few. Sadly, no black inventor is cited, sending a strong and negative message to young school goers that black people are inept and foolish, thus they own no single invention.

Observing how the concept of invisibility, race separation and of course exclusion is strongly emphasized in the textbooks, makes one ponder, what does Mapara (2009) mean when he says postcolonial theory reflects the colonized announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past because of being othered by colonialism? Does the author inevitably suggest that whites (once privileged) should be exposed to the same treatment black folks endured in the past or did he mean something else? Through these rhetoric questions, we wish to state, that the dismantling of structures of colonial control (Child & William, 1997) should not necessarily imply creating an Afro-centred hegemony approach which is anti-minority cultural existence, as is the case with the representation in the textbooks under assessment. On the contrary, we mean to regard blackness and whiteness in the absence of any “superior class mentality” (Williams, 1974, p.25).

Needless to say, “from the time when notions of ‘white’ and ‘black’ were used as generic labels by colonialists, who were regarded as superior, the colonized Africans had to struggle against both economic and psychological enslavement” (M'bow, 1985, p. xx). Race and other cultural elements were “used to signify the centrality of a dominant/ dominated relationship” (Prakash, 1994, p.1478). In colonial Africa, before independence, the power relations between individuals and groups were, since the arrival of the first European settlers, determined first and foremost by the colour of the skin of the individuals involved (Mondlane, 1968, p.14). Moreover, race and ethnicity were used as a strategy to differentiate whites from Africans enslaved people. This means that the category “Negro”, - despite skin colour - was used as a symbol of slavery in colonization (Severo & Makoni, 2020, p.5). Nevertheless, ‘race’ continues to be used as an indicator of racialized identity and inequality (Moreira, 2015), as noted in the textbook where whites (take i.e. the inventors), are acknowledged, as opposed to black inventors, who are excluded. “As a result, *some black people* get alienated from their cultures, and some even attempt to bleach their skins so that they get as close to the colonisers’ colour as possible” (Mapara, 2009, p.141).

In regard to 'skin bleaching', the world has lately been witnessing this phenomenon, mostly amongst the youth. Compared to other nations around the globe, Africa has reached epidemic levels (Hunter, 2011; Davids et al., 2016). In Angola, youth as young as 10 years old are victims of this mischievous occurrence. Skin lightening, in Angola labelled as

"Paculamento", is the result of a deliberate desire to lighten skin. Though, according to Petit (2019) the phenomenon may be associated with a wish to erase pathological stains, or even with an incentive to start practising this procedure, in Angola the phenomenon seems to be motivated by both a sense of racial inferiority and as "a tool of seductive charm" (Petit, 2019, p.3). The chief reasons for the growth in this practice remain varied, but, undoubtedly, are strongly linked to historical racism, the perceived social benefits of lighter skin and the marketing expertise of the multinational cosmetics companies now involved in their production (Glen, 2009 and Rondila, 2007 as cited in Davids et al., 2016, p.1). Through depictions, as exhibited in the textbooks, in which some cultural groups are shown as privileged, vulnerable social-class citizens (particularly the youth), become the primary victims.

Occupation / Profession

In terms of occupation, the representation of blacks is overemphasized in the textbooks, as opposed to whites. Compared to colonial times, according to some literature, blacks were typically allocated menial jobs contrary to what these textbooks show, whites are assigned to these modest jobs, except in some occasions when they are assigned jobs such as medical doctors, nurses, veterinarian, but with scarce cases. For instance, when some blacks are portrayed as medical doctors, engineers, electricians, teachers, and train-drivers, white or coloured representation is limited to loose cases. The representation might imply that those jobs in which whites and coloured are underrepresented are left for these two ethnic groups. There is one image of an interesting profession, that of astronaut, which purposely is not clearly assigned to a specific cultural group; in the picture, he /she is wearing a helmet, which makes it difficult to see the person being depicted. Due to past experience in which this profession was mechanically allocated to whites, it might implicitly propose as such. The representation is similar to the grade 4 and 6 textbooks whereby there is only one picture that depicts four white folks who are fishermen and one showing a communication system operator. Interestingly, as previously discussed, five well-known inventors, all white, are displayed in the grade 6 textbook, there is also one picture of a potter. In the remaining pictures, blacks are shown as journalist, business people, teacher, blacksmith, etc.

This thoughtfully arranged representation, as previously mentioned, reflects the opposite of colonial practice, which in most cases was to show the "other" (blacks), as inferior. Professions were used as discriminatory toolkits against black folk. In most cases, this was achieved through biased policies. It is the case of the Indigenato Law and others employed by the Portuguese regime in the former overseas provinces. Between 1926 and 1961, the overwhelming majority of the Angolan population lived under a "Native Statute" (Estatuto dos Indígenas), which put them apart from the Portuguese system of justice and

created the *Tribunais Privativos dos Indígenas* (literally "Natives' Private Courts") (da Conceição Neto, 2017). Detailed evidence from Angolan archives shows how the system was used mainly to obtain unpaid and/or forced labour for state activities and colonial enterprises, and to assure white supremacy in a racially divided society (da Conceição Neto, 2017).

According to Peclard (2021), the Portuguese colonial state in Angola relied on the exploitation of the so-called native workforce through a vast system of forced labour. Fascinatingly, poor and uneducated White settlers who migrated to African colonies, rapidly came to take over the only positions and jobs that indígenas could hope to occupy outside of the *contrato* system, pushing them even further to the margins of the colonial world. Due to their relatively low level of education, the social status of the new settlers depended primarily on the colour of their skin, and the assurance of a privileged status in the colonies was itself a pull factor for emigration toward Angola.

Overall, the study has documented that “in postcolonial settings, foreign states typically continue to exercise considerable power over their former colonial territory, most which occupy subordinate positions” (Aminzade, 2013, p.9). This is the case of the naming system entrenched in the textbooks appraised in which the European system predominates. Nevertheless, signs of decolonization were shown although using following, in some cases, colonial patterns. It is important to stress that by decolonizing the Angolan curriculum and of course textbooks, we certainly did not mean that it would “lead to localization, isolation, or only Africanization” of the system or content, on the contrary we mean “we must ensure that what comes out of the process of dismantling the colonial and Eurocentric education [...] does not become a new form of fundamentalism and hegemony” (Heleta, 2018, 58-59) as it was obviously observed in the discussion.

Conclusion

This article evaluated textbooks for teaching the Portuguese language in the primary schooling system in Angola. The document focused on three issues that are currently being debated in the postcolonial era in the arena of curricula and textbooks studies; namely anthroponomy, ethnicity and occupation. The results have provided important insights with regard to the dynamics of representation in the aftermath of the two important educational reforms. The findings demonstrating that textbooks “continue to project colonial epistemologies” or rather “they reproduce Eurocentric colonial hegemony” (Kim, 2013, p.213), by normalizing particular states of humiliation based on white supremacy (Mbembe, 2015). Nevertheless, efforts to ensure the decolonization of textbooks and curricula were eminently established, although in some cases, were expressed through the same strategic approaches which colonialism employed to dominate other cultural groups. In this context, some settings were centered around Afrocentric hegemony discourse, others stereotypical and exclusionary which of course is against the

post-independence political agenda that recommends a democratic approach to education.

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