

A LOOK AT LITERARY EDUCATION IN THE ANGOLAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Literary education is a methodology that aims to provide individuals with a knowledge of codes, symbols and stylistics that will help them to read literary texts and become readers. This study analyses its presence in the Angolan education system, focusing on the Portuguese language syllabus for the first cycle of secondary education (grades 7 to 9) and the Portuguese language teaching syllabus of the Huíla Higher Institute of Educational Sciences. It concludes that although literary

texts are recognised for their ethical and aesthetic value, the term 'literary education' does not appear explicitly in these programmes; moreover, they do not suggest readings or pedagogical practices that encourage the formation of readers or train future teachers in literary mediation. The article proposes recommendations for valorising literary education at school and in teacher training.

KEYWORDS: Literature; Literary Education; Angolan Education System; Didactics.

UM OLHAR SOBRE A EDUCAÇÃO LITERÁRIA NO SISTEMA EDUCATIVO ANGOLANO

RESUMO

A educação literária é uma metodologia que visa dotar os indivíduos de um conhecimento de códigos, símbolos e estilemos que os ajudem a ler textos literários e a formarem-se como leitores. Este estudo analisa sua presença no sistema educativo angolano, focando-se no Programa de Língua Portuguesa do 1º Ciclo do Ensino Secundário (7ª a 9ª classes) e no Programa de Didática da Língua Portuguesa do Instituto Superior de Ciências de Educação da Huíla. Conclui-se que, embora os textos

literários sejam reconhecidos pelo seu valor ético e estético, a designação "educação literária" não aparece explicitamente nesses programas; além disso, não sugerem leituras ou práticas pedagógicas que incentivem a formação de leitores ou capacitem futuros professores para a mediação literária. O artigo propõe recomendações para a valorização da educação literária na escola e na formação de professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Literatura; Educação Literária; Sistema Educativo Angolano; Didática.

1 INTRODUCTION

Literature, seen as an art form whose raw material is language, has always been present in schools, albeit in different forms, depending on the context and objectives. Nowadays, literature is becoming more and more central and its presence in school contributes to the promotion of social, cultural and literary knowledge (Evangelista & Coutinho, 2020; Medeiros, 2024; Ntoulia, 2022). Although literature is present in schools, its promotion through literary education is a relatively recent subject, especially in the Angolan context, where the term rarely appears and research on the subject, especially in schools, is still scarce. It is still a novelty in Angola for various reasons; in addition to the scarcity of national scientific research on the subject, the lack of initial and ongoing teacher training on these issues and the still not very influential presence of the National Reading Plan stand out.

Literary education is a challenge facing schools, especially those working with compulsory education and the training of teachers for these schools; hence the importance of this study, which aims to understand whether and how literary education is present in the Portuguese Language Program of the First Cycle of Secondary Education. In addition, we will also analyze the syllabus of the Didactics of the Portuguese Language course, taught on the Degree in Portuguese Language Teaching at the Instituto Superior de Ciências de Educação da Huíla (ISCED-Huíla), in Angola.

Huíla province, one of Angola's most populous, with over 2.4 million inhabitants, plays a strategic role in the national economy, contributing significantly to GDP, especially in the agricultural and services sectors. In addition, the province is home to one of the country's main teacher training institutions, ISCED-Huíla, which is responsible for the annual training of hundreds of teachers for compulsory education. This data is particularly relevant in a context where Angola faces challenges in universalizing access to basic education, reducing school drop-outs and improving the quality of teaching. Thus, studying the impact and adequacy of the training offered by this institution, particularly with regard to literary education, is essential in order to assess the extent to which it meets local and national needs, contributing to the training of a qualified teaching staff that is aligned with the country's educational demands.

2 LITERARY EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

According to Roig Rechou (2013, p. 54), literary education is

a methodology that allows reading to be planned, taking into account the different age groups, based on objectives such as: to provide the reader and future mediator with a body of cultural, literary and social knowledge that provides encyclopedias and individual intertexts [...] to be able to discover in literary works, from their specific language, models, guidelines, conventionalisms, symbols, myths, historical events...an individual reaction to the reading of a work, a recollection that leads to the reader's empathy with

the works on offer and which results in the configuration of a competent reader.

Balça (2023, p. 4) defines literary education as "a specific reading competence that requires knowledge of the conventions that regulate the relationship between the reader and the text." This reading competence makes it possible to read literary texts. At school, literary education aims to develop students' literary competences, reflected in the development of comprehensive and expressive skills and strategies that enable them to familiarize themselves with and take advantage of different literary manifestations (Costa & Batalha, 2016; Oliveira dos Santos, 2024). According to Lomas (2006, p. 73), the objectives of literary education are:

the acquisition of reading habits and text analysis skills, the development of reading competence, knowledge of the most significant works and authors in the history of literature and even the stimulation of literary writing.

"School is the moment and space for the salvation of literature, for the possible discovery and formation of the future reader" (Machado, 2002, p. 15). Therefore, as in many contexts, in Angola, the school is one of the spaces that offers the greatest and best possibilities for the individual to come into contact with books, to promote reading and literary education, but the presence of literary education in the school involves multiple factors, among which the reference and guidelines present in the syllabus documents stand out, since these are the ones that govern teaching action; hence our interest in understanding if and how literary education is present in the aforementioned regulations.

2.1 The Angolan education system

Angola is a plurilingual country located in southern Africa. In terms of language policy, Portuguese is the official language (art. 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (CRA, 2010), of pedagogical discourse (art. 16 of Law no. 32/20 - Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System), a school subject (Study Plans of the Teaching Subsystems under the Ministry of Education) and is increasingly becoming the mother tongue of a considerable number of individuals, as well as being the second language of a still significant number of Angolan citizens. In addition to Portuguese, other Angolan Bantu languages are also spoken, but Portuguese is the most widespread, especially in urban areas, where it is the mother tongue of most Angolan citizens.

Angolan literary production is mostly written in Portuguese; a Portuguese that is increasingly distanced from the standard European norm and which is very much reflected in the literary works written both before and after independence.

Currently, the Angolan education system is governed by the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System, Law No. 32/20, of August 12, which establishes the general principles and bases of the education and teaching system in Angola. The Angolan education system is made up of six subsystems and four levels of education, as can be seen below (art. 17 of Law no. 32/20, of August 12):

Table 1: Structure of the Angolan education system

STRUCTURE OF THE ANGOLAN EDUCATION SYSTEM		
Subsystem	System	Class
Education subsystems	Pre-School Education Subsystem	Nursery, kindergarten and beginners' class
	General Education Subsystem	1st to 12th grade
	Technical-Vocational Education Subsystem	7th to 13th grade
	Teacher Training Subsystem	10th to 13th grade
	Adult Education Subsystem	1st to 13th grade
	Higher Education Subsystem	1st to 4th/5th grade
Levels of Education	Pre-school education	Nursery, kindergarten and beginners' class
	Primary Education	1st to 6th grade
	Secondary Education	7th to 13th grade
	Higher Education	1st to 4th/5th grade

According to article 57, there are public, private and public-private institutions in the Angolan education system. The functioning of the public institutions is ensured by the General State Budget, while that of the private and public-private institutions is ensured by the remuneration for the different services provided and by other sources of funding (art. 98). This situation results in a differentiation of services provided by public and private schools.

This law also sets out the general principles of the Angolan education system, namely: legality, integrity, secularism, universality, democracy, free of charge, compulsory education, state intervention, quality of services, education and the promotion of moral, civic and patriotic values. With regard to the principle of compulsory education, Article 12 stresses that it is "the duty of the State, society, families and companies to ensure and promote access to and attendance at the Education and Teaching System for all individuals of school age". If it is the obligation of these school partners to ensure that all school-age individuals attend the Angolan education system, it is also their responsibility to promote literary education, a literary education that truly forms readers (literary and non-literary), cosmopolitan readers, in the words of Dionísio (2004), readers who read for pleasure, critics, capable of reading and having a vision of the world.

According to the same article, in Angola, compulsory education covers pre-school education, primary education and the first cycle of secondary education, i.e. from beginners to ninth grade, and the training of Portuguese language teachers for the last cycle of compulsory education, at higher education level, in Lubango, the capital of Huíla province, is provided by the Huíla Higher Institute of Educational Sciences (ISCED-Huíla).

Article 15 of the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System states that

the Education and Teaching System promotes respect for national symbols and the appreciation of history, national culture, national identity, territorial unity and integrity, the promotion of wisdom, peace and the democratic state, as well as moral values, good manners and citizenship.

Literature, by summoning up events and possible worlds that are relevant in the cultural, linguistic and imagistic contexts of a community, questions the world and shares certain axiological and anthropological dimensions. Thus, literary education can help build a sense of community, capable of valuing the national aspects of a language, a culture, a people, and the universal aspects of a society. By reading national and international works, it not only rescues and reaffirms local identities, but also promotes values such as respect, a culture of peace and harmonious coexistence between peoples. In addition, literary education, by fostering a critical and aesthetic appreciation of texts, contributes to the formation of subjects who are sensitive to human and environmental issues, in line with the principles of sustainable development. In this process, literary texts become privileged instruments for cultural sharing, for dialog between traditions and for building a broader sense of community.

"Reading is (...) an essential tool for understanding the world and the literary text makes it possible, through enjoyment and critical reading, to question praxis and open up new possibilities for thought and transformation" (Azevedo & Neves, 2024, p. 3). Promoting literary education at school is also a way of promoting the harmonious and integral formation of the citizen, a formation with which the Angolan education system is very concerned, since it is also the school's mission to build a free and democratic society through critical citizens.

2.2 Critical and reflective analysis of selected educational regulations

The Portuguese Language Program for the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education in Angola (7th, 8th and 9th grades) plays a central role in the linguistic and literary education of students, providing a privileged space for the development of reading, writing, speaking and aesthetic appreciation skills. Set in a socio-cultural context marked by linguistic diversity and the coexistence of Portuguese with several national languages, this program has the challenge of not only promoting proficiency in the official language, but also encouraging the formation of critical readers capable of dialoguing with national and universal literature. However, it is essential to question the extent to which the objectives proposed by the program, aligned with the national curriculum guidelines, have been implemented in pedagogical practice, considering the resources available, the training of teachers and the specificities of the Angolan student public. This reflection becomes even more pertinent in view of the need to consolidate literary education practices that link canonical texts to students' cultural experiences, contributing to a culturally-situated, civic education.

We were also interested in working with the program for the last cycle of compulsory schooling because it is the last cycle of compulsory schooling and can tell us a lot about literary education and its promotion at school in Angola, and with the Portuguese Language Didactics Program at ISCED-Huíla because it is the only higher education institution in Huíla with a course aimed at training Portuguese language teachers for this cycle and the curricular unit is the only one throughout the course that addresses issues related to the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language.

Thus, through a critical and reflective analysis of the Portuguese Language Programs for the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education in Angola and the Didactics of the Portuguese Language for the 2nd year of the degree course in Portuguese Language Teaching, we intend to answer the questions **i.** is literary education present in the educational regulations under study? **ii.** how? **iii.** with what objectives? **iv.** what literary texts are suggested for its promotion? **v.** what teaching proposals are suggested to teachers for its promotion?

2.2.1 Literary education in the Portuguese Language Program for the First Cycle of Secondary Education

The Portuguese Language Program for the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education is the responsibility of the National Institute for Research and Development in Education (INIDE)¹, published by Editora Moderna in 2019, and covers the 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Structurally, it includes a presentation, an introduction to the subject in the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education, general objectives for the Portuguese Language in the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education and the syllabuses for the classes (7th, 8th and 9th), with their respective objectives and thematic plans; in

¹ It is responsible for pedagogical studies and the development of curricular materials. Currently, through Presidential Decree No. 91/21 of April 16, it has been replaced by the National Institute for the Evaluation and Development of Education (INADE), which has the mission of promoting and coordinating studies relating to the evaluation of the education and teaching system, curriculum management, implementation of educational policies, innovation, quality assurance, including the production of didactic-pedagogical instruments, curricular materials, certification, equivalence and homologation of studies at the levels of Pre-School Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education and teaching modalities.

the final part, it presents strategies for organizing and managing teaching and learning processes, assessment in the service of learning and a bibliography.

The program recognizes that the Portuguese language plays a crucial role in the exercise of citizenship in Angola, as it is the official language and the language of educational discourse; therefore, it is the language that defines the individual as a citizen and leads them to interact with other members of society. On an international level, it also recognizes its role in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), as it is the main instrument of communication between the member countries and their citizens.

In the CPLP and in Angola in particular, Portuguese is the instrument that "ensures access to knowledge, the creation and enjoyment of culture" (Azevedo, 2006, p. 47); "its deficient mastery can condition the subject's participation in social praxis" (p. 47).

In the first cycle of secondary education, the Portuguese language subject essentially aims to develop literacy skills, which means "broadening and perfecting the understanding and practice of the language (...)" (INIDE, 2019, p. 5).

As for literary education, the syllabus does not explicitly mention literary education, but it does recognize the aesthetic dimension that language contemplates and enhances, especially through literature, because, as Luís Sepúlveda (1993) points out in "O velho que lia romances de amor" (The old man who read love novels), literary texts also show us how beautiful human language can be. For this reason, he suggests "contact with various types of texts and literary genres, as well as a taste for creating texts as a way of personalizing and communicating with others" (p. 6), since these texts foster the development of sensitivity, creativity and an appreciation for reading.

The syllabus presents the textual typologies to be studied as core content and recognizes their importance in consolidating mastery of the language, but it doesn't make suggestions for literary works to be read, leaving it up to the teacher to work on these works. This fact can condition the promotion of literary education in LP classes. In the context of working with literary texts, the program also aims to "develop the student's sensitivity and creativity through reading and writing literary texts(...)" (p. 8), but it doesn't give any concrete clues as to how to achieve this goal.

Literary education may be implicitly present in the following objectives in the syllabus: to understand the characteristics of textual typologies and the contextualization of discourses, to understand oral and written utterances through the information captured, to analyse texts through the progressive appropriation of linguistic and literary tools, to interpret utterances and texts that vary according to the social or situational context (7th grade) (p. 11); to understand linguistic variations and the interpretation of different textual typologies (8th grade) (p. 11); to understand the affinities and contrasts in reading literary texts between various types of texts and spaces. 11); to understand linguistic variations and the interpretation of different textual typologies (grade 8) (p. 23); to grasp affinities and contrasts, when reading literary texts, between different types, spaces, times and textual genres, to develop interpretation skills through the progressive appropriation of linguistic and literary tools (grade 9) (p. 35). However, these objectives can only be seen from the perspective of teaching literature and not really literary

education, so they need to be transformed into explicit objectives, with clear ideas about literary education and its promotion.

"Literary education (...) is fundamental for the formation of readers capable of dialoguing with texts and, therefore, with the world." (Azevedo & Neves, 2024, p. 3), which is why its presence in schools, also through school programs, is very important, because, "in the school context, literary education introduces students to the universe of literature, awakening the pleasure of reading while developing their interpretive skills" (Azevedo & Neves, 2024, p. 3).

That's why in our societies literature has been a powerful instrument of instruction and education, entering the curriculum and being offered to everyone as intellectual and affective equipment. The values that society advocates, or those that it considers harmful, are present in the various manifestations of fiction, poetry and dramatic action. Literature confirms and denies, proposes and denounces, supports and combats, providing the possibility of living problems dialectically (Cândido, 2011, p. 177).

The program only calls for working with literary texts, but it doesn't give guidelines or present compulsory literary works or suggestions for literary reading (although we recognize that promoting literary education also starts with free reading and sharing between teachers and students), or activities with these texts/works in the classroom.

The thematic plans only suggest activities linked to reading and producing texts (both literary and non-literary), with a workload divided into theoretical, theoretical-practical and practical, including work with other dimensions of language. The strategies presented in the final part of the program do not suggest solid practices on literature and literary education, the use of literary works of aesthetic-literary quality that integrate the students' life experiences, dynamics of contact with the book and with literary reading, among other practices that promote the book and literary reading in a school context.

Although some of the program's objectives refer to the reading of literary texts, we didn't find any indicators that refer to playful and pleasurable literary reading and contact with the literary text with the aim of teaching reading and forming literary readers. The implicit presence of literary education in the program analyzed poses a great challenge to its promotion, since although its presence in school does not depend exclusively on what is regulated in school regulations, it is important that these school regulations present guidelines for raising the awareness of teachers and other actors in the educational process about the presence of literary education in school and about the actions of teachers in relation to its promotion, because, as Azevedo and Neves (2024, p. 3) point out,

(...) literary education allows students to read between the lines, helping them to become sophisticated and comprehensive readers. This practice not only prepares them for active and conscious citizenship, but also ensures critical and in-depth reading, enabling them to be members of a "common home", where literary dialog is a way of understanding and interacting with the world around them.

2.2.2 Literary education in the Portuguese Language Didactics Program of the Higher Institute of Educational Sciences of Huíla

The municipality of Lubango, one of the 14 municipalities in the province of Huíla, Angola, with an estimated population of 729,857 inhabitants, according to data from the 2014 Census, has only one higher education institution dedicated to training Portuguese language teachers for the first and second cycles of secondary education, the Higher Institute of Educational Sciences of Huíla (ISCED-Huíla).

This institution, founded in 1980, focuses on training teachers for various levels of education, as well as scientific research and university extension. It also has several bachelor's, master's and doctoral courses. Among these is the degree course in Portuguese Language Teaching, which trains teachers to teach Portuguese Language in the 1st and 2nd cycles of secondary education. In terms of the curriculum, the course has only one curricular unit (UC) specifically focused on the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language, the UC of Didactics of the Portuguese Language.

In the 2024/2025 academic year, the course has a syllabus with the following structure: identification of the course, introductory note and rationale, general objective, learning outcomes, syllabus content, teaching-learning methods and media, learning assessment system, methodological recommendations and key bibliography. The aims of the course are: i. to prepare future teachers for teaching Portuguese, providing them with pedagogical-didactic training appropriate to the characteristics of the students and the context, ii. to deepen reflection on the specificities and the development of the skills involved in using the language, with special attention to the distinction between the products of acquisition and the products of school-based learning of the Portuguese language, iii. to develop technical skills that enable students to develop motivated and meaningful language learning; iv. to produce teaching materials suitable for Portuguese language teaching and learning situations, mother tongue/second language, v. to analyze Portuguese language teaching programs in Secondary Education; vi. to evaluate the assessment system in force in Secondary Education.

The program makes no mention of literary education and seems to us to be more focused on technical aspects of the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language; it doesn't provide a topic for the initial training of reading mediator teachers, nor does it present a theme focused on literary reading and the training of readers in a school or classroom context.

As it is the only curricular unit that deals with aspects related to the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language during the four years of the future Portuguese language teacher's training, it has little time to deal with aspects related to didactics, language and literature, places greater emphasis on didactic aspects to the detriment of those linked to language and literature, not taking into account that, at school, teachers, especially Portuguese language teachers, play an important role in promoting literary education, as they are the main mediators of reading due to the fact that they are often in direct interaction with students.

Of the objectives set, none refer to the literary education of future teachers and the promotion of literary education in the school context (classroom, library and school grounds),

which reflects the lack of attention given to this theme in the initial training of Portuguese language teachers in that context.

It is therefore important that the program takes into account that

in the school context, it is essential that teachers take on the role of literary mediators, promoting active mediation that respects the pleasure of reading. Such mediation should ensure that students experience reading as an act of fruition, which not only challenges them to think critically, but also nurtures their ability to interpret the world (Azevedo & Neves, 2024, p. 4).

As far as reading is concerned, in the program content section, there are themes aimed at exploring the text and exercises in reading and producing texts. We assume that these themes can be used to explore strategies for working with literary texts, with the aim of training readers and promoting literary education. Even so, it is necessary to implement themes aimed at preparing future Portuguese language teachers for reading mediation and the consequent formation of readers, given that the Portuguese language teacher is also a literary reading mediator par excellence.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the critical and reflective analysis of the programs, we present some recommendations for improvement regarding the presence of literary education at school through school regulations, both in initial teacher training and in compulsory school contexts:

- That the programs analyzed be extensively revised, taking into account thematic advances in the field of literary education;
- That literary education is explicitly taken up by school regulations through clear objectives, reading suggestions and methodological strategies that promote books, teach reading and form readers;
- That in the degree course in Portuguese Language Teaching, a curricular unit is implemented aimed at the initial training of teachers who mediate reading, who teach reading and train readers, or that the Portuguese Language Didactics program prepares future Portuguese language teachers, also taking into account solid training in didactics, language and literature, and also taking into account the implementation of significant and relevant pedagogical practices aimed at training and mediating reading;
- That the Portuguese language program also suggests dynamics of contact with books and literary reading so that teachers can use them as a reference, or that it presents clues for working with literary texts and promoting literary education at school;

- That the Portuguese language syllabus suggests texts of aesthetic quality that integrate the students' life experience; this suggestion could be linked to the proposals for aesthetic reading in the Angolan National Reading Plan;
- Emphasize the inclusion of Angolan and African authors in the curriculum, highlighting works that dialogue with local experiences and strengthen students' cultural identity;

That assessment methods be adopted that value students' reflection on literary works, rather than just measuring their ability to memorize content, encouraging critical analysis and collaborative discussions.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If we consider that literature and, consequently, literary education is an incompressible good, as António Cândido (2011) states, we are also considering that its presence at school, through educational regulations, is an indispensable condition for the enjoyment of this good. So, after a critical and reflective analysis of the Portuguese Language Programs for the 1st Cycle of Secondary Education and Didactics of the Portuguese Language for the 2nd year of the degree course in Portuguese Language Teaching, the following notes should be made:

- both programs do not use the term literary education and rarely present indicators that refer to the training of readers and/or the promotion of literary education;
- the implicit presence of literary education in the programs analyzed can be an obstacle to the promotion of literary education principles in teachers' pedagogical practices;
- the Portuguese Language Program, despite presenting some objectives that refer to work with literary texts, does not explicitly present aspects that refer to the promotion of literary education at school and in the classroom in particular, since it does not suggest concrete indicators linked to pedagogical practices with literary texts and the promotion of literary education;
- We would also stress that the implicit presence of literary education, mainly through the objectives outlined in the Portuguese Language Program, is already an important step towards consolidating literary education at school.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize the importance of initial teacher training and of schools promoting literary education through educational regulations, teaching practices and supplementary teaching in order to form readers, i.e. people who read for pleasure, but also critically and who contribute to the development of societies.

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