

# Environmental Education in Angola's public policies: an analysis of the post-colonial period

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## Abstract

This article aims to analyze public policies in Angola during the post-independence period. The analyze public policies related to Environmental Education in Angola in the country's post-colonial period. The analysis aims to identify the presence of Environmental Education, even in its incipient form, in the official documents that guided the structuring and reforms of the Angolan education system. This article explores the following scientific question: what is the contribution of educational reforms to the implementation process of environmental education in Angola? This study consists of analyzing and systematizing the content related to legislation and the National Environmental Education Strategy in Angola (2022-2050). To develop this research, a methodology of document analysis and historical analysis of existing reforms in Angola was applied. The study's conclusions contribute to the systematization of Angolan educational history in a review that may fill some gaps in previous studies and situate the current National Environmental Education Strategy within a political framework that will guide actions until the year 2050.

Keywords: Environmental education. Educational reform. Angola. School curriculum.

## A Educação Ambiental nas políticas públicas de Angola: uma análise do período pós-colonial

## Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar as políticas públicas relacionadas a Educação Ambiental em Angola no período pós-colonial do país. A análise

visa identificar a presença da Educação Ambiental, mesmo que forma incipiente nos documentos oficiais que orientaram a estruturação e as reformas do sistema de ensino angolano. Este artigo explora a seguinte questão: qual o contributo das reformas educativas no processo de implementação da Educação Ambiental em Angola? Este estudo consiste em analisar e sistematizar os conteúdos presentes na legislação e na Estratégia Nacional da Educação Ambiental em Angola (2022-2050). Para desenvolvimento desta pesquisa, foi aplicada uma metodologia de análise documental e análise histórica das políticas públicas relacionadas ao campo da Educação Ambiental em Angola. As conclusões do estudo contribuem para a sistematização da história educativa angolana numa perspectiva crítica, que pode colmatar algumas lacunas nos estudos que já foram realizados e situar a atual Estratégia Nacional de Educação Ambiental em um marco político que orientará as ações até o ano de 2050.

Palavras-chave: Educação ambiental. Reforma educativa. Angola. Currículo escolar.

## 2

## **La educación ambiental en las políticas públicas en Angola: un análisis del período poscolonial**

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### **Resumen**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las políticas públicas relacionadas con la Educación Ambiental en Angola en el período poscolonial del país. El análisis tiene como objetivo identificar la presencia de la Educación Ambiental, incluso en su forma incipiente, en los documentos oficiales que guiaron la estructuración y reformas del sistema educativo angoleño. Este artículo explora la siguiente pregunta científica: ¿cuál es la contribución de las reformas educativas al proceso de implementación de la educación ambiental en Angola? Este estudio consiste en analizar y sistematizar el contenido relacionado con la legislación y la Estrategia Nacional de Educación Ambiental en Angola (2022-2050). Para desarrollar esta investigación, se aplicó una metodología de análisis documental y análisis histórico de las reformas existentes en Angola. Las conclusiones del estudio contribuyen a la sistematización de la historia educativa angoleña en una revisión que podría llenar algunos vacíos en estudios previos y situar la

actual Estrategia Nacional de Educación Ambiental dentro de un marco político que guiará las acciones hasta el año 2050.

Palabras clave: Educación ambiental. Reforma educativa. Angola. Currículo escolar.

## Initial Considerations

This article aims to analyze public policies related to Environmental Education in Angola in the post-colonial period of the country. This process aimed, apart from a qualitative study, to identify the presence of Environmental Education, even if incipient, in the official documents that guided the structuring and reforms of the Angolan education system.

From a historical point of view, it is worth noting that Angola experienced a long period of war, which began in 1975, after the end of Portuguese colonialism. The motivation for the conflicts was linked to strong pressure from different groups that saw at that time the opportunity to take over the government. In this way, the pro-independence nationalist movement began to fight for government control for a long period, which ended on April 4th, 2002. These events left gaps and created difficulties that affected the process of political, social, and economic development of Angola. For this reason, Angolan leaders proposed the establishment of goals to transform the country's educational landscape and improve the formation of citizens. (Malanga, 2021).

In this sense, it would be important to highlight that the post-independence period of Angola, even if marked by armed conflict, required the beginning of the process of restructuring the education system, considering that the system in force until then was not democratized and had wide access to the local population. Thus, educational reforms in Angola reaffirmed access to school education as a right for citizens. However, due to the quantitative and qualitative precariousness of schools at that time, the guarantee of such a right became a great challenge to Angolan public management.

Understanding the political and educational scenario in Angola reveals challenging issues of all kinds, which are related to the high level of illiteracy and the lack of teachers prepared to meet the country's formative needs, among

other complex issues that are difficult to solve in the short term. One of these issues, which we will deal with in this article, refers to the need to know how Angolan educational reforms contemplate elements that denote a concern with the environmental balance and the relationship that is established between society and nature in school curricula. In addition, we question the efforts of the Angolan State over the years to ensure the inclusion of these topics related to Environmental Education in schools, as well as what strategy could be adopted to ensure compliance with the guidelines established by law.

In view of the questions raised and the objectives of this research, the methodology chosen was documentary research for data collection. We examined key documents such as the Law on Environmental Protection Associations (Law No. 5 of 19 June 1998), the Basic Environmental Laws, the Regulation on Waste Management (Law No. 190 of 24 August 2012), the Environmental Impact Assessment (Law No. 117 of 22 April 2020) and the National Strategic Plan for Environmental Education 2022-2050 (2022). documentary analysis was performed following the hypothetical-deductive method, starting with an overview and gradually focusing on specific aspects relevant to the study.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (1978), the implementation of Environmental Education in Angola is supported by several legal documents. First, Articles 16 and 39 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola are fundamental, as they deal with the issue of natural resources and the right to the environment. These articles ensure the protection and preservation of the environment, ensuring that natural resources are used in a sustainable manner. In addition, other important laws include the Law on the Bases of the Education System (Law No. 17/16) and the Law on the Bases of the Environment (Law No. 5/98) published in the *Diário da República* (Republican Official Diary) – 1st Series No. 85 of May 30th, 2016. These laws establish guidelines for the incorporation of Environmental Education into the school curriculum and environmental management in the country. In addition to legal documents, there are several government programs that deal with Environmental Education, such as the National Environmental Education Program (PNEA) and the National Development Plan (PND) that incorporate environmental objectives.

## Contextualization of the research

This research is contextualized in Angola, a country located in sub-Saharan Africa, known for its educational traditions that reflect both its ancient and recent history. Traditional educational practices in Angola are deeply rooted in local cultures, especially among Bantu ethnic groups. These groups have preserved their customs and forms of education over the centuries, transmitting knowledge and values across generations through family and community structures. This educational tradition is described by authors such as Ndombele (2020) in their study on traditional education in Angola, which highlights the importance of cultural practices in the formation of young people.

In the Angolan context, formal education has been adapted to incorporate ethnic principles that aim to protect and value the culture and families of African communities. This approach is discussed by Ndombele (2020, p. 205) in "Portuguese language teaching in Angola: methodological reflections in a multilingual context [...]", in which he explores how Angolan educational policies seek to integrate local cultural elements into the school curriculum to promote a robust and cohesive national identity.

Historically, access to formal education has been limited for many communities, which has led to significant reliance on traditional education. Traditional educational practices often occurred outside the school environment, using informal but effective teaching methods based on orality and practical experience. According to Ngula (2005), conceptions about tradition and education are essential for the transmission of cultural knowledge and practical skills, vital for the survival and cohesion of communities.

In Angola, the education system is composed of a significant network of educational institutions, ranging from Elementary School to High School. According to the latest report by the Ministry of Education of Angola, published in 2021, the country has approximately 20,000 schools. These institutions are served by about 200,000 teachers, responsible for the education of approximately 8 million students enrolled in Elementary and High School.

Education in Angola is mandatory until the 9th grade. In addition, enrollment is free until grade 12, as established by the government to ensure that all children and young people have access to basic and secondary education. This effort is part of a broader government commitment to promote education as a fundamental right and an essential pillar for the country's social and economic development. The minimum formation required for teachers who work in the teaching profession is the graduate course for teacher, as determined by the guidelines of the Ministry of Education. This requirement aims to ensure that educators have the necessary qualification to offer quality education and meet the educational needs of students. In terms of teaching structure, Angolan students must complete 6 years in Elementary School, divided into two cycles of three years each, and 3 years in High School. This framework is designed to provide a solid foundation of knowledge and skills before students specialize in specific areas or enter Higher Education.

6

Educational reforms in Angola have played a crucial role in modernizing and improving the education system. Since independence, the country has undergone several significant reforms. The 1978 reform, for example, was the first major post-independence initiative focused on the nationalization of teaching and the inclusion of adult education. In 2004, another major reform introduced new disciplines and modernized the curriculum to better reflect contemporary needs. More recently, in 2019, a comprehensive reform was implemented to improve the quality of teaching and school infrastructure.

About Environmental Education, Angola adopted a National Environmental Education Strategy in 2022, valid for the period from 2022 to 2050. This document, which is the basis for the integration of Environmental Education into the education system, includes specific provisions in articles 10, 15 and 20. According to the strategy, Environmental Education should be incorporated into school curricula by specific modules in various disciplines. In addition, it is recommended to develop school projects that encourage sustainability and environmental awareness, together with extracurricular activities guided by principles of sustainability and preservation of the environment.

The challenges facing the education system in Angola are significant, including resource scarcity, insufficient teacher formation, and poor infrastructure. However, recent reforms have focused on overcoming these difficulties, expanding access to education, and improving the quality of teaching. According to data from the Ministry of Education of Angola (Angola, 2021), the reports of the ministry himself and international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF highlight notable progress, such as the increase in enrollment rates and the implementation of new educational technologies available to teachers and students.

## **Environmental education and the responsibility of education systems**

Human thought in relation to nature has become a central concern of today's society, reflecting a growing recognition of the need to preserve the environment. Environmental Education plays a crucial role in this context, by raising awareness and empowering people to act in a sustainable manner. Within the education sector, teachers could promote improved quality of life by encouraging students to take a shared responsibility in the search for sustainable solutions. By integrating sustainability principles and environmental practices into their classes, educators can help form citizens who are aware of and engaged in protecting the planet.

We realize the importance of creating sustainable societies, oriented to face current challenges and form people to be responsible citizens. Changing and improving the relationship between man and the environment should be the main objective of education. However, to form such relationships, it is necessary to undergo an internal change that includes self-care, relationships with other people and indirect cohabitation with other organisms (Scherer, 2023).

According to Guimarães (2005), Environmental Education was born with a vocation to problematize and rethink the dynamic relationship between people and the environment, demonstrating its importance and drawing attention to a theme that is currently gaining great relevance due to the social and environmental crisis that is becoming increasingly evident throughout the planet.

Through Environmental Education, individuals and societies acquire the necessary bases for the collective confrontation of environmental problems and for the creation of social responses to the planetary crisis that humanity faces.

Scherer (2023) points out that Environmental Education is concerned with incorporating new values and attitudes to increase individuals' awareness of social and natural problems so that they can act critically as citizens. In this sense, it recognizes the importance of understanding the world, taking the necessary actions, building new attitudes, in addition to protecting and caring for the environment in which they live. In turn, in this context, schools need to assume their social responsibility, acting through participatory educational processes, which can educate and, at the same time, build a critical and deep understanding of current environmental issues.

8 The growing environmental degradation and climate change have aroused a global concern about the need to preserve the environment. In this context, Environmental Education emerges as an essential tool to raise awareness and empower citizens to adopt sustainable practices. Thus, Environmental Education could be defined as an educational process that aims to form a population aware and concerned with the environment and associated problems, which has knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitments to work, individually and collectively, in the search for solutions to the present environmental problems and in the prevention of new problems (Unesco, 1978). According to Telles (2002), the environment materializes the relationships that human beings have with each other and with nature, incorporating physical, chemical, biological, socioeconomic, cultural, political, ecological, ethical, and aesthetic aspects. Therefore, Environmental Education seeks to address the environment in its entirety, promoting a broad and integrated understanding of the various elements that constitute the environment.

Currently, most of the environmental problems we face are closely linked to the "modern" lifestyle adopted by our society, which is characterized by unbridled consumerism and deeply unsustainable practices.

To transform these habits, it is essential to promote an educational model that incorporates sustainability and social and environmental responsibility as pillars of our actions.

Environmental education in schools should function as a tool for awareness and reflection, stimulating both individual and collective concern regarding environmental issues. The focus should be on changing behaviors, with the objective of achieving sustainable development that preserves the environment and improves people's quality of life.

It is believed that children, representing future generations and being at a developmental stage, find it easier to develop an environmental awareness. This can occur more effectively than in adults, as they still do not establish fixed habits and behaviors (Carvalho, 2001).

For this reason, it is essential to promote environmental education in schools, to form citizens more aware of ecological issues, which can contribute to the preservation of the environment and to a higher quality of life. Providing children with an ambience rich in sensory experiences and cognitive challenges generates lasting effects, since sensitivity is more pronounced in childhood (Capra, 2008).

## Implementation of environmental education in Angola

In Angola, Environmental Education has gained prominence in public policies since the approval of the National Environmental Education Strategy in 2022. The Constitution of the Republic of Angola, in its Article 39, establishes the right to a healthy and unpolluted environment, in addition to the duty to defend and preserve it, demonstrating the country's concern with environmental issues. This article also states that the State must promote actions to protect the environment, encouraging sustainable practices among its citizens.

In addition, the National Environmental Education Strategy (ENEA), in force until 2050, defines guidelines and goals for the integration of Environmental Education at all levels of education. This strategy is guided by the global principles that guide the field of Environmental Education, adapting to the specific needs of the Angolan context. It provides for the inclusion of Environmental

Education modules in various disciplines, the promotion of school projects that encourage sustainability and the performance of extracurricular activities focused on environmental preservation.

Therefore, it is considered that Environmental Education is an essential resource for the formation of a critical and active citizenship, capable of fostering actions to promote the sustainability and quality of life of all forms of life on the planet. Its effective implementation depends on the adoption of clear principles and objectives, which aim to transform the relationship of human beings with the environment in a critical and participatory way. In Angola, efforts to integrate Environmental Education into the education system represent an important step to face environmental challenges and promote sustainable development for the country. Therefore, it is considered that the consolidation of Environmental Education in educational policies and its practical implementation in schools are fundamental for the formation of a more conscious society and committed to the preservation of the environment.

10 Angolan legislation has a recent trajectory in relation to environmental issues, unlike educational legislation, which has always been a concern of the Angolan government, considering that, at the time of independence, about 85% of the population was illiterate. Therefore, the Angolan State's concern with education manifests itself at various times as a fundamental requirement for the country's economic and social development. Regarding the education system, the curricular norms establish that Environmental Education is a right of all people, guaranteed by Article 39 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola, which states that everyone has the right to live in a healthy and uncontaminated environment, and has the duty to protect it (Angola, 2000).

## **Educational reforms in Angola and environmental education**

The implementation of Environmental Education in the school curriculum in Angola is a fundamental issue, given the importance of expanding the environmental awareness of the population through transformative and emancipatory formation processes, capable of discussing reality and creating alternatives to face the social and environmental problems that affect all humanity. Thus, we

sought to detail the educational reforms that shaped the Angolan educational system in the post-independence period to understand how Environmental Education was being incorporated into these processes.

Angola has undergone several educational reforms since its independence, considering that the model adopted in the colonial period was incompatible with the needs of democratization of education and extensive formation for citizenship. Each of the reforms of the education system sought to improve and meet the needs of society and the labor market. According to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Angola (Angola, 2014), the main reforms include:

1. 1977 reform: first major reform after independence, focusing on the nationalization of the educational system and the elimination of illiteracy.
2. 2001 Reform: introduced significant changes in the curricula and structure of the education system, aiming to align Angolan education with international standards.
3. 2011 reform: emphasized technical and professional education, seeking to prepare students for the labor market and for the country's sustainable development.
4. 2021 reform: The most recent focused on the integration of new technologies in teaching, teacher formation and the inclusion of disciplines focused on sustainable development and Environmental Education.

In view of the various educational reforms implemented since Angola's independence, it is clear the effort made to adapt the educational system to the country's evolving needs and with the nationalization of the system, through curricular and structural modernization, with special emphasis on technical and professional education, as well as the integration of new technologies and themes related to environmental sustainability. These reforms not only aimed to reduce illiteracy and prepare young people for the labor market, but also sought to position Angolan education as an essential pillar for social and economic development.

Environmental Education is an essential component of Angola's educational policies, as it has recognized its ability to form citizens who are aware of and responsible for the environment. In this sense, according to Guimarães (2005), it is worth mentioning that Environmental Education emerged to try to save the dynamic relationship between people and the environment, demonstrating its importance and drawing attention to the need for more sustainable development. To understand the process of insertion of Environmental Education in Angola's public policies, it is important to highlight some documents that guide its implementation, as highlighted in the report "Global Assessment of Educational Reform" (Angola, 2014):

1. Law No. 3 of January 18, 2006 – Law of environmental defense associations: Establishes the guidelines for the formation and operation of environmental associations, promoting the active participation of society in the protection of the environment.
2. Law No. 5 of June 19, 1998 – basic environmental laws: Defines the principles and objectives of Angolan environmental policy, including the need for Environmental Education as an awareness raising tool.
3. Presidential Decree No. 190 of August 12, 2012, which regulates waste management: it regulates waste management in the country, integrating Environmental Education practices to promote recycling and waste reduction.
4. Decree-Law No. 117 of April 22, 2020 – environmental impact assessment: requires the conduct of environmental impact studies for development projects, encouraging Environmental Education to understand and mitigate environmental effects.
5. National Strategic Plan for Environmental Education 2022-2050: document that guides the implementation of Environmental Education programs in schools, promoting an interdisciplinary and practical approach.

Each of these documents plays a fundamental role in the construction of the current National Strategic Plan for Environmental Education, guiding the integration of educational programs related to the environment in schools. These documents not only provide legal guidelines, but can also support and give greater legitimacy to the promotion of environmental and sustainable awareness

among the population, preparing them for the environmental challenges of the present and the future.

According to André (2010), because of the war period that began in 1975, education went through a period of significant emptiness, which caused the demobilization of many teachers, administrative technicians, and managers, many of whom left Angola and moved to other countries. This situation suspended pedagogical activities, which caused great damage to the process of reconstruction of the education system and to the entire development process of the country, which at that time was experiencing political, social, and economic chaos.

The first post-independence educational reform was implemented in 1978, as described by Panzo (2024). In fact, according to the author, it was not really a reform, but rather basic principles for the reformulation of the education system. However, as it was a first initiative to rebuild the education system, it was considered as a first reform, as it established the foundations for education during that period.

According to Nguluve (2010), the first educational system developed with the 1978 reform essentially increased educational opportunities, free basic education (from 1st to 4th grade), compulsory school attendance at first level and the teacher's pedagogical improvement. In turn, Base Law No. 13, of December 31, 2001, establishes the legal guidelines for the second reform of the Angolan education system. In that social context, educational issues appear in the political discourses of rulers and people from all walks of life. It was the politicians who decided on the problem of education in Angola and this, according to Buza (2013), reverberated in the constitution of a picture of poor quality of teaching in the country.

Throughout the reforms that followed, it was possible to perceive the lack of Environmental Education in the basic laws of the education system (educational reforms). Thus, at this moment of implementation of the first National Environmental Education Strategy in Angola, the challenge of the Angolan government and society is to overcome the gaps left by the insufficiency of actions in the field of Environmental Education that have marked the reconstructions of the

educational system so far. Because, according to Maka na Sanzala (2021), almost or nothing was said in the latest educational reforms on Environmental Education, which demonstrates that there is a large deficit in legislation, that is, in the basic laws of the educational system in Angola.

## Final Considerations

The analysis of the results reveals the existence of an intersection between the theory and practice of Environmental Education in the theoretical approaches, however, the absence of this theme in the educational reforms denotes that there was no attribution of importance either from a theoretical or practical point of view, from a critical perspective, as pointed out by Maka na Sanzala (2021). On the other hand, Buza (2013) and Nguluve (2010), from a critical analysis of the documents of the educational reforms reveal a significant gap in the systematic incorporation of Environmental Education in the education systems. According to them, the absence of a clear emphasis in these documents suggests a mismatch between educational theory and the practical implementation of environmental policies in the educational context.

According to André (2022), educational policies need not only to promote environmental awareness, but must effectively integrate the principles of Environmental Education into the school curriculum. Even considering that recent educational reforms in Angola have brought important structural changes, the implementation of the National Environmental Education Strategy still faces significant challenges in its implementation, given the need to expand teacher formation, encourage the development of interdisciplinary school projects, among other actions that foster the development of Environmental Education in schools.

For Panzo (2024), Environmental Education must be more than a transversal theme, it must be an interdisciplinary approach that promotes a critical understanding of the relations between society and the environment. In this sense, it could be considered that the National Environmental Education Strategy, although it is a positive advance for the field of educational public policies, faces difficulties in its implementation process, considering limitations of

all kinds, from the formation of pedagogical teams, to practical issues, such as the lack of adequate didactic material and the insufficient formation of teachers.

In the face of these challenges, it is crucial to review and strengthen educational policies to ensure that Environmental Education is meaningfully and effectively integrated into everyday school life. This requires not only curriculum reviews, but also investments in continuing teacher formation and the development of contextualized educational resources.

Environmental Education is still little explored in Angolan schools, mainly due to the lack of initiatives supported by school managers, which means that, in most cases, teachers do not finish developing their projects or are able to promote an effective approach to topics related to Environmental Education in schools. It is necessary to establish educational practices with the objective of emphasizing the role of the school in the formation of citizenship, considering the interrelationship between the natural and social environment.

In general, the greatest difficulty is the lack of actual educational proposals in comprehensive educational reforms that promote Environmental Education, with actions that are carried out inside and outside the educational centers through the cooperation between the teaching staff and the entire school community. To carry out the educational practice, whose main objectives are collected in the formal and informal programs of the educational institution, and to effectively achieve the social and environmental objectives in the educational proposal, everyone must participate in the work, being essential for the institution and the school community in general.

Environmental Education must have a contribution at school that is not limited to theoretical discussions in the classroom, as it needs to be inserted in a broader debate, capable of mobilizing citizenship in a great effort to react to the global social and environmental crisis. Therefore, in conclusion, among the analyses carried out in the light of the authors studied, we underline the importance of a more critical and participatory approach to Environmental Education.

The school, as an agent of social transformation, needs to promote an education that not only informs, but also empowers students to act as responsible citizens, committed to the environment. Thus, it is essential that educational

policies reflect this commitment, since the environmental crisis faced by humanity demands effective and creative responses from all societies.

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