

THE TEACHING OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN SÃO VICENTE - CAPE VERDE: The Portuguese School of Mindelo



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Abstract: It was our intention to study the policy of diffusion of the Portuguese language in the diaspora with a special focus on the mechanism of private initiative on the island of Sao Vicente in Cape Verde, in the Portuguese School of Mindelo. An analysis will be made of the educational project and the statistical analysis of the evolution of the number of students as well as the analysis of its educational project. It is in this perspective that the present proposal is oriented, that is, to frame policies as a means of promoting and disseminating the Portuguese language because it is taking into account the economic value and influence that of Portuguese language, not only in the field of discourses but, fundamentally in the field of concrete actions that time and historical evolution have determined.

1. Language policy and language planning

The lack of a true language policy is a finding we so often hear from researchers and experts and even teachers on the ground. However, many separate measures have been taken that have allowed for a greater command of Portuguese as a mother tongue and a more extensive diffusion as a second or foreign language. In a document entitled *Portuguese Language, Perspectives for the 21st Century*, by the governmental body that promotes the promotion of Portuguese language and culture, states that The important position that the Portuguese Language occupies today in the world linguistic panorama does not, however, result from the implementation of a strategic program aimed at achieving this goal, since Portugal did not associate with its expansion process a policy of diffusion of the language, an option contrary to that

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adopted by other European powers. According to Silva (2005) there are no lines of action or political will to foresee a national strategic plan for the promotion of Portuguese language and culture abroad, therefore demonstrating an inability to understand the economic value of language and its role in the construction of an external image of quality, dynamism and respectability.

When speaking of language policy, it must be thought of as an intervention activity and regulation of the use of languages in different contexts. Language policy and language planning designate political mechanisms whose impacts are reflected in official regulations, implicit and unofficial mechanisms and which are reflected in the teaching of language as a vehicle for schooling communities that use it as a second language, and language as a reference sociopolitical and cultural in spaces where it is a foreign language or as a set of actions defined and carried out by the governing authorities of a community (Mateus, 2010). The former President of the Republic, Dr. Jorge Sampaio (2004), stated that the cause of the affirmation and projection of the Portuguese language represents one of those challenges that, if we do not know how to grasp it, we are truly failing a primary responsibility of the present, an enormous wealth we have received from the past and neglecting the future.

Moura (2005) points out that something must be done at the level of public policies because the Portuguese language is in regression and can only surpass this state if there are sufficiently strong and suggestive bilateral cooperation policies that allow it.

2. The Portuguese school of Mindelo and the model of private initiative

The Portuguese School of Mindelo is a private and cooperative teaching institution, owned by the "Portuguese School of Mindelo - Teaching Cooperative", created on April 26, 2016, which has as a priority the creation of a national reference teaching center and international education capable of contributing to the personal, social and human development of its students and other elements of the educational community.

The Portuguese School aims to affirm and disseminate the language, history and culture of Portugal and Cape Verde, providing the children of Portuguese, Cape Verdean and other nationalities with a curriculum and Portuguese programs that will be complemented with the contents related to Cape Verdean history and culture, in order to allow the communication between the two educational systems and the strengthening of cultural ties between the two countries.

3. School identity

The Portuguese School of Mindelo is a private school with a Portuguese and Cape Verdean educational and cultural background. It is a 21st Century

School, a school that intends to prepare the future citizens based on three pillars: globalization, knowledge and ecological awareness.

We live in a society where there are no longer barriers to space or time that prevent people from communicate, where knowledge is constantly expanding and has become the most significant resource and citizens have become aware of how much nature is indispensable for human life and how much it is necessary to preserve our natural resources.

As a result, schools have ceased to be an enclosed space or a privileged place for the transmission of knowledge.

The promotion of interculturalism, a commitment to a deeper knowledge of national and local history and culture and in the field of international communication languages will not only be an essential condition for the full integration of the Portuguese School in *Mindelense* society, as a guarantee that its students will learn and internalize fundamental values such as respect for others and appreciation for difference.

It aims to establish itself as a prestigious school through pedagogical excellence, a high degree of exigency, the quality of its management and above all the development of self-esteem attitudes, mutual respect and rules of living that contribute to the their education as tolerant, just, autonomous, organized and civically responsible citizens. A school that defends discipline and freedom.

This School was *born* from the initiative of a group of citizens living in Mindelo as a response to these new educational needs, to the growth and mobility of the Portuguese community that needs a school that facilitates, from a curricular point of view, the circulation of students and, finally, the need for a school that responds to the growing demand for a more comprehensive and demanding educational project.

4 The Portuguese language and quality of teaching

It is true that after independence, the Cape Verdean population and rulers showed how much they value education, considering it a fundamental vector of the country's development, making a remarkable financial effort for education to reach everyone. However, if the objectives of universality of education, extension of compulsory schooling and secondary education to all the places of the country were achieved, at the moment, the perception of civil society is that this effort was made by sacrificing the quality of education.

The situation worsened over the last few years with the creation of a kind of confrontation between the Portuguese language (often referred to as a language of power - official language) and the Cape Verdean language (mother tongue, affections, language of resistance – unofficial language). Consequently, judgments of value and, above all, feelings that led to an overvaluation of the Cape Verdean language, reducing more and more the social space of the Portuguese. In public services, in the media and even in

the official education system, the use of the Cape Verdean language is becoming increasingly widespread. There is nothing more natural and desirable than the widespread use of a mother tongue by its speakers, but the consequence in teaching is a huge linguistic mischief: they hear and speak one language, read and write in another language.

Cape Verdean youths who want to have access to higher education in Brazil must provide proof of Portuguese language and in Portugal, some universities, require prior attendance of Portuguese language courses lasting at least three months. In addition, the Portuguese language continues to be a language for access to information and knowledge (the production or translation of scientific works and dissemination in Cape Verdean language is non-existent). It is, for now, the path to access a community of about 250 million speakers and an immeasurable collection of books, magazines, films.

Thus, the objective of the school is to promote understanding of the structure and functioning of the Portuguese Language and to favor its use with correctness and fluency in the different modes of communication. This way it is possible to develop an interest in reading and writing, associating them with the pleasure of communication, discovery and creative activity and foster knowledge of values related to language, history and culture.

But it is not only the command of the Portuguese language that is essential for the integration of children and young people in an increasingly global world.

5 Principles and values of the Portuguese School of Mindelo

To educate is to favor the overall development of personality, social progress and the democratization of society. It is, therefore, an act of public responsibility. In educating we do not limit ourselves to instructing, transmitting content, but sharing ideas and ways of being, of thinking and of feeling.

Principles and values:

- The School should promote the development of students' civic awareness as a fundamental element in the process of training responsible, critical, active and intervening citizens;
- The School should cultivate, promote and teach to value knowledge, study, discipline, research and creativity;
- The School should promote, encourage and teach to value the critical and democratic spirit as pillars of any and all civilized society, teaching the values of freedom, responsibility, cooperation, loyalty, respect, autonomy, justice, equity and solidarity;
- The School should develop communication, dialogue and cooperation between members of the educational community and the surrounding society.

- The School should sensitize students to environmental issues related to sustainable development
- The School should keep its identity alive and project itself into the future as a dynamic, creative school open to innovation.

6. Main objectives

One can only assess the quality and success of an institution if goals and targets to achieve are clearly defined. So the school is committed, among others, to promote student's success by improving student performance and achievement, promote creativity, curiosity for knowledge and the ability to use, in an original and innovative way, the unlimited set of information available today, to promote interdisciplinarity and the exchange of knowledge and to provide students with diversified extra-curricular activities that foster their connection to school and community and contribute to their balanced development.

7. Educational offer

The Portuguese School of Mindelo aims to cover pre-school, basic and secondary levels. Started its activity in the 2016/2017 school year with pre-school education and the 1st year of basic education, with 14 students enrolled in each of the classes.

In the academic year 2017/2018 opened a class of the 2nd year of basic education. In the academic year 2018/2019, in a sustained way, the Portuguese School of Mindelo continues its growth with the opening of a class of 3 years of Pre-school Education, a second class of the first year of primary education and a class of 3 year of basic education. In September 2017, it opened with four classes, two from the 1st cycle of basic education (1st and 2nd year) and another two at the level of pre-school education with students of three, four and five years. The number of students increased significantly throughout the year, finishing the first cycle of basic education with 43 students and Pre-School Education with 43 students.

In the last school year seven classes were opened, four of the first cycle of basic education (2 classes of the 1st year, 1 of 2nd year and 1 of 3rd year)

In all stages of education, the programs and coursebooks are the same used in Portugal complementing them with those of Cape Verde in the study of the physical and social environment of the islands.

Mindelo school has maintained its commitment to pursue an ambitious educational project and to a Portuguese curriculum that is demanding a pedagogical quality and rigor that goes hand in hand with the quality of facilities and teaching materials in an affectionate, disciplined, creative, democratic and secure environment.

A careful analysis of the work developed reveals an inclusive dynamic evidenced in differentiated educational responses and effective support to

students, which are operationalized in the various actions of the improvement plan and that aim to respond to the different rhythms of student learning and to problems.

To this end, the institutional support of the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the Portuguese Embassy in Cape Verde are fundamental for the development of the Educational Process and its entire Annual Activity Plan.

Regarding the academic results, the school promotes whenever possible the internal debate about them, which led to a correct evaluation criterion in all the teaching cycles, reinforcing the weight of the cognitive dimension.

The appropriation by teachers of peer work in which weekly meetings are held to define strategies, joint planning and construction of pedagogical materials to better attend to the fulfillment of the programs, as well as the different rhythms of student learning.

It should also be mentioned that all this work was based on a humanized leadership that promotes dialogue and closeness, fostering a good educational environment and an improvement in the organizational performance and the learnings of the students.

8. Final remarks

As a result of the recommendations and in the context of the implementation of Portuguese schools abroad carried out by the Portuguese government, internal debates on the identified problems were promoted and over the years, the practice of collecting data related to academic success was implemented, practices of reflection on the results, management of programs and pedagogical practices.

The Education Officer is involved in moments of reflection where it is possible to analyze their degree of satisfaction on the part of the beneficiaries of the activity and the partners with whom we work together.

To what concerns the improvement of learning and taking into account the profile of the Portuguese School of Mindelo, the action provides a methodology that aims at the identification and early intervention of learning problems, individualized and small group support in the development of reading and math skills, promotion of articulation work between years of schooling, particularly with non-mother tongue students.

The work developed took into account the profile of each class, each student and the implementation of these measures was an added value for the learning process of the intervened classes and without them, the results would certainly be less satisfactory.

The dynamics of work was diversified and always conditioned by the context of each of the classes.

Likewise, moments of professional enrichment were constituted, where pedagogical strategies, materials and ideas were discussed, in order to

motivate and respond to the needs evidenced by the students, having promoted an intense and fruitful work of peers and professional enrichment of the teachers.

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