

Between Nationalization and Eurocentric Heritage: Educational Reforms in Guinea-Bissau in the African Post-Colonial Context (1973–1990)

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Abstract

This paper examines the educational reforms implemented in Guinea-Bissau during the post-independence period (1973–1990), focusing on the tensions between efforts to nationalize education and the persistence of Eurocentric educational structures inherited from the colonial system. The study addresses the following research question: how did educational reforms in Guinea-Bissau between 1973 and 1990 attempt to promote the nationalization of education while confronting the enduring influence of colonial educational legacies? Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach based on bibliographic research and historical analysis of official documents and scholarly literature on education and public policy within the African post-colonial context. Following independence on September 24, 1973, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) assumed leadership of the newly established state and initiated a national reconstruction process guided by principles developed during the liberation struggle. Within this framework, key sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, education, and health were prioritized to overcome socio-economic structures inherited from colonial rule. Education was assigned a central role in the project of national reconstruction and in the broader process of decolonizing social consciousness. Schools were expected to contribute to the formation of a “New Man,” committed to social transformation and national development. However, the implementation of this educational project faced significant structural, institutional, and political challenges. The findings suggest that, despite efforts to adapt the educational system to the country's social and cultural realities, many structural and curricular aspects remained influenced by Eurocentric models. Furthermore, the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986 increased the influence of international organizations on educational policymaking, particularly in relation to curricular reforms.

Keywords

Educational reforms, Eurocentric heritage, nationalization of education, African post-colonialism, Guinea-Bissau.