The ‘representation’ of Europe in the Cape Verdean Secondary Education

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Introduction

This paper aims to summarize the main findings of a master thesis research finished in November 2010 at the Deusto University in Spain in the field of Euroculture.

The project focuses on understanding, from an educational perspective, how Cape Verdean Secondary Education, encompassing its former colonizer’s educational system, now an independent country, represents Europe in their educational system. In other words, it will analyze how that concept is built upon; which tools are used; and what ideological interests and values the system follow when building such representation.

Resumo

É importante ressalvar que nas antigas colónias europeias o fim da dominação política não deve ser confundido com o fim de todas as formas de influências e mesmo dominação. Esta influência pode ser questionada a partir da análise do sistema educativo. Tendo dito isso, parece ser pertinente analisar como esses países representam a “Europa”, nos seus respetivos sistemas educativos. Cabo Verde pode ser um bom exemplo para analisar este fenómeno. Assim, o objetivo fundamental do presente estudo foi o de compreender como a Europa é representada no Ensino Secundário Cabo-verdiano. Para a sua concretização, combinou-se os métodos qualitativo e quantitativo. As principais conclusões apontam para: (i) o sistema educativo cabo-verdiano (Ensino Secundário) tem construído uma imagem da Europa fundamentalmente caracterizada pela harmonização de Cabo Verde com a Europa; (ii) a “representações” da Europa que os alunos do ensino secundário cabo-verdiano incorporam diversas características.

Palavras-chave: representação; Europa; educação; educação secundária; (pós) colonização.

Abstract

It is important to know that, in all former African colonies under the European colonial power, the end of the political domination should not be confused with the end of all forms of influence, or even domination. That influence can be questioned through an analysis of education. Having said that, it sounds interesting to analyze, how these countries, currently represent the idea of “Europe”, that is, their mental picture of the former colonizer within their educational system. Cape Verde can be a good example to examine such a phenomenon. The main objective of the present study was to understand how Europe is represented in the Cape Verdean Secondary Education. To better comprehend that phenomenon qualitative and quantitative research methods were combined. The main conclusions pointed out are: (i) Cape Verden educational system invested in a sort of image of Europe mainly characterized by the harmonization of the European continent and Cape Verde; (ii) the “representations” of Europe that the Cape Verdean secondary school students have are supported by different aspects.

Key words: representation; Europe; education; secondary education; (post)colonization.

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It is important to know that, in all former African colonies under the European colonial power, the end of the political domination should not be confused with the end of all forms of influence, or even domination. That influence can be questioned through an analysis of the educational system in place during the postcolonial era. It is possible to notice several studies (see, for instance, Cheikh Aw, 2001; Benavot, 2006 and Gauthier, 2006) pointing out the continuity of some essential fundamentals of colonial educational system in these new independent countries. Multiple, diverse, and complex reasons can explains such phenomena: (i) the difficulties of dismantling the profound and diverse colonial heritage associated with the organization of the educational system; (ii) the evident consequences resulted from the symbolical violence which was the objective of colonial domination; (iii) economic and financial obstacles of the postcolonial context; and in some cases, (iv) the (re) appropriation of some intrinsic elements produced by colonial discourse, uttered during the colonization as strategic trick to materialize some political and economical interests in the country.

In terms of structure, the present work is subdivided into an (i) “Introduction” where the topic and the objectives are presented; the (ii) Methodological aspects, aiming to explain the trajectory of the research and the tools used to accomplish the objectives predetermined; the (iii) theoretical and historical debates; (iv) the main findings of the bibliographical analysis; the questionnaires submitted and its interpretation with the (v) conclusion drawn from this study.

Methodological Aspects

This research combined two methodologies based on the most appropriate ones and taking into account the intrinsic features of the research. According to Given (2008), mixed methods is, defined as research in which the inquirer or investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of study. (pp: 526-528).

In terms of characteristics, it is important to highlight the fact that this method helps collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data which combined, linked and mixed the analysis and the discussions.

The theoretical and historical analyses turn out to be clear about the following issues. Firstly, it was obvious that we might promote a basic, but useful debate about the meaning of “representation” as a concept. The followings authors were cited as references: Butler (2007), Hoffman (2001), Hall (1987) and Moscovic (quoted by Butler, 2007). Secondly, it was also necessary to conduct an appropriate research in respect to the historical evolution of the educational system (mainly SE) in Cape Verde in the colonial and postcolonial context. Of all the authors
involved in the debate, one should highlight Cabral (n.d), Mungazi (1996), Vinck (1995), Wane (2008), Armah (2006), etc. Also, there are several other relevant historical documents and textbooks used.

Table 1 - Summary of textbooks used in the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook Reference</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The analysis of the textbooks directed by the transversal objectives aiming to find information related to the Europe, Africa, and Cape Verde (that is, a hermeneutic analysis: what does the text tell us, what messages does it transmit...). Up to this point, the analysis took into account the organization of the contents, the topics included in the textbooks (see table 1), related to Europe, Africa, and Cape Verde; and the identification of texts and pictures that can give information about the subject of the research.

The elaboration of questionnaire began between March and May, 2010. The students who are in the last year of secondary schools were selected as the target group for the research. The following structure of the questionnaire can elucidate the subject in discussion in a better way:

I. Students personal information
1. Place of questionnaire submission (close-ended question, CEQ)
2. Gender (CEQ)
3. Age (CEQ)
4. Field of Secondary Education (CEQ)
5. Student Residence (CEQ)
6. Level of family schooling (CEQ)

II. Secondary Education curriculum analysis
7. Topics about SE (CEQ)
8. Evaluation of the importance of the topics about Cape Verde (CEQ)
9. Topics about CV in the SE curriculum and the understanding of CV culture (CEQ)
10. Elements about CV identity (idiom, dance, culinary, religion, music, traditional festivities) and their relationship with Africa and Europe (CEQ)
11. General comparison CV culture with European and African cultures (CEQ)
12. Level of profundity of the issues studied in SE about CV (CEQ)
13. Evaluation about the knowledge related to African, European, and American continents acquired in SE (CEQ)
14. Pedagogical material used in SE and the continents focused on (CEQ)

III. Comparative knowledge about Africa and Europe
15. African/European continent is… (Open-Ended Question, OEQ)
16. Africans/Europeans are… (OEQ)
17. The quality of life in AF/EU is… (OEQ)
18. African/European culture is… (OEQ)
19. The quality of life in AF/EU is… (OEQ)
20. The peace in Africa (AF)/Europe (EU) is… (OEQ)
21. African/European governments are… (OEQ)
22. Historic facts that characterize EU/AF (OEQ)
23. Sources of their knowledge (OEQ)
24. Desire of living in EU (OEQ)
25. Meaning of Special Partnership European Union/Cape Verde (OEQ)
26. Visit Europe (CEQ)

The summary allows one to conclude that three main points appearing the questionnaire: (i) the student’s personal information; (ii) information studied in the SE which are related to Cape Verde, Africa, Europe and America; (iii) impressions and information that lead the students to connect to Europe and Africa. The questionnaires were submitted in three municipalities chosen in Santiago Island: Santa Catarina, Tarrafal, and Praia.

The table below reveals information about the targeted group.

Table 2 - Characterization of the targeted group (frequency) by Gender, Age, area of study in SE, and Residence based on their Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Area of study in SE</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15 to 17</td>
<td>+17 to 19</td>
<td>+19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Catarina</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarrafal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 2, the following conclusions can be drawn: (i) the majority of the individuals involved in the research are female mainly from Santa Catarina municipality; (ii) more than half of the targeted group are between 17 and 19 age bracket; (iii) there is not a big difference among students who study Humanities, Economics; Science and Technology; (iv) more than half of the targeted group live in the city.
What does “representation” means? Historical background, multiple meanings and its implication in the present work

“Representation” is a concept that can be perceived from different perspectives as different sciences such as, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, politics, mathematics and philosophy, conceptualize it in different ways. The most important element to bear in mind is that this study does not fully explore all the relevant literatures about the concept. The objective is to provide basic operative elements that allow one to understand the concept and its relation to the main issue in debate. That is why a brief summary of the concept is presented along with some historical remarks about it as well as its multiple meanings, and character. Afterwards, the attention will be directed to some considerations about the way that this study is using the concept “representation”.

It should not be a surprise to the reader, if one understands that the effort to perceive the concept of “representation” goes back to the origin of Western thought. As Butler (2007) points out that, in the Plato’s allegory of the cave, the accessibility to the truth is only possible through the reflection of it (p.3879). The same author emphasizes that in Descartes’ hypothesis of the Evil Demon all that is known is merely an illusion produced by another alien intelligence. He added that Descartes’ ideals defend that the world comes about only either as an effect of our will, or that the world exists only, insofar, as it is perceived. He concludes that the postmodern context embodied the idea of “representation” in a better way. The conclusion drawn by this short inference is that “representation” relates to the world and the thoughts about the world (Hoffman, 2001, n.p). To sum up, social world is not found and discovered, but made and invented. That is, its meaning can be conditioned by several factors.

Hall (1987), considered as the father of cultural studies, emphasizes the concept of “representation” by analyzing it from cultural perspectives. According to him, the production of meanings is linked to the culture that plays a big role in the process of making things meaningful. He believes that “representation” connects meaning and language to culture.

Yet, Carugati, Selleri and Scappine (1994), teachers at University of Bologna, Italy, clarify the concept of “social representations” interrogating whether or not it constitutes a sort of architecture of cognitions. According to them,

> every society contains a number of different descriptions of salient issues which constitute a significant part of the objective world for groups and persons in that society. Consequently, such descriptions are not only taken-for-granted constituents of reality but they become subjectively appropriated through socialization. (p.2)

That is, “social representations” is a process results from many factors entrenched in the socialization process, where one can reinforce the idea of culture and history.
Another important issue about “social representations” studies is connected to its construction. Moscovic (quoted by Abric, 1996) argued that the processes through which “social representations” are generated depend on two main subjects: (i) objectivation and (ii) anchoring. Objectivation consists of transforming abstract entities into concrete and material realities. It is the way that a given entity is structured, schematized and naturalized. On the other hand, anchoring means the process of categorization through which the entities are classified and named. That can be considered as a procedure through which the meanings are allocated in a personal system of thought and it implies a sort of instrumentalisation of knowledge.

Having all of these elements in mind, the meaning of the concept “representation is related to the following words and expressions extracted from different dictionaries and encyclopedias: “image of”, “feeling”, “idea”, “thought”, “simply opinions”, “system of values”, “ideas and practices”, “appearance”, “impression at the sight”, “attitudes toward”, “branches of knowledge”, “the view of the world”, “naïve thinking”, “imaging core”, “figurative model”, “specific logic”…etc.

To sum up, the meaning of “representation” related to this study focuses on the process of attribution of meaning to a given reality about Europe. Therefore, in order to understand the sense of this significant terminology one has to position totally dependent on socio-historical, political, cultural conditions and interests.

Bearing that in mind, the objective of this work does not aim to build “a representation” of Europe. It is hard to see the contradiction. In fact this study aims to bring a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible “representations” of Europe. That is, the research centers on how the students, annotatively and connotatively, converge or diverge in their ways of constructing the meaning of Europe.

Cape Verde: from colonial to postcolonial period, searching the roots of the educational system

It is taken-for-granted that one of the main tools of colonization is education in its extensive and exhaustive meaning. The colonial educational system represents one of the most important instruments to establish, by imposing a given system, the cultural and mental domination. Guided by the objective, and to better clarify these ideas, the current topic analyzes the roots of educational system implemented in Cape Verde, and its importance in the process of colonial regime in place back in the days.
Colonial education: principles and objectives. Let’s decolonize the mind

The article entitled What Colonial Education did to Africans by Armah (2006), a well-known Ghanaian novelist and poet, explains how the official educational system imposed during the colonial regime contributed to pull the colonized mind far from its reality and cultural references. He noticed that, before entering the world of schools, I grew up in a home environment that gave me a point of view from which I could see that the vision of reality the established world offered me in its magnificent schools was an atrocious lie (p.38).

The report provided by Armah points out the characteristics of the colonial education that was implemented by Europeans in Africa. That proves that European colonialism gave little attention and ignored the pre-existing forms of education in Africa. Besides, it demonstrates how colonial educational system, implanted the colonial ideologies by ignoring the cultural values that existed within the confine of the dominated group. Up until now, nothing is more important and powerful than creating “doubt in people’s mind about who they were” (Wane, 2008, p.184). This is a way that colonial government found to structure and implement a system of mental domination. In doing so, their objective was to maintain the educational status quo, and force people to understand that “colonization through education was actually part of a much bigger and lengthier process” (Wane, idem, p.185).

Education is indubitably a strong tool for cultural domination. Thiong’o (2010), an African writer believes that, education [colonial education], far from giving people the confidence in their ability and capacities to overcome obstacles or to become masters of the laws governing external nature as human beings tends to make them feel their inadequacies and their ability to anything about the condition of their lives (http://english.emory.edu/Bahri/Education.html).

This transversal objective of colonial education dragged dominated group away of its past and identity; that is why it should be highly emphasized. Its purpose was to bring under control the mind of dominated group, and subjugate those individuals to the foreign rules, values and beliefs; and at the same time legitimize the necessity of the colonizer (the Europeans) with the pseudo-intention of opening the doors of the so-called Western Civilization. The colonial governments used the tool of education to control African minds and to materialize their own economical and political interests.

Decolonizing mind, as Wane (Ibid.) states, “is one of the most difficult process. Most Indigenous people who have been subjected to Western education become a commodity of Western ideology” (p. 183). It is difficult, because “you carry something in you, something very subtle,
something that comes from your contact with the [Western thought]… One of our concerns is whether it is for you to be here and there at the same time” (Wane, Ibid).

The roots of Cape Verdean educational system have been structured based upon the mainstream ideals of the colonial education. This is the first task to take into account when thinking about the trajectory of educational system in Cape Verde.

The idea discussed above can lead one to conclude that the colonial context did what normally characterizes a given colonial system: to colonize by imposing a system of alienation; to despise those who are under the dominion of the colonizer; to establish the mechanisms that perpetuate the domination; to colonize the minds; to depersonalize others; to impede the dominated group from writing their history; to condemn the dominated group by forcing them to live in misery and obscurantism, etc.

Cape Verdean educational system values after the independence period: rupture or continuity

Normally, the post-independence period is characterized by important initiatives viewing the dismantling of colonial heritage. Education is a key sector in this process. When talking about Cape Verdean context many questions can be posed: Did the Cape Verdean educational system implement any national values considered as cornerstone of a “New State” and a “New Man” after its independence? Did the discourses, decisions, laws published, at the very beginning of the emancipation process, incorporate new values? Were the new values evident in the SE system? And if they were, did they mirror, either directly or indirectly, the reproduction of the values and ideals that led to struggle against the colonialism and the solidification of an independent country?

In the process of struggle for independence, a specific political body of values supported and oriented all the process of militarization and political struggle led by PAIGC against the Portuguese colonialism in Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau. As Cabral (n.d) stated,

the national independence is not the unique issue that our party wants: the national independence constitute only the first important step for the freedom and dignity of the men and the African peoples in the process of building up a peaceful life, the progress and the happiness for the people (www.fundacaomariosoares.pt).

That citation above proves that the anti-colonial struggle would not finish with the political independence. That is, it was not an end in itself. Several changes would have to occur so as to promote a kind of cultural rupture, which should be perpetuated in order to build up the “New State” and the “New Man”.

The official historical document about the proclamation of Cape Verdean independence (BO nº 1, 1975) neither contained any matter regarding education, nor the way that it would be
configured. This situation could not be understood as an apathy of the new government that replaced the former colonial power to promote and improve the educational system on a national scale.

From the very beginning, education was considered strategically important to build the “New State” and society (Constitution, 1980; First national Plan of Development, 1982). Practical initiatives were implemented: mobilization of indispensable resources; change in the educational system followed by the challenge of finding out new directions; alteration of the curriculum framework and textbooks; promotion of a new teacher training program.

In conclusion, the basic structure of colonial education (as structure and body of knowledge) was maintained for several years. Consequently, we believe that all mental construction and representations built by the programs, intended to maintain the colonial status quo.

Secondary education textbooks (History and Portuguese Languages) and the idea of Europe-from independence period until educational reform (1990)

The history textbook (História 1- Ensino Secundário, 1986) used in the first grade at the secondary schools’ content follows the following pattern: the definition of History, humanization process, urban societies and the Neolithic Revolution (first civilizations). None of those topics was related to Cape Verde. In some cases, they created European characters, demonstrating what the prototype of a child should be: white skin, thin and long hair, with the European dress style. The images used to illustrate the meaning of the text do not match the Cape Verdean student’s cultural reality. In the second grade, there was no textbook produced by Cape Verdean experts, neither public nor private. The syllabus began with the Middle Age and finished with the European Expansion and Ancient Regime. There was no reference to African or Cape Verdean issues. The textbooks used were the same utilized in Portugal. The contents were totally focused on the Portuguese historical dynamism with some references to the Universal and European History. In the third year of secondary schools, the topics that constituted the subject were related to the universal history of XVIII and XIX centuries. There was also no national textbook. In the second year of Complementary Course, the most important contents were related to the two World Wars. References to African or Cape Verdean realities were practically inexistent.

In regards to Portuguese Language (Avançar 2, 1987), two textbooks were selected in order to give a general overview of the situation. The contents included in the textbook chosen for the second year of SE were: Communication, Friendship, Art, Other countries and Peoples, Science/Technique and Progress. It was possible to identify some text that guides one to understand the “representation” of Europe. For instance, the text entitled “Language: the instrument of communication” (Cabral) demonstrates how language is important to men, societies, peoples and
continents. The contents incorporated in the textbook (Avançar 3, 1987) for third year of SE and the curriculum framework were: Adolescent, Adulthood, Oppression, Freedom, Solidarity, and Emigration.

To sum up, History contents about Cape Verde for students studying from the first year all the way up to the last year at the secondary school were limited. The contents were related to general knowledge about Universal and European History. As it was pointed out, the contents included in the textbook for the first year students did not match the Cape Verdean reality. When it comes to specific aspect of “representation” of Europe, one should highlight the fact that these “illustrations” represented in the books center on Europe as a model to the Cape Verdeans.

The Portuguese Language books led one to identify the existence of a certain dichotomy about the “representations,” and the main values that supported them. On the one hand it is obvious that some attempts to promote values that are part of the challenge of developing national conscience were made. The illustrations in the textbooks deserved some special attention and analysis. For instance, the pictures in the textbooks denote the type of “representation” that the writers (mainly Portuguese) of those textbooks had about Cape Verdean realities, not to mention the way that they manipulated the contents.

As a consequence, one can identify a kind of continuity of external values and ideologies in the national Cape Verdean educational system. In this specific analysis, the matter that is dealt with are the “representations” created by the international authors in the texts; the pictures drawn in those texts; and the illustrations used. None of those aspects connected to Cape Verdean realities.

Educational Reform (1990), textbooks, and the “representation” of Europe

The educational reform launched in 1990 (Law nº 103/III/90, December 29) focused on the following objectives: the democratization of SE; “nationalization” of its curriculum; the necessity of restructuring a new educational system that promotes the preparation of work force to face the weak economic situation that the country was going through; reinforcement of cultural values that ought to be strengthened in order to develop national conscience important for the development process.

When it comes to the “representation” of Europe portrayed by the textbooks, it would be great to stress that their deficient organization (in terms of pedagogical organization) that can be a strong obstacle to identify the core values that objectively mobilizes, describes and raises understanding about the real concept of Europe. That opposes the real objective of Cape Verdean SE, and it does not fit what they really wanted to convey to the Cape Verdean students. To clarify this aspect, a sort of general analysis of some textbooks (Portuguese Language) and the program of History subject, will be carried out.
The Portuguese Language textbook (Neiva, 1996) for the first two years of SE (7th and 8th grades), encompasses contents about the conception of Europe that are objectively insignificant. Several texts written by foreign authors can be the unique vehicle of portraying a given “representation” of Europe. These texts normally focus on European (Portuguese) traditional stories, arts and other cultural movements. The existence of a kind of harmonized analysis about the two (Europe and Cape Verde) social realities is noticeable in those texts. That is to say, no contrastive analyses are made in order to show the situation before and after the colonial domination.

In the second cycle of the SE, there are two separate textbooks: one for the first, and the other one for the second year. The first year of the first cycle (9th grade), the textbook (Matos, n.d) is composed by three main topics: the Gestation of the Language; Language and Society, and Man and Language. It does not focus on topics about the emergence and the development of Cape Verdean Language. The issue about Caboverdeanidade (Typically Cape Verdean) is discussed; histories about colonial context are also emphasized; the importance of Portuguese Language in the Cape Verdean culture is strongly highlighted; there is no use of expressions related to Europe. However, if one pays close attention to the content in the textbook, he or she can identify clear references to Portuguese culture, and its contribution in the process of forging Cape Verdean identity. In the second year of the cycle (10th grade), the main emphasis is put on the comparison between Portuguese Language and the so-called African ethnic languages (Matos, n.d).

In the third cycle, there are no textbooks adopted. The texts used depend on the areas of study proposed for the third cycle. The Humanities’ students centralize their study on issues about Cape Verdean literature. As far as History as a subject the following observation was made: In the second year of the first cycle (8th grade) there is a subject named “Conhecimento do Mundo Contemporâneo” (Knowledge about the Contemporary World). The issues about European history are highly emphasized: The colonization, the wars, European integration, European cultural movements and so forth.

In the second cycle of SE, History is as an independent subject (9th Grade). The topics included in the subject program are related to the evolution of the history of humanity, which is done from the Western perspectives: Humanization process, the emergence of history, the first civilizations (classics civilizations), the Middle Age and the Renaissance. There is no national textbook produced on this subject. The ones used are produced in Portugal.

In the third cycle, the history subject is compulsory for those who chose the area of Humanities and Arts. Students of Humanities study contents that are mainly related to the contemporary dynamic of European (universal) history. One can identify, for instance, the issues about European expansion, the colonization, the imperialism, the wars, and the decolonization.
These issues introduce from a linear to a uniform perspective. Those who choose Arts study contents related to the European history of arts.

**Secondary education students and the “representations” of Europe: survey findings**

The current topic goes over the main points of the questionnaires with the purpose of describing “representations” of Europe depicted by the Cape Verdean SE students. Now, this study emphasizes information about variables, such as: (i) the way that they compare Cape Verdean, African and European cultures and (ii) their general knowledge, impressions and feelings about Africa and Europe.

The comparative analysis made among students, regarding Cape Verdean-European and African cultures, provided the following results: Firstly, 42 students considered Cape Verdean language as being closer to the European one than any other African language; Secondly, an expressive number of students, 32, considered that Cape Verdean music has a great impact of African culture; 28 students agreed that the music has the influence of both African and European music. The study reveals that 36 students considered the Cape Verdean dance to be closer to the African ones. As far as the culinary, 32 students considered it to be close to both cultures: European and African. Finally, the “religion” is also an important element to take into account. 39 students considered it to be close to the European culture. In relation to the traditional festivities, 45 students (the majority of students) considered it to be closer to African culture. In nutshell, the findings demonstrate that students analyze differently the influence of several aspects imported from foreign cultures: European and African cultures. By doing so, they indirectly admit that one can not establish a Cape Verdean culture as a homogeneous in terms of values, but as system that incorporate heterogenic foreign influences.

Regarding the issues about how students perceived African and European continents, its people, culture, government, young people, the data collected depicted the following picture: African continent is mainly depicted as a poor one, but rich in natural resources. Africans were considered as tough workers and intelligent. African cultures were classified as attractive and different. The quality of life in Africa was considered as precarious and difficult. The peace in the African continent is understood as rare and is still a dream for many. African governments are mainly characterized as corrupt and tough workers.

In contrast to the way they perceived Africa, Europeans and their culture are viewed from a different angle. European continent was recognized as rich and developed. They were characterized as racists, self confident and intelligent. European cultures were viewed as interesting, valuable, and different. The quality of life in Europe was considered as good and very good. The peace in Europe
is mainly perceived as sustainable and good. European governments were understood to be intelligent, organized, cooperative, as well as corrupts.

Thus far, the findings lead one to conclude that the target group has a great quantity of information that characterizes African and European continents. There is not a big divergence in relation to the difference about the variety of area of study in the secondary education, place of residence, and the level of family schooling. By the same token, students depict Europe and African continent differently as far as what they learn from the curriculum framework. As shown in the theoretical part of this research, “representations” are built from different sources without any kind of logical interconnection of the information.

Cape Verdan Secondary Education and the “representations” of Europe: interpreting the findings

To analyze the results already collected, an essential consideration of the theoretical debate is necessary. Now, the discussion centralizes on three main points: (i) identifying and reinterpreting the meaning, the fundations and the objectives about the way(s) Europe is represented in the Cape Verdan SE; (ii) identifying and establishing the pillars, or the central elements in which SE students support their “representations” of Europe; and (iii) comparing the two ways of representing the same continent.

(i) The “representation” of Europe in the Cape Verdan SE

The general analysis allowed the current research to identify chronologically two periods which structured the process of Cape Verdan educational system, which contributed to explore some clues to understand how Europe was and is represented in the Cape Verdan SE.

(i.i) First period (1975-1990)

During this period, one can confirm the continuity of the basic structure of former educational system, that is, the colonial educational system. Consequently, the way Europe was represented was not radically different from the colonial context if one takes into account the main features such as: knowledge organization in the curriculum; apparent neutral interest for African and even Cape Verdan issues; and the construction of harmonized and complementary conception about Europe and Cape Verde. To clarify it better, it has not been possible to identify elements of educational rupture between colonial and postcolonial contexts, which normally constitutes the key element to separate colonial domination from self-governing state.

The general “representation” of Europe founded apparently puts uninteresting emphasis on aspects typically related to European colonial legacies, conceived as structurally important for Cape Verdan culture, and political survival. The way that Europe was represented through the textbooks
and subject programs was based on the idea of harmony, brotherhood, donor, centre of cultural movements, etc. The same situation did not happen with Africa. African dimensions, regarding aspects such as colonialism were not clearly introduced in the SE curriculum.

(i.ii) **Second period (1990-)**

In the second period, that goes from the educational reform until now, the situation might not be so different if compared to what has been stated before. The first element that should be exposed is that foreign (Portuguese), and local specialists planned the paradigmatic educational reform of 1990. Therefore, it might not be wrong if one states that the educational system that emerged from that reform seems to be, to some extent, a reproduction of the Portuguese educational system. Having said that, the “representation” of Europe depicted by these textbooks and other SE tools continue to be a kind of harmonized one. In fact, it is bringing together Cape Verde and Europe as complementary realities. In other words, the painful lessons of colonialism are practically banished. Therefore, the textbooks and subject in the programs analyzed in this study stress the legacies of Portuguese colonization, and the European history as a sequential development of facts. Europe is practically not present in its relation with Cape Verde as the former colonizer and the dominant continent. For instance, the literary texts (the Cape Verdean ones) included in the textbooks did not aim to stress the spirit of rupture rooted in anti-colonial perspective.

In conclusion, it has neither been possible to objectively identify a significant tendency to localize Cape Veridian realities in the SE curriculum, nor identify the assumptions of perspectives that can bring Cape Veridian cultural references closer to the dynamics of African history. Concomitantly, the process of portraying the “representation” of Europe can be indirectly accessed through the posture of the SE system, apparently in an uninterested way, in its contents and perceptions about this continent.

(ii) **Cape Veridian SE students and the “representations” of Europe**

The second item proposed to be commented in the present section, is related to the “representations” of Europe by SE students. Only the central elements highlighted by the students will be emphasized.

After asked to answer questions about “The European continent …” the answers are that they are rich and developed. The target group links Europe with wealth and development. These are, at least, the first two central elements used to “objectivise” Europe. What may be interesting here is not to evaluate the it’s veracity, as it is, but to understand the type of source from which students construct this meaning.

However, when asked to complete the sentence about The African continent, the words and expressions mostly used were poor, but rich in natural resources. As stated before, the pedagogical
materials used by the students in the SE did not accentuate African realities. Then, the question is to get to know what sources do they access to get that information from.

Another element included in the questionnaire was about how the target group perceives Europeans. They are mainly conceived as racist, intelligent and self-confident. The question about how they construct this image is also relevant at this point.

When it comes to the African continent students often link Africans to or expressions such as tough workers and kind. Some references to Africans as black people, or underdeveloped people were made, and they seem interesting for an in-depth analysis.

Nevertheless, focusing attention in two more issues can be important to draw up this difficult task of constructing the global picture of Europe in the students’ mind: European cultures and European governments. Considering the European cultures, the three main words used are: interesting, different, and valuable. However, students conceived African culture as attractive, marvelous, and different.

When it comes to the question about European governments, students used the words intelligent, organized, and cooperatives to classify them. Whereas to the African continent the main words used were: corrupt, tough workers, and honest.

All the information presented and debated may be enough to support the idea about the “representations” of Europe portrayed by the SE students. That idea is expressed through the following components: one can notice that economically, Europe is conceived as a rich and developed continent, although some voices recognize that wealth and development are not extensive to every country. They reinforce this perspective by claiming that in Europe the quality of life is good and very good.

On the other hand, in terms of political issues, European governments are considered as intelligent, corrupt, and organized. At the same time, students recognize that in Europe peace is sustainable and good; whereas, in the African continent, they say that peace is rare, and it is still a dream. Nonetheless, the European cultures are represented as interesting, different and valued. Finally, in terms of relational issues, students perceive Europeans as racists, intelligent, and self–confident.

(iii) Brief comments about the two ways of representing Europe

The last point proposed is to analyze comparatively the “representation” of Europe portrayed by SE tools (textbooks and subject programs) with the students’ “representations” of same continent. Here, the first observation that must be made is these two ways of representing Europe are complementary, even though some opposite elements can be found. They are complementary
because it is difficult to separate, or to establish fixed boundaries between the participation of elements coming from formal education and others rooted in different other sources. For instance, in the textbooks the connections between Europeans and “racism” are not portrayed. However, this aspect was mostly used by the students to characterize Europeans.

Conclusions

The extensive trajectory provided by the present research has permitted us to highlight many conclusions. However, the following one is closer to the main research objective:

1) Without any kind of visible rupture, Cape Verdean educational system (SE) decided to create a sort of image of Europe mainly characterized by the harmonization of this continent and Cape Verde. This harmonization can be found in the way that the two realities are presented as complementary, that is, not as realities that were in two different positions and power in the past;

2) The “representations” of Europe that the Cape Verdean SE students have are supported by four basic pillars: economic pillar, classification of Europe as rich and developed. They stated that quality of life over there is good and very good with more opportunities for young people. Cultural pillar- they emphasize the fact that European cultures are interesting, different, and valued. Political pillar-they depict European governments as intelligent, corrupt, and organized. Finally, relational one viewing the Europeans as racists, intelligent and self-confident;

3) SE curriculum and students (textbooks and subjects programmes) do not go hand in hand, from a global perspective, with the “representations” of what Europe really is. As it can be seen many divergent approaches can be identified among them.

Our final remarks are directed to the fact that this study has demonstrated the importance of conducting such a kind of research in a comparative way. That is, the idea is to discover how the idea of Europe has been shaped in other African former colonies. It looks like it is an interesting field of study. For me, it will be an outstanding opportunity to understand how Africans are dealing with colonial and hegemonic knowledge. The issue must be of interest of African countries. On the other hand, I believe that this issue might be interesting for Europe as a “soft” power. In fact, Europe is always worried about its image around the world. As we might know, new features are nowadays presented as European flagship. Are they the ones represented as a meaning of Europe around the world? This is a question that might still remain in our minds, and deserves an in-depth research to bring an objective understanding of this phenomenon.
References


