

Effective Learning in the School Library: the Portuguese School Libraries' Learning Standards Framework: Conception and Framing

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present School Libraries Network Program (Ministry of Education) and its strategy concerning the creation and development of a national network, the elaboration of an Evaluation Model and the reference corpus of Learning Standards. This is the main goal of this presentation.

Nowadays educational agents have a general concern regarding the tremendous transformation that technologies and social networks brought up to the present, placing on the agenda of educational institutions, policies, and new standards of reference about curricula and learning that today schools and school libraries must ensure. The conviction that school libraries can play an undeniable role in the acquisition of a set of critical skills vital in 21st century education, led us to the creation of learning standards for school libraries, associated with their mission and intervention in schools, called "Effective Learning in the School Library: the Portuguese School Libraries' Learning Standards Framework".

Keywords: School libraries, learning standards framework, curricula, literacies

Introduction

Launched in 1996, the School Libraries Network Programme, (SLNP) was aimed at installing and developing libraries in state schools at every level, supplying its users with the necessary resources to read, access, use and produce information, regardless of the format. The organization and operation of school libraries are guided by principles, namely its development within a school community perspective, calling for articulation and networking principles, like the collection that should be updated and suitable to the students and teachers' needs, including curricula supporting documents, literature collections, children and young readers and, to empower the collection, the practice of library interloan.

The process of integration of schools in the School Libraries Network Programme is carried out through annual applications, based on definite criteria and established principles. The schools that offer the most qualified projects are selected and receive technical and financial support for the acquisition of specified equipment and furniture, collections and management software. Now, all state schools have a library or, a library service in very small schools.

Regarding primary schools, the Municipalities are involved in the installation of school libraries. They have a financial responsibility, when space intervention is necessary and the Public Library is, from the beginning, involved at a technical level, assuring the treatment of all documents and helping schools with the different tasks, namely with the collection procedures, through the School Libraries Supporting Service (SLSS). This structure was created to promote collaborative work beyond the technical work, such as reading promotion activities and exhibitions, among others, and are developed by these two partners.

These procedures are formalized with the signature of a Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Municipality and the school clusters involved. These agreements also reach interlibrary loan services, allowing a real articulation and sharing of resources which is a significant added value.

The National Reading Plan launched in 2006, an initiative from the government which is of the responsibility Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Culture. The National Reading Plan is considered a national goal to increase reading and reading literacies. Research on the Portuguese reality is only partial, the National Reading Plan also includes a set of studies which will allow a better understanding of the reality, and also monitor and evaluate the National Reading Intervention. Research will also be aimed at creating tools which may serve as guidelines to support and motivate reading, literacy, and cultural promoters – teachers, educators, librarians, school librarians, mediators, parents and guardians.

To accomplish its main goals, School Libraries Network Programme tried to respond to training needs of the school librarian and of the team, either continuous teacher training or by higher education institutions. So, the human resources allocated to school libraries have been consolidated, evidenced by the 2009 law that created the position of the teacher librarian in all schools, with adequate training. As a teacher librarian he/she plays an important role, not only in library management, and supporting curricula, but also in pedagogical and cultural promotion, namely all that concerns the articulation with school communities of reading programmes, but also supporting the activities of the National Reading Plan.

The role of teacher librarian can make the difference. Focusing on literacy development in the school educational project (School Mission Goals) is the first step. The commitment with stakeholders as School Boards, all staff, seems to be crucial to accomplish our work strategies to develop collaborative partnerships with teachers, support curriculum activities, make connections, create opportunities for cooperative learning and develop a learning environment. Working with a teacher or a group of teachers providing strategies, materials and resources, according to their needs and evaluating the impact on students' achievement, is the only way to promote changes in the teaching and learning process and place the school library at the core of instruction and to achieve curricular goals.

To support school libraries, School Libraries Network Programme has a team in charge, a vast group of teachers with library training and experience in the management of the school libraries known as Municipal Coordinators, that provide consultancy and technical support in the field, both in library installation and in optimizing the qualified work developed by teacher librarian and the library staff. These teachers are also in charge of encouraging municipal

working groups, in articulation with the Public Library, in order to develop structured projects in the promotion of reading and literacy to render people aware of the need to adopt resource sharing policies and joining organisational activities to stimulate the creation of network information management systems. This group of teachers is another important support not only for school libraries but also to the development of a national reading plan activities, carrying out a set of projects that we have running in the field, such as the creation and development of regional networks and to the implementation of the Evaluation Model, (since 2008) and now for the implementation of the School Libraries' Learning Standards Framework.

Effective Learning in the School Library: the Portuguese School Libraries' Learning Standards Framework: conception and framing

1. Digital Era and new challenges

Nowadays, educational agents have a general concern regarding a tremendous transformation that technologies and social networks represent, placing on the agenda of educational institutions policies and new standards of reference about curricula and learning that today's schools and school libraries must ensure.

The new digital media, as we know are changing the nature of our societies and economies, either on an individual level or as in a global and collective plan. Industrial economies change to knowledge economies, and it is now a driving force of economic activities based on lifelong learning, innovation, and creativity.

The impact of networked technologies in our cognitive abilities and learning is huge, and their nature is growing more difficult to understand/clarify.

The digital revolution has transformed many of our practices, from accessing information to knowledge construction. Reading has also changed; it is multimodal and hyper-textual, fragmented, superficial, and multi-sensorial today.

Our cognitive structure continues to change, influenced by the new contexts and instruments, acting in the capacity of reasoning, problem-solving strategies, knowledge transfer, information handling and flexibility, reflective consciousness, etc.

Our students live and interact in a set of social media, having great expectations and trust related to their technologic skills, use these as a way to achieve what they want in a very short time, the nature of activities being more important than the kind of technologies that support them.

They live surrounded by all kind of media, (social networks, Youtube, videogames, MP3 ...) Besides this brief landscape and despite this picture, and in contrast with the view that young people have an intuition and confidence in the use of new technologies and digital environments that dismiss any difficulty or need for educational intervention, research has been emphasizing/stressing a lot of reservations about these qualities, namely in what information skills are concerned, critical thinking, and responsible attitudes, with huge importance in the learning and educative processes.

Great challenges for schools and teachers. Libraries are, due to their environments and reception conditions, easy providers of information access and learning opportunities that become vital hubs either for schools or students to develop all these complex literacies, competencies, skills, values, and attitudes, regarding 21st century demands. Reading, regardless of what format or support, is the great agent of change and a means to achieve educational success, and therefore the best cross-strategy to develop understanding in all other areas of knowledge.

2. New learning environments

To understand the scope and impact of these changes in education and in learning, there is nothing better than to reflect on the way the new ways of learning are characterized, physical or virtual:

The conviction that school libraries can play an undeniable role in the acquisition of a set of critical skills, vital in 21st century education, led us to the creation of learning standards for school libraries, associated with their mission and intervention in schools, called "Effective Learning in the School Library: the Portuguese School Libraries' Learning Standards Framework".

2.1 Goals:

- Promote students' improvement in literacies in defined areas
- Set the library's areas of intervention in relation to learning.
- Give school libraries an instrument that defines its role in the promotion and improvement of a set of literacies associated with civic and personal training and learning.
- Contribute to the integration and enhancement of the role of school libraries in schools and in the educational process, through the articulation and collaboration with school library/ teachers.

We start from a set of assumptions such as the alignment with the educational goals of the school curriculum, associating the implementation of school activities, projects or programs in development, through the collaboration with teachers or other actors; the relationship with learning documents, advocated by curriculum guidelines at national level: education and teaching programs, learning and curriculum goals; by the integration of literacy skills associated with reading established by the framework standards; the use of ICT and different media; research work; use of information in personal and social life, in school learning, and knowledge creation.

The document is based on many initiatives and publications in Portugal of Curricular Standards and Goals, identifying the performances that reflect the knowledge and skills to be carried out by students in different subjects, which add a transdisciplinary perspective, which is related to the contexts, knowledge, and levels of analysis about disciplinary content and helps to promote the necessary skills so that they can consider themselves literate citizens.

The learning *corpus* that structure these learning standards framework are part of not only the inherent knowledge related to disciplinary fields, but also other nuclear knowledge, to which libraries contribute.

The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that this document refers to can be worked into different contexts through the curricula and many other extracurricular activities: disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary by promoting the collaborative work among teachers' subjects and the teacher librarian; empowering the role of school libraries; and enabling the practice and integration of global skills, transferable to new situations, such as critical thinking, self-assessment, metacognition, cooperation, creativity and imagination, among others.

These standards are organized according to three major areas of work of school libraries: reading literacy, media literacy, and information literacy.

The reading literacy area includes the use, reflection, and understanding of multimodal texts, printed or digital, and the different forms of expression: oral, written and multimedia. Working on reading in a changing context requires much more complex capacities.

The media literacy area aims to train students for the critical analysis and understanding of the nature of the different products, communication techniques, and messages used by students, as well as its impact on individuals and society, giving students critical thinking skills. Students need to use media to learn, interact, and participate in social spaces of communication.

The information literacy area aims to equip students with knowledge that enables them to search for, access, and evaluate ethical and effective production and use of resources and information and communication tools, regardless of their format or support.

Technology and digital literacy across all areas reflect the ubiquity of digital technologies, tools, and environments in social life, either at school or in teaching and learning activities.

Technological literacies do not have a relevant space in the Learning Standards Framework. It is a transversal issue, crossing and reflecting its presence in all learning areas, such as tools, digital environments, and in all technological environments and learning situations, in or out of school.

The elaboration of this Learning Standards Framework comes from the need to orientate the pedagogical work of school libraries, in order to integrate the teaching of different curricular content, as well as in the development of other projects and activities, the knowledge, skills and attitudes inherent in the different literacies. This tool is intended to guide the school work to offer others opportunities and possibilities, strengthened by the school library, contributing to the increasing reflection on curriculum management practices, learning, and assessment of students' achievement. While it is an orientation tool to schools and libraries, this Framework establishes school library initiatives and promotes partnership activities of curricular or extracurricular character.

These Guidelines are organized in two parts. The first one is composed by a set of tables relating to the three areas that make up the benchmark and a set of implementation strategies to be developed in each one of them.

The second part of the document is dedicated to the presentation of examples of application in different discipline's activities and curricular areas.

3. Organization

All areas are organized in the same way:

- Knowledge/capacities
- Attitudes/values
- Strategies
- Activities examples

3.1 To a better understanding, we present the general table for the different levels reported to reading literacy areas:

3.1.1 Knowledge/Capacities

Table 1. Knowledge/Capacities

1 st cycle	2 nd cycle	3 rd cycle
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Reads, freely or orientated, full fiction or non-fiction books.	Reads, freely or orientated, full books of different kinds of progressively more complex books	Reads, freely or orientated, full different kinds of books, bigger and complex
Chooses reading, according to his/her likes and interests and reading competences addressed to this level	Chooses reading, according to his/her likes and interests, needs and reading competences addressed to this level	Chooses mainly reading to different criteria, using reading competences addressed to this level
Builds scenarios from reading Books and other multimodal texts (audio, video, multimedia)	Builds scenarios, recognizes different kinds of texts, and establishes inter-textual connections in a multimodal reading base line	Builds and discusses scenarios and identifies different connections and functions related to diverse multimodal texts
Expresses ideas orally and presents short talks using adequate grammar structures and vocabulary	Express ideas orally with cohesion and sequential discourse, using progressively more complex vocabulary and grammatical structures	Expresses ideas orally, manifesting a domain of organization mechanisms and a discursive cohesion, using diverse vocabulary and complex grammatical structures
Reports reading experiences, expressing feelings and opinions	Reports reading experiences, identifying texts, authors, characters or events that have marked his way as a reader.	Reports reading experiences, expressing, the preferences that define their identity as a reader
Expresses ideas writing different types of texts correctly and consistency, in the different supports indicated by teacher	Expresses ideas writing different types of texts, in various media, according to its purpose.	Expresses ideas, composing with correcting and adjusting the speech to language conventions, specifics to the type of text, support and selected genre
Acquires progressively reading habits	Develops reading habits.	Consolidates your readings habits
Searches information in order to respond to daily situations and learn more about topics of his interest.	Searches information and applies it to new situations, according to personal or learning needs.	Seeks and uses information autonomously, to solve of everyday life problems, expand knowledge and make decisions.
Uses technologies and digital tools to communicate and achieve their interests and personal or scholar needs, under the guidance of an adult.	Uses digital tools and technologies to communicate and respond to their interests, personal and school needs, respecting instructions and safety rules	Uses, independently and safely, digital tools and technologies to communicate in everyday situations and in learning process
Uses the school library to answer their needs and interest.	Knows school library organization and uses it autonomously digital and physical resources.	Uses school library and other libraries, autonomous and systematically, either digital or physical libraries

		for his formative process.
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3.1.2 Attitudes/Values

- ✓ Demonstrates curiosity
- ✓ Shows interests and likes reading
- ✓ Participates in exchanging and debating ideas
- ✓ Reveals critical thinking
- ✓ Respects different opinions
- ✓ Recognizes the importance of information
- ✓ Reveals initiative and creativity in problem solving
- ✓ Communicates with accuracy
- ✓ Values the use of library and its resources

3.1.3 Reading Literacy implementing strategies

- ✓ Creating conditions to access in the school library, in the classroom, at home and at distance to a variety of resources to recreate and support learning, in order to provide reading experiences and information research that promotes critical and motivated readers.
- ✓ Developing activities:
 - Reading loudly and retelling stories associated to free time activities integrated in learning contexts;
 - Talking about books and writers;
 - Monitoring and giving advice to readers;
 - Encourages participating in events, initiatives and reading programs.
 - Developing projects in order to promote diverse literary genres and/or curricula objectives:
 - Reading clubs
 - Creating a digital library with books from students' production using e-books tools, such as, for instance: Myebook (<http://myebook.com>), Calaméo (www.calameo.com) or other;
 - Promotion of physical and online forums, or blogs, about books or writers that school library has pointed out.
 - Collaboration and support for classroom activities and projects related to the development of skills in the context of language and reading.

3.1.4 Support for students:

- Giving advice and guidance of readings;
- Research experiences;
- Relating learning to reading
- Treatment and production of information.
- ✓ Creating situations that promote the development of communication, visual, oral, writing or others skills:
 - Debates about books, movies or other media;
 - Communities of practice;
 - Creation of sites about authors or themes;
 - Creation of blogs and wikis for collaborative texts production or other media content.
- ✓ Making available, in print, on the library blog or web page support materials to the production and use of tools: collaborative production of texts or other media content:
 - Research Guides;

- Written Tutorials, audio (podcasts) or video (screencasts), for the use of different features such as, for example: how to use the library catalog; how to make a quotation; how to write a bibliography; how to present a written work or a multimedia presentation; how to search the Internet; how to create an email account; others;
- Creation of a feature on the blog or school library web page, from which the students can post questions.
- ✓ Provision, on the blog or library web page of reading suggestions made by students
- ✓ Provision of information to students, through publication on the blog or library web page of highlights for digital or printed books:
 - News;
 - Works related to topics covered under the classroom curricula projects or other projects;
 - Works of an author or authors' visits to school which are being prepared.
- ✓ Development of projects with families:
 - A set of reading volunteers parents;
 - Awareness-raising sessions for reading;
 - Reading in "coming and going"

3.1.5 Activities examples

To promote the implementation of this framework, sample activities were created and teacher librarians can access them in our web page. The other main goal of this pilot project is the creation of their own products by TL and curriculum teachers, such as this one we will present:

Teacher librarian's appreciation

"In Porto de Mós cluster, the Framework was applied by one the teacher librarian, under the pilot project, in a class of 5th year at the school library of EB2 Manuel de Oliveira. The chosen area was information literacy and the subjects were Sciences, Portuguese and Portuguese History and Geography. There have been four sessions of 90 minutes each, being the first part of each one of expositive character and the second a practical application. The themes of the first three were: research and document location in SL; how to make quotations and references; how to search on the internet. The fourth session was the implementation of a «webquest» on «the crisis of 1383-85 (HGP).

The Framework was an excellent starting point, providing models and clues which proved to be very useful. Students participated in the activities on a committed and enthusiastic way."

The materials produced under the project can be consulted at:

lernos.net/index.php/aprender-com-a-be

Carlos Alberto Silva
Teacher librarian

4. Procedures to development and implementation process

How do we proceed to implement this Learning Standards Framework?

- ✓ Analysis of Curriculum National Standards Framework, in the different disciplinary areas, by Minister of Education, in relationship with School Libraries Learning Standards,

- ✓ Consulting by academics of Language Departments, Information Science and Communication of Lisbon New University and Minho University, in the design and definition of Learning Standards and following the implementation of pilot testing,
- ✓ The Guidelines are being implemented since this year, in 28 schools (15% of our global public schools, in a pilot testing, The schools chosen according the different realities of our country – interior, littoral, schools with good national rating and with high levels of school rate,
- ✓ Consulting and involvement of School Libraries Regional Coordinators, in the collection of information relating to the schools for which they are responsible and in the definition of strategies of engagement and implementation of Learning Standards, of teacher librarians, directors and all content teachers.

5. Outcomes:

5.1 School Library Network Agency – Outcomes expected:

- Increasing of reading;
- Improvement of students' skills in the identified Guidelines areas, related to the work and action of the school library;
- Coherence and quality of educational activities to develop;
- Exploration of new contexts and practices of teaching and learning based on collaborative experiences and joint assessment.
- Use of new tools and technologies. Integration and use of information in diverse learning situations and knowledge construction;
- Integration, sustainability and impact of school library in the school and training and improvement of students ' learning;
- Recognition of the importance of the project and the potential of the Framework in learning and educational improvement by school and pedagogical board.
- Teaching and learning practices sustained in collaborative experiences and joint assessment.

5.2 Teacher Librarian outcomes:

At the moment, and on a preliminary basis, we only have findings, perceptive findings and teacher librarians answers in different meetings, related to the Framework general analysis, and the first monitoring implementation process in these first 28 schools involved in the pilot project, so we choose to translate their opinions:

a) General structure and organization of the document and its relevance:

“It's relevant. Relevant working areas. Mentoring and facilitator”.

b) Adequate to the philosophy and to the problems of today's school:

“The Reading area are adequate (reading, media and information literacy) are up to date to today's school challenges.”

“Regardless of the growing concern with the national final exams it is important that SL are enchased to the development of these skills.”

“Link to curricular learning. Relationship among knowledge and transversal skills with the scientific content and teaching methodology / techniques of disciplinary contents.” “The document is transversal and strengthens in the diverse disciplinary contents”

c) Standards defined. Adequacy, relevance, and quality, as in cognitive or psycho pedagogical terms.

“Adequate Standards, rigorous and relevant. We cannot find discrepancies as they are defined in the Framework”

d) Nature and pedagogical and operational value of the proposed strategies and examples. “Mentoring and facilitator”.

e) Receptivity and implementation

“The choice of the curriculum teacher is important for the successful implementation of the benchmark (receptivity, availability, initiative). The mobilization of teachers, is not easy, especially when we think in different levels of education and the amount of work to which they have.

Aspects to be taken into account in the future: difficulties of cooperation from teachers; the higher is the level of education, more difficult to achieve partnerships; Teacher Librarian's access to the classroom is still very difficult in some cases; we must involve the Coordinators of Departments and school coordinators in the case of pre-school and first cycle in this process.”

f) Application. (Collaborative work, situations and strategies of implementation).

“The application was easy and motivating considering the collaborative work carried out, the sharing of opinions and activities development.”

g) Evaluation. Tools. Articulated management of evaluation data. Data.

“The instrument type is suitable. The process of evaluating in articulation with subject teachers was positive because it allowed to discuss extracurricular student skills”.

h) Value. Effective impact on learning

“For the value of the work already carried out were referred the following aspects: the interest, motivation for reading, the approach of new content, collaboration between TL and another teacher, knowledge and participation of the family in the context of this project (pre-school) and concentration of students.”

“For the impact on actual learning taking into account the activities already carried out under the Framework we need to take into account the difference between the results obtained (and these are positive in general both to students ' learning or for the implementation of this process) and impacts (which still cannot generalize because only it is a half medium term and with a more consistent and systematic implementation of the Standards you can assess the impact of these results in educational success of students).”

Conclusions

In general, this document was well accepted by facilitators and mentors, easy to apply, and useful for the articulation and integration of school library resources and curricula contents and in the improvement of literacies and knowledge, contributing student achievement, as we saw in teachers' responses. Furthermore, according to teacher librarians and curricula teachers, it seems to help students to achieve the knowledge and the skills inherent to the challenges of a complex, hybrid and constantly changing society. This is a working document being tested and aims at being reformulated according schools inputs.

The results of this first year of implementation of Learning Standards Framework is an experimental baseline, to show us that we must reflect on different issues that teacher librarians reported, like: generalization is difficult at a national level, collaboration remains a problem, and it is timing consuming, apart from the others we have already referred.

Next year the Framework will be expanded to wider audience and it will be possible to have more outcomes. Then we think that it will be useful for other countries to access the Standards, adapting them to their reality.

The generalization will be progressive and free, according to schools conditions.

Sources Consulted

Aprender com a biblioteca escolar [Em linha]. Lisboa: RBE, atual. 20-11-2012. [Consult. 03-06-2013] Disponível em WWW: <URL: <http://www.rbe.mec.pt/np4/681.html>>

The references that support Portuguese Learning Standards Framework, can be accessed from our web page:

http://www.rbe.min.edu.pt/np4/np4/?newsId=681&fileName=Aprender_com_a_biblioteca_escolar.pdf

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