

Portugal

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1. History of the school system

1.1 Cultural context and corner stones of the historical development of schooling

The Revolution of 25 April 1974 is to be considered the great landmark of change with obvious consequences on the historical development of schooling in Portugal. Putting an end to a forty-eight year old dictatorship, it opened the country to democracy.

After Salazar's death in 1968, the new prime-minister Marcello Caetano tried to gradually open the regime, but the so-called Marcellist Spring was so weak and rotten that the revolution broke in the early morning hours of 25 April 1974. It was the army, tired of a bloody and useless war in remote colonies in Africa that led the Revolution (also known as Carnations Revolution, because these flowers were in bloom at that time of the year and were placed in the guns of the soldiers). It was a peaceful revolution since the forces of the "ancien régime" surrendered with little resistance.

The national euphoria did not last long however. In spite of the coherent "three D's" political program, which promised Democracy, Decolonisation and Development, the MFA (Armed Forces Movement) was not a unified body. Some officers wanted a liberal democratic state while others sought radical social transformations. In the following two year period, there were six provisional governments, two presidents, a failed right-wing coup attempt, a failed left-wing coup attempt, three elections, seizures of land and housing, bombings and strikes, while the country was flooded by millions of Portuguese settlers, escaping from ex-colonies at war. Yet, surprisingly, and contrarily to the expectations of most observers, national political players committed to a democratic system determined by the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic approved by the Constituent Assembly on 2 April 1976.

Portugal became, then, a democratic State based on the rule of the law, the sovereignty of the people, the pluralism of democratic expression and the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens. As far as education was concerned, it proclaimed that everyone had the right to it on a platform of equal opportunities. Denouncing a strong social coherent tendency, the State was to be responsible for the democratisation of education and was not entitled to orientate education and culture to any particular philosophical, aesthetic, political or religious direction, searching for freedom of personal choice whatever it might be.

In this context, education was seen as a means to “minimize economic, social and cultural differences, stimulate democratic participation in a free society and promote mutual understanding, tolerance and spirit of community”. A “new” education was coming for a “new” society. According to the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, the following principles were determined in Article 74, with obvious consequences for the development of schooling in Portugal:

1. Everyone has the right to education with the guarantee of the right to equal opportunities for access and success in schooling.
2. In the implementation of its policy for education, it is the duty of the State:
 - a. To ensure compulsory and free basic education for all;
 - b. To institute a public system and develop the general system of pre-school education;
 - c. To guarantee continuing education, and to eliminate illiteracy;
 - d. To guarantee to all citizens, in accordance with their ability, access to the highest levels of education, scientific research and artistic creativity;
 - e. To institute, by stages, free education at all levels;
 - f. To provide for schools within the communities they serve and co-ordinate education with economic, social and cultural activities;
 - g. To promote and support access by citizens with disabilities to education and support special education where necessary;
 - h. To protect and develop Portuguese sign language, as a cultural expression and instrument of access to education and equality of opportunity;
 - i. To ensure instruction in the Portuguese language and access to Portuguese culture the children of emigrants.
 - j. To ensure that the children of immigrants have adequate support to implement their right to education.

Another historical corner stone determining some schooling rearrangements in Portugal was related to its European integration on 1 January 1986, together with Spain, at a time there were already 7 countries (6 founding countries in 1973, and Greece in 1981). Being all EU decisions and procedures based on the Treaties, which are agreed by all the EU countries, Portugal had to adapt itself to new rules. If in the early years, much of the co-operation between EU countries was about trade and the economy, it has now been gradually dealing with many other subjects of direct importance for the Portuguese citizens’ everyday life, such as their rights to freedom, security and justice, job creation, regional development, environmental protection, all that in the attempt to raise Portuguese living standards. A single Europe-wide market launching a single European currency, the euro, gave Portugal a new philosophy, strengthening a neo-liberal economic trend.

Portugal had to learn how to articulate its specificity with the amazing European diversity and share values with different traditions and languages. Unity in diversity was another challenge

fostering co-operation with other peoples in Europe, in a spirit of openness, tolerance and solidarity. If it is true that the EU does not decide what Portuguese pupils learn in school, it has a word to say about Portuguese educational and professional qualifications in terms of recognition by other EU countries, by stimulating access to learning opportunities, at home and abroad, through partnerships and exchange schemes and removing bureaucratic obstacles.

1.2 Reforms and innovations during the past 30 years

From the description above, some determinant educational reforms are expected to have happened in Portugal, during the last 30 years.

But it is convenient to go back a little further and remind the Primary Education reform of 9 July 1964 under the leadership of Galvão Teles which decided upon 6 years of compulsory education, when there were only 4 before, creating a second cycle of Primary Education addressed to those pupils who did not want to go on studying. Later in 1967, 2 January, the first cycle of Highschool and the preparatory cycle of Technical School were melted by the same Minister of Education. This measure was the launching platform for others coming in ten years.

In fact, one year before the Revolution, under Marcello Caetano's government, another reform took place on 25 July 1973. The Minister of Education Veiga Simão made the Basic Education be composed by Primary and Preparatory Education, with 4 years each, making a total of 8 years of compulsory education. As far as Secondary Education was concerned, it was constituted by two cycles of two years each. So, one academic year plus was added to the Portuguese School system. Even so, and despite this supposed openness of the school system, there continued to exist an intended ideological indoctrination through subjects like the "Political and Administrative Organization of the Nation" and "Morals and Religion", or even other more academic ones as History and Mother Language, as stated on the programs and transmitted through unique obligatory books.

Immediately after the Revolution, with the Decree-Law of 29 April 1974, nº 176, all academic authorities, such as school principals nominated by the previous government, were overthrown, and the decisions were taken by pupils, teachers and auxiliary personnel in general assemblies after long hours of debate. Several measures were taken in the near following future: Education won a place in the mass media with radio and television programs and periodic pages on educational themes; there were direct consultations of the population on some educational reforms; parents' associations had the right to express their opinion on the general lines of orientation of educational reforms; ideological features were removed from the old programs and a committee was nominated to study new ones; schools themselves obtained the capacity of electing their management boards (the so-called democratic management) instead of the nominated principals; a few optional subjects were introduced in secondary school; Azores and Madeira Autonomous Regions obtained an enlargement of decisional power on educational affairs...

Another important reform that still persists, although now and then being object of some attacks, was the “unification” of secondary schools, that is to say, the unification of study and “productive work”. Before 25 April, 12 year old children had to choose between a Technical school and Highschool, the most accepted way to enter the University. Of course the “choice” was very much determined by parents’ profession and status. Then a new philosophy of integration of theory and practice, intellectual and manual work, started to be launched at school. Instead of an indoctrinating methodology settled on the slogan “God, the Country and the Family”, praising values as obedience, submission, order, respect for hierarchy and conformity, other “new” values, such as freedom, tolerance, solidarity, etc., were given priority. The ideas of “interdisciplinary areas”, “going out into the community”, and doing “productive work” or “socially useful work” were recurrent at this period. These studies, to be developed with the collaboration of people out of the schools, might include areas such as pasturing and factories of woollen goods, fishing and factories of canned fish, metallurgies, etc. The most typical example of this new vision was the “Civic Service”, a new intermediate year between Secondary school and University, to be accomplished outside the school. According to the Decree-Law of 11 July 1975, nº 363, all students wanting to go to university should have “an intermediate year of activities of civic service that may create in students the habit of socially productive work and that may acquaint them with the great national problems.”

After these revolutionary times, a “normalization period” came out at the time the European integration was being prepared, starting to refuse and deny all socialising ideological features from the schools daily routines. Curricula were changed again: the newly introduced interdisciplinary areas that aspired to link school to community, manual work to intellectual work and to engage pupils and teachers in “productive work” were “suspended”; a subject of “Introduction to Politics” that had been introduced in the last grades of Secondary school vanished, only remaining in the evening adult courses. The intermediate year of “Civic Service” was replaced by an academic year, the 12th year of schooling. In 1986, the Education System Act (Law 46/86 of 14 October) was finally published twelve years after the Revolution, establishing 9 years for Basic and compulsory Education, divided into three cycles.

In 1997, the Education System Act was amended with the Law nº 115/97 of 19 September, to demand the same level of education for all teachers: the schism between Primary and Secondary teachers do not exist now, because all teachers have to get the same academic qualification, that is to say, the *licenciatura* degree.

Meanwhile, going back to the original “idealistic” orientation, several political measures were taken again, under the governance of Socialist Prime-Minister Antonio Guterres. The Decree-Laws of 18 January 2001, nº 6/2001 and nº 7/2001, respectively related to Basic and Secondary Education (the latter was suspended by the following social democratic and popular PSD/CDS coalition government), brought significant changes to the curriculum development in Portugal. New non-disciplinary areas were created with a cross-curriculum logic such as: (1) a project area making

use of research methodology on particular problems felt by the pupils themselves; (2) an area of guided study to help them learn how to study in order to acquire their autonomy; (3) and a civic education area to create habits for a responsible, critical, active and participating citizenship.

For the first time Portugal had a globally coherent national curriculum for all the 9 compulsory years of Basic Education. The subject specialist was already not only aware of the logical sequencing of his/her own subject throughout the course, but also of the subject matters of all other disciplines from 1st to 9th schooling year. This led to a multi-disciplinary approach rather than an isolated development of individual subjects. On the other hand, and against the highly centralized Portuguese tradition, the national curriculum started to be decentralized into a School curriculum project and a Class curriculum project, according to different interests and needs, having regional, local and idiosyncratic characteristics of pupils in mind.

This reform had been gradually prepared, from 1996-97, with some legal measures to fight against the exclusion in the Basic Education as, for example, the definition of geographical zones for priority intervention and the possibility of designing alternative curricula for those children with social and cultural handicaps. This sort of work required a new kind of autonomy schools did not have in the past. That is the reason why a new Autonomy Regime for the school management was created (Law n° 24/99, of 22 April 1999). Other reforms took place in the areas of learning assessment, school management, teacher continuing professional development and teacher education.

At the present moment, and under the social democratic and popular coalition government of Prime Minister Durão Barroso, a proposition of a new Education System Act (Lei de Bases da Educação) has already been sent to the Assembly of the Republic for discussion, after being approved by the Government Council. One of the most important measures, among many others, is the establishment of 12 years of compulsory Education, instead of the 9 years ruling the time this paper was written.

2. Social cultural context of the current school system

2.1 Educational targets and general function of school

As described above, it took twelve years until the educational political intentions prescribed on the Constitution were condensed in an Education System Act. In fact, this Law n° 46/86, of 14 October, established a general framework for the reorganization of the Portuguese educational system, having new educational targets to be accomplished. Considering that the education policy is the translation of a series of political intentions, the Education System Act is one of the most important sources for its analysis.

So which priority is really given for the personality development of Portuguese people? Is priority given to the individual or to the society as a whole? Is the policy designed for the interests of

a pressure group, a social class more than the others, an economic lobby, a political party or a religious group? Or is there a balance between the interests of each individual and the whole society?

In spite of referring to the personal contribution for the development of the society, the Law attests a very strong preoccupation with the individual. Over and over again it claims for “the right to the difference in the respect for the personalities and the individual projects of existence as well as in the consideration and valorisation of different knowledge and cultures”. But at the same time great priority is given to the construction of the society as a whole, since Education is expected “to promote the development of a democratic and pluralist mind open to the dialogue and to the free exchange of opinions, in respect for the others and their ideas” (Art.2.5.); and “to make citizens able to judge the social environment where they are integrated with critical and creative views and make them able to engage in its progressive transformation.” (Art.2.5.). Everyone is expected to participate in the development of the society, having an education which cares for “the defence of a national identity and the reinforcement of the Portuguese historical matrix and the cultural heritage of the Portuguese people” (Art.3.a.). And this is to be done “in the scope of a universal and European tradition and the growing interdependency and necessary solidarity among all peoples of the world.” (Art.3.a.).

To be consequent to this obvious trend of social integration and sense of belonging to a major world, the State had to assume the control of the educational system in general, and particularly the control of the Basic and compulsory school system.

2. 2 Socio-economic context

Basic Education is free of charge: pupils do not need to pay any entrance or enrolment fees and they all have school insurance. General support, such as school meals, transports, books and materials are provided however exclusively to the neediest pupils. Even so, and despite the fact that the Portuguese Education System Act recommends “to provide a second chance schooling for those who did not enjoy it at the appropriate age...” (Art.3.i.), “to provide equal opportunities for both sexes...” (Art.3.j.) and to create conditions to “cultural promotion” (Art.3.i.), Portugal, according to the Census 2001, has a rate of 9.0% of illiteracy (6.3% male and 11.5% female) due to low levels of socio-economic conditions of its population, mostly older people from the region of Alentejo (15.9%). We consider 9.0% still a high rate of illiteracy, although in 1991, it was 11.0%, of which 7.7% male and 14.1% female.

Another aspect that may characterize the socio-economic context of schooling in Portugal is the optional nature of Pre-school Education, in spite of making part of the State Education system. The number of places available is lower than the number of applicants. So, probably those having economic resources can afford sending their children to that level of education, with obvious consequences on their success in the following Basic Education. Secondary Education is not compulsory either. The access to the University or Polytechnics is determined by the well-known *numerus clausus* restraining the will of access of many candidates to Higher Education. Socio-

economic conditions are a determinant factor in the access to Higher Education, especially for those who have to leave their homes and arrange rooms in another town where the higher institution is located. And not everyone may provide the costs of the fees at a Higher Education private institution.

Relating socio-economic conditions to levels of learning achieved, we have a panorama of 37.8% of Portuguese population having completed Primary Education, 18.8% and 18.7% having finished respectively 2nd and 3rd cycle of Basic Education, which means Lower Secondary Education, 15.0% with Secondary Education, and only 8.9% of Portuguese population with Higher Education.

Another social indicator is the high percentage of Portuguese population aged 18 to 24 years old who abandoned education with few qualifications. According to an Eurostat study on the Social Situation in the European Union in 2001, these people were 46% when the European average was 21%. Probably it had something to do with the rate of population with an income below 60% of the national median, which was 22% while the European average was 17%.

2.4 Social position of teaching profession

From the amendment of the Education System Act in 1997, all teachers in Portugal have to get a Licenciatura degree. Either in pre-school, or in primary school, either in secondary or university level, the same type of academic qualification is demanded. This fact has obvious consequences on the way the society faces the teaching profession.

According to a well-known survey about confidence in professions, launched by Reader's Digest in 2004, taking in 14 European countries, including Central and Eastern Europe, Portugal has voted 72%, firmly relying on the integrity, ability and character of the teachers as a profession, as long as the average European voting on teachers was 76%.

In 2001, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary Portuguese teachers, started their career earning about 19,585 US Dollars per year. That figure lied below OECD average, which was \$21,982 (primary), \$23,283 (lower secondary) and \$24,350 (upper secondary). Nevertheless, after 15 year experience, their wages were raised up to \$28,974 (equivalent to 1.56 GDP per capita), when the OECD average was \$30,047, \$31, 968 and \$34,250. However, at the top of the scale, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary Portuguese teachers earned \$ 52,199, as long as the OECD average was only \$19,585, \$38,787 and \$41,244.

2.5 School and the role of the family

Before the Revolution of 25 April 1974, families had no right to participate in the school system or choose any particular school to send their children to. But it was necessary to wait for the publication of the Education System Act in 1986 to start the decentralisation of the curriculum turning the school back to the families and the community.

In 1990, the Ministry of Education published a legal diploma (Despacho Conjunto 60/SERE/90 of 14 September) giving parents the possibility to chose the schools they want for their

children whenever possible. On the other hand, the new School Management System (Decree-law n° 172/91, of 10 May) gave parents the right to be represented in the Class Council, Pedagogic Council and School Council. From then on, the families were allowed to be more involved and participative on the school management strengthening the links between school and families.

An example of the parents' will to engage onto the school activities is the creation of a National Confederacy of Parents' Associations (the CONFAP) gathering 14 regional federations. It has an executive committee, whose members come from the regional federations, a discipline council and a general assembly where 970 associations of parents from public and private schools take part. This confederacy of associations have the responsibility to inform its members about the educational system, to analyse and discuss the educational policy, to organize trainings on various subjects concerning education and defend the rights and duties of the parents.

3. Organizational context and governance of the current school system

3.1 Basic legal principles, levels of governance, philosophy of governance

Education in general is the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education, apart from some education establishments that are either jointly supervised with, or fall under the administration of other Ministries. The central services ensure the implementation of laws passed and decisions taken by the Government and the Parliament, and develop additional decisions, instructions and notifications, essentially dealing with the design, development, coordination, evaluation and inspection of education and training.

So the Ministry of Education makes decisions with regard to the establishment and general organization of schools and school time and the employment of staff, and issues guidelines on the content of Pre-school Education and the curricula for Basic and Secondary education.

The Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira, due to their Political and Administrative Statutes, have a specific educational organisation depending on their own regionalised administration: the Regional Secretaries of Education (Secretarias Regionais de Educação), instead of the Ministry of Education, for matters that do not put in question the fundamental educational law that gives Portuguese people a national identity in terms of education and training. Having this limitation in mind, all legal measures are allowed to be adapted to the insular reality, after their approval in the Regional Legislative Assemblies (Assembleias Legislativas Regionais).

The Ministry of Employment and Social Security (MESS), through its Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) and in collaboration with the social partners, is responsible for apprenticeships and centres of employment and vocational training. It also has joint responsibility, with the Ministry of Education, for vocational schools and runs some pre-school establishments.

As far as Higher Education is concerned, public universities and polytechnics have administrative, financial, academic and pedagogical autonomy.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the administration of all levels of education at the present moment is in the process of being reformed and the Ministry's regional services are being restructured with a view to decentralization. The decision-making powers of local (and regional) authorities are also increasing, and educational institutions themselves have increasing autonomy.

3. 2 Financing

Portugal spends around 5.73% of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in Education, as long as the European average situates in 5.03%. Public education is essentially financed by the Ministry of Education, although the financing of some institutions is shared with other Ministries (e.g. the Military Academy or the Naval School are under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education).

The Ministry of Education finances central and regional services through the allocation of funds, and finances private and cooperative education by means of budgetary transfers. However the regional administration of the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira finance educational services and establishments with their own resources and state budgetary transfers.

The co-financing provided by the PRODEP (Programme of Educational Development for Portugal), resulting from the European Community Decision of 18 June 1990, should also be mentioned. The programme deals with financing and resources within the field of training and innovation and the modernization of educational infrastructure (construction and equipment of new classrooms, Vocational Education and Higher Education).

The municipalities are partly responsible for educational finance and expenses. They cover the construction, maintenance, equipment and certain operational expenses of schools of Pre-school Education and first cycle of Basic Education, and provide complementary funding for school transport and extracurricular and leisure activities.

Compulsory education is free as regards fees and other payments related to enrolment, school attendance and certificates. In certain cases, pupils are also entitled to free use of books, school material, transport, meals and accommodation. However, pupils and their families do make an important financial contribution to education through the payment of enrolment and tuition fees and the purchase of books for both Secondary and Higher Education.

3. 3 Public - private schooling

Private and cooperative schools are set up and managed by private individuals acting individually or collectively.

Private and cooperative schools which provide collective instruction in keeping with the objectives of the national Education system are eligible for the same benefits as public schools.

Public institutions are attended more than private ones in Portugal, except for the Pre-school Education, where there is a balance with a slight difference of percentage (49.81% for public institutions and 50.19% for the private ones). Only focusing on the mainland, there is a panorama of 89.8% pupils attending public Primary schools, 89.1% attending Lower Secondary public schools, 88.6% attending Upper Secondary public schools, and 73.3% students attending Higher Education institutions.

The force relation between public and private schooling may be presented through the sample of Madeira Autonomous Region, where there are 90.9% pupils attending Upper Secondary public schools and 86.2% students attending Higher Education institutions.

3. 4 General standards of the school education system

The principles of curriculum design are regulated by the Education System Act and the Law n° 24/99, of 22 April 1999 (Autonomy Regime for the School Management). The Education System Act in its 47th article establishes that the curricular organization of the schooling system should keep in mind promoting a balanced harmony among the pupils' levels of physical, cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social and moral development. The same article imposes the existence of a national curriculum in spite of the possibility of some regional-based components being added to, both at primary and secondary levels. Universities and polytechnics have autonomy to design their own curricula, provided they meet regional and national needs. On the other hand, the Law n° 24/99, of 22 April 1999, allows Primary and Secondary schools to have some autonomy to take decisions in strategic, pedagogical, administrative, financial and organizational domains, provided they had built up an educational project, which cannot contradict nor substitute any components of the national curriculum.

As we stated at point 1.2, against the highly centralized Portuguese tradition, the national curriculum can now be partially decentralized into schools' and classes' curriculum projects, according to different interests and needs, having regional, local and idiosyncratic characteristics of pupils in mind. Thus, participation of teachers in curriculum design is possible both at schools and classes. Parents' participation in curriculum design occurs by means of the participation of their associations in the National Council for Education (Conselho Nacional de Educação). Participation at a school level is also possible, since parents' representatives must be at least 10% of the schools' assemblies. Students' participation in curriculum matters is also possible in secondary schools, because students' representatives must join schools' assemblies as well.

3. 5 Quality management

The quality management of the Education System in Portugal is internally assured by some central services of the Ministry of Education, which makes it known through the Department of Information and Evaluation of the Education System (GIASE).

The Department of Educational Evaluation (GAVE) is one of the Ministry of Education key departments, which is centred on the students' academic performance. It has administrative autonomy, and is responsible for planning, co-ordinating, producing and monitoring instruments of external assessment of the learning process. In fact, GAVE is supposed, among other aims, to organise the process of production and validation of the instruments for external evaluation of the learning process; to establish, together with schools and through the Regional Boards of Education (Direcções Regionais de Educação), the information necessary for the production of the assessment instruments; to co-operate with the Basic and Secondary Education departments (DEB and DES) in the process of implementation of external assessment instruments for primary and secondary school students; to supervise the marking process of the scripts of primary and secondary school students; and to participate in international studies related to the assessment of students' learning processes.

Within this scope, GAVE has produced testing items for Secondary Education and has made national exams for this level of education and tests for 4th, 6th and 9th grades of Basic Education. It has also offered courses for teachers involved in the process of marking.

Another key department for the quality management of the Education System in Portugal is the General Inspectorate of Education (IGE), which is responsible for the educational and technical supervision and monitoring of all education establishments. With regard to public Higher Education, the Inspectorate is also responsible for verifying compliance with the legal provisions governing fees and support for students. In addition, the Inspectorate has the task of monitoring the financial and administrative efficiency of the Education System as a whole.

Non-higher teachers are evaluated by their schools. Whenever they want to progress in their professional career, they have to present a "document of critical reflexion" about the commitment they have had and the work they have done to be appreciated by a specific commission constituted by some fellows of their own school designated by the Pedagogic Council.

As far as Higher Education is concerned, the evaluation and monitoring of higher institutions do not directly depend from the Government due to the autonomy these institutions enjoy (Universities Autonomy Law n° 108/88, of 24 September). Only in 1994, the Law of Higher Education Evaluation (Law n° 38/94, of 21 November) was introduced in Portugal, focusing on the higher courses to be appreciated in two moments: the first one dedicated to an internal evaluation and the second one to an external evaluation, where Experts' Commissions and External Evaluation Commissions participate, under the coordination of the National Commission of Higher Education Evaluation (CNAVES). At the present moment, the following items are object of analysis: the quality of teaching, namely the curriculum organisation, the scientific level aimed at, the pedagogical process and the innovative characteristics; the qualification of the teaching personnel; the research implemented in connection with the course analysed; the openness to the community assured by the services offered for its scientific and cultural promotion; the state of the physical installations and equipment; and the projects of international cooperation in which the institution participates. Although laterally, there are some

other aspects taken into consideration, such as the effective search of the analysed course by the students, the academic proficiency, the social support services, the interdisciplinary, interdepartmental and inter-institutional approach, the graduates' insertion in the labour market and, finally, the efficiency in organisation and management.

We can say, in general terms, there was no strong tradition for the Portuguese curriculum to be monitored by really external examiners, that is to say, by foreign experts, both in Higher and Non-higher Education, until the new challenges brought up by the EU integration started demanding a comparative view. In fact, since January 1999, GAVE has been the Portuguese organisation responsible for the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), which seeks to devise international indicators of student performance in the member states. Other projects under the coordination of the European Commission, such as the "15 quality indicators of lifelong learning performance in Europe" made the Portuguese Education System be confronted with other countries. In parallelism, the External Evaluation Commissions of Higher Education now seek to integrate one foreign expert at least, although constrained by the problems of language, which limits the possibilities of choice to Portuguese and Spanish languages experts.

3. 6 Supporting systems

There are some mechanisms at schools to support students to overcome problems of academic failure or absence of future life projects. The Psychology and Orientation Services (Serviços de Psicologia e Orientação) aim at supporting students to detect their problems and advise them how to overcome them. They also provide them information so that they may consciously choose their schooling and professional career.

On the other hand there are other services devoted to support students from low social and economic levels. The School Social Services (Acção Social Escolar) guarantee that all students have access to school, giving them conditions to attend it successfully in order to reach the end of compulsory education and to hopefully go further. It partially or even totally supports the costs of meals, canteen services, school transports, lodgement (university residences, in the case of Higher Education), books and other school materials, fee exemptions, health care and scholarships. There are also private institutions that grant scholarships to Higher Education students.

These are the supporting systems to those who are in a normal schooling process. For those who failed to complete their education at the usual age, or who dropped out of school early, the Education for Adults – Basic and Secondary Education for Adults (Ensino Básico recorrente and Curso Geral e Cursos Tecnológicos do Ensino Recorrente) provides a second opportunity. It involves a distinct pedagogy, given the need to adapt it to different groups, different life experiences and individual knowledge, which will lead to the students' autonomy. This is carried out through an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on real problems. Although it entails specific curricular

organisation, methodologies and evaluation, it leads to diplomas and certificates that are equivalent of those provided in regular Education.

4. The current school system

4.1. General structure: overview

In Portugal there is a difference between Education system and school system. The Education system is to be understood in a broader way, comprising pre-school Education, school Education and extra-Education. So, the school system, as part of a bigger system concerning the whole Education system, is composed by Basic Education, Secondary Education and Higher Education.

The Ministry of Education administers national non-higher Education policies, the curricula in force and programmes, among other aspects, concerning Basic and Secondary Education. The administrative structure of the Ministry of Education consists, in addition to other departments, of central departments with the task of pedagogic conception, orientation and co-ordination of the various levels of education: Department of Basic Education (Departamento de Educação Básica - DEB) and Department of Secondary Education (Departamento do Ensino Secundário - DES). There is also an important consultant board made up of specialists and representatives of different educational participants: the National Council for Education (Conselho Nacional de Educação).

So, the Education System Act (Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo), Law nº 46/86, of 14 October, and amended by Law nº 115/97, of 19 September, governs the Portuguese Education system in all Portuguese territory (Mainland and Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira) and ensures that Education is universal, compulsory and free of charge for 9 years, for all children. Compulsory Education goes from 6 to 15 years of age, covering the 3 successive cycles of Basic Education (Ensino Básico). The first lasts for four years, the second for two years, and the third for three years. The education programme at this level aims at providing all individuals with a general and common education, enabling them to continue to higher levels of Education or to join programmes geared to working life.

The proposition of a new Education System Act (Lei de Bases da Educação), already approved by the Government Council, has been sent to the Assembly of the Republic for debate. The intention of enlargement of compulsory education to 12 years is one of the most important changes already agreed.

4.2. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary Education (Educação pré-escolar) complements and/or supplements the role the family plays in early learning.

Attendance is optional, recognising the family's part in the learning process of children aged 3 to 6. The aim of pre-school is to stimulate the skills of each child, encouraging learning and the balanced development of the entire child's potential, the acquisition of moral values and a sense of responsibility, associated with a sense of freedom. At the same time, the aim is to encourage the child's integration into different social groups outside the family, with a view to developing social awareness. From the administrative point of view, Pre-primary Education is incorporated into the Department of Basic Education (Departamento de Educação Básica).

4. 3 Primary Education

Primary Education is the first cycle of Basic Education and lasts 4 years.

According to the development of this age group, the aims of the first cycle are the development of speech and the initiation and progressive ability in reading and writing, basic notions of arithmetic, physical and social environment, artistic expression, drama, music and physical skills.

This level of Education is administered by the Department of Basic Education (Departamento de Educação Básica – DEB).

4. 4 Lower secondary Education

Lower secondary Education corresponds to the second and third cycle of Basic Education in Portugal.

The second cycle lasts 2 years and its specific aims focus on education of a humanistic, artistic, physical, sporting, scientific and technological nature together with a moral and civic education. It seeks to enable the students to assimilate, and critically and creatively interpret information in order to acquire knowledge and obtain working methods and instruments allowing them to continue their learning.

The third cycle lasts 3 years and its aims are the systematic and differentiated acquisition of modern culture, in its humanistic, artistic, physical and sporting, scientific and technological dimensions. These are vital for starting a working life and for continuing studies.

The Basic Education Diploma/Certificate (Diploma de Ensino Básico) is awarded to those students who complete the 3rd cycle of Basic Education successfully, although not through a final examination. This Diploma or Certificate is awarded by the school board, mentioning the subjects and the level attained. It entitles pupils to proceed to Upper Secondary Education.

There is also a level II Vocational Qualification Diploma/Certificate (Diploma de Qualificação Profissional de Nível II) at the level of Lower Secondary Education. It is a Certificate awarded to pupils who have completed a course in initial vocational training or a level II vocational qualification course in a vocational school or a set of technical training supplementary credits in second chance education, qualifying for a given occupation. There is no examination and the

Certificate mentions the subjects, the level of the course and its equivalence to the Basic Education Diploma. It gives access to employment.

4. 5 Upper secondary Education

Upper Secondary Education corresponds to the term Secondary Education in Portugal. Secondary Education – public, private and cooperative – is optional and consists of a three-year cycle after Basic Education. Access is through the Basic Education Diploma/Certificate. The secondary school curricular structure seeks to achieve the three main aims defined in the fundamental law for this level of education:

- a) to create the conditions allowing the consolidation and increase of personal autonomy conducive to personal and social fulfilment;
- b) to deepen and consolidate knowledge, instruments and methodologies that support a humanistic, artistic, scientific and technical culture, and promote the definition of individual interests and motivations when facing school and vocational options;
- c) to reinforce practical values and attitudes that will prepare young people intellectually and emotionally to consciously play their roles in society.

There are two types of secondary courses: General Courses (Cursos Gerais) and Technological Courses (Cursos Tecnológicos) or Vocational Education Courses (Cursos Profissionais).

General Courses are aimed at those wanting to continue on to Higher Education. At the end of the 12th year of schooling there is a compulsory nationwide final examination leading to the award of the Secondary Certificate/Diploma (Diploma de Estudos Secundários, Diploma de Fim de Estudos Secundários), taken in some subjects by pupils who have regularly attended officially recognised schools (internal pupils), by pupils whose attendance was for some reason interrupted or who attend schools not officially recognised (external pupils), and by independent candidates in the context of the General or Technological Courses.

The Technological Courses (Cursos Tecnológicos) and Vocational Education Courses (Cursos Profissionais) are aimed at those seeking to enter the labour market. Permeability between General and these courses is guaranteed because students may change from one course to another. The teaching and practice of Technological or Artistic courses including Visual Arts, Dance and Music, are provided by Vocational Schools and Special Schools for Education in Arts. Each of these courses lasts three years, corresponding to the 10th, 11th and 12th year of schooling.

All Technological Courses provide a level 3 vocational qualification, awarding pupils a Certificate of Professional Qualification level III (Diploma de Qualificação Profissional de Nível III), after a final assessment based on the pupil's subject average and the final assessment in the PAP (Prova de Aptidão Profissional). The PAP is an examination that takes the form of an interdisciplinary project developed according to the pupil's personal interests and is organised in close connection with

enterprises. This project is submitted and assessed by an examination board which includes the pedagogical director of the vocational school, who presides, the tutor and representatives of the relevant local trade associations and trade unions.

This kind of education is highly flexible and can be adapted to the pace, availability, knowledge and experience of the individual. Therefore, it consists of a system of units which students can accumulate. Consequently, the length of the courses depends on the individual path set by each student.

So the Secondary Education Certificate/Diploma (Diploma de Estudos Secundários, Diploma de Fim de Estudos Secundários) is awarded at the end of the three years of upper secondary courses, either General or Technological and of Vocational Education Courses, and is the prerequisite for access to Higher Education. The diploma specifies the course that has been finished and the final mark obtained, and allows the student to apply for a place in Higher Education.

The grading system in secondary school is a numerical grading one from 0-20. From 18 to 20 is very good (*muito bom*); from 14 to 17 is good (*bom*); and from 10 to 13 is fair (*suficiente*). The highest on scale is 20. The pass/fail level is 10, and the lowest on scale is 0.

Secondary Education is administered by the Department of Secondary Education (Departamento do Ensino Secundário – DES).

4. 6 Special Education schools

For some years up to 1994, the responsibility for Special Education was mainly the responsibility of two Ministries: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Both Ministries offered services to children and youths with special educational needs (SEN). With the Declaration of Salamanca (1994), Portugal tried to alter the way it responded to the needs of Special Education by starting to implement an inclusive system in regular schools.

According to the data supplied by the National Institute of Statistics, Portugal has an average student population of 1,600,000 (INE, 1996), from which 12% has SEN and only 2.9% receives assistance. Regarding the population being served, 79.6% are in integrated schooling, as long as the others are in special schooling or other types of support structures. So the majority of students with special needs is in regular schools, although this does not mean that all students are in regular classroom.

Focusing on the special needs categories, it is recognised that the assistance for hearing and visual impairment has grown substantially over the years, all cases expecting to be attended to within a few years. As for assistance to physical disabilities, the majority of the population is being attended to in one way or another, despite the differences from district to district. On the contrary, the assistance provided for mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and multiple disabilities is much lower.

The number of specialized teachers is still very low. This reflects an accentuated shortage of qualified teachers. If we consider that the related services are almost non-existent (only a few psychologists and therapists working in the field of the integrated education), then the assistance to SEN students, at all levels of education, is by far not sufficient, and in many cases even non-existent.

As far as the Special Education Schools are concerned, there are 115 Special Schools that assist 9396 students with SEN being supported by 1397 teachers, 106 psychologists, 99 therapists, 80 special technicians and 607 teachers' aides.

5. Postsecondary and tertiary Education

According to the Article 76 (University and access to Higher Education) of Portuguese Constitution,

1. The rules governing access to universities and other institutions of Higher Education shall guarantee equal opportunities for all and the democratisation of the system of Education; they shall take into account the need for qualified graduates and the enhancement of the educational, cultural and scientific standards of the country.
2. Universities shall be autonomous in the making of their regulations and shall enjoy scientific, educational, administrative and financial autonomy, in accordance with the law, without prejudice to appropriate assessment of the quality of education.

Higher Education in Portugal is divided into two subsystems: university education and non-university higher education (polytechnic education), and it is provided in autonomous public universities (University Autonomy Law - Law n° 108/88) amended by Law n° 252/97), private universities, polytechnic institutions and private higher education institutions of other types. In addition, there is a university institution which offers courses in Management, Anthropology, Sociology, History, Economics and Psychology: the Portuguese Catholic University (Universidade Católica Portuguesa) instituted by Decree of the Holy See and recognized by the State of Portugal. Private higher education institutions cannot operate if they are not recognized by the Ministry of Education. Access is regulated by the same procedures as those for state higher education institutions. The two systems of Higher Education (university and polytechnic) are linked and it is possible to transfer from one to the other. It is also possible to transfer from a public institution to a private one and vice-versa. At present, distance Higher Education is provided by the Open University (Universidade Aberta).

The pre-requisite for the admission to both non-university and university study programmes is the Secondary Education Certificate/Diploma (Diploma de Estudos Secundários). But there is a special competition for students over 25 having passed a special (ad-hoc) exam and for candidates already holding a qualification for a medium/higher level course. The admission for Higher Education in Portugal is not absolutely free: Entrance exams are required. There are *numerus clausus* restrictions.

Each year, the institution (public and private) establishes the number of places available for each course which has to be supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. In addition to passing entrance and access tests, students must fulfil particular prerequisites for the chosen course. Universities make their entrance requirements known in a booklet distributed to applicants by the Regional Office of the Direcção de Serviços de Acesso ao Ensino Superior which is responsible for placing applicants in courses according to preference. Vacancies allocated by public institutions are filled by means of a National competition organized by the Direcção-Geral do Ensino Superior. Each private institute fills its places by means of a Local competitive examination which they organize.

Foreign students may also apply for the Portuguese higher courses. They must have a Secondary-School-Leaving Certificate (certified copy) and pass an entrance examination. A study visa (obtained from the Portuguese consulate in the country of residence) is necessary and they must present the notice of approval and length of scholarship or provide proof of adequate financial means for the duration of their studies in Portugal.

But social and welfare services are provided to the neediest students. In order to obtain financial aid for first degree studies, students must address themselves directly to the welfare services of the institutions they wish to attend. Students must be Portuguese nationals or citizens of the European Union, political refugees and citizens from a country with bilateral agreements with Portugal to which this type of support may be granted.

Universities and Polytechnic institutions have different functions in the Portuguese Higher Education.

Polytechnic Education aims at providing a solid higher cultural and technical training, developing the innovation and critical analysis skills, and providing the practical and theoretical scientific knowledge and its applications in professional activities. Escolas and Institutos Superiores provide courses in such fields as Education Sciences, Teacher Training, Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Nursing, Business and Management, Agriculture and Silviculture, Engineering and Technology. Polytechnic institutions can award the Bacharelato and Licenciatura degrees, while the degrees of Mestre and Doutor can only be awarded by universities.

The Bacharelato degree is awarded by university and polytechnic Higher Education institutions at the end of a specific course (usually 3 years) attesting to a scientific, academic or cultural education sufficient for the exercise of certain professional activities. It is awarded on the basis of the student's participation and semester and annual examination results in all subjects. The form of the certificate varies from one institution to the other but always indicates the subject area and the qualification or classification awarded. It confers the title of Bacharel and gives access to employment or to further study leading to the Licenciatura degree.

The Licenciatura degree is similarly awarded by both university and polytechnic institutions at the end of a specific course, usually of 4 to 6 years' duration, attesting to a sound scientific, academic or cultural education providing in-depth knowledge aimed at specialisation in a given field

or sufficient for entry to a profession. It is awarded on the basis of the student's participation and semester and annual examination results in all subjects. It confers the title of Licenciado.

The most common format in Polytechnic Education is the "Cursos Bietápicos de Licenciatura". These courses are divided into two cycles, the first leading to the Bacharelato degree and the second to the Licenciatura degree. The first cycle lasts for six semesters, while the second may vary between two and four semesters.

University Education is undertaken in universities and aims at ensuring a solid scientific and cultural preparation as well as to provide a technical training. This will enable students to the exercise of professional and cultural activities, and promote the development of conceptual and innovative skills.

In the university studies, most Licenciatura courses are organized in credit units, but many are still organized per semester or academic year. Students having a Licenciatura degree may generally proceed to undertake further study for the Carta Magistral degree or the Carta Doutoral degree if they obtain respectively at least 14 (Bom), or 16 (Muito Bom), out of 20 in the final classification. Those who have obtained a mark below 14 may also be eligible for a Mestrado course after analysis of the curriculum by the University. So Carta Magistral is an advanced degree of second level in a specific scientific field, indicating capacity for conducting practical research. The third university level is Carta Doutoral degree conferred to those who have passed the Doctorate examinations and have defended a thesis. There is no fixed period to prepare for the Doctorate examinations. The fourth university level is the Agregação. This is the highest qualification reserved to holders of the Carta Doutoral degree, that is to say, the Doutores. It requires the capacity to undertake high level research and special pedagogical competence in a specific field. It is awarded after passing specific examinations.

Teacher Education in Portugal is now a matter of Higher Education of Licenciatura degree, no matter what teaching level teachers are educated to. Educators (Teachers of Pre-primary Education) and Teachers of Basic Education attend 4-year courses in Escolas Superiores de Educação or Universities to obtain a Licenciatura degree. Teachers of Secondary Education must hold a Licenciatura degree and follow courses that last for between 4 and 6 years. Studies are sanctioned by a Licenciatura em Ensino or a Licenciatura - Ramo de Formação Educacional, according to the issuing institution. Educators and Teachers of Basic and Secondary Education, with practice in regular or special Education, may obtain a qualification to teach in specialized Education. Continuous training for teachers is offered in Centros de Formação Contínua.

Higher Education is administered by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Ministério da Ciência e do Ensino Superior) with the support of the Portuguese Conference of Rectors (Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas - CRUP), the Coordinating Council for Polytechnic Institutes (Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Politécnicos - CCISP) and the Coordinating Council for Private and Cooperative Higher Education (Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior Particular e Cooperativo - CCESPC).

6. Current problems, discussions and perspectives of development

After a broad overview on the Portuguese Education system, now the time is to reflect on a few problems under discussion at the moment, in order to foresee some perspectives of development.

One major problem Portugal has to overcome is related to the demands of an economy of knowledge and the low levels of performance Portuguese pupils demonstrated in 2000, according to PISA results. PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) is a new three-yearly survey of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in the main industrialised countries. 265,000 students from 32 countries (28 OECD Member countries and four other countries) took part. PISA assessed students' capacities to apply knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics and science (referred to as reading, mathematical and scientific literacy), seen as essential prerequisites for them to be well prepared for adult life. Each student receives a score on a continuous scale devised in such a way that across OECD countries, the average score is 500 points, and around two-thirds of students achieve between 400 and 600 points. In terms of reading literacy, Portugal was below the average in the three subscales: retrieving information (455 points), interpreting texts (473) and reflecting on texts (480). The same happened with regard to the mathematical literacy (454 points) and the scientific literacy (459 points). 27% of 15 year-olds have been found to be inadequately prepared for engaging in a lifelong learning process in relation to their reading literacy skills, 22% are expected to experience difficulties in the domain of numeracy, with subsequent learning activities requiring numerical skills, and, in respect of scientific literacy, 27% of Portuguese students are considered lacking in the requisite skills for productive learning in this area.

Another serious problem Portugal has to face is connected with the high figures of early school-leavers at the age of 18-24 years. In fact, according to the Eurostat, Portugal in 1999 had the highest percentage (46%) of early school-leavers with low qualifications in a comparative study involving 35 European countries. Something has to be done for a free circulation labour market where the qualifications are determinant.

The European Commissioner for Education and Culture Viviane Reding once said: "If Europe is to achieve the goals set by the European Councils in Lisbon and Barcelona to make our continent a competitive knowledge-based economy and a world quality reference by 2010, important far-reaching reforms must now be introduced in most of our countries..." We rather say: Portugal has to immediately launch deep structural reforms in order to achieve the goals set by the European Council. Otherwise we run the risk of being completely overthrown by the newcomers.

But in our opinion competitiveness should not take us into a deterministic cause-effect vision in which only a liberal-economic logic masters. It is crucial not to isolate a certain subsystem from the whole system, exclusively blaming education and teacher education for all the evils of Portuguese society.

7. Appendix: statistical profile

Table 1: Number of students in schools and post secondary education facilities, full time students – year 2001/02

School level=ISCED97 level	Formal (expected) age group in given country	Number of students in education facilities of the respective ISCED level
ISCED 0 (Pre-primary)	[3 - 5 years old]	237.547
ISCED 1 (Primary)	[6 – 9 years old]	506.230
ISCED 2 (Lower secondary)	[10 – 14 years old]	666.550
ISCED 3 (Upper secondary)	[15 – 17 years old]	394.783
- academic	[15 – 17 years old]	360.475
- non academic type 1	[15 – 17 years old]	34.308
ISCED 4 (Post secondary- sub tertiary level)		
ISCED 5 A and 5 B (Tertiary)	[19 – 21/23 years old]	396.601
ISCED 6 (Post graduate)	[24 – 28 years old]	

Table 2: 1996 majority, minority pupils-, students in percent of the total enrolment in the given school type/level

School type/level	students of the titular nation	minority (-ies)	migrants
ISCED 0 (Pre-primary)	Not available	Not available	Not available
ISCED 1 (Primary)	457,572	35,970	7.9%
ISCED 2 (Lower secondary)	577,358	41,410	7.1%
ISCED 3 (Upper secondary)	254,745	17,165	6.7%

Source: BD Entreculturas, 1997

Table 3: School time

	Primary school	Lower secondary school	together
School days per year	180 days	180 days	
teaching time: weeks per year	36	36	
teaching time: hours per week:			
- nominal hours (teaching units)	25 a)	17 b)+18 c)	
- actual time units *		50 & 90 mins.	
time (weekly hours) spent in school (half/whole day school system, extracurricular activities)	25 a)	17 b)+18 c)	
home work**			

*effective teaching time ** outcomes form studies if available

a) Morals and Religious Education and Enrichment Activities (such as a Foreign Language) are optional. They should be added to the 25 hours.

b) 2nd cycle of Basic Education

c) 3rd cycle of Basic Education

Table 4: Distribution of teaching time devoted to subjects (subject groups): percent of the total teaching time

	Primary school 1. year	Lower sec. school 1. year
Mother tongue (writing reading. literature)	a)	b) 29.45 %
Other language*		
Foreign language	a)	b) 29.45 %
Mathematics	a)	c) 20.58 %
Sciences	a)	c) 20.58 %
Social Sciences	a)	b) 29.45 %
Fine arts, music	a)	d) 16.64 %
Other	a)	e) 32.35 %
Sum	100	100

* Official language of the country, minority/majority language - not second foreign language

- At this level of education, the process of learning is integrated. No exact time is devoted to any particular area.
- Languages and Social Studies constitute an area: each school decides upon the exact time for each discipline.
- Mathematics and Sciences constitute an area: each school decides upon the exact time for each discipline.
- Artistic and Technological Education constitutes an area: each school decides upon the exact time for each discipline.
- Physical Education is an obligatory area: each school decides upon the exact time for it. But there are also other non-disciplinary areas, such as Project Area, Guided Study and Civic Education. There is also an obligatory discipline to be chosen by the school and Morals and Religious Education as an optional discipline.

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