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Portugal

History of the school system

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

The Revolution of 25 April 1974 was a great milestone of change with obvious consequences for 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 reform the regime, but the so-called Marcellist spring was so weak and corrupt that the Revolution broke out in the early morning hours of 25 April 1974. It was the army, tired of a bloody and futile war in remote colonies in Africa, that led the Revolution (also known as the 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 programme, which promised democracy, decolonization, 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. Surprisingly, however, and contrary to the expectations of most observers, national political players committed themselves to a democratic system determined by the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, which was approved by the Constituent Assembly on 2 April 1976.

Portugal thus became a democratic state based on the rule of the law, the sovereignty of the people, the plurality of democratic expression, and the respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens. As far as education was concerned, it was proclaimed that everyone had an equal right to education. Abandoning a strongly centralizing tendency, the State was to be responsible for the democratization of education and was not entitled to orientate education and culture in any particular philosophical, aesthetic, political, or religious direction; it was rather required to foster freedom of personal choice. 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 a spirit of community'. A 'new' education was to be provided for a 'new' society. The following principles were set out in Article 74 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, with obvious consequences for the development of schooling in Portugal:

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

Another historical corner-stone forming the basis of a number of changes to schooling in Portugal was European integration on 1 January 1986. Since all EU decisions and procedures are based on treaties signed by all the EU countries, Portugal had to adapt itself to new rules. In the early years, much of the co-operation between EU countries was concerned with trade and the economy, but it now involves many other subjects of direct importance for Portuguese citizens' everyday life and increased living standards, such as their rights to freedom, security, and justice; job creation; regional development; and environmental protection. The euro as the European currency gave Portugal a new philosophy, strengthening a neo-liberal economic trend.

Portugal had to learn how to articulate its specificity within an extraordinary European diversity, and share values with different traditions and languages. Unity in diversity was another challenge demanding co-operation with other peoples in Europe, in a spirit of openness, tolerance, and solidarity. Although the EU does not decide what Portuguese pupils learn in school, it has a say in Portuguese educational and professional qualifications in terms of recognition by other EU countries, in access to learning opportunities at home and abroad, in partnerships and exchange schemes, and in the removal of bureaucratic obstacles.

A corner-stone of schooling that was already in place before the revolution of 1974 was the primary education reform of July 1964 under the leadership of Galvão Teles. This reform extended the previous four years of compulsory education to six years. Later, in 1967, the first cycle of secondary school and the preparatory cycle of technical school were established by the same Minister of Education. In fact, on 25 July 1973, one year before the Revolution, another reform took place under

Marcello Caetano's government. The Minister of Education, Veiga Simão, divided basic education into primary and preparatory education, each of four years' duration, making a total of eight years of compulsory education. Secondary education was constituted by two cycles of two years each. Thus, one academic year was added to the Portuguese school system. Even so, and despite the nominal openness of the school system, explicit and intentional ideological indoctrination continued to exist through subjects such as 'the political and administrative organization of the nation', and 'morals and religion', and even in other more academic subjects as 'history and the mother tongue', as stated in curricula and transmitted through uniform and obligatory textbooks.

Immediately after the Revolution, through the Law of 29 April 1974, all academic authorities, such as school principals nominated by the previous government, were removed, and decisions were made by pupils, teachers, and auxiliary personnel in general assemblies after long hours of debate. Several important changes followed: education won a place in the mass media; 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 educational reforms; ideological features were removed from the old programmes and a committee was nominated to study new programmes; schools themselves obtained the right to elect their management boards (so-called democratic management), thus replacing nominated principals; a few optional subjects were introduced in secondary school; and the Azores and Madeira autonomous regions received wider decision-making powers in educational affairs.

Another important reform that still persists, although it has been and continues to be an occasional object of attack, was the 'unification' of secondary schools, i.e. the amalgamation of study and 'productive work'. Before the revolution, twelve-year-old children had to choose between a technical school and a high school, which was the standard route to university. Of course the 'choice' was very much determined by their parents' profession and status. Now a new philosophy of integration of theory and practice, of intellectual and manual work, was launched in schools. Instead of indoctrination, expressed in the slogan 'God, the Country and the Family', and praising values such as obedience, submission, order, and respect for hierarchy and conformity, other, 'new' values, such as freedom, tolerance, and solidarity were given priority. The dominant ideas were now 'interdisciplinary areas', 'going out into the community', and doing 'productive' or 'socially useful' work. The respective activities were to be developed with the collaboration of persons outside school, and were supposed to include areas such as farming and woollen goods manufacturing, fishing and fish canning, mining, etc. The most typical example of this new vision was 'Civic Service', a new intermediate year between secondary school and university, to be completed outside school. According to the Law of 11 July 1975, all students wanting to go to university should have 'an intermediate year of activities of civic service that might create in students the habit of socially productive work and acquaint them with the great national problems'.

After these revolutionary times, a 'normalization period' involving preparation for European integration followed, when all features informed by socialist ideology

were gradually opposed and removed from schools' daily routines. Curricula were changed again: the recently introduced interdisciplinary areas that sought to link school to the community and manual work to intellectual work, and to engage pupils and teachers in 'productive work' were 'suspended', and the subject 'introduction to politics', which had been introduced in the last grades of secondary school, vanished, remaining only in evening courses for adult learners. The intermediate year of 'Civic Service' was replaced by an academic year, the twelfth year of schooling. In October 1986, twelve years after the Revolution, the Education System Act was finally passed, establishing nine years of basic compulsory education which were divided into three cycles.

In 1997 this Education System Act was amended by the Law of 19 September, which introduced uniform teacher training for all school forms and thus brought to an end the schism between primary and secondary school teachers. All teachers now completed their training with the academic qualification of a *licenciatura* degree. Meanwhile, the pendulum swung back in favour of the ideas of the earlier 'idealistic' movement, and several corresponding political measures were taken under the government of the socialist Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres. Two laws of 18 January 2001, related to basic and secondary education respectively, brought significant changes to curriculum development in Portugal, although the latter was suspended by the subsequent social democratic and popular PSD/CDS coalition government. New cross-curricular interdisciplinary project areas were created. Among them were: a project area making use of research methodologies on particular problems felt by the pupils themselves; an area of guided study to help pupils learn how to study in order to acquire their autonomy; and, finally, a civic education area to create habits for responsible, critical, active, and participatory citizenship. Thus, for the first time Portugal had a coherent national curriculum for all nine years of compulsory basic education. Subject teachers were no longer aware only of the logical sequencing of their own subject from the first to the ninth year of schooling, but also of the subject matter of all other disciplines. This led to a multi-disciplinary approach, rather than the isolated development of individual subjects. Moreover, and contrary to the highly centralized Portuguese tradition, the national curriculum started to be decentralized into a school curriculum project and a class curriculum project, which responded to the different interests and needs arising from both regional and local characteristics and the individual idiosyncrasies of pupils. This provided a new kind of autonomy that schools did not have in the past, and a new regulation confirmed the autonomy of school management. Other reforms took place in the areas of learning assessment, school management, the continuing professional development of teachers, and teacher education.

Most recently, under the social democratic and popular coalition government of Prime Minister Durão Barroso, the draft of a new Education System Act (*Lei de Bases da Educação*) has 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 twelve years of compulsory education, instead of the previous nine years.

Socio-cultural context of the current school system

Educational targets

As mentioned above, it took twelve years for the educational aims prescribed in the Constitution to be legally implemented in the Education System Act. Given that 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. Thus, what are the priorities regarding the personal development of Portuguese people? Is priority given to the individual or to society as a whole? Is the policy designed according to the interests of a pressure group, for one social class over others, for 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 its insistence that personal self-realization contribute to the development of society, the Law attests a very strong preoccupation with the freedom of the individual. Over and over again it expresses 'the right to develop personalities, individual life projects, and the consideration for and valorization of different knowledge and cultures'. As suggested above, however, great emphasis is also placed on the construction of society as a whole, since education is expected 'to promote the development of a democratic and pluralist mind open to dialogue and to the free exchange of opinions, with respect for others and their ideas', and 'to make citizens able to judge their social environment in a critical and creative way, and to make them able to engage in its progressive transformation.' Everyone is expected to participate in the development of society, through an education that is concerned with 'the defence of national identity and the reinforcement of Portuguese historical tradition and the cultural heritage of the Portuguese people', and that is to be linked to 'a universal and European tradition and the growing interdependency and necessary solidarity among all peoples of the world.'

Socio-economic context

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

Another aspect that relates to the socio-economic context of schooling in Portugal is the optional nature of pre-school education, in spite of its being a part of the state education system. The number of places available is lower than the number of applicants. It is thus probable that those with greater economic resources will be able to send their children to pre-school education, with obvious consequences for their

success in the following basic education. Secondary education is not compulsory either. Access to university or polytechnics is determined by the well-known *numerus clausus*, which restricts the access of many candidates to higher education. Socio-economic conditions are a determining factor in access to higher education, especially for those who have to leave home and rent rooms in another town. In addition, not everyone is able to pay the fees charged by private higher education institutions.

As for the levels of schooling achieved, 37.8% of the Portuguese population has completed primary education, 18.8% and 18.7% respectively has finished the second and the third cycle of lower secondary education, 15.0% has completed secondary education, and only 8.9% has completed higher education.

Another relevant indicator in the socio-economic context of schooling is the high percentage of the Portuguese population aged eighteen to twenty-four who abandoned education at a low level. According to a Eurostat study on the social situation in the European Union in 2001, this figure was 46%, whereas the European average was 21%. This statistic is probably connected with the proportion of the population with an income below 60% of the national median, which was 22%, while the European average was 17%.

Social position of the teaching profession

Since the amendment to the Education System Act in 1997, all teachers in Portugal have had to obtain a *Licenciatura* degree. For pre-school, primary, secondary, or university level, the same type of academic qualification is demanded. This fact has obvious consequences for the attitude of society towards the teaching profession.

According to a well-known survey concerning confidence in professions comparing fourteen European countries including Central and Eastern Europe, 72% of the Portuguese population had a firm faith in the integrity, ability, and character of teachers as a profession, while the European average 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 lay below the OECD average, which was $21,982 (primary), $23,283 (lower secondary), and $24,350 (upper secondary). After fifteen years' experience, their wages rose to $28,974 (equivalent to 1.56 GDP per capita), while 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, while the OECD average was only $36,585, $38,787, and $41,244.

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 to choose any particular school to send their children to. It was not until the introduction of the Education System Act in 1986 that the decentralization of the curriculum began, returning school to families and the community.

In 1990 the Ministry of Education published a legal decree (*Despacho Conjunto*) giving parents the possibility to choose their children's school whenever possible. Furthermore, the new school management system of 1991 gave parents the right to

be represented on the Class Council, Pedagogic Council, and School Council. From then on, families were allowed to be more involved in school management, which in turn strengthened the links between school and families.

An example of parents' desire to engage in school activities is the creation of the National Confederacy of Parents' Associations (the CONFAP), combining fourteen regional federations. It has an executive committee, whose members come from the regional federations, a discipline council, and a general assembly in which 970 associations of parents from public and private schools take part. The responsibilities of this confederacy of associations are to inform its members about the education system, to analyse and discuss educational policy, to organize training on various subjects concerning education, and to defend the rights and duties of parents.

Organizational context and governance of the current school system

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

Education in general is the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education, apart from a few educational 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 Parliament, and develop additional decisions, instructions, and notifications, essentially dealing with the design, development, co-ordination, evaluation, and inspection of education and training. The Ministry of Education thus 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 on the curricula for basic and secondary education.

Because of their political and administrative statutes, the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira have regional secretariats of education (*Secretarias Regionais de Educação*) which are specific educational organizations relying on their own regionalized administration. They are responsible for matters that do not impinge on the fundamental educational law that gives Portuguese people a national identity in terms of education and training. Within these limits, all legal measures can 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 social partners, is responsible for apprenticeships, 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 is currently 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 enjoy increasing autonomy.

Financing

Portugal spends around 5.73% of its GDP on Education, which is slightly above the European average of 5.03%. Public education is essentially financed by the Ministry of Education, although the financing of some institutions is shared with other ministries. The Ministry of Education finances central and regional services through the allocation of funds, and finances private and co-operative education by means of budgetary transfers. However, the regional administrations of the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira finance educational services and establishments through 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 involves financing and resources within the fields of training, 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 funding and expenses. They cover the construction, maintenance, equipment, and certain operational expenses of pre-school education and the first cycle of basic schools, and provide complementary funding for school transport and extra-curricular and leisure activities.

Compulsory education is free, and in certain cases pupils are also entitled to the free use of books, school materials, 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.

Public and private schooling

Private and co-operative schools are set up and managed by private individuals acting individually or collectively; those schools which provide instruction in line with the objectives of the national education system are eligible for the same benefits as public schools. More learners attend public institutions, however, than private ones, except in the area of pre-school education, where private establishments account for slightly over 50% of the total enrolment. Taking the mainland alone, 10.2% of pupils in primary education are enrolled in the private sector; in the lower secondary schools the figure is 10.9 %, in upper secondary schools 11.4%, and in higher education 10.9%.

General standards of the school education system

The principles of curriculum design are regulated by the above-mentioned Education System Act and the Law from April 1999 (Autonomous Regime for School Management). The Education System Act demands that the curricular organization of the schooling system strive towards an harmonious balance in pupils' levels of physical, cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and moral development. The same Law prescribes the existence of a national curriculum, although there is the possibility of some regional-based components being added to it, both at primary and secondary

levels. Universities and polytechnics have the authority to design their own curricula, provided they meet regional and national needs. On the other hand, the Law from April 1999 allows primary and secondary schools some autonomy in the strategic, pedagogical, administrative, financial, and organizational domains, provided they have prepared an educational project which neither contradicts nor substitutes any components of the national curriculum.

As mentioned above, in contrast to the highly centralized Portuguese tradition, the national curriculum can now be partially decentralized into curriculum projects for schools and classes, according to the different interests and needs arising from both regional and local characteristics and the individual idiosyncrasies of pupils. Thus, the participation of teachers in curriculum design is possible both at school and classroom levels. Parents' participation in curriculum design is made possible by the participation of their associations in the National Council for Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*). Participation at school level is also guaranteed, since parents' representatives must make up at least 10% of the school assemblies. Pupils' representatives must also be included in school assemblies.

Quality management

The quality management of the education system in Portugal is internally assured by a number of central services of the Ministry of Education, and is made public through the Department of Information and Evaluation of the Education System (GIASE).

The Department of Educational Evaluation (GAVE) deals with pupils' academic performance and is one of the Ministry of Education's key departments. It has administrative autonomy, and is responsible for planning, co-ordinating, producing, and monitoring instruments of external assessment of the learning process. GAVE provides, together with schools and the regional boards of education (*Direcções Regionais de Educação*), the information necessary for the production of the assessment instruments; co-operates with the basic and secondary education departments (DEB and DES) in the process of implementation of external assessment instruments for primary and secondary school pupils; supervises the evaluation of textbooks of primary and secondary education; and participates in international studies related to the assessment of pupils' learning processes. In this context, GAVE has produced testing items for secondary education; has prepared tests for the fourth, sixth, and ninth grades of basic education; and has prepared national exams at the level of secondary education. It has also provided courses for teachers involved in the process of evaluation.

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 educational establishments. With regard to public higher education, the Inspectorate is also responsible for controlling compliance with legal provisions regarding fees and financial support for students. Finally, the Inspectorate has the task of monitoring the financial and administrative efficiency of the education system as a whole.

Teachers of the primary and secondary levels are evaluated by their schools. Whenever they want to progress in their professional career, they have to present a 'document of critical reflection' describing the commitment they have made and the work they have done; the document is then assessed by a commission composed of colleagues from their own school who are designated by the Pedagogic Council.

As far as higher education is concerned, the autonomy enjoyed by higher education institutions means that quality evaluation and monitoring does not directly depend on the government. However, in 1994 the Law on Higher Education Evaluation was introduced, which focuses on the evaluation of higher education programmes in two respects, namely internal and external evaluation. With regard to the latter, commissions of experts and external evaluation commissions carry out evaluation under the auspices of the National Commission of Higher Education Evaluation (CNAVES). At the present moment, the following are objects of analysis: the quality of teaching, the organization of the curriculum, the scientific level aimed at, the pedagogical process and its level of innovation, the qualifications of teaching personnel, the amount of research carried out in connection with the programme under evaluation, the contribution of the programme to the community's scientific and cultural development, the condition of physical installations and equipment, and the international projects in which the institution participates. In addition, a number of other aspects are taken into consideration, such as organizational and managerial efficiency; academic proficiency; social support services; interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and inter-institutional approaches; and, finally, the uptake of graduates by the labour market.

In general terms, it can be said that there was previously no strong tradition in Portugal of external, let alone foreign, evaluation in either secondary or tertiary education until membership of the EU demanded both national evaluation and international comparison. Common projects under the co-ordination of the European Commission, such as the 'fifteen quality indicators of lifelong-learning performance in Europe' forced the Portuguese education system to measure its performance against that of other countries. Since January 1999, GAVE has also been the Portuguese organization responsible for the country's participation in PISA. The External Evaluation Commission of Higher Education now seeks to gain one foreign expert at least as a co-operating member, although there are severe limitations due to language problems.

Support systems

There are some mechanisms in schools to support pupils in overcoming problems associated with academic failure or a lack of vocational orientation. The Psychology and Orientation Service (*Serviços de Psicologia e Orientação*) aims at supporting pupils by helping them to identify their problems and advising them how to overcome them. They also provide information to assist them in choosing an educational and vocational career. Other services are devoted to supporting pupils and students from lower social and economic strata. The School Social Service (*Acção Social Escolar*) seeks to guarantee that all pupils have access to school, and that they enjoy the conditions necessary for successful attendance, so that they will complete com-

pulsory education and hopefully proceed to a post-compulsory programme. These services partially or even completely cover the costs of meals, canteen services, school transport, accommodation (university residences in the case of support for students in higher education), books and other school materials, fee exemptions, health care, and scholarships. There are also private institutions that grant scholarships to students in higher education.

These support systems cater to those who are in the regular education system. For those who fail to complete their education at the usual age, or who dropped out of school early, adult education, which includes basic and secondary education (*Ensino Básico recorrente* and *Curso Geral e Cursos Tecnológicos do Ensino Recorrente*), provides a second opportunity. Adult education requires a distinct pedagogical approach that is adapted to different groups, different life experiences, and individual knowledge. This approach is interdisciplinary, focuses on real problems, and aims to enhance learner autonomy. Although it entails specific forms of curricular organization, methodologies, and evaluations, adult education leads to diplomas and certificates that are equivalent to those provided in regular education.

The current school system

General structure: overview

The Ministry of Education administers national school education policies, and the curricula and programmes of primary and secondary education. The administrative structure of the Ministry of Education consists, in addition to other departments, of two central departments with the task of pedagogic conceptualization, orientation, and co-ordination at the various levels of education: the Department of Basic Education (*Departamento de Educação Básica - DEB*) and the Department of Secondary Education (*Departamento do Ensino Secundário - DES*). There is also an important consultancy board, the National Council for Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*), which is made up of specialists and representatives of different educational stakeholders.

Education is universal, compulsory, and free of charge for all children for a period of nine years. Compulsory education consists of basic education (*Ensino Básico*), which runs from six to fifteen years of age, and covers three successive cycles of four years, two years, and three years respectively. The educational programme of basic education aims at providing all individuals with a general and common education that enables them to continue to higher levels of education or to join programmes oriented to working life.

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 extension of compulsory education to a period of twelve years is one of the most important changes already agreed upon.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education (*Educação pré-escolar*) complements and/or supplements the role played by the family in early learning. Attendance is optional. The aim of pre-

school is to stimulate the skills of each child, encouraging learning, the balanced development of the entire child's potential, the acquisition of moral values, and a sense of freedom coupled with responsibility. At the same time, the aim is to encourage the child's integration into different social groups outside the family, in order to develop social awareness. In terms of administration, pre-primary education is incorporated into the Department of Basic Education (*Departamento de Educação Básica*).

Primary education

Primary education is the first cycle of basic education and lasts four years. In line with the developmental characteristics of this age group, the aims of the first cycle are the fostering of linguistic skills in the areas of speaking, reading, and writing; basic notions of arithmetic; an awareness of the 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*).

Lower secondary education

Lower secondary education corresponds to the second and third cycle of basic education in Portugal. The second cycle lasts two years and its specific aims focus on education of a humanistic, artistic, physical, sporting, scientific, and technological nature, together with moral and civic education. It seeks to enable pupils to both assimilate and critically and creatively interpret information in order to acquire knowledge, working methods, and instruments that will allow them to continue their learning. The third cycle lasts three 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 entry into the workforce and for continuing studies.

The basic education diploma (*Diploma de Ensino Básico*) is awarded without a final examination to those pupils who successfully complete the third cycle of basic education. This diploma is awarded by the School Board, and specifies the subjects studied and the level attained in each. It entitles pupils to proceed to upper secondary education. There is also a level 2 vocational qualification diploma (*Diploma de Qualificação Profissional de Nível II*) at the level of lower secondary education. It is awarded to pupils who have completed a course in initial vocational training, or a level 2 vocational qualification course in a vocational school, or a set of technical training supplementary credits qualifying for a given occupation in second chance education. There is no examination, and the diploma specifies the subjects studied, the level of the course, and its equivalence to the basic education diploma. This diploma gives access to employment.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education corresponds to the term secondary education in Portugal. Secondary education, whether public, private, or co-operative, is optional and con-

sists of a three-year cycle after basic education. Access is through the basic education diploma. 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 that promote the definition of individual interests and motivations when facing school and vocational options; and

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 twelfth year of schooling, there is a compulsory nation-wide final examination leading to the award of the secondary diploma (*Diploma de Estudos Secundários*, *Diploma de Fim de Estudos Secundários*). This examination is taken in some subjects by pupils who have regularly attended officially recognized schools (internal pupils), by pupils whose attendance was for some reason interrupted or who attend schools not officially recognized (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 courses and these courses is guaranteed, as pupils may change from one course to another. The teaching and practical elements of technological or artistic courses, including visual arts, dance, and music, are provided by vocational schools and special schools for education in the arts. Each of these courses lasts three years, corresponding to the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth year of schooling.

All technological courses provide a level 3 vocational qualification, in the form of a certificate of professional qualification level 3 (*Diploma de Qualificação Profissional de Nível III*), after a final assessment based on the pupil's subject average and his or her 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 organized in close co-operation with enterprises. This project is submitted to and assessed by an examination board which includes the Pedagogical Director of the vocational school, who chairs the board, the pupil's 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 pupils can accumulate. Consequently, the length of the courses depends on the individual path taken by each pupil. The grading system in secondary school is a numerical one from 0 to 20. A grade from 18 to 20 is very good

(*muito bom*), 14 to 17 is good (*bom*), and 10 to 13 is fair (*suficiente*). The highest mark on the scale is 20. The pass mark is 10, and the lowest mark on the scale is 0.

The secondary education diploma (*Diploma de Estudos Secundários*, *Diploma de Fim de Estudos Secundários*) is awarded at the end of the three years of upper secondary courses, whether general or technological and vocational, and is the pre-requisite for access to higher education. The diploma specifies the course that has been completed and the final mark obtained.

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

Special education schools

Until 1994 the responsibility for special education lay mainly with 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 initiating the implementation of an inclusive system in regular schools.

According to the data supplied by the National Institute of Statistics, Portugal has an average pupil population of 1,600,000 (INE, 1996), of which 12% has SEN and only 2.9% receives assistance. 79.6% of the pupils receiving assistance are in integrated schooling, while the others are in special schooling or are assisted through other types of support structure. Thus, the majority of pupils with special needs are in regular schools, although this does not mean that all pupils are in regular class-rooms. With regard to specific special needs categories, it is recognized that the assistance for pupils with hearing and visual impairments has grown substantially over the years; it is expected that the coverage will be 100% within a few years. As for assistance given to pupils with physical disabilities, the majority are being at-tended to in one way or another, despite differences from district to district. How-ever, the level of assistance provided for pupils with mental handicaps, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and multiple disabilities is much lower.

The number of specialized teachers is still very low. Indeed, there is a pro-nounced shortage of qualified teachers and only a few psychologists and therapists working in the field of integrated education. There are 115 special schools that assist 9396 pupils with SEN and employ the services of 1397 teachers, 106 psychologists, 99 therapists, 80 special technicians, and 607 teachers' aides.

Post-secondary and tertiary education

According to Article 76 (University and Access to Higher Education) of the Portu-guese Constitution, the rules governing access to universities and other institutions of higher education must guarantee both equal opportunities for all and the democ-ratic character of the system of education; they must also take into account the need for qualified graduates and the enhancement of the educational, cultural, and scien-tific standards of the country. Universities are guaranteed autonomy, within the limits of the law and without prejudice to the appropriate assessment of the quality

of education, in the making of their regulations and in their scientific, educational, administrative, and financial decisions.

Higher education in Portugal at both university and non-university level is provided in autonomous public universities, private universities, polytechnic institutions, and private higher education institutions of other types. In addition, there is the Portuguese Catholic University (*Universidade Católica Portuguesa*), established by Decree of the Holy See and recognized by the State of Portugal. It offers courses in management, anthropology, sociology, history, economics, and psychology. Private higher education institutions can only operate if they are 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 admission to both non-university and university study programmes is the secondary education diploma (*Diploma de Estudos Secundários*). However, there is a special competition for students over twenty-five years of age who have passed a special (ad hoc) exam, and for candidates who already hold a qualification for a medium/higher level course. Admission to higher education in Portugal is not absolutely free: entrance exams are carried out. There are also *numerus clausus* restrictions. Each year, the institution (public or private) establishes the number of places available for each course, which has to be approved 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 Board for Access to Higher Education (*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 General Board for Higher Education (*Direcção-Geral do Ensino Superior*). Each private institution fills its places by means of a local competitive examination which it organizes.

Colleges and institutes of higher education (*Escolas* and *Institutos Superiores*) provide courses in such fields as education sciences, teacher training, fine arts, applied arts, nursing, business and management, agriculture and forestry, 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 universities and polytechnic institutions of higher education at the end of a specific course (usually of three years' duration). The form of the certificate varies from one institution to another, 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 also awarded by both universities and polytechnics at the end of a specific course, usually of four to six years' duration. It confers the title of *Licenciado*. The most common format in poly-

technic education is that of 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.

At the universities, most *Licenciatura* courses are organized according to credit units, but many are still organized on the basis of the semester or academic year. Students who have a *Licenciatura* degree may generally proceed to further study for the *Carta Magistral* degree or the *Carta Doutoral* degree if they obtain a grade of at least 14 (*Bom*) and 16 (*Muito Bom*) respectively. Those with a mark below 14 may also be eligible for a *Mestrado* course, depending on the curriculum at the given university. The *Carta Magistral* is an advanced degree at the second level in a specific scientific field, indicating the ability to conduct practical research. The third university level is represented by the *Carta Doutoral* degree, which is conferred to those who have passed their 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 and is reserved for holders of the *Carta Doutoral* degree. It requires the ability to undertake high level research, as well as special pedagogical competence in a specific field. It is awarded after passing specific examinations.

Teacher education in Portugal is now conducted in the higher education system to the level of the *Licenciatura* degree, no matter what educational level teachers are training for. Educators (teachers in pre-primary education) and teachers in basic education attend four-year courses in *Escolas Superiores de Educação* or universities to obtain a *Licenciatura* degree. Teachers in secondary education must hold a *Licenciatura* degree and follow courses that last between four and six years. Studies are completed with the award of a *Licenciatura em Ensino* or a *Licenciatura – Ramo de Formação Educacional*, depending on the issuing institution. Educators and teachers in basic and secondary education with experience in regular or special education may obtain a qualification to teach in special 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 Co-ordinating Council for Polytechnic Institutes (*Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Politécnicos - CCISP*) and the Co-ordinating Council for Private and Co-operative Higher Education (*Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Superior Particular e Cooperativo - CCESPC*).

Current problems, discussions, and perspectives for development

One major problem that Portugal has to overcome is related to the demands of a knowledge economy and the low levels of performance demonstrated by Portuguese pupils in the PISA survey of 2000. 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 situation occurred with regard to

mathematical literacy (454 points) and scientific literacy (459 points). 27% of fifteen-year-olds were found to be inadequately prepared for lifelong learning with regard to their reading literacy skills, 22% are expected to experience difficulties in the area of numeracy and with subsequent learning activities requiring numerical skills, and 27% of Portuguese pupils were shown to be lacking the requisite skills for productive learning in the area of scientific literacy.

Another serious problem that Portugal has to face is connected with the high number of early school-leavers between the age of eighteen and twenty-four. In fact, in a Eurostat comparative study conducted in 1999 and involving thirty-five European countries, Portugal had the highest percentage (46%) of early school-leavers with low qualifications. Viviane Reding, the European Commissioner for Education and Culture, 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.' With regard to Portugal, we would say that the country 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 overshadowed by our competitors. On the other hand, in our opinion the demands of competitiveness should not lead to a deterministic vision dominated by liberal-economic logic. It is crucial not to isolate the subsystem from the whole system, which is the case when, for example, education and teacher education are exclusively blamed for the evils of Portuguese society.

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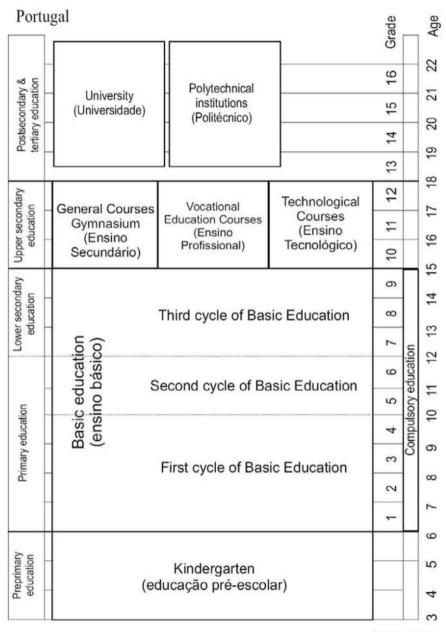
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