Policy measures implemented in the first cycle of compulsory education in Portugal

INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION 2008

Peter Matthews, Elisabeth Klaver, Judit Lannert, Gearóid Ó Conluain and Alexandre Ventura

FOREWORD

Countries in the OECD and throughout the world are constantly looking for ways to improve the performance of their education systems, knowing that these play a pivotal role in enhancing economic growth and social cohesion, developing young people to reach their full potential and underpinning healthy and vibrant societies. And all efforts to reshape basic education systems have the same ultimate objective – to improve the learning outcomes for every student in every classroom in the country.

Portugal has put in place since 2005 an ambitious set of measures to improve teaching and learning conditions in the first four years of compulsory education, which comprise the first cycle. These reforms have been comprehensive and their design has drawn on evidence of what works in other countries and lessons learned elsewhere. Nevertheless they have been carefully tailored to fit the Portuguese context and to respond to the country's particular priorities and challenges.

Good policy design is a pre-requisite for success, but improvements in outcomes will only start to flow through as policy changes are progressively implemented and lead to positive changes in teaching and learning practices in the classroom. This requires a major investment of time and effort. And it can take many years before the full benefits of these reforms can be measured in national or international assessments of learning outcomes.

Responsible policymakers look for intermediate assessments and evaluations during the implementation phase to provide them with feedback on whether the path being followed is delivering the benefits expected and how the strategy might need to be fine-tuned, adjusted or augmented in light of experience. Indeed, there has been some shift across countries away from approaching education policy as a series of one-off reform initiatives per se towards building self-adjusting systems with rich feedback at all levels, incentives to react, and tools to strengthen capacities to deliver better outcomes.

In this spirit, the Ministry of Education (ME) has commissioned this report from a group of independent international experts led by Dr. Peter Matthews. The evaluation and assessment that they have carried out in Portugal follows closely the methodology and approach that the OECD has used in assessing a range of education policies across many member countries over a number of years.

This report presents emerging evidence that these measures are already raising the standards of basic education. These early results are very encouraging. The report provides not only an assessment of the policy changes and the achievements to date but also makes thoughtful and constructive recommendations on

aspects that could be improved or further developed. These recommendations merit the full consideration of the Portuguese authorities.

This report provides valuable insights to the Portuguese authorities, to stakeholders in the education system and to the general public. It will, no doubt, make an invaluable contribution to raising the level of national dialogue on education policies and practices as well as keeping a spotlight on the ongoing challenge of modern societies to raise educational performance and improve student outcomes at all levels and ages.

Portugal's approach to reform in education is also attracting attention internationally. This report deserves to be studied by others looking at similar issues and challenges in their own countries, not least because it provides an excellent case study into how to make reform happen and how to manage implementation successfully so as to deliver real improvements. Indeed, this report will be a valuable resource for the OECD to draw on in its work assisting other countries in their efforts to reshape education policies to deliver better student outcomes.

Deborah Roseveare
Head of the Education and Training Policy Division
Directorate for Education
OECD

CONTENTS

Main findings

       1.1 System leadership

       1.2 Reorganisation and development of the school network

       1.3 Expansion of full-time school and access to curricular enrichment activities

       1.4 Teacher training

       1.5 School leadership and managerial clarity

       1.6 Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Recommendations

       2.1 Reform of the first cycle of compulsory education in Portugal

       2.2 Evaluation goals and method

       2.3 Structure of the report

       3.1 Demographic trends

       3.2 The school system and its management

       3.3 Research evidence

       3.4 Government action and implementation

       3.5 The concept of school centres and vertical clusters

       3.6 Levers of change: charters and incentives

       3.7 Conduct of the reorganisation process

       3.8 Two shift schools

       3.9 Influences on the reorganisation process

       3.10 School centres

       3.11 Incentives for change

INTRODUCTION

We have pleasure in presenting this report to the Ministry of Education for Portugal.

It has been a privilege to evaluate the changes which have taken place in school provision for first cycle education in Portugal over the last three years. As we state in the report, the ambition and speed of the system-wide reorganisation of education for young children has few, if any, international parallels. The reforms have earned wide support across the country and will attract increasing international interest. The changes to basic education have made a major contribution to the lives of children and their parents and there is emerging evidence that they are contributing to raising the standards of basic education in Portugal.

We greatly appreciate the help and information provided by many people in conducting this evaluation. Our work was facilitated by the excellent *Country Position Report* produced in advance of our visit and the well-planned programme of meetings and visits, some of which were included at short notice at our request. We thank the representatives of all the organisations who met us in Lisbon, from parents to Ministers, teachers' unions to school coordinators, public servants, and representatives of academic and advisory bodies. We appreciated the hospitality of schools and municipalities in each of the five areas covered by the Regional Directorates of Education. We were pleased to see a range of first cycle schools and centres at work and to meet pupils, parents, teachers and non-teaching staff, members of school committees and local and regional authorities during our visits.

Our work was enhanced by the ready availability of an impressive array of data provided by Office for Education Statistics and Planning (*Gabinete de Estatística e Planeamento da Educação – GEPE*), who also gave us full logistical support, and close liaison with the Ministers' office.

The Ministry required – and we have conducted – a fully impartial and independent evaluation of the major elements of the reorganisation of first cycle education. We congratulate the government on massive achievements in the last three years but also draw attention, in our recommendations, to aspects which we believe could be improved or further developed as the system continues to evolve. We have found the Ministry to have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the strengths of the system and areas for improvement or further development. We hope our observations will be of value.

Peter Matthews, *England UK*   **Elisabeth Klaver,** *The Netherlands*   **Judit Lannert,** *Hungary*

Gearóid Ó Conluain*, Ireland*   **Alexandre Ventura,** *Portugal*

1. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN FINDINGS

1.1 System leadership

- The transformation of the primary school network in Portugal has few if any modern international parallels in terms of its ambition and speed of implementation. The reorganisation and development programme brings together a coherent range of policies. These policies are very well aligned, each making an essential contribution to the success of the programme.

- The reforms reflect clear political vision and a high level of strategic thinking. They represent a bold and imaginative response to the challenges of upgrading and integrating a school system which was no longer suitable for its purpose or delivering the outcomes for children and young people which are necessary to enable them to succeed in a modern, changing and challenging world.

- Keys to the successful implementation of these policies include rigorous planning and preparation, effective consultative mechanisms and communications, and recognition of the needs and interests of a wide range of stakeholders.

1.2 Reorganisation and development of the school network

- The policy for closing small and ineffective primary schools, many of them in rural areas, has been pursued vigorously by regional directorates of education working closely with municipalities. Closures in the last three years have greatly exceeded those in the previous ten. The benefits of better facilities, more stable staffing and social development in larger schools are generally seen to outweigh concerns about the effects of travelling to school and the long day, particularly for younger children.

- The provision of full day education in almost all first cycle schools also responds to a pronounced social need by caring for children for an extended day. This is particularly helpful in supporting lower income families, where both parents are working, and single parent families. The great majority of parents approve the changes to first cycle education. Initial scepticism and fears have largely been dispelled and some parents would like the school day to be extended further.

- These developments are still evolving, but are no less impressive for that. The biggest changes to infrastructure have been accomplished already. A considerable amount has been achieved in a short time, representing a well advanced but unfinished success story. There is emerging evidence that standards of achievement in first cycle education are rising and that children are experiencing a richer and better quality curriculum.

- The policy to replace double shift schools with full day schools is on course in most regions but progress is slow in Lisbon. The main barriers are the capital costs involved in obtaining sites for alternative schools to replace the poor quality buildings in which some schools are housed, and the capacity of parents working in the city to afford private childcare provision.

1.3 Expansion of full-time school and access to curricular enrichment activities

- The enrichment curriculum ensures that full use is made of the extended day to promote children's learning. The subjects of English, physical activity and sport and music, together with study skills support, engage the children through complementary types of learning. There are drawbacks in the fact that in most schools, the enrichment curriculum is very largely classroom based and uses similar teacher-directed methods as for the core curriculum. The effect is to extend the main curriculum by adding extra subjects, making it a very long taught day for children.

- There is a need for innovative thinking and experimentation in school curriculum planning, which considers how best to manage and programme the interface between the core and enrichment curricula. The core and enrichment curricula have some overlapping aspects, such as physical education. A flexible approach to planning may also be an advantage where there is a shortage of teachers in specific knowledge areas such as English. The possibility of teaching English in mornings as well as afternoons may help to secure the English teaching programme where there is a shortage of specialist subject teachers.

1.4 Teacher training

- An excellent in-service training model has been developed to improve the quality of teaching of Portuguese, Mathematics and Experimental Science. There is evidence of improved standards in Mathematics which are likely to be associated with improved teaching of this subject.

- The deployment of trained trainers in school clusters enhances the cooperation between schools and is forging stronger links between higher education providers and schools. This leads to reciprocal benefits in initial teacher training.

1.5 School leadership and managerial clarity

- The evolution of arrangements to appoint cluster leaders is to be welcomed. The exercise of pedagogical leadership should amount to more than administration and coordination. The provision for General Councils to elect directors of clusters on the basis of an analysis of each candidate's curriculum vitae and projects for the school will give more weight to the professional merit of candidates.

- Cluster management boards or executive committees have an important role in overseeing the quality of educational provision in the cluster, providing both support and challenge to the professional workers.

1.6 Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

- The Ministry gathers an impressive range of up-to-date data about all aspects of the school network. This has enabled it to provided well-informed analyses and monitor trends in a rapidly changing system. This system-wide picture is complemented by the sampling undertaken by the General Inspectorate of Education whose surveys and visits to clusters contribute to monitoring the implementation of policies and compliance with statutory requirements and guidelines.

- An increasing emphasis is being placed on internal monitoring and evaluation by schools, including classroom observation as part of the appraisal mechanism. Systems are in place within municipalities and school clusters for the local evaluation of the work of staff responsible for Curricular Enrichment Activities (CEA), for whom different evaluation arrangements apply.

- Internal evaluation of educational processes is not at present complemented by external evaluation. The work of inspectors, unusually, does not include the first hand observation and assessment of teaching and learning, although it has in the past. The re-introduction of this element would provide schools with a model of effective evaluation and the system with information about the strengths and priorities for development of classroom practice. We consider that internal and external evaluation of the educational process make a complementary contribution to school and system improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. LEADERSHIP OF SCHOOL CLUSTERS.

In order to take full advantage of the established clusters into which the two-thirds of schools are organised, the clusters should be franchised to take responsibility for the full educational programmes they provide. This requires: appointing the most competent leaders to direct the clusters; providing training in the role, and empowering clusters to tailor the programme of the extended school day to fulfil both the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of children in the locality of the cluster. The changes planned for the appointment of cluster directors are an important first step in this process.

B. RAISING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.

By reducing the turbulence caused by high teacher mobility and creating mechanisms for teachers to plan their work collaboratively, the new arrangements are likely to improve the quality of instruction. This can be further enhanced by:

- knowledgeable internal and external evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning;
- raising expectations by abolishing retention in first cycle schools; and
- setting criteria for effective good lessons.

C. IMPROVING THE CURRICULUM DIET.

Schools and clusters should aim to provide a high quality experience for children throughout the time they are at school. Greater autonomy is needed in curriculum and programme decision-making at school and cluster levels, accompanied by an effective accountability system.

Ways should be found to differentiate enrichment activities from formal instruction and include more learning outside the classroom, although there is a case for including English in the basic curriculum. It is desirable that aspects of the Curriculum Enrichment Activity programme should be more flexible, adjusting to the needs of the younger children in particular, for example by providing for more play and games in the open air in the afternoon.

D. RESTRUCTURING THE WORKFORCE.

There should be greater equity between tenured and contracted teachers. The latter are often employed on inequitable

terms to undertake a similar role as permanent staff. There would also be advantages in more flexible use of the skills of teachers across the different levels represented in each cluster and across the basic and enrichment aspects of the curriculum. This would require a more coherent approach to the recruitment of teachers.

E. THE CHALLENGE FOR INCREASED LOCAL AUTONOMY.

School clusters have the potential to take greater responsibility for determining and managing the services they provide. The varied and often complex arrangements for organising the school programme do not always meet the aim of providing a high quality and rounded experience for children during the school day. There should be further experiments and pilot projects in the delegation of funding, management and staffing responsibility to school clusters and their managing boards.

Municipalities should retain an important role in representing community interests and commissioning suitable provision from their clusters, allowing the cluster boards and directors to determine how best to do this. This requires school or cluster boards to function effectively as management committees responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the cluster and for the resources made available to the cluster.

Such changes would provide much clearer delineation of responsibilities and improve accountability. They should be accompanied by more systematic procedures for the setting of performance objectives and monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the schools in the cluster.

F. DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Increased autonomy calls for capacity-building in terms of leadership and management skills. We recommend the provision of management training for directors, school coordinators and executive board members on how to capitalise on increased autonomy in the areas of personnel, finance, curriculum implementation and communication, providing them with monitoring instruments and protocols for accountability.

G. ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The overarching goal of raising educational achievement will require rigorous and open approaches to school self-evaluation and external evaluation, aimed at identifying and raising the quality of learning and teaching. At present, external evaluation is based largely on surveys, discussions and inspection of curriculum planning and does not include first hand observation of teaching and learning. This position is inconsistent raising academic standards and with helping schools to develop effective self-evaluation procedures.

2. BACKGROUND

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Reform of the first cycle of compulsory education in Portugal

Since 2005, the Ministry of Education has been developing a set of measures aimed at improving teaching and learning conditions in the first cycle of compulsory education and promoting the effective integration of the first four years which comprise the first cycle.
These measures include:

- the reorganisation and redeployment of the school network;

- the generalisation of full-time school and access to curricular enrichment activities;

- government funding of school meals and transportation;

- programmes for in-service training for teachers of Mathematics, Portuguese language and Experimental Science teaching;

- the definition of curriculum orientations, establishing minimum hours dedicated to the teaching of the core subject areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Evaluation goals and method

The main goals of this evaluation, set by the Ministry are:

- the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy;

- the analysis of the factors which explain different levels of success;

- the identification of successful initiatives and best practices.

The evaluation identifies areas in which adjustments need to be made and has produced recommendations for sustaining and developing the strong points of the programme of reforms and overcoming the main challenges.

The evaluation was based on methodologies used in OECD[1] studies in accordance with agreed terms of reference. The evaluation was informed by a comprehensive overview report, prepared by the Ministry of Education, which described the implementation of each one of the measures, supplying internal evaluation of the changes made, and including much supporting evidence and data. This was studied in advance of a six-day visit to Portugal by an international team to interview key stakeholders and to visit a small number of schools.

The team was led by Peter Matthews, an international consultant and visiting professor at the Institute of Education, London, who acted as rapporteur; Liesbeth Klaver, international expert in the Netherlands school inspectorate; Judit Lannert, managing director of TÁRKI-TUDOK Inc, Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research, Budapest; Gearóid Ó Conluain, Chief Executive of the Irish Higher Education and Training Awards Council and Alexandre Ventura, Professor at the University of Aveiro, Portugal.

The evaluation draws on interviews with a wide range of stakeholder groups in the Portuguese education system (Annex 1). These discussions proved extremely helpful in providing a range of perspectives on the reform of first cycle education and the wider context in which these changes are occurring. The oral evidence was supplemented by a range of documents supplied by the Ministry, Regional Directorates and several of the organisations whose representatives were interviewed. Members of the team also visited all five regions of Portugal and held discussions with a range of stakeholders in each of the eleven first cycle schools, centres or clusters they visited throughout the country.

2.3 Structure of the report

The report is prefaced by an executive summary which sets out the main findings of the evaluation and our recommendations for policy development (Chapter 1). This is followed by an introduction to the reorganisation policies, the evaluation and the structure of the report (Chapter 2).

The third chapter of this report considers the reform of the school network. It analyses the reasons for *reorganising the school network*, the management of the change process, the progress made and evidence of outcomes and impact. We examine the nature of *school clusters* and *school centres* and the leadership of these entities. In particular, the report examines the factors which helped to promote change or which have acted as barriers.

The fourth chapter examines implementation of the policy of *extending school working hours and providing curriculum enrichment activities*. It considers the nature of the curriculum enrichment diet, the organisation and management of curriculum enrichment and the employment of the contracted teachers who provide CEA programmes.

---

[1] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

In the fifth chapter, the report evaluates the approach to *in-service training for teachers* in the core subjects of Mathematics, Portuguese language and Experimental Science. We analyse the effectiveness of the programmes and evidence of their impact.

The sixth chapter discusses the wider implications of the reforms for the *leadership and management of schools* and the *quality assurance and continued development of the system*, having regard for the monitoring and control activities carried out by the General-Inspectorate of Education (*Inspecção-Geral da Educação* – IGE). The reforms of first cycle education have significant implications for *school governance and autonomy*. This analysis is set in the context of quality assurance and raising standards, identifying issues of responsibility, accountability and change management.

3. REORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOL NETWORK

3.1 Demographic trends

Mainland Portugal is a country of demographic contrasts. The density and number of the population is much higher in the northern of the Tagus river, which includes the North and Central Regions and Lisbon, than in the south – Alentejo and the Algarve. The distribution of young people (figure 3.1) helps explain differences in the solutions adopted by the regions when creating school clusters.

Figure 3.1 Comparative populations aged 0-19 years across the regions.

Distribution of young population in Portugal, 2007, by regions
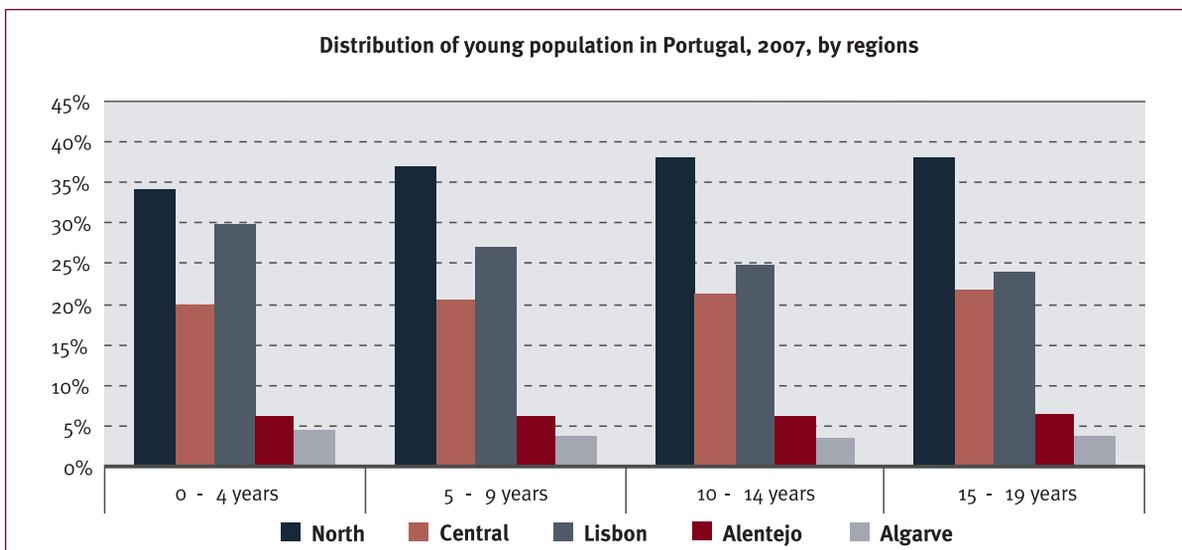
Source: Dr Lannert, from data provided by GEPE

Although the North region contains the highest proportion of young people, their number is decreasing more rapidly than in other regions. In contrast, Lisbon and the Algarve show some increase in the number of the youngest ones, as shown in figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Regional trends in birth rate

Trends in population of 0 - 4 year - old children in Portugal, 2000 - 2007, by regions, 2000=100%
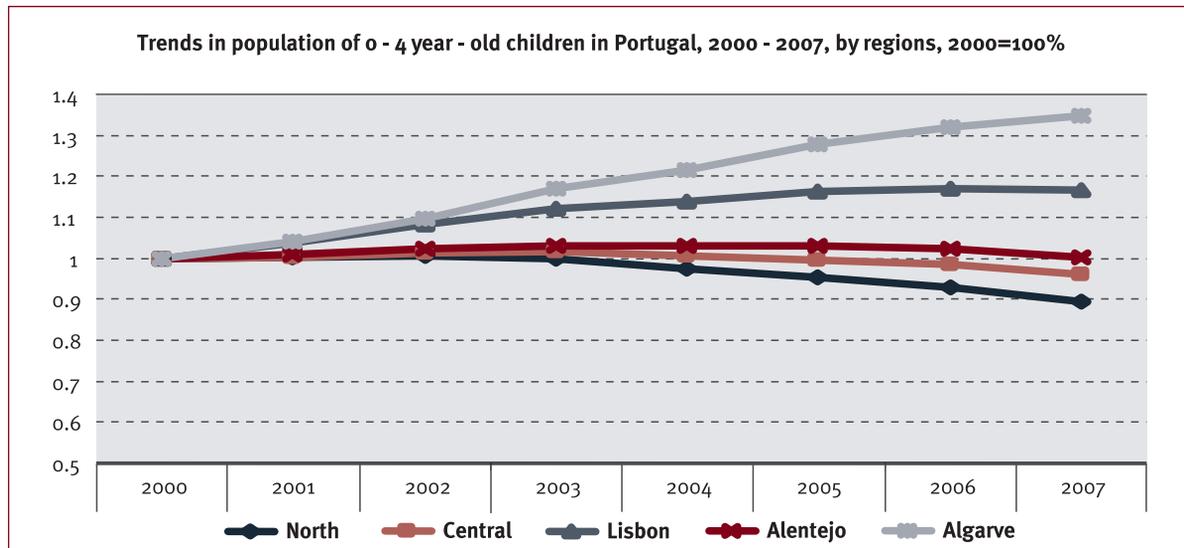
Source: Dr Lannert, from data provided by GEPE.

The reorganisation of the school network is led operationally by the Office for Education Statistics and Planning (*Gabinete de Estatística e Planeamento da Educação – GEPE*). Five mainland regional bodies, the Regional Education Directorates (*Direcções Regionais de Educação* – DRE), implement ministerial policies and provide guidelines, coordination and support. Municipal education councils have a growing role in coordinating and overseeing the work of schools in their areas. Whereas the Directors of Ministry Departments and the Regional Directorates are appointed by the Minister of Education, municipal councils are elected by their constituencies.

3.2 The school system and its management

The pre-school and school system in Portugal is funded by the state except for private schools, to which parents pay fees. Education is compulsory from 6 to 15 years of age (figure 3.3). In the first cycle of compulsory education, children are normally taught by one generalist teacher who may be assisted by other teachers in specific knowledge areas. The basic timetable is 25 hours, but from the school year 2006/07, the timetable of first cycle schools has been extended so as to include curriculum enrichment activities such as supported study for all pupils; English; other foreign languages; music; physical education and sport, and so on. The extended day normally lasts from 09:00 to 17:30 and is intended to support children and working families.

Figure 3.3 The Portuguese school system

Year	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Grade				1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
	Nursery school			1st cycle				2nd cycle		3rd cycle			Secondary education		
				Basic education (Compulsory education)											

Rolling back history for just three years shows a very different picture. Portugal has a tradition of isolated primary schools with isolated teachers. In the school year of 2005/2006 there were 7400 schools with first cycle education with 416500 pupils. 1570 schools had fewer than 10 pupils, 1300 had between 10 and 20. There were big differences in provision between the rural and urban areas. Rural areas were dominated by small schools with poor facilities; urban areas had overcrowded schools with double shift education. This network was very inefficient, the retention rate in the second grade was very high, around 15%, and the mobility and fluctuation of quality of teachers, particularly in the rural areas, resulting in poor and frequently disrupted educational provision, illustrated by the following report shows (Example 3a.).

Example 3a. Discontinuity

'It was a common occurrence in very small rural schools for a new teacher to stay for a few weeks then leave abruptly. The children may then go for weeks without formal education until a new teacher could be appointed, only for the cycle to repeat itself. Pupils made little progress, leading to high retention rates, and teachers generally could not withstand the social and professional isolation of working in rural schools for very long.' (Witness statement)

It had been decided to rationalise the primary education system and to close down small schools having less than 10 pupils in 1984, but the essential political will was not definitive enough to make more than gentle progress in implementing this policy. By 2005/06, research had confirmed that pupils in smaller schools were making slower progress than their peers in larger schools.

3.3 Research evidence

The decision to close smaller first cycle schools was made two years ago after 'several feasibility studies'[2], which by 2005/06 indicated a direct relationship between the size of school and student success. The reasons for the relative ineffectiveness of smaller schools are not hard to find. The social conditions in Portugal have contributed

---

[2] Carried out between the Ministry of Education and the Portuguese National Association of Municipalities after the signing of the Protocols of 15th December 2004 and later 25th October 2005.

to two related phenomena, low population densities due to the declining birth rate and the depopulation of rural areas, for example, in Alentejo. This has led to a sharp drop in attendance in rural schools over the last decade. In the last few years, therefore, first cycle schools have seen their student numbers fall, which has led to closures.

- These schools were unattractive to many teachers, with the result that teachers did not stay long, were hard to replace and had to work in professional isolation.

- The decline in teaching standards is reported to be accompanied by a decline in the physical condition of school buildings.

- Students were taught in mixed age groups, often experiencing similar work year after year.

- Since they failed to make the expected progress, retention rates were high. Thus many children left the first cycle underprepared for the ensuing stage of their education.

3.4 Government action and implementation

To increase the effectiveness and the quality of first cycle schools, the government determined that small schools showing higher rates of retention than the national average must be shut down during 2005/06 and 'fostering' schools must be identified to receive the pupils from the schools which were discontinued.

The closure of small schools necessitates expanding or building other schools to accommodate the displaced students. The government's objective has been to improve the provision for first cycle students by accommodating them in larger 'school centres' which provide a range of enhanced provision. The vision for an ideal school or centre is that it should provide for a minimum of 150 students at more than one level.

The implementation of the school closure policy involved collaboration between the five Regional Directorates and the 278 municipalities of Continental Portugal. The Ministry of Education and the municipalities take the decision on the construction of new schools. This process is criterion based, using measures such as numbers of students and schools, geographical factors and demographic indicators. Under school centres programme 66% of projects are approved when assessed against the criteria.

Although the degree of engagement varied across municipalities, the overall effect was remarkable: about 2500 schools have closed in the last three years (figure 3.4) compared with 1000 in the previous 10 years. There was of course some resistance in the system, this being strongest in the Central Region. The requirement

that all schools having fewer than 10 pupils must close provided considerable leverage, which accounts for the very high rate of closures in 2006/07, the earliest year in which the new mandate applied. The capital programme for modifying and enlarging existing schools and creating "school centres" was supported by 400m Euros from the European Structural Fund. This allowed municipalities to augment their own capital spending through matched funding from ESF which ranges from 50 to 75%.

Figure 3.4 Numbers of schools closed in the school years 2004/05 to 2007/08
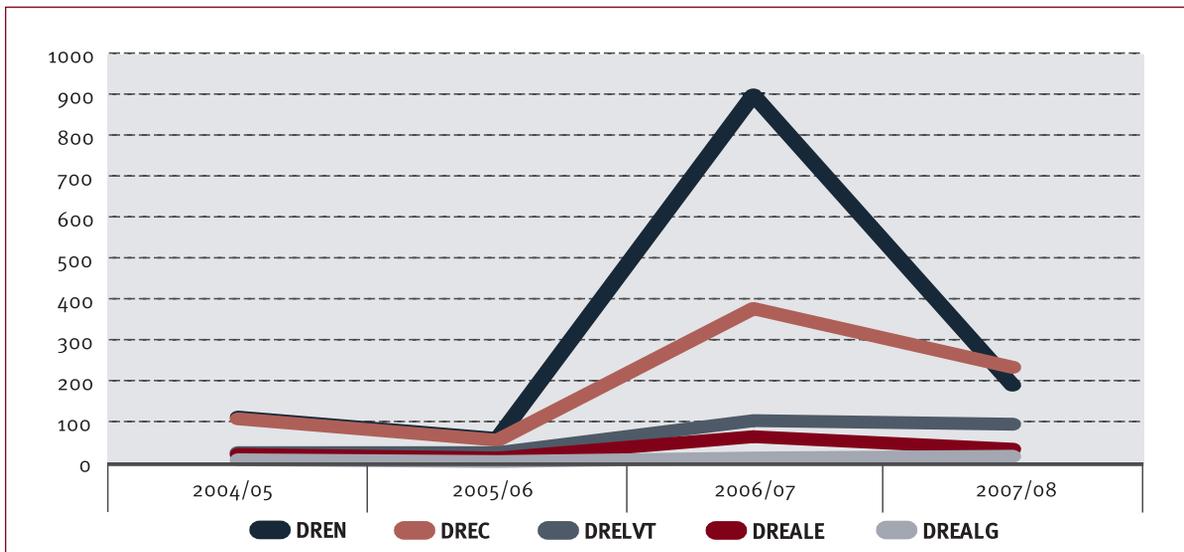
Source: Country Position Report, Annex 2 (Data from GEPE)

The reorganisation and redeployment programme has several instrumental features.

- There was a clear central vision about what type of schools should replace the closing schools.

- It was recognised that parents needed to be convinced that the outcomes for them and their children would be better.

- Municipalities needed incentives to invest in new provision.

- The consultation and decision-making processes needed to be applied carefully.

The Regional Directorate of North (*Direcção Regional de Educação do Norte* – DREN in Figure 3.4) spent the 2005/06 year planning for the massive reorganisation that would follow (Example 3b).

Example 3b. Implementation in the North Region

The North Region covers 87 municipalities including the city of Porto, Portugal's second city. Since 2005, 200 schools with fewer than 10 pupils were closed. There has also been a great reduction in double shift schools. The programme was a year in preparation and timed to be implemented after the municipal elections. The policy faced the fact that the children in rural areas were the poorest, and so was their educational diet, with a changing succession of teachers, a poor curriculum, few opportunities for socialisation and high retention rates. The plan was made in consultation with schools and involved a large number of different ways of clustering schools. Clusters varied in size but some contain 70-80 small schools. The school closure programme began with all the smallest schools but is progressively encompassing schools slightly larger than 10 pupils as parents see what opportunities and facilities are provided in school centres. Of the larger schools, rolls are falling and mergers will continue to take place.'

3.5 The concept of school centres and vertical clusters

The feasibility studies (see 3.3) which showed a relationship between school size and student success also found that pupils at schools with low attendance rates and with few resources have much lower educational success. While these results are not surprising, they provide a research-based approach to policy making.

The feasibility studies led to protocols to improve school conditions, in terms of the physical environment, learning support materials and information technology – by creating *school centres* to receive the students formerly taught in small rural schools. These centres provide school facilities that include:

- more than one level of education, in order to maximize common infrastructure. The most common example is one of the integration of first cycle and pre-school establishments in the same or neighbouring spaces, but there can also be integration with other levels of education;

- common or multi-use areas, such as libraries/computer rooms, canteen/multi-functional area for meetings/cultural and PE activities, staff room/parents' reception area, among others;
- classrooms modernised for computer use and experiments;

- outside areas with fences and security, covered areas and sports areas, whenever possible, among others.

The studies (see 3.3) also revealed how pupils of varying educational and family backgrounds get on with each other, strongly influences their ability to learn. One of the measures was to concentrate more than one level of education and teaching within the same school. The outcome has been the creation of some schools which provide for more than one phase of education such as combined pre-school and first cycle (EB1/JI[3]) and integrated schools (EBI/JI[4]) which provide for pre-school and the first, second and third cycles. A further benefit claimed for these centres is more efficient use of existing school resources. Until the 1st September 2008, more than 600 applications presented by municipalities had already been approved by GEPE under this National Programme, and around 250 were being prepared.

The main organisational entity for schools in the first cycle is the *school cluster*. Clusters may provide for two or more levels of education, from kindergarten to secondary education, integrated into one organisation. The structure of the clusters varies, but typically a cluster may consist of one school of the second and third cycle with a number (typically five to ten or more) of schools with first and preschool cycles. A school cluster is, by definition[5] 'an organisational unit, with its own administrative and management bodies, made up of pre-school establishments and one or more education cycles, with the following objectives:

- to facilitate a sequential and coordinated path for the pupils covered by compulsory education in the particular geographic area and to facilitate the transition between levels and cycles of teaching;

- to overcome the isolation of establishments and prevent social exclusion; to consolidate the pedagogical capacity of the establishments that are part of it and the rational use of its resources;

- to guarantee the application of a system of autonomy, administration and management in terms of the current legislation.'

From the evidence received and experience of visits to see at first hand school centres and schools within clusters, we consider the cluster system a highly appropriate, pragmatic and durable solution to the challenge of providing universal, high quality basic education.

3.6 Levers of change: school charters and incentives

The reorganisation process was helped by thorough planning mechanisms established by the local 'educational charters' which were prepared by the municipalities in consultation with the regional departments of the

---

[3] EB1/JI – *Escola Básica do 1.º ciclo com Jardim de Infância* (Institution offering pre-primary education and the first cycle of compulsory education)
[4] EBI/JI – *Escola Básica Integrada com Jardim de Infância* (School providing pre-primary education and the three cycles of compulsory education in an integrated form)
[5] Country Position Report p.17.

Ministry of Education. The Office for Education Statistics and Planning of the Ministry of Education provided comprehensive sets of data (demographic and educational) to help decision making. The charters, which are approved by the municipality and ratified by the Ministry, are a very useful tool for the planning of the school network.

The available evidence suggests that charters have provided an approach to planning which gives local ownership of educational solutions within a national policy framework. Meanwhile, the municipalities were encouraged to provide full-time education by the inclusion of specified curriculum enrichment activities (CEA) (see next chapter), free school meals and transportation.

3.7 Conduct of the reorganisation process

The reorganisation process was administered by the Regional Directorates. They acted as the agents of the Ministry to effect the changes needed. We give examples from some regions here. In the first, the Central Region illustrates the consultation and decision-making process.

Example 3c. Reorganisation in the Central Region[6] from a regional perspective

The start of the redevelopment process of the first cycle of compulsory education in the area covered by this Regional Education Directorate (*Direcção Regional de Educação do Centro – DREC*) for the 2006/2007 academic year occurred with scheduled meetings in coordination with Civil Governors (*Governadores Civis*), where the local authorities were present. A list of "Target Schools" for each municipality (identified by GEPE) was distributed at those meetings (one meeting per district), and the philosophy and principles that were behind the redevelopment process re-stated.

A second series of district meetings followed, involving all of the Presidents of the School Cluster Executive Councils in a district and the respective Educational Coordinator who was asked to take charge of the negotiations leading to the closure of the listed schools with the educational partners of the municipality. The DREC followed the process through collecting data using an internally developed IT application that allowed it to monitor the progress of the process. The DREC was also available for meetings whenever the need arose, receiving representatives of the local authorities and other members of the educational community or going to other locations to assess the state of buildings to be closed and the conditions in host schools, as well as studying the effects on the children who would be affected by the process.

Finally, DREC held meetings with the Educational Coordinators with the objective of validating the collection and introduction of previously collected data and attempting to solve any situations where the decision to suspend schools was still "being studied". The same methodology was used in the following academic years.

---

[6] Evidence from the internal evaluation report from the Central Region

The process was described by DREC as a 'long, drawn-out, difficult and complex process of negotiation where DREC sought consensus regarding the "closure of schools", albeit constrained by instructions from a higher level. Difficulties included *intrinsic* problems, namely:

- specific geographical conditions, like the distance between the listed schools and possible host schools, the conditions of the road network, the lack of means of transport;

- the capacity of the proposed host school to accept students as a result of the discontinuation of another school, for example if the accommodation is limited.

The main *extrinsic* difficulties were:

- opposition from some local authorities, who believed there were additional costs with school transport and the need for small building improvements;

- opposition from the educational community that considered:

  → that this process "uprooted" children and increased effort and time at school, which reduced time with the family;

  → that it led to job losses for teachers and non-teaching staff;

  → that it further "impoverished" small villages, which already had no other services or economic activities that helped younger people to stay.

DREC[7] points out, however, that there has been a general improvement in pupils' learning and socialisation, as well as the working conditions for teachers and non-teaching staff. These conditions will be further improved by the building of new educational centres.

Consultation was central and crucial to the reorganisation process in all Regions, but not all the reorganisation was 'top down'. The Regional Directorate of Lisbon and the Tagus Valley (*Direcção Regional de Educação de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo* – DRELVT), for example, has described examples of municipalities that have taken the initiative, illustrated below.

---

[7] DREC achieved the closure of 44% of schools during the three years 2006/07 to 2008/09.

Example 3d. Municipalities in the lead
The reorganisation process took place in a different fashion in the municipality of Mafra, where the local authority itself took the initiative to reorganise/redevelop the first cycle network, via the creation of school centres equipped with excellent operating conditions. The municipality of Ourém is also worth highlighting, as its local authority gave top priority to making changes to the school network. A good example is the number of schools it has closed (30) and the number of school centres it has built (5/6)

The Regional Directorate of Alentejo claims that:

- 'the initiatives were supported by all educational stakeholders, in order that all pupils got along with their peers and that the educational and personal development process improved, although other factors came into play, thus affecting the way the initiatives were carried through;'

- 'these new establishments are seen by teaching staff as of benefit to the day-to-day activities of the school, helping pupils to live together harmoniously and producing best practice which should continue on the ground.'

Central policy helped this process by changing the management system of education and providing financial support. The share of responsibility between the central and the local level has changed; there is a shift in power from the central level to the local one. By reinforcing the role of educational councils at the municipal level, the municipality gained more responsibility and authority for basic education. The key bodies are the General Councils, newly created at school level and representing the local teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, pupils and community as well as the municipality. A key role of the General Council is to elect directors of clusters according to professional criteria. The new management system decided by Law, also gives more tools and powers to the leaders of school clusters although, as we shall see, further changes are intended. The challenge for the future will be to ensure that enhanced local determination will help bring about higher educational achievement.

3.8 Two shift schools

Part of the national policy is to eliminate two shift schools, making every school a full day school with a programme of curriculum enrichment activities. The number of two shift schools has been greatly reduced, but there are some intractable problems in city areas where schools are old but may be in protected buildings, building sites are expensive and in short supply and councils have financial challenges. The following examples show two contrasting scenarios.

Example 3e,3f: A tale of two municipalities

Municipality 'A' is in debt. It is a challenge to meet its responsibility for schools while trying to repay debts. Several schools have not opened because construction contractors have not been paid. Several other municipalities have signed agreements with the Government to take responsibility for second and third cycle as well as primary schools, but municipality 'A' cannot do this until it has solved existing problems like reorganising two-shift schools and implementing CEA. They also envisage substantial transport costs when they close schools in the centre of town and construct them further out.

Municipality 'B' has undertaken much work on redeveloping school facilities, providing 60 pre-schools, building gymnasia and refectories. They still have three schools with two shifts; but next year will have two more full day schools, so the timetable is on target. Meanwhile, they are using prefabricated buildings. 'B' has found it relatively easy to provide CEA. They had the accommodation, and already taught music and physical education. The inclusion of the other activities was an extension of what schools were doing. In this municipality, CEA teachers are employed by the schools; the head is the employer and the municipality is responsible for recruitment of the teachers.

3.9 Influences on the reorganisation process

The evidence suggests that five main factors influenced the reorganisation process. They are classified as 'enablers' and 'barriers'. The enablers include:

- strong and courageous political leadership by Ministers in the new government, determined to drive the necessary changes to improve the quality of education for Portuguese children and young people while allowing some flexibility in the detail;

- substantial funding of capital (building) programmes supported by the European Structural Fund;

- excellent technical support in engineering the process, drawing on comprehensive data provided by the GEPE and the regional departments of the ministry;

- the high adaptive capacity of the Portuguese society;

- demographic changes, including migration from rural settlements and differing trends in birth rate from one region to another.

Barriers included apprehension about change within the teaching profession; local opposition from communities affected by the closure of their school; parental opposition fuelled by concern for the wellbeing of children required to travel significant distances to much larger schools; political opposition by some municipalities opposed to central direction and fearing lack of local determination. The changes were deeply unpopular in the early stages of the reform. Evidence from organisations representing parents, teachers and municipalities shows widespread acknowledgement that many of the initial fears quickly dissolved and that the reconstituted system for first cycle education provides a much improved system of provision for children, young people and their parents.

The strength of opposition was addressed systematically through very thorough and astute groundwork, sophisticated consultation processes, good articulation of the benefits of restructuring and the availability of substantial capital funding to minimise the impact on tax payers.

To take the restructuring further, it was necessary to provide school accommodation that was superior to those schools being closed. This involved constructing or redeveloping first cycle schools with multifunctional school areas, and promoting the construction of school centres which would operate at more than one level.

3.10 School centres

The National Programme for the redevelopment of the School Network of the first cycle of compulsory education and pre-school education, launched at the end of 2007, invited applications from municipalities for the development of school centres as stipulated by the education charters. A school centre means school facilities which include conditions described in the section 3.5.

The school centres in rural areas (low density) involve building one or more first cycle schools from scratch or on the redevelopment of existing ones – always in terms of *School Centres* – in areas that are geographically central in relation to other small first cycle schools. The school centre would provide differentiated and multi-functional areas, without neglecting aspects of social support and the occupation of free time, and also creates the physical conditions that facilitate the transfer and progressive integration of pupils from small first cycle schools (which have between 10 and 20 pupils and are likely to close).

In urban areas (high density), where many schools are overcrowded, this overcrowding means the operation of a dual timetable system, which can be a serious impediment to *full-time school,* the focus should be on the construction of new schools that include first cycle and pre-school education, always in terms of a School Centre, as well as the redevelopment of existing schools. In both cases, the schools created and/or redeveloped should provide the best teaching and learning conditions possible. The example below illustrates a good model of a school centre.

Example 3g. Visit to Escola Basica Integrada de Alcoutim in north-east Algarve

A school centre was visited which acts as an educational hub for the village of Alcoutim and a large sparsely populated rural hinterland and caters for pre-school education, first cycle, second cycle, third cycle and adult education. The agricultural area consists of 580 square kilometres and contains 3600 inhabitants. Originally, the centre catered for second and third cycle students only. However, because of decreasing population in the area the school had significant surplus accommodation. The closure of four rural primary schools resulted in pupils transferring to the Alcoutim central school, travelling up to 30 km in each direction every day. The school has a large and well resourced sports hall, a networked computer room, a science laboratory, an art and crafts room complete with a kiln, a large central staff room, a large library, a kitchen and dining area and administrative offices.

Parent representatives confirmed that the centre had become a strong focal point for the wider community. It provides a seamless and highly integrated educational service and is a strong force for social cohesion in the region. The leadership at Director level was decisive and visionary, reflected in some of the current innovations illustrated below.

Peripatetic teachers from the Centre visit homes and various parish halls to provide pre-school education to children under six years of age on four days of the week. On one day each week the same cohort of children are transported to the Centre for lessons. Clearly, this is a way of preparing children and their families for the transition to first cycle education and it is also an excellent strategy for promoting early socialisation and identification with the wider community. Remarkably, pre-school children from the main village who attend private pre-schools are also invited to the centre for pre-school lessons on the same day that the other children in the community attend.

The curriculum enrichment activities provided at first cycle are wide-ranging: role-playing, games, sports, maths laboratory activities, music, recreational reading and art club. They appeared to link well with the core curriculum while also providing for a lighter and fun approach to learning, more appropriate to the learning capacities of young children in late afternoon periods. Second cycle teachers are also involved in the CEA activities at first cycle level. The Centre arranges for some of its CEA teachers to provide contract hours to another Municipality and this ensures that CEA teachers are fully occupied and optimally deployed. The Centre has also arranged for periodic on-site training to be delivered on CEA.[8]

This Centre, which has evolved over some years, provides an admirable model for other centres and promotes a powerful case for delegated management powers and resources.

3.11 Incentives for change

The comprehensive restructuring policy also contains a range of measures intended to support parents whose children would be required to attend school beyond their village or community. These included:

- free transport to and from school;

---

[8] Training on CEA is the responsibility of General Directorate of Innovation and Curricular Development (*Direcção-Geral de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Curricular - DGIDC*), with the support of the regional directorates, and the collaboration of the municipalities and other entities responsible for the CEA.

- a free mid-day meal at school for children who benefit from social support;

- enhanced facilities in the new school;

- a curriculum enrichment programme to fill the extended school day (Chapter 3 of this report);

- far better and more sustainable educational provision.

3.12 The retention issue

One of the biggest issues was, and is, the high retention rate of the pupils on the second grade. The main reason was the strong negative correlation between the size of the school and the retention rate. Also there is some negative correlation between the stability of the teacher and the retention rate. The data (figure 3.6) tell a clear story. In 2006/2007 there were 25% fewer schools in the system than in 2001/02, and the retention rate decreased by half. The smallest improvement is in Alentejo, but even in that region, this rate is now 66% of the rate in 2001/02.

Given the context of a decreasing trend in retention rates, we consider that there is a good case for banishing retention from first cycle education. There are several persuasive reasons for doing this. The first must be that there is no place in a child centred educational system for branding the child a failure after one year in school. The second, and crucially important, related to the need to re-professionalise teachers. It runs counter to the need for teachers to have the highest possible expectations of what children can achieve if they always have the possibility of retention in the back of their minds for children who do not respond well to their teaching.

New types of school groups are emerging and new types of school management are taking form related to local circumstances. A small school cluster typically consists of one main school having the second and third cycle of education and 4-5 schools (from 20 to 400 pupils) having first cycle education, but there are many much larger school clusters having many more schools. The earlier tendency to form clusters which coordinated first cycle schools horizontally has given way to strong encouragement for clusters to incorporate more than one level, resulting in vertical coordination.

Figure 3.6 Reduction in retention rate over 5 years in relation to school closures

2001/2002	Number of schools (all types)	Number of clusters	Number of first cycle teachers	Number of second graders	Retention rate in 2nd grade
North	5858	309	14680	46600	14.08%
Central	4950	139	8970	25891	13.90%
Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	1399	109	7343	26421	17.85%
Alentejo	1262	65	2879	7937	15.26%
Algarve	381	46	1314	4416	17.48%
National total	13850	668	35186	111265	15.15%
2006/2007	**Number of schools (all types)**	**Number of clusters**	**Number of first cycle teachers**	**Number of second graders**	**Retention rate in 2nd grade**
North	3902	307	11266	43631	7.06%
Central	3769	174	7338	25268	7.85%
Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	1190	244	6513	27382	9.28%
Alentejo	882	66	2288	8197	10.02%
Algarve	328	49	1282	4961	10.02%
National total	10071	840	28687	109439	8.15%
Change from 2002 to 2007	**Number of schools (%)**	**Number of clusters (%)**	**Number of first cycle teachers (%)**	**Number of second graders (%)**	**Retention rate in 2nd grade (%)**
North	-33.46	-0.65	-23.26	-6.37	-49.86
Central	-23.86	25.18	-18.19	-2.41	-43.53
Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	-14.94	123.85	-11.30	3.64	-48.01
Alentejo	-30.11	1.54	-20.53	3.28	-34.34
Algarve	-13.91	6.52	-2.44	12.34	-42.68
National total	-27.28	25.75	-18.47	-1.64	-46.20

Source: GEPE December 2008

3.13 Strengths of the school reorganisation strategies

The new network of the schools and the system of school clusters has met with great success and has provided the solution to a number of problems. In general, the reorganisation process has brought about:

- implementation of policies which had long been judged necessary;

- innovations and improved efficiency of the schools (lower retention rate, better results in Mathematics and English);

- reduced isolation of teachers, who have overcome initial difficulties and are now very enthusiastic about working together and having a team spirit in the school;

- improved socialisation of underprivileged or isolated pupils by gathering them into one organisation and providing them with extra activities;

- opportunity for parents to leave their children in the school for the full day while they can be at their workplaces;

- a strengthened local community, making civil society stronger by shifting more responsibility to the municipality;

- a collaborative approach between the Ministry of Education (centrally and regionally), municipalities, schools and other stakeholders;

- the opportunity to achieve vertical coherence (progression) in curriculum planning and delivery, and greater continuity between the different cycles;

- success in overcoming most of the resistance to the implementation of political measures, as illustrated by the strong endorsement by parents' associations;

- permanence of tenured teachers in schools for at least 4 years: sustainability of the organisation, pedagogical work and relationship with pupils, teachers and parents;

- better facilities and resources for pupils and teachers;

- improved awareness and responsibility of municipalities for education issues.

3.14 Weaknesses which remain in the system

There are inherent challenges in managing the system of clusters, particularly where there are many schools in the cluster and distances between schools are large. The clusters have the potential to be more effective entities than individual schools working in isolation, but more research and case studies are needed to determine best practice in a variety of urban and rural clusters. There are some immediate issues.

- Clusters as entities will need effective leadership, greater autonomy and a clearer delineation of responsibilities and accountabilities if they are to function as intended. Any managerial tensions between clusters and their sponsoring municipalities will need resolution.

- Clusters will need greater delegated freedoms in the way they procure and deploy human and other resources, accompanied by an increase in autonomy.

- The role, pay and conditions of school coordinators merits re-examination (see Chapter 6).

- Practical issues will need to be resolved if clusters are to have the desired benefits. Some witnesses have commented, for example, on the lack of financial support for teachers travelling between cluster schools.

- Tensions between the core curriculum and the curriculum enrichment activities can best be resolved locally rather than by external intervention.

- Some municipalities are more willing or able to provide the necessary improved infrastructure than others. Perpetuation of this differential will result in inequitable provision. There may be a case of recognising regional differences and giving differentiated support.

Overall, we feel that the structures and expectations for the leadership and management of clusters, and responsibilities and accountabilities of different players, need greater definition and recognition. These challenges are examined in Chapter 6 of this report.

4. EXPANSION OF FULL-TIME SCHOOL AND ACCESS TO CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

4. EXPANSION OF FULL-TIME SCHOOL AND ACCESS TO CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

4.1 Objectives and their realisation

The reform of the educational provision in the first cycle has two main objectives:

> a. to give new learning opportunities to students;

> b. to adapt school timetables to the needs of families.

The new learning opportunities (a. above) are both relevant and ambitious. They include, firstly, making it compulsory to teach English in the first cycle. This policy has been remarkably successful owing to the availability of teachers who have a qualification in English. Secondly, is to make study support compulsory with the aim of consolidating students' learning and allowing them to benefit from teacher support. This is being operationalised by providing a period for study support, during which children may do their homework. The nation-wide provision of small lap-top computers to children in first cycle education is also relevant to give new learning opportunities to students. Thirdly, the policy aims to facilitate the development of other optional activities in the areas of the arts (particularly art and music), sports and other foreign languages.

These aspirational aims are only possible because the schools operate for an extended day. The adaptation of timetables to the needs of families (b. above) is accomplished by ensuring that almost all first cycle schools are open from 09.00h in the morning until 17.30h or later in the afternoon. This is of particular advantage to the high proportion of mothers who are in work or would like to be and who would otherwise need to find, and often pay for, alternative means of childcare. In effect, first cycle schools provide a combination of education and care for children aged 6-9 years while ensuring that the time spent in school is focused on learning. The fundamental provisions are as follows:

Figure 4.1 Features of the curriculum enrichment policy

| Features of CEA	Implementation
Statutory basis	Dispatch no. 12591/2006, of 16th June Dispatch no. 14460/2008, of 26th May
Launch of programme	2005/06 school year
Specified subjects	Language (English), physical education/sports, study support and music
Ministry curriculum guidelines	English, sports and music
Delivery	CEA teachers on annual contracts
Promoting entities	Municipalities (89%), school clusters (4.1%), parents' associations (4.6%) and IPSS[9] (2.3%)
Monitoring	Classroom observation instruments and questionnaires for the teachers and trainers have been developed

Schools and municipalities have some freedom to tailor their provision to local circumstances in order to meet these objectives, although the intended range of curriculum enrichment activities is defined by the Government. In practice, arrangements vary according to school or cluster from a complete separation of the core curriculum of the school from 'after school' activities to enrichment activities which are, in effect, a continuation of the activities of the core curriculum. This can lead to an excessive workload for the children. The Government provides guidelines to help assure the basic quality of curriculum and curriculum enrichment activities.

We found some very good examples of CEA, where children experienced interesting and challenging activities as a result of schools, professionals and representatives of government bodies being stimulated by a degree of autonomy. We consider that giving local power to design and manage the enrichment programmes, working within a national framework of guidance, can inspire the imagination and provide enrichment not only for the children, but for all people working with them in the schools, as well as parents and other members of the community.

The overall provision of CEA activities is very good as shown in figure 4.2. Music is the hardest to deliver, owing to a shortage of music teachers – particularly in Alentejo region. It is creditable that about half of all providers offer English in the first two years. Attendance is not compulsory but 88.2% uptake of English (grades 3 and 4), physical activity and sports (79.3%) and study support (83%) is very good. Uptake of English is lowest in the Algarve, where the language is widely spoken, and fewer pupils attend (or have access to) CEA activities in the Algarve and Lisbon than elsewhere.

---

[9] Private Charitable Institutions (Instituições Privadas de Solidariedade Social - IPSS)

Figure 4.2 Establishments (%) providing the main CEA activities in the years 2005/06 to 2007/08 (national proportions)
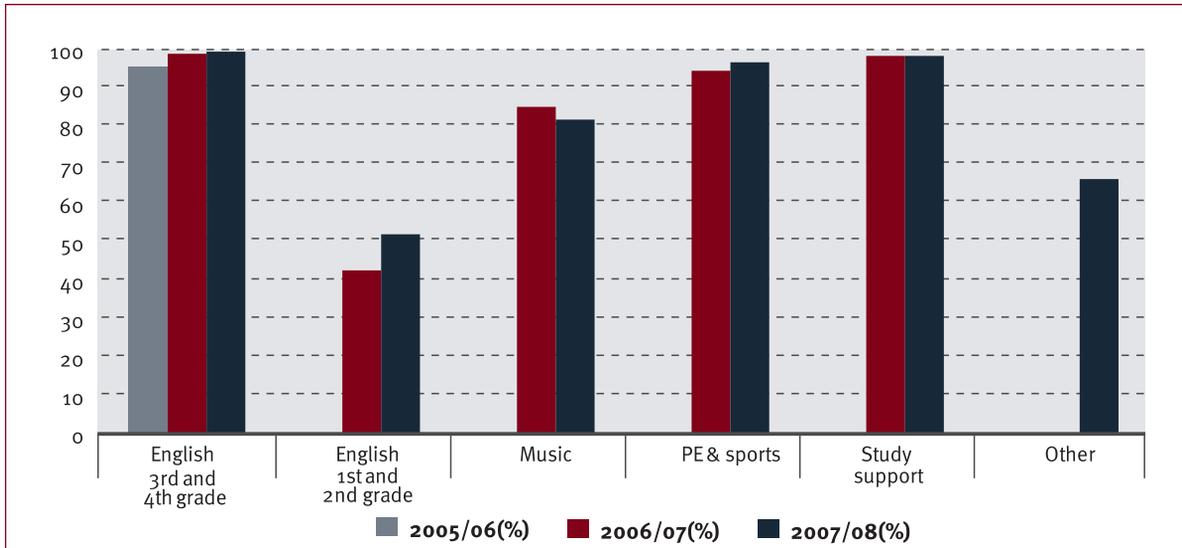
In the following paragraphs we consider first the main features of the CEA, such as the development of the programme, the staffing and the budgets before we focus on some strengths and areas for development.

4.2 CEA teachers: their training, employment and monitoring

The teaching force in first cycle schools is made up of tenured teachers and contracted teachers. Owing to considerable over-supply of teachers, partly due to the reorganisation and closure of schools, there is strong competition for the prized tenured posts. These teachers are deployed centrally by the Ministry but enjoy high job security and other benefits.

Contracted teachers, many of whom are employed to provide CEA, appear to have a lower status. Their pay is lower; they have fixed term contracts, typically lasting from a month to a year, and often suffer from bureaucratic insufficiencies like delays in being paid. Most CEA teaching staff are new or relatively inexperienced teachers. We met several who – despite their relative inexperience – were confident, lively and enthusiastic and had good relationships with pupils. They are contracted directly by the municipalities (or by private enterprises paid by the municipalities), parents' associations and IPSS. The story of one teacher in the Central Region was replicated in our visits to other regions.

Example 4a. Story of a contracted English teacher for CEA

The teacher has a Bachelor's degree in Languages and Modern Literature (Portuguese & English). She was recruited for CEA 4 years ago by an urban municipality. Each of her classes lasts for 45 minutes. She received 11.50€ for each class and gives a (green) receipt. The municipality paid her at the end of each month.

After the first year, the municipality has decided a new system for CEA. She has signed contracts with the University of Coimbra and with the College of Education (both State institutions), for 55% of her work and with several private institutions, for 45% of her work. From then on, CEA teachers were paid only every three months. Nevertheless, they have to pay their Social Security at the end of each month (if they do not pay on time, they have to pay interest on deferred payment).

This year, she and others have been working for one month but have not yet signed any kind of contract. During the previous years, they did the introduction of CEA during the core curriculum time. She had 22 hours of classes every week. From this year on, the municipality, after consultation with Executive Councils and Titular teachers, has decided to cease this kind of flexibility. CEA occurs between 15.45h and 17.30h. As a result, she only has 10 hours of classes each week. In the first year there were 3 teachers in the CEA process. Now, they are 38. The amount of work is scattered. Many teachers withdraw from CEA because the pay is too low, not on time, and the amount of work is not enough to ensure survival. The ones that stay are forced to find two or three other jobs.

The training of the CEA teachers is mainly provided by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with professional associations that are part of the Programme Monitoring Commission (PMC) and the regional education directorates, but municipalities can also provide training, contracting private enterprises or colleges to deliver it. Teachers of English and some other aspects have also used distance learning programmes.

The CEA teachers are monitored by representatives of the Programme Monitoring Commission at local level, which incorporates experts in the different knowledge areas. CEA programmes are discussed in 'round table' meetings which include the school director, the expert (trainer), the representatives of the municipality and parents (these are also the representatives that are involved in the Programme Monitoring Commission). Training activities take place in the school centres, at the main building of a school cluster or in individual schools.

4.3 Financial provision for CEA programmes

Pupils can participate in CEA activities at no expense to the families. Since the launch of CEA, funding[10] has increased as follows:

---

[10] Order no 14460 describes the budgets for each element of the activity and combinations thereof.

- 2005/2006 :   100 Euro per student (English);
- 2006/2007/2008 :   250 Euro per student (set of 3 activities);
- 2008/2009:   262.50 Euro per student (minimum of a set of 3 activities):

The Ministry has issued a list stipulating to the institutions organising the CEA the minimum pay per hour taught, in line with teacher qualifications. Municipal governments receive the budgets from the Ministry of Education. They then pay the teachers, the parents associations or the private enterprises contracted by them. According to the Country Position Report (ME, 2008, p.28) and through the interviews with representatives of the local communities, we learned that there is evidence of significant differences in the efficiency with which financial resources made available by the Ministry are used. The Ministry proposes to undertake a comparative study of this issue in the near future.

4.4 Facilities and other factors

Facilities for CEA vary. They are good in the school centres but some schools lack appropriate rooms and areas for physical education and sports. This can result in children occupying the same room all day and every day and the benefits to these children are limited. There was little evidence of education out of the classroom, for example beyond the school premises, owing to concerns about supervision and safety. In schools where the range of learning experiences and activities is limited, by the accommodation, facilities or staffing, the effect on children is like having a much longer class-based timetabled curriculum than is intended. We have no direct evidence of children suffering as a result, but opportunities to rest, relax or even sleep might mitigate the demands of such a regime.

Some of the diminishing number of schools with double shifts have problems implementing CEA programmes. There are, however, examples of such schools in which the curriculum is provided in the morning and CEA in the afternoon on a different site, using other municipal facilities, and the other way around. Transportation and supervision of pupils presented some difficulties under these arrangements.

A third of schools are unable to provide music owing to a shortage of music teachers and other musically trained professionals. Concerns have also been expressed that physical education is disappearing from the core curriculum owing to the reluctance of many class teachers to teach the subject[11] and their knowledge that there will be provision for physical education and sport in CEA.

Although we encountered some examples of very strong and capable leadership in some municipalities and clusters, where this was lacking, responsibility for strategic planning and management was unclear.

---

[11] Simple physical education activities for this level have been 'designed' by the Ministry as a programme wherein simple activities were worked out.

4.5 Quality assurance

The evaluation of quality appears more strongly established for the CEA than core curriculum teaching. There is evidence of municipalities taking seriously their responsibilities for the quality of provision made by the CEA teachers they employ, as the following example shows.

Example 4b. Quality assurance of CEA teaching in Grandola Municipality, Alentejo

The municipality in Grandola took the initiative together with the school, to make yearly evaluations of CEA teachers, which helps the municipality, as an employer to decide whether to prolong these contracts, or not. The evaluation is made by questionnaires (for parents, students and staff) and by class room observation. Collecting the information they evaluate it together (the person responsible for education at the municipality and the school staff including CEA teachers). The results provide information to the municipality to act as a responsible employer. They have already evaluated CEA teachers three times, and this process has been received very positively by the staff and by the CEA teachers themselves. The pedagogic coordinator considers it as a very good practice where some evaluation activity is happening and evolving a kind of culture for it. The CEA teachers think that is really helpful for them to teach better and better. Their good feeling is strengthened by the fact that the municipality provides relatively good conditions and the teachers consider them as colleague members of the staff.

4.6 Strengths of the programme

The CEA programme has some striking benefits, which include the following:

- the provision of a nation-wide programme to meet the needs of families and children (note: a number of students still have activities at private institutions);

- the transfer of responsibilities and resources to local and school levels, being a significant first step in giving school clusters greater autonomy in the management of their affairs. Devolved responsibilities include appointing and training personnel, managing the finance for CEA provision and developing the curriculum in consultation with various partners in the community. In this way, the programme is meant to be tailored to local circumstances;

- creation of effective partnerships which are a critical factor in the success of CEA. It is reported that such partnerships are leading to a wide range of imaginative solutions that can be considered as examples of good practice. Key partners include, for example, music schools, education and training schools and recreational institutions. In general, the CEA programme has not introduced an undue burden of bureaucratic procedures and parents show a high trust;

- a means of combating isolation, by providing for:

  → greater socialisation among students;
  → more interaction between teachers: among CEA teachers and between CEA and class teachers;
  → more interaction between schools: schools from urban areas sometimes visit schools from rural areas;

- greater equity, since the majority of children can now attend the activities, who would previously have had difficulty attending any type of educational establishment. In particular, every child now has the opportunity of learning English, which used to be available only to students whose parents could afford it;

- the potential for greater development of the activities; sharing of good practice; and the opportunity of children to relate to more than one teacher which can be productive if teachers cooperate in such a way that they support and learn from each other.

4.7 Some issues or weaknesses

Although not its prime purpose, the CEA policy can be seen as one of the major mechanisms for transferring autonomy to other levels in the education system. The balance of responsibility for CEA between municipalities and schools or clusters is not always clear in terms of managing the CEA curriculum, personnel – including training, and financial resources. Some specific issues raised with us include:

- difficulties in the coordination of the design, planning and evaluation of the programmes;

- lack of easy access to innovative approaches for subjects other than English, for which Portuguese and international materials are available;

- overlap between the core curriculum activities and the CEA (e.g. physical education/sport and music in the first cycle). Some schools tend to move these core curriculum activities to the CEA. Others comment that enrichment activities are scheduled during school hours. The class teachers may then have time in between their timetable teaching commitments, but this means that they have to teach core-curriculum subjects in 'CEA hours' (according to representatives of a teacher union). This overlap is also mentioned as a strength however to combat isolation between teachers;

- inequity, because the CEA activities are not mandatory. If seen as enrichment programmes, or programmes with an overlap with the core curriculum, differences between students will naturally occur, such as when students in the first cycle follow the English programme, and chose English as a second language of the core curriculum in the second cycle;

- regulation and budgets restrict local freedom to decide the content of programmes, which are not always tailored to the needs of the community; and

- the contractual conditions and promptness of payment of CEA teachers. It is asserted that funding is not always at the disposal of the Municipalities to pay the CEA teachers in time, because the budgets are transferred by the Ministry on a termly rather than monthly basis. The CEA teachers' position is also problematic. They are employed by the municipality year by year and they are not public employees, they are not entitled to many extra benefits. Their qualifications are usually high, but their conditions are very poor, and sometimes feel themselves very alienated and exploited, especially CEA teachers employed through companies or parents' associations.

Aspects of the CEA programme are still evolving and it is to be expected that further refinement is possible. This evaluation has identified some local practical difficulties which impede some objectives of the policy. We were not able to determine how widespread these concerns are.

4.8 Challenges

There are clear challenges in balancing the tensions between, for example:

• Encouraging local autonomy	and	allocating resources for specific content areas
• The responsibilities of tenured teachers	and	those of contracted CEA staff
• The school or cluster	and	the municipality
• Professional development of tenured teachers	and	training and development of contracted teachers
• An integrated school day	and	rigorous separation of the curriculum and CEA programmes
• The nature of core PE	and	the nature CEA PE and sport

In some schools the overlap between CEA activities and the core curriculum cause problems in the distribution of tasks between teachers. In other schools however schools themselves found solutions at school level profiting from each others expertise. The difficulties call for a clear coordinated approach through either an integrated system of core curriculum and CEA activities in the school or by creating effective communications mechanisms between the class teachers and CEA teachers and at the same time between the municipalities (including the promoting entities) and the (cluster) schools.

We believe that these tensions cannot be fully resolved unless the school, or schools as a cluster, is/are led, managed and staffed as a single entity operating a coordinated or integrated weekly programme for pupils which incorporates the mandatory curriculum and curriculum enrichment activities, staffed by one team of professional and trained lay adults (see Chapter 6).
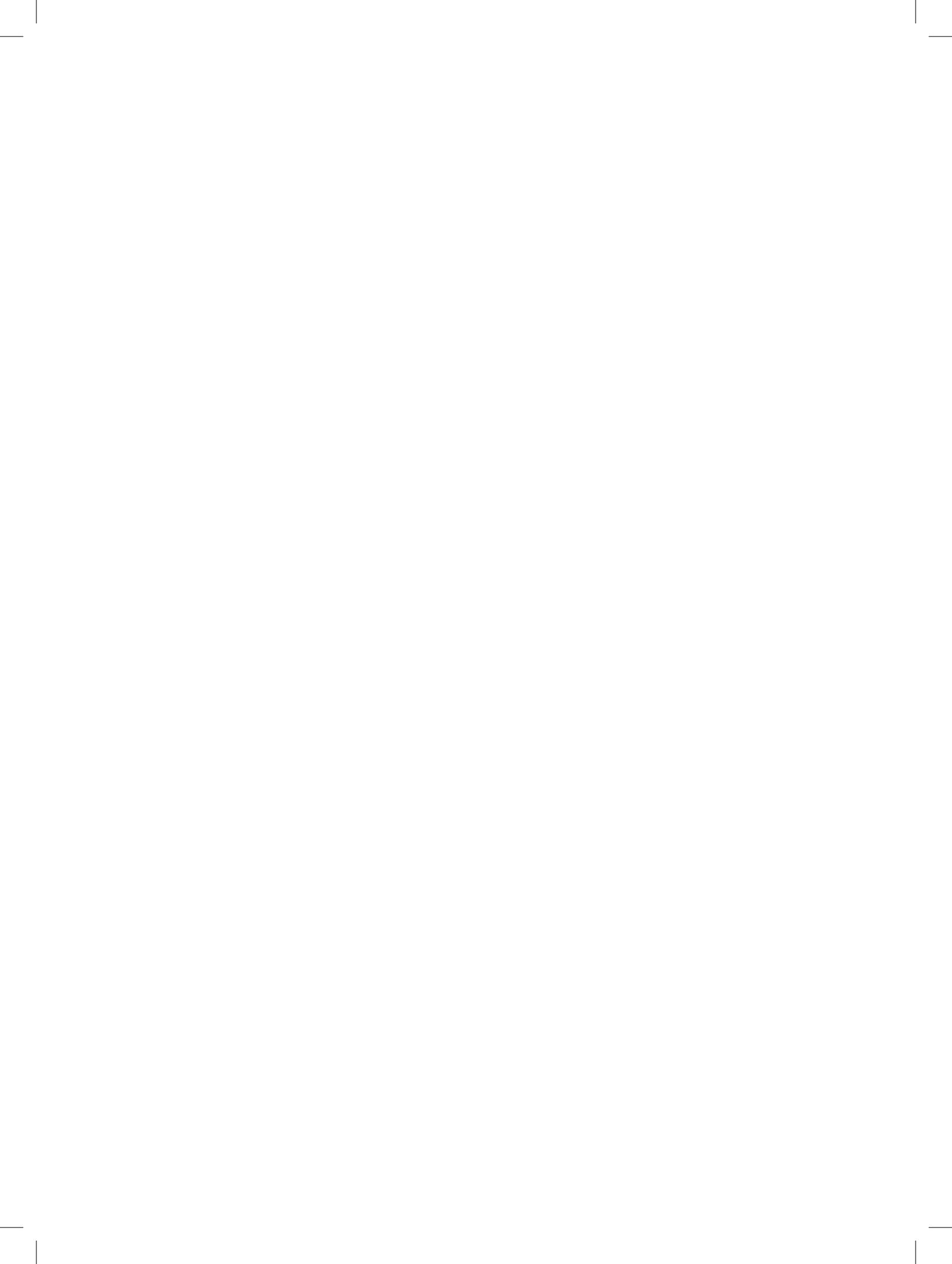
5. IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS IN MATHEMATICS, PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AND EXPERIMENTAL TEACHING OF SCIENCE

5. IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS IN MATHEMATICS, PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AND EXPERIMENTAL TEACHING OF SCIENCE

5.1 Overview

The Ministry of Education has launched Programmes of In-Service Teacher Training for first cycle teachers in Mathematics, Portuguese Language and Experimental Teaching of Science.

The basic model, created in the context of the Portuguese programme, is one year of training followed by a year as 'resident trainer' in the cluster. In Mathematics and Science, the model is a little different, although training is also based in school and on observation of classes by trainers chosen by the higher education institutes. But the principle of using trainers who stay on the school is becoming more common in the other programmes as well.

Despite the differences between them as a consequence of the need to answer the different areas' specific needs, the three programmes are based on the same principles, having common features, namely:

- they are carried out under the supervision of higher education establishments responsible for initial teacher training;

- they include individual support, training and monitoring of teachers in the classroom, with work sessions with the teachers of the Higher Education Institutions;

- they are related to career progress, via the accreditation of training;

- they implied the production of specific didactic resources to support first cycle teachers' work.

The national in-service model inaugurated in 2005 is comprehensive, well structured and strategic. The overriding goal is to improve teaching and learning in core curricular areas of Portuguese Language, Mathematics and Experimental Science. This reflects awareness at governmental level of the need to strengthen key skills in the light of PISA outcomes and the need to invest in system-wide human capital as preparation for the knowledge economy of tomorrow's world. The programmes of in-service training are also part of a broader strategy of developing professional practice among teachers in order to equip them to meet the challenges of wider structural and organisational reforms in the education system. The adoption of more demanding criteria for entry to the teaching profession itself is a particularly strong indicator of government resolve to build enhanced professional capacity in the teaching profession.

5.2 Strengths of the in-service training model

The training is focused on developing key practical competencies as a foundation for further learning and life skills. Notwithstanding that the first cycle curriculum is broader than the three subjects which are the foci of the training, the approach underlines policy priorities unambiguously and unapologetically.

The training model is designed to have a multiplier effect within clusters and the wider system. It is essentially a *trainer of focal teachers* model which sets out to build capacity within schools, clusters and regions. It succeeds by using trainers who stay on at the school. The model draws the trainers from school clusters, prepares them well, and then gives them substantial time without having the responsibility for a class of pupils, to work with colleagues in the cluster or in other clusters. The model avoids the typical pitfalls of 'cascade' approaches to training by keeping the chain of training short, providing sufficient trainer time to have a sustained effect and avoiding dilution of the messages. The trainers gain advanced skills both in the teaching and leadership of their subject and become an enhanced asset within their cluster.

There are other spin-offs from the programme. Personnel from colleges of education and universities have told us that the experience derived from the implementation of the in-service training model is influencing pre-service programme design and is enhancing the professional authority of academic staff. The in-service training programme is therefore having a significant ripple effect beyond the schools that it is targeting.

With higher education institutes delivering the training and providing for the application of training experience in classrooms during the programme of training itself, there is an effective interface between theory and professional practice. Essentially, this approach adds credibility from the point of view of teachers and they have told us so.

The cooperation between higher education institutes in designing and monitoring teacher in-service training programmes (18 colleges of education and 4 universities) is providing for broad strategic coherence in implementing Ministry of Education training guidelines and objectives.

The incremental expansion of the training programmes from '05 to '08 in terms of teacher, cluster and subject coverage provided for a gradual absorption of significant change. We take the view that while the approach adopted is comprehensive, ambitious and successful. It is reported that demand for the training continues to increase.

5.3 Possible scope for developing the in-service training model and its impact

Evaluating the impact of in-service training

The impact of the large scale training programmes on standards and quality in classrooms, schools and clusters needs to be evaluated systematically. The views of teacher educators/trainers expressed to the experts regarding the quality of regional and national progress in this regard are positive but they are not based on a scientific study and are essentially impressionistic. The monitoring of the training programme being conducted by the National Monitoring Commission has some strengths, as shown in example 5a, although it is largely based on progress reports submitted by the regional training centres. It is reported that the three major programmes are being subject to external and independent evaluation. In Mathematics and Science, the first reports are already available and the one from the Portuguese language programme will be available soon.

### Example 5a. Monitoring of the Mathematics training programme

The National Monitoring Commission considers that the Programme has gradually and increasingly contributed to the development of teacher "self-confidence" and "a professional attitude of greater commitment and investment in the teaching of Mathematics, with a greater awareness of the challenges faced and with greater capacity to meet them – greater awareness of the problems of learning mathematics, greater knowledge of the mathematics to be taught and how to teach it, greater willingness to carefully and meticulously plan mathematics classes, greater knowledge of the resources to be used". The main limitations and obstacles found are:

- high number of groups per full-time trainer; often made worse by the number of trainees per group. This situation makes it difficult for proper support to be given in planning and building portfolios.
- difficulty in setting up training groups when schools were scattered over a wide geographical area.
- operational difficulties for training, for example when timetables were unsuitable.
- the need to supply schools with the materials necessary for the training.
- difficulty for the teachers in being autonomous on a daily basis without the presence of the trainer and giving up the textbook as the dominant resource.

There is also an external assessment process, which is provided by an independent team. The report, presented to the Ministry of Education in January 2007, gives a positive assessment of the programme, concluding that it generically achieved its aims and that it should continue. One of the main positive aspects highlighted in the report is the training model adopted: a close working relationship with trainees and monitoring and observation of teaching in school context. The report also refers some difficulties and produces several recommendations to improve the programme in the following years. (Country Position Report)

There is clear evidence of improvement in performance in Mathematics in the first cycle (figure 5.1) which witnesses claim is associated with the mathematics training programme.

Figure 5.1 Mathematics Assessment Test – 1st Cycle
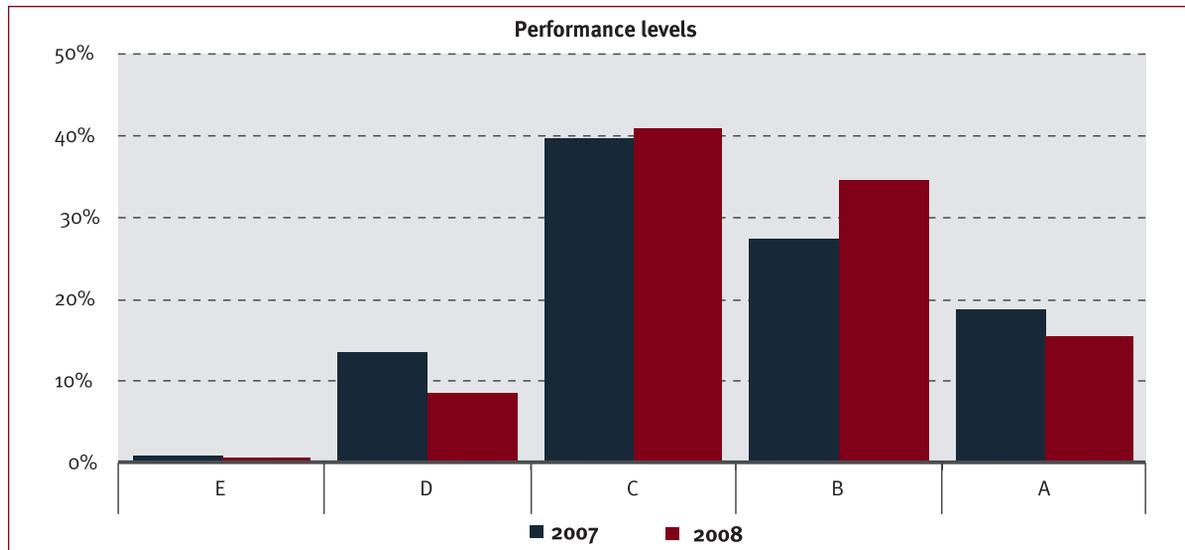
Source: GAVE/JNE, Assessment Tests - 2007 and 2008.

Selection of in-service trainees

The higher education institutes participate in the selection of potential trainees for their in-service programmes but feel they should have greater involvement. They argue that a selection process which achieves a greater match between the skills of the trainee and the demands of the role of trainer will pay greater dividends in the impact of the training within schools and clusters. At present, a school cluster submits an application to a regional college or university for a traineeship in respect of one or more of its teaching members. Effectively this presents the institute involved with a *fait accomplis* notwithstanding that the institute decides on programme numbers. However, the Ministry of Education believes it is important to involve each school cluster in the identification of trainers both in order to meet local needs as well as to guarantee the conditions for the participation of teachers in the training. There is some evidence that the programmes would benefit from more discriminating selection of trainees, having regard for their suitability and likely contribution.

Geographical distribution of in-service training opportunities

The in-service model needs to ensure that training programme opportunities are availed of by schools and clusters in isolated areas in addition to urban areas where the support infrastructure and facilities are more naturally and immediately available. Our visit to Escola Basica Integrada de Alcoutim in the Algarve found that while the school was particularly innovative in serving the wider rural hinterland, none of its teachers

as yet, had applied for a place on any of the in-service training programmes in the region. One reason given for this was that until recently no teacher stayed in the school for more than one or two years and as a result teachers were not inclined to commit to a one year in-service training programme followed by a further year as a resident trainer (in the case of the Portuguese language programme). Recent changes to the placement of teachers will reduce the mobility problem, although there is also a problem of lack of resources in this school, since there the few first cycle teachers are also senior teachers who have other responsibilities. The difficulty of attending classes in Faro, some distance away, was also cited as an impediment to the training.

Drawing on the training to build enhanced leadership and responsibility in schools and clusters

General councils and their school directors need the capacity to identify pedagogical training and development needs within their clusters. The opportunity to select teachers for membership of pedagogic council committees post-2009, should help this process. There are Training Centres which belong to school and cluster associations. It is reported that these centres have recently been restructured so as to respond to the needs identified by the training plans of the schools and clusters they serve. Training Centres have the potential to promote a stronger and broader interface between the role of coordinators, resident trainers and the pedagogical council, leading to greater teamwork at school and cluster levels in relation to whole school curriculum development and implementation.

Although we met a number of trainers in different regions who are fulfilling their intended role very well, the Council of Directors told us that some teachers who have trained as resident trainers are reluctant to train other teachers across their clusters. This could be a significant drawback to the present training model. In order to extract maximum system-wide value from the resident trainer concept, consideration needs to be given to further encouraging and supporting school clusters and councils in working on pedagogical innovation with resident trainers. School leaders, the directors themselves, need to engage more in promoting and facilitating the work of resident trainers across their clusters both horizontally and vertically. Such a strategy would enhance the impact of the teacher in-service programmes and intensify teacher autonomy in curriculum delivery.

The contribution of internal evaluation to identifying training and development needs

If training, or professional development in the widest sense, is to make a real impact on raising standards of achievement through improving the effectiveness of teaching and developing the curriculum, it needs to be focused on local and individual needs. To do this requires a more professional approach to the internal evaluation of the quality of education at school and classroom level and identification of strengths and areas for development. The Inspectorate (IGE) representatives pointed out to us that while school self-review has been mandatory since 2002, it is not widespread and as yet does not receive systematic support at local or regional levels across the country. This we see as one of the more important challenges for the reorganised school network.

5.4 Key features of best practice in the design of the in-service programmes

- The strategic programme goals across the three in-service priorities are explicit and practical.

- The principles of the training programme provide for specialist support from regional training colleges and require that the overall approach has national coherence.

- A key feature of the programme content is a focus on classroom based mentoring.

- Training programmes are accredited thereby providing an incentive to teachers to develop their skills and further their careers.

- The regional and management structure for the in-service programme is strong and the expanding provision of on-line communication facilities and teacher/pupil materials demonstrates clear and decisive support for the initiative.

- The training of focal teachers model has the power and potential to build capacity and raise standards across the system.

5.5 In-service training in the Portuguese language and the national reading plan

The in-service programmes relating to the Portuguese language are a powerful complement to the national reading plan. Each initiative reinforces the other. The focus of the in-service programmes is on the development of oracy and reading comprehension skills and the focus of the national reading plan is on reading for enjoyment (recreational) and interpreting the mass information of daily living. The provision of a dedicated period of one hour per day for reading and writing in first cycle schools is clearly a national priority designed to increase standards and provide greater equality of opportunity for pupils to access other parts of the curriculum at second cycle, third cycle and beyond. Competence in reading is a pivotal life skill and the obvious emphasis on first language consolidation in first cycle schools via a dedicated in-service programme, and a practically based national reading plan is a striking feature of the Portuguese reforms in education. The experts believe that this strategy will be crucial in delivering better outcomes in curriculum access and educational achievement.

5.6 In-service training and pupil achievement data

The end of cycle standardised testing conducted in the system since 2000 and universally applied since 2006/2007 is a powerful means of tracking the success of in-service initiatives and other teacher empowerment strategies. In Mathematics the percentage of first cycle pupils scoring a grade E or D performance rating has reduced from 14% to 9% between 2007 and 2008 while the percentage of pupils scoring grade B has increased from 27% to 35%. A slight increase in the numbers of pupils achieving a grade C has also been recorded. In the Portuguese language the progress is less dramatic but there is emerging evidence of gains in pupil achievement. On the whole, the experts agree that there has been significant progress in pupil achievement in a short period of time and consider that this is an important measure of the success of the Portuguese education reforms to date. It is clear from this success that the concentrated in-service programmes and the national reading plan are playing a key role in improving learning outcomes for pupils. Notwithstanding this general success it should be noted that the performance rating of pupils at the highest level of performance has reduced significantly in both Mathematics and Portuguese. It is suggested therefore that further attention be given within the in-service programmes and the national reading plan, to the learning needs of the most able pupils.

The monitoring of pupil achievement levels is a fundamental means of tracking system progress. In this context it is recommended that more comparable data relating to variations in achievement between the Portuguese regions and variations in achievement between rural and urban areas within regions be examined in order to inform ongoing policy interventions and adjustments. This will require specific research.

6. LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

6. LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

6.1 System-wide leadership

The policy measures for the improvement of first cycle education have been exceptionally well conceived, planned and implemented during the three years 2005/06 to 2007/08. Their long gestation may have helped in the planning process, but their rapid, nation-wide implementation early in the secession of the new government indicates a high level of political confidence, courage and conviction. This was confirmed in an interview with one Regional Director.

Example 6a. System-wide political leadership

The agenda of the incoming government was to accelerate changes which had been around for some time, such as the closure of small schools. The incoming Minister was a key driving force, with strong backing from the Prime Minister. The Minister wants a better deal for pupils who are in the system now, not in ten years time. She conveys a sense or urgency and looks at schools as organisations not just communities. Her principle of action is reported to be simple: 'difficulties can be tackled and overcome; problems in contrast need studying, analysing and resolving!'

There is considerable attention to consultation at national, regional and local levels, where representational councils feed in the viewpoints of all the main stakeholders. This is part of the process of consensus building which provides a hard to resist momentum for change.

The main levers in the process, such as Ministry and Regional Directors, are not independent civil servants but political appointees aligned with the government's policy objectives. They are supported by up-to the minute data services which allow smart and well informed decision making. The professional culture recognises and accepts the authority of democratic government encouraged by democratic structures which extend to the management of schools.

6.2 Creative use of legislative powers

In some administrations, there is frequently a gulf between the passage of enabling legislation and ensuing action, particularly in respect of educational change[12]. Education systems can be subject to considerable inertia, electorates can be fickle, and legislation is not immune from being enacted before the practicalities of implementation have been analysed. The incoming government in 2005 both took advantage of existing powers stemming from the 1986 Education System Act[13] which states that 'it is the State's responsibility to create a network of public education and teaching establishments that meets the needs of the whole population'

---

[12] A Portuguese example could be that 'compulsory education was of 4 years until 1966, but only in 1981 was it possible to enact, in practice, this compulsion (Country Position Report, p.8)
[13] Law No 46/86 with subsequent amendments

supplemented by the provision that 'the need for constant adjustment of educational provision, particularly in view of changes in demand, both in terms of quality and quantity and the physical state of the buildings requires an annual appreciation and adaptation process for the education network.'[14]

If existing statutes enabled 'adjustment of educational provision' and use of educational charters as planning tools, new legislation facilitated the path of reform in several ways. One example is the creation of the Ministry of Education's consultative body, the Schools Council, in 2007. Another very significant policy is the extension by the Ministry of Education of the period in which tenured teachers must remain in one school, and also the period in which contracted teachers may remain in the school. These regulations should do much to reduce the curriculum disruption caused by high teacher mobility in some schools and districts.

6.3 Hitching the reforms to educational quality, opportunity and achievement

Communicating such locally unpopular measures as the closure of village schools to parents and communities, in partnership with often reluctant municipalities was managed very adroitly. The message was that children would get much better education with wider opportunities and higher standards. Parents would have their children looked after in extended day schools, and transport and meals would be provided free of charge. By 2007/08, opposition to the reforms has almost completely melted away.

All the policy measures have been aligned astutely to achieve the grand vision and major policy objectives. They form a coherent and comprehensive bundle of policies, each supporting the others. The quality of strategic planning and determination which drives implementation is reflected in the rapid progress of school reorganisation and associated measures. We cannot readily think of international parallels.

Central to the implementation process has been widespread consultation and the attention given to the key partners including central, regional and local government, school clusters and executive boards, unions and all the other main stakeholders, financial incentives for municipalities have also played their part, thanks to access to European funding. The initial phase of reform of first cycle education is almost complete. The Ministry is reaching 'the end of the beginning.'

6.4 The next challenges

Having the building blocks of effective education in place will not guarantee that it happens. We have not evaluated the quality of the provision and lessons we have seen. It was not within our remit do so, and we have only seen a small sample of provision in the regions.

---

[14] Article 13, number 1 of Decree-Law No. 7/2003, 5 January

We believe that the next steps will need to take account of the following issues and do not expect these to come as surprises to the Ministry.

Potential of school clusters

The clusters have the capacity and flexibility to do much that individual schools cannot. They are educational entities that contain an array of talent and expertise which exceeds what is contained within the staff of an individual school. They have or should have the opportunity to:

- deploy staff in creative ways so as to make the best of their talents and skills;

- pool resources so as to give all pupils access to them;

- maximise effectiveness by evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and finding ways to improve it;

- assess and monitor the progress of individual pupils and intervene or support them if they are slipping back;

- plan the curriculum and extra-curricular activities programme in an holistic way so as to provide pupils with interesting, varied and challenging experiences throughout their time in schools in the cluster; and

- ensure all teaching and non-teaching staff understand the aims of the cluster and what it is doing to improve, as well as appreciate their role as a member of the cluster team and the values promoted within the cluster.

Much depends on the size and geographical distribution of schools in the cluster, the quality of communications across the cluster and the facilities for pupils and staff to travel between schools and centres. Some schools have imaginative programmes in which children periodically visit centre facilities like a swimming pool even though their own school is some distance from the centre.

Implications for cluster leadership

It is clear that policy makers recognise the vital importance of effective leadership in making clusters work effectively and efficiently. We note that arrangements for identifying the lead professional of a cluster are changing from the elected 'President' to the 'Director' whose election is based on curriculum vitae, school management experience and the quality of the project plans proposed by applicants for this position.

The current system gives precedence to elected grade or year group representatives on executive boards over the coordinators of the different schools in the cluster. We believe that coordinators are undervalued and that they have an important role in taking responsibility for the individual schools and assuring the quality of the core education and curriculum enrichment provision on that school site.

Example 6b. A coordinator's perspective

Being the coordinator of a school in a cluster is an elected position, so carries peer recognition, but is not a promoted post. A coordinator receives the normal teacher's salary, credits on the teacher scale and 100 Euro a month extra. Coordinators are not members of the cluster council. The professional representatives are the principal (president) and 2, 3 or 4 deputies. Her cluster is 2 schools of second and third cycles, 4 schools of first cycle and 2 kindergartens.

A group of coordinators of urban schools told us:

Example 6c. Coordinators' responses to a focus group

Coordinators have less quality of life under new arrangements. A big challenge for the system is to give more time to first cycle school coordinators. One coordinates a school of 300, has a class of 27, works 08.30h-18.30h every day, and works a lot at home preparing classes and meetings. One of the big challenges is CEA; she has to coordinate the teachers responsible for those activities as well as all the other work of the school.

The coordinators said they would like to see coordinators relieved of responsibility for a class. They quoted the Algarve, in which coordinators in schools with more than 300 pupils do not have a class. Evolution from horizontal to vertical clusters of schools has created the need to coordinate different levels of teaching. They are not used to coordinating across school phases. There is a need for training and relief for first cycle coordinators and recognition of the extra responsibility they carry. Health and stress issues were raised; parents can be very demanding, and there are bureaucratic demands such as frequent written returns to regional departments for which a time allowance of two hours was not enough.

Coordinators, therefore, currently have little incentive to undertake a significant leadership role, although many – driven by professionalism and concern for the pupils and families - remain on site throughout the extended day and assume responsibilities beyond what is expected of them. The role of coordinators needs re-examination. They do a lot of work while having a class as well. They are paid an extra 100 euro/month, but what they need is extra time, some exemption from teaching and greater clarity about their job. In practice they are not only teachers but administrators, managers, local leaders, daily problem solvers, evaluators and supervisors, as well as coordinators. They have no clear place in the leadership structure of the cluster but a crucial role in the quality of the children's experience in their schools. We recommend a fundamental review of their role and conditions.

Local autonomy

The state has already devolved much responsibility for key decisions about infrastructure and the operation of school clusters to municipalities and the clusters themselves, although some of these decisions remain subject to ministerial approval. At the local level, however, it is not always clear where responsibility lies. One of the principles of effective delegation is to ensure that the resources needed for delivery are locally managed by those responsible and accountable for delivery. Although there has been a marked and deliberate shift of power from the central level to the local one, the retention of teacher allocation at the centre contradicts the moves to decentralise the system and give more autonomy to municipalities and schools. Unpalatable side effects include the apparent discrimination between classes of teacher based not on merit, i.e. their qualifications and competence, but on their employment status.

An extrapolation of this delegation principle would mean allocating a budget to the executive board of a school cluster with which to meet all the recurrent or operating costs. In a fully autonomous system, the cluster budget would allow for everything from staff costs to other resources such as educational materials, maintenance costs, energy and so on. The proper use of these funds would be audited by the municipality, which would bear responsibility for the efficient and effective provision of education in its area.

Local autonomy would mean that the school cluster, with oversight of the municipality, would recruit and deploy the teaching and support personnel needed to provide the full programme of education, including curriculum enrichment activities, in the schools across the cluster. The composition of the teaching force would reflect the needs of the cluster and allow for both continuity and flexibility. Teachers would therefore be on tenured and shorter term contracts, and may be full or part–time, but they would all be part of the 'cluster team' with the professional and pedagogical leadership of the director and the school coordinators (perhaps considered as assistant directors). Developments in the direction suggested here would begin to give clusters a corporate responsibility for the education and care of each and every child in the cluster schools. The cluster would be more of a self-governing educational entity than an administrative structure.

Total cohesion is of course difficult in a large cluster of widely distributed schools. But web-based communications, imaginative timetabling and the provision of sufficient resources to cover the costs of teachers meeting for shared curriculum planning and professional development can do much to bridge the otherwise isolated school communities.

We recommend that questions of greater autonomy, financial delegation and local management are explored through research and pilot projects involving a small number of municipalities and school clusters keen to explore the opportunities provided by a greater measure of local determination.

Evaluation and accountability

It is axiomatic that increased autonomy shines the spotlight on accountability. An effective education system, like any other successful enterprise, must continually seek ways of improving the quality of learning and teaching. At the heart of such improvement is an effective system of internal and external evaluation, or an internal system externally validated. We note current policy which, expressed by a source in the Ministry, is that:

> 'The work developed during the recent years, concerning the upgrading of teaching activity, is based on the development of schools' internal practices and on external assessment. Thus, the monitoring of teaching practices in the classroom should be, above all, within the responsibility of school's spheres of pedagogical coordination, as part of the programming, support and evaluation of teachers' performance, and of the development of their training activities; in this field, the external assessment of schools should evaluate the way each school conducts the monitoring.'

We recognise the very useful analyses produced as a result of the work undertaken by the IGE which inspects systems, plans and policy delivery so as to keep Ministers informed of the progress and impact of government policy. The Inspectorate does not, however, evaluate the quality of the teaching and learning process by direct observation of classroom practice, claims not to have the manpower or remit to do this and feels it would be inadvisable *'to proceed with generalized forms of observation and external assessment of classroom practices when the development of observation and internal assessment is in progress.'* This contrasts with the established inspectorates of Northern Europe, who gather and evidence of the quality of teaching and learning through inspection programmes informed by direct observation of lessons[15] and classroom-based action research. This allows them not only to report on the actual quality of education but also to disseminate good practice. Moreover, there is evidence that the promotion of school self-evaluation, which includes internal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, classroom is accelerated and improved by being modelled on the 'gold standard' which can be demonstrated through effective external evaluation and feedback by external evaluators or inspectors.

---

[15] It is understood that the Portuguese Inspectorate included classroom observation during the full inspection programme between 2000 and 2002 with, as reported, 'significant success and without negative reactions from teachers.'

Classroom observation is not absent from the system, however. The appraisal system for teachers requires two observational visits by the coordinator each year, which can form a basis for internal evaluation. An even more effective way of evaluating and improving teaching is the work done – at its best – by the local trainers in the core subjects as part of the development of Portuguese language, Mathematics and Experimental Science teaching. This involves expert teachers working alongside their peers in classrooms across the cluster. These school-based approaches to the evaluation and support of learning and teaching provide a very promising basis for school self-evaluation as a precursor to the annual planning cycle. The observational evidence would be supplemented by progress data, end of cycle performance data and attendance and retention (if applicable) data to give an ongoing picture of the performance of the school or cluster. There is a case for considering either the creation of a national independent body to undertake and report on the quality of education nationally or a redefinition of the role of the IGE. Evaluation could be based on a rolling programme of visits to school clusters and include a sample of direct observations, self evaluation summaries and performance data. Alternatively, the external evaluation of *'the way each school conducts its monitoring'* provides an opportunity for inspectors to sample the rigour and effectiveness of internal monitoring through observation of such monitoring in progress.

6.5 Concluding comments

Taking an overall perspective of the reorganisation of first cycle education, we consider the achievements of the last three years to be outstanding, reflecting an ambitious programme, well-conceived and largely accomplished through a combination of central drive and local initiative. The structures and programmes are emerging which have the potential to ensure that young children and their parents are much better provided for than ever before.

The next step is to focus on the quality and improvement of pupils' experience, particularly the pace, challenge and enjoyment of their learning. This will be influenced most directly by the quality of teaching and, second only to this, the quality of school and cluster leadership. The challenge moves from local government to the profession itself, in collaboration with all stakeholders. Meeting this challenge will be as demanding, but as important, as the reorganisation and policies which have provided the infrastructure for success.

ANNEX

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	POST
Government	Jorge Pedreira Valter Lemos	Deputy Minister for Education Deputy Minister for Education
Central services	João Trocado da Mata Joana Brocado Edmundo Gomes Sandra Pereira	General Director of GEPE General Director of DGIDC General Director of GGF Deputy Director of GAVE
Regional services	Margarida Moreira Manuel Oliveira Engrácia Castro José Leitão Rui Correia José Verdasca Luís da Silva Correia	Regional Director of DREN Regional Deputy Director of DREN Regional Director of DREC Regional Director of DRELVT Regional Deputy Director of DRELVT Regional Director of DREAle Regional Director of DREAlg
IGE	José Maria Azevedo Leonor Duarte Pedro Teixeira	Chief-Inspector Coordinator of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team Coordinator of the 'Organisation of the Academic Year' Activity
Experts	Isabel Alçada João Formosinho Lucília Salgado Rosa Martins	Responsible for PNL Professor at Minho University Professor at Coimbra ESE Member of RBE
Coordinators of the Programmes of Teachers' In-Service Training	Inês Sim-Sim Lurdes Serrazina Rui Marques Vieira	Responsible for the Portuguese Language Programme Responsible for the Mathematics Programme Member of the team of the Sciences Programme
Professional Associations of Teachers	Rui Petrucci Alexandra Marques Cristina Barros	Physical Education Pre-school teachers English
Coordinators of 1st cycle schools (urban)	Paula Saraiva Maria do Sameiro Ana Paula Aveleira Helena Assude Teresa Mendes	EB1/JI da Bela Vista EB1 Augusto Lessa EB1 do Solum EB1 de Vista Alegre EB1/JI Coca Maravilhas
Coordinators of 1st cycle schools (rural)	Isabel Morais Maria Aldina Maltes Júlia Granata Maria da Conceição Catarino Rui Xabregas	EB1 Paredes de Coura EB1 de Mira EB1 de Alcanena EB1 de Arronches EB1 de Vale do Judeu
National Confederation of Parent's Associations (CONFAP)	Albino Almeida António Amaral Emília Bigotte	President Member Member

Schools' Council	Álvaro Santos Maria José Carrilho José Mesquita Anabela Grácio Conceição Sousa	President Member Member Member Member
Local authorities	Francisca Abreu Fernando Paulo Ana Maria Ferreira Ana Dinis Florbela Martins Carlos Catalão / Rosaria Alves Ana Luísa Vicente	Câmara Municipal de Guimarães Câmara Municipal de Gondomar Câmara Municipal de Santo Tirso Câmara Municipal de Amadora Câmara Municipal de Ourique Câmara Municipal de Lisboa Câmara Municipal de Portimão
National Council of Education	Júlio Pedrosa Manuel Miguéns Teresa Gaspar	President Coordination Body Adviser
Trade Unions	Maria José Simões Samuel Jorge Vicente Francisco Almeida Manuel Grilo	FNE FNE FENPROF FENPROF

Members of the international team also visited schools in each of the five Regions of Portugal and met parents, teachers, school council members, pupils and officers of municipalities and Regional Directorates.

The team benefited from access to a range of documents, including:

- Galvão, M.E. (Ed.) (2004). *Development of Education in Portugal.* Ministry of Education and Bureau for European Affairs and International Relations.
- Ministry of Education (2007). *Education and Training in Portugal.* Ministry of Education, Portugal.
- Ministry of Education (2008). *Policy Measures implemented in the First Cycle of Compulsory Education in Portugal: Country Position Report.* Ministry of Education, Portugal.
- Serrazina, M.L. (2008). *An In-service Teacher Education Programme in Mathematics: rewards and challenges.* Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa, Portugal.
- Reports were prepared on the reorganisation of the first cycle school network in each of the five regions, written for the purpose of the evaluation, and papers were produced by some of the witness groups interviewed.
- Information and data produced by all the Central Service Directorates, particularly GEPE, and by the IGE were also very valuable.

ANNEX 3: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Biographical note on Peter Matthews

Peter Matthews is an Education Consultant and Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. He specialises in the evaluation of national policies for schools and works mainly for governments or national organisations in the UK and other countries. In England, he is currently evaluating programmes including the work of National Leaders of Education and system leadership more widely. Recent international projects include evaluations for the OECD of improving school leadership in Victoria, Australia; analysis of school performance in Mexico in the light of PISA results and a case study on attracting, training and retaining teachers in Germany. He has contributed to education development projects in South Africa, the Gulf States, Europe and Bermuda. He is also a Schools Adjudicator, appointed by the Secretary of State to take decisions on school reorganisation proposals and pupil admissions.

Professor Matthews was previously a senior civil servant, Her Majesty's Inspector and Head of School Inspections in the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) from 1993 to 2004, where he also had responsibility for strategic planning and evaluating the work and impact of Ofsted. He has worked as a teacher and teacher educator, and held senior positions in local government. He has chaired national committees and organisations and is expert on the provision of pre-school, primary and secondary education. He has represented Ofsted on the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). His publications include research in both science and education. In 2003, he received a State honour for his contribution to education.

Biographical note on Elisabeth Klaver

Liesbeth Klaver has ten years experience as Inspector of the National Education Inspectorate of the Netherlands. She is Member of the International Department of the Inspectorate and several research and development committees. She specialized in Organizational Management and Educational Evaluation and Research.

Dr Klaver has had considerable experience of international projects funded by the World Bank including overall technical and financial responsibility for the Primary Education Quality Improvement Project in Indonesia; evaluation of the National Vocational Training System in India, and General co-ordination for the Teacher Training Program of the Youth Vocational Training Project in Hungary. Here she advised on Curriculum Development and Management for Hungarian Administrators and Teacher Trainers and her responsibilities included the selection of competent education institutes in the field of vocational training in six different EC countries, advising on the design, planning and organization of the study program, setting up of criteria for project-impact assessment and a number of classroom studies. She has also been responsible for training school inspectors in Egypt, analysing the graduate labour market in Kenya and other international projects.

Dr Klaver was senior education adviser/inspector in the Department for Education of the Municipality of Rotterdam. She is a Member of the European Network of Women Studies, Ministry of Education of the Netherlands in cooperation with the Council of Europe, active in the application of Woman's studies research towards policy making in this sector of education. She is the author of many relevant publications.

Biographical note on Judit Lannert

Judit Lannert is Managing Director of Tárki.-Tudok, the Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research, Budapest. She has extensive experience in a range of projects, including editing the National Reports on Hungarian Public Education, designing strategies for the Ministry of Education in several expert teams, and empirical and quantitative research work in the fields such as career aspiration of pupils; school leadership and school effectiveness.

Dr Lannert has taken part in a number of international projects as an expert, including the OECD projects on Schooling for tomorrow (2004) and Transition from school to work (1998); a peering group project in Serbia in 2002 ETF (European Training Fund), and Managing vocational education in Central-Europe for the IIEP (Paris). Her fields of interest include: the progression of pupils in the education system, school structure, comparative studies of education, and school to work transition and further education.

Her doctorate is in sociology and her expertise in social policy and economics was acquired through studies in Universities in Budapest and the USA.

Biographical note on Gearóid Ó Conluain

Gearóid Ó Conluain is Deputy Chief Inspector of the Irish Department of Education and Science. He has overall managerial responsibility for the policy sub-division of the Inspectorate. His sub-division encompasses Inspectorate units dealing with primary and post-primary curriculum and assessment, teacher education, inspection support in primary and second-level schools, education policy research, international linkages and special education.

Educated as a primary school teacher, he became head teacher of an Irish-medium primary school and joined the Inspectorate in 1982. As well as his work as a field inspector, he was involved in the management and delivery of in-service education to primary teachers on a broad range of curricular themes throughout the 80's and early 90's. In 1994 he was seconded to the Scottish Office Education Department in Edinburgh where he worked in the Audit Unit on the development of inspection instruments and systems for composite analysis of inspection reports. He completed masters studies in social science and equality studies and later founded and managed the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Inspectorate. He is Ireland's representative

on the Governing Board of CERI – the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD and on the European Network for the Evaluation of Education Systems. He is a member of the Irish Council for Special Education and has also served on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. In recent months he has been seconded to the Irish Higher Education and Training Awards Council as Chief Executive Officer.

Biographical note on Professor Alexandre Ventura

Alexandre Ventura is the President of the Scientific Council for Teacher Evaluation and Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Aveiro (Portugal) where he coordinates the Erasmus programme. He is researcher at the Centre for Research in Education and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Aveiro, where his main research projects include the impact of school evaluation programmes, school self-evaluation, teacher evaluation, school management and bullying. Professor Ventura has held a range of academic positions and was recently Deputy Chief Inspector of the Portuguese Inspectorate of Education. He is a member of the General Assembly of the Portuguese Educational Administration Forum and has coordinated the organisation of many national and international educational events, two of them under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2007).

Professor Ventura is a prolific writer, credited with a wide range of publications. He is a versatile speaker on educational issues and has given many public lectures and presented papers at a large number of seminars and conferences. He has strong international interests and connections. He is an international consultant on educational issues.