THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION 2008

National Report of Portugal

by

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CONTENT

PART I

EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

1. Improving public schooling as an instrument in encouraging equity and social cohesion

1.1.   Global perspective

In the three decades from 1974 to 2004 democracy was consolidated in Portugal and, with great determination, educational policies that were bold and financially demanding had been pursued. The aim was to give citizens high levels of schooling at all teaching levels, with the prime objective of providing compulsory schooling for all, in equality of opportunity. Successive education and training policies centred essentially on the gradual increase in human, physical and financial resources required to respond to a large and socially diversified demand for education. The main result of these educational policies developed during these 30 years led to a significant increase in students and teachers at all levels of schooling and in a wider range of supply, and to the construction and equipping of educational structures previously unheard of in Portuguese history.

In 2004, Portugal invested in education and, similar to the other members of the European Union, acquired a large number of schools that increased with rise in demand and had an acceptable teacher/pupil ratio. The low education level of the population at the start of the 60s explains this quantitative boom. Consequently, many reforms, some of them ambitious, were made throughout this period to the organisation and curricular content of education, teacher training was diversified and improved at all educational levels and schooling rates began to rise from preschool level to higher education, while attendance at compulsory schooling was more effectively completed. All of this meant that major investments had to be made in the third cycle of basic and secondary education. The consolidation of these changes, despite some political instabilities and discontinued reforms, resulted in a school network fairly adapted to the school age population.

This reality is made clear in several statistical indicators as well as in some studies and analyses done on the Portuguese education system, the most recent being Portugal's report to the 47th. Session of the CIE, and in information produced by the OECD in the "Portugal Economic Survey" (2006) and in the project "improving school leadership" (2008). It is not surprising, then, that in 2004, for the first time, thanks to the reforms made and to the demographic situation in sharp decline, Portugal did not need to build more schools, hire more teachers or introduce new curricular reforms.

The investment needs of public schools were centred essentially on quality and equity, and for this reason the need was to reorganise the school network, in response to new demographic challenges and to imbalances in regional development. There was also a need to extend the preschool network, create the conditions to integrate pupils with special learning needs into the system, avoid school dropout and school failure, overcome literacy deficits, invest in technological equipment for schools, diversify supply in the education system, create the conditions for the children of immigrant populations to gain access successfully, qualify the school as an organisation, encouraging it to exercise its autonomy fully and giving it the instruments for assessment and self-assessment.

The challenges brought to the education system were no longer quantitative but now more a question of quality, particularly in seeking the more effective and efficient application of resources.

Against this background, the 17th Constitutional Government found in 2005 an education system that was apparently modern and democratic but in which some performance levels did not meet up to the financial investment in the system and to the needs of giving the Portuguese better qualifications, pressing needs bearing in mind indicators on the skills of the working population.

1.2 .Principal developments since 2004

Diagnosing the main weaknesses of the education system and identifying corrective measures were generally approved throughout Portuguese society and, to a great extent, shaped the political programme for education adopted by the 17th Government, which underscored the essential objectives: i) "we can only move towards inclusion and equality of opportunity by defending and improving the public service for education and public schooling, open to all, and ii) promote the qualification of young people and adults and prevent school drop-out."

These two structure-building approaches to educational policy that have been developed since 2005, make a break with the strategies of the past three decades based on major reforms that, sometimes, could not be consolidated for lack of continuity in policies.

Within this framework of *a relative modernisation of the education system two key questions arise that affect the functioning and results of the work done:*

1) The first fundamental problem, examined since 2000, has to do with the under-performance of the education system. Indeed, countries with the same amount of investment made in education achieve better results than Portugal, as the PISA regularly reports. Improving the way in which the education system functions, with a view to better results, must be the prime priority of government leaders. Although the rate of schooling has been increasing, particularly for basic and higher education, it is no less true that the number of children and adolescents that leave the education system too early, without having completed compulsory schooling, without secondary education or without being equipped with the vocational training required for them to work at a skilled profession, or without even basic literacy skills, is high. This situation is made worse by still too few young adults attending second-chance modules or programmes that provide a second opportunity to acquire education.

2) The second major education issue in Portugal has to do with a problem from the past that consists of an adult workforce that is insufficiently qualified for technological needs, the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and the demands for re-qualification of the working population in the context of globalisation and the emergence of the post-industrial knowledge-based economies. Around 2.5 million workers (50% of the working population) have only the ninth year of schooling or less so that their effective productive use on the labour market becomes the second major challenge faced by the education system, that is, adopting a reference list of qualifications at secondary level for all Portuguese citizens.

To this end, the Programme of the 17th Constitutional Government presents as guidelines the introduction of structural changes reflected in initiatives aiming at education for inclusion, integrating all children and adolescents in the school, while at the same time providing new opportunities for all adult citizens to learn.

The main developments in educational policies in Portugal from 2004 to 2008 can be grouped and briefly explained as follows:

1.2.1   Equality in access to educational opportunities

Guaranteeing effective equality in gaining access to educational opportunities is one of the pillars to the democratisation of education systems. Considerable political priority was attached to this dimension of equality in education bearing in mind the needs detected in the country and remembering that any educational measure can have repercussions on social fabric. Below is a list of the main changes introduced in this field.

- Greater access to pre-school education for all children, with continued investment in expanding the public network. With a view to extending and consolidating pre-school education, a survey was done of the most needy municipalities and those furthest away from the towns and cities in which 100% coverage has not yet been achieved. As a result, in 2008 the *Programme for Support with Extending the Pre-School Education Network* was launched.

In this way, the measure covered in the *National Action Plan for Inclusion* (PNAI) for intervention in the network for pre-school facilities, will increase the number of places for children between the ages of three and five, contributing towards the social and educational development of children and towards the adjustments of the personal, familiar and professional life of young families.

- *Reorganisation of the School Network for the 1st. Cycle of Basic Education* led to opening 60 school centres and reorganising the network by approving a financial instrument for support in re-qualifying schools in the 1st. cycle. In cases where schools were closed due to a lack of pupils, school transport for these pupils to new reception schools was provided by the municipalities. Reorganising the school network in this way for the 1st. cycle is of key importance because it was done to play a decisive role in reducing school failure and in avoiding early school dropout.

- Creating *Activities for Curricular Improvement* (1ˢᵗ. Cycle) and giving pupils access to them, increasing the time spent at school (up to 5.30 p.m.) and guaranteeing full occupation of school time with replacement classes and other activities monitored by teachers, whenever the class teachers are absent. *The Full Time School* is planned not only as an instrument to improve learning but, above all, as a way of supporting family units in which the woman very often works.

- The general provision of *English Teaching* for pupils in the first 4 years of public schooling, as this type of teaching until recently was provided only by private schools.

- Combating school failure by re-launching TEIP projects - *Educational Territories for Priority Intervention* - that involve a wide range of measures in the school and in the community geared to reinserting the pupil in the school. 35 programme-contracts were signed in TEIP schools, covering around 50,000 pupils. This is a symbolic measure in avoiding school failure and has a direct repercussion on increasing equality of opportunity and in promoting the inclusive school.

- With the aim of improving equality of opportunity in the education system, several guidelines were also developed for Non-Mother Portuguese language in the 3ʳᵈ. cycle of basic education and in guidelines for *Portuguese as a Foreign Language* in secondary education, aiming both at the new pupils from migratory flows and other specific pupils.

- Along the same policy lines, the new legal framework for providing *special care for children and young people with special educational needs,* on the one hand, and measures aimed at pupils who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or suffering from multi-handicaps, on the other, contribute towards reinforcing equality in gaining access to educational opportunities.

- In the field of *School Social Action*, changes have led to a growing number of beneficiaries, which has almost tripled from 240,000 to more than 700,000, and to more fund sharing for books, school material, accommodation for pupils in the 2ⁿᵈ. and 3ʳᵈ. cycle of basic and secondary education, as well as financial help for more needy pupils.

- Lastly, the *Programme for the General Provision of School Meals in the 1ˢᵗ. cycle*, with the collaboration of the municipalities, more financial assistance for pupils as well as the introduction of the school social pass, are all measures that will help prevent early school dropout and encourage better results, with the consequent reduction in school failure.

1.2.2 .Quality of learning, results and schools success

With the aim of promoting quality learning, improved results and schools success, a whole series of measures was implemented, those with most impact being listed below.

- *Curriculum guidelines for the 1ˢᵀ. cycle* of Basic Education with a view to reinforcing the work aimed at acquiring basic skills in the Portuguese Language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies - Science Teaching.

- The system for *National Assessments by Standardised Testing* was improved and used more widely, as the best way of assessing national curricular developments and school performance, in basic education.

- A start was made to the procedure for early detection of pupils with learning difficulties which means that *School Recovery Plans* can be used in school time to improve educational success.

- *Artistic Education Assessment* was completed, with a public discussion of the results and recommendations, and a work group set up to restructure specialist artistic teaching.

- The *Curricular Revision of Secondary Education* was completed, covering courses in the sciences and humanities, technological courses, vocational courses and specialist artistic courses.

- On-going teacher training is a major priority of the Ministry of Education particularly over the past ten years. The political changes introduced since 2005, particularly the New Status of Teaching Career, are under-pinned in their implementation by a transverse guideline based on on-going teacher training, in particular for those teaching Mathematics, Portuguese, ICT, special education and school autonomy and assessment of teacher performance. The Training Centres for Associations of Schools, CFAES, play a determining role in this training interface. A *Training Plan for the Experimental Teaching of the Sciences* was designed for Basic Education with a view to training teachers to give support, in schools in their area, in implementing a new form of teaching Science subjects that focuses on practical and experimental work.

- The *Action Plan for Mathematics* came to light from a diagnosis made by teachers of Mathematics, after reflection on the results of mathematics exams in the 9th. year of schooling in 2005 and aims to improve the way Mathematics is taught by providing Maths teachers with specific training activities.

- In its turn, the *Training Plan for Teachers of Portuguese* aims to improve the performance of pupils in the key area of language expression in the mother tongue.

- The *National Reading Plan* aims to create the conditions to help citizens achieve reading levels in which they feel capable of handling the written word, in any circumstances, can interpret information provided by the media, gain an understanding of Science and enjoy major literary works.

- The new *Scheme for the Assessment, Certification and Adoption of School Manuals* is now in operation for basic and secondary education to ensure the scientific and pedagogic quality of the books available on the market for use by schools and which must be used by pupils.

- The *National Award for Teachers* was created to recognise and award teachers who contribute in some exceptional way to the quality of the education system, either in practising teaching or in direct contact with pupils.

- To improve the performance of pupils in scientific literacy, the Ministry of Education decided, in coordination with schools of higher education with responsibility for initial teacher training, and with 1st. cycle schools and groups of schools, to develop a *Training Programme in the Experimental Teaching of Science Subjects for teachers in the 1st. Cycle of Basic Education*, that involves a continuous training plan, which is national in scope, and to produce and provide teaching resources for teacher trainers and for teachers in this cycle of education.

- The document "*Strategic objectives and recommendations for an action plan to promote Education for Citizenship*" explains and integrates debates held in this area, providing an organised framework for the measures considered as strategic objectives in Education for Citizenship.

- *The National Project for Education in Entrepreneurship,* encourages schools to develop initiatives to help create skills and attitudes in educational communities that will lead to an enterprising spirit and a business culture in schools, which will encourage the skills of pupils and their school success as well as contribute towards co-operation, equity and quality in learning.

- One area in educational reform where there has been most development and in which enormous progress has been made in recent years was in the important area of the *Information and Communication Technologies* and the importance they have acquired in renovating and the general balancing of the whole education system. This discipline has also moved from Secondary Education to the seventh and eight years of Basic Education, and the teachers have been trained with a view to the use of the TIC throughout the whole curriculum.

1.2.3.   Organisation of resources and functioning: Assessment and more autonomy

More equality in gaining access to educational opportunities and better quality learning, better results and educational success will only be possible using an approach that covers the organisation of educational resources and the way schools operate. This new approach can be broken down into three dimensions: more autonomy for schools and colleges, more

responsibility for those managing schools and for teaching staff and the systematic assessment of those involved with a view to better quality of results from school management and teaching.

- *The External Assessment of Schools* falls within the scope of organisational assessment and is a relevant contribution towards school development, particularly in improving learning quality for pupils and, naturally, towards better results from management exercises. Subsequent to the 2002 guidelines, the Government approved a *National Plan for the Assessment of Schools for Basic and Secondary Education.*

To address external assessment, objectives were summarised as follows: (i) encouraging schools to query systematically the quality of their practices and results, (ii) coordinating the contributions of external assessment with the culture and provisions for self-assessment of schools, (iii) strengthening the capacity of school in order to develop its autonomy, (iv) helping to regulate the way in which the education system works and (v) contributing towards a better understanding of schools and the public service of education, encouraging social participation in the life of schools. The assessment teams in each school include two inspectors and one assessor external to the General-Inspectorate of Education.

- In the area of *assessment, management and autonomy of schools* efforts have been made to implant a culture and assessment practice in all the dimensions of the education system, establishing a close link between assessment and the conditions to increase the autonomy of schools. To this end, references were defined for self-assessment as well as references for the external assessment of schools. From the external assessment process applied to some groupings and schools, clear classifications resulted for schools and, above all, recommendations for preparing Autonomy Contracts. By signing the Autonomy Contract, which takes the shape of a financial package, the Ministry of Education decentralises functions and delegates a wide range of competencies to the schools, particularly competencies related to non-teaching staff management and management of infrastructure and school equipment.

  The Autonomy Contracts are planned as a strategy adapted to solving local problems and as a supreme opportunity for placing pedagogic management at the service of learning quality and pupil integration.

- Another change in the reorganisation of human resources with a significant impact on stabilising the education system, as well as on global results, is the change that alters the competition for the annual placement of teachers as from 2006/07. In fact, the *Multi-Annual Placement of Teachers* in schools for periods of three years should bring more stability to schools, pupils and their families and, naturally, for the teachers themselves and their respective families. This measure is expected to help set up stable pedagogic teams that will be directly responsible for the quality of teaching service and for the educational results of pupils.

- Part of this approach to reorganise human resources and to use them efficiently is the negotiation, approval and gradual entry into force of the *Status for the Teaching Career in Basic and Secondary Education*. There are three major distinct aspects to this new Status: i) higher demands made for access to the teaching profession; ii) reshaping the career structure and creating the category of *Professor Titular* (teacher with tenure) with specific status, responsibilities and salary; iii) assessing teacher performance emphasising results obtained.

- Also on the question of assessment, autonomy and more responsibility for schools, directors and teachers, special mention should be made of the new *Regime for School Autonomy, Administration and Management*, which becomes a legal instrument likely to: i) reinforce autonomy in schools and colleges; ii) introduce the new dimension of effective, healthy competitive leadership to school management; iii) promote a culture of more responsibility with a professional approach to school management that is accountable and mindful of results; iv) the readiness and qualification of the educational community to participate and become involved in some aspects of school management.

- To complement this demanding legal structure of school autonomy, administration and management of schools, it is important to underscore the role played by the *School Council*, recently created for the first time. As the advisory body of the Ministry of Education, the School Council, made up of the 60 chairmen of the executive councils, elected directly from the chairmen of the executive councils, according to the electoral register, coinciding with the

administrative districts of mainland Portugal, is a highly representative and qualified body for the most effective participation of schools in defining and monitoring educational policy.

1.2.4. Modernisation and re-equipping schools

According to the lay-out of this document, the last structure-building approach to developing the education system over the past 10 years is that looking to the modernisation and re-equipment of schools. Indeed, a successful school that is ambitious in seeking to improve results needs the reorganisation and re-qualification of schools used for preschool, basic and secondary education. There is a need to halt the cycle of decline in many schools and correct imbalances in the school network. It is indispensable to qualify spaces available and modernise schools, particularly by improving the conditions in which pupils are received, and by making schools better adapted to needs, more accessible and more secure.

- *The Re-qualification of the School Network for Pre-school Education and the 1st. Cycle of Basic Education* includes: i) closing schools with insufficient pupil numbers or that have temporary or rundown premises; ii) introducing substantial improvements to the running conditions of schools that are well located to receive pupils, an example being the reconstruction of schools that are part of local improvement programmes and programmes for school painting and repairs; iii) gradually bringing into operation school centres that can receive school populations scattered over remote areas with difficult access and iv) extending the network for pre-school education to all areas where school cover is at the lowest, particularly the metropolitan areas of the major cities.

- *The Programme for Modernising Schools for Secondary Education* is based on the multi-annual planning of measures to modernise school areas. Begun in 2006, the programme will continue until 2015, when these measures should be concluded in more than 330 secondary schools. Creating the public enterprise *Parque Escolar* has helped gradually plan the re-qualification of the network for the 1st. Cycle, as well as measures for the first phase of the Programme for Secondary Schools, with some of the most symbolic already functioning.

- *Transferring Competencies to the Local Authorities.* One of the driving forces behind the current education policy has been the decentralisation of competencies to the local authorities for educational affairs. The partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Local Authorities has been a lever in improving school results in the 1st. Cycle of Basic Education, bringing school management closer to the school and making it more efficient, encouraging shared responsibilities and encouraging more community and family participation. Around a hundred implementation contracts were signed for the transfer of handling non-teaching staff matters, curricular improvement activities and the construction and re-qualification of schools, covering around one third of Portuguese municipalities.

- Another aspect essential to modernising and re-equipping schools is the *Technological Plan for Education.* This is a powerful agent in modernising schools, allowing them to function in a network, that increases security within buildings and which, in guaranteeing equality of opportunity in gaining access to facilities, is a major contribution towards improving the school performance of pupils.

Approved in 2007, with the strategic objective of placing Portugal among the five European countries most advanced in the technological modernisation of schools, the Technological Plan for Education is creating the physical conditions that encourage the school success of pupils and is consolidating the role of the information and communication technologies (ICT), as a basic tool for learning and teaching and for overcoming exclusion from information in educational communities. From the structural point of view, the Plan works in three areas that have their own projects, which in an integrated and transversal way cover all areas related with the technological modernisation of the education system in Portugal: a) *Technology*-Technological Kit, High Speed Internet connection, Internet in the classroom, School Card and escol@segura; b) *Contents* - School Gateway, Escola Simplex and Institutional Gateway of the Ministry of Education; and c) *Training* - ITC skills, Electronic Assessment, ITC Practical Courses and ITC Academies

2.   Qualifying young people and adults

As indicated in this document in the section "Principal developments since 2004" (see 1.2.), the second major educational issue in Portugal lies in the imperative need to raise levels of school and vocational qualification among young people and adults, particularly among the high numbers of working population who have not completed secondary education.

Recognizing the urgency of reinforcing and accelerating the rate at which the population becomes qualified, in 2005 the initiative *New Opportunities* was formally introduced as a national strategy for qualification under the National Plan for Employment and the Technological Plan.

The prospect of covering a varied public, recognizing and qualifying individual careers, took shape in the measures adopted in the initiative *New Opportunities*. The aim is speed up the process of qualifying Portuguese citizens, aiming at secondary education and vocational levels for all, with a view to overcoming the country's structural deficit in this area. The initiative is implemented in two ways: a) overcoming school failure and early dropout of adolescents, a factor that perpetuates conditions of poverty and social exclusion; and b) promoting higher standards of basic qualification for the adult population by creating an effective training system for this population.

Secondary level becomes the reference threshold for the qualification of the Portuguese and the intervention operates according to approaches that are inter-co-ordinated:

- *A new opportunity for young people*, stressing diversification, reinforcement and improvement of professionally qualifying learning careers with dual certification, the objective of which is to place half of the adolescents in secondary education in professionally qualifying courses by 2010, thus inverting the trend of rising numbers of adolescents who do not complete secondary education and improving the level of qualified insertion on the labour market.

- *A new opportunity for adults*, based on the mobilisation, adaptation and reinforcement of recognition, validation and certification of skills and education on offer and vocational training, with a view to lifelong learning, the objective of which is to improve basic qualification levels of those over the age of 18 who did not complete the 9th. year of schooling or secondary education, promoting the integration of adults in a new learning processes and providing everyone with adequate conditions for attending.

Assuming the objectives already asserted in the *New Opportunities Initiative*, the *National System of Qualification* promotes the instruments required for their effective implementation, in coordination with the financial instruments approved by the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, adopts the principles enshrined in the agreement signed with the social partners and restructures the vocational training that is part of the education system and that which is part of the labour market, integrating them with common objectives and instruments and under a renewed institutional framework.

The National Catalogue of Qualifications is a strategic management instrument for non-higher qualifications, containing a series of essential references for both competitiveness and the modernisation of companies and the economy, as well as for the personal and social development of citizens, organised according to a logic of dual certification, that is both school and vocational, and structured according to the levels of qualification described in the National Framework of Qualifications, in line with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

2.1   A new opportunity for young people

2.1.1   Vocational Education

Vocational Education Courses are one of the approaches in secondary education, that are geared to provide young people with an initial qualification, encouraging their insertion in the labour market without prejudicing their wish to pursue higher education studies.

These courses last for three years, lead to a diploma in Secondary Education and also to a level 3 vocational qualification.

Vocational courses are available in schools for this purpose, both public and private vocational secondary schools, integrated in the public network of schools. These courses are for adolescents who have completed basic education (9th.year of schooling) and want training that will prepare them for entering the job market.

The essential objectives of these courses are to: (i) respond to the needs of vocational training; and (ii) qualify and diversify supply by creating a regionalised network of initial level 3 training leading to qualification.

The curricular model for vocational courses is based on vocational profiles that shape training references per vocational group for the respective qualifications. The model is based on a curricular syllabus organised according to disciplines that are grouped into the three components of training, which are socio-cultural, scientific and technical, in which Training is set in a Labour Context.

2.1.2   Education and Training Courses

Education and Training Courses were created within the framework of the Curricular Revision of Secondary Education, first applied in the 2004-2005 school year, and designed as initial training providing qualification, preferably for adolescents of 15 years of age or over, at risk of school dropout or who left the education system prior to completing 12 years of schooling. These courses were also for those complete 12 years of schooling but have no vocational qualification and wanted to enter the labour world.

Education and Training Courses provide a level 1, 2 or 3 qualification, or the equivalence of compulsory schooling levels (6th, 9th or 12th year), and are provided by the network of public, private and cooperative schools, vocational schools and centres directly managed and funded by the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, or other accredited training bodies, in coordination with community bodies, namely local authorities, companies or corporate organisations, other social partners and local or regional associations. This qualification is covered in protocols undersigned by the bodies involved, with a view to making best use of physical structures and of human and material resources.

2.1.3   Specialised Artistic Education

Specialised Artistic Education (SAE) it is a form of training at secondary level and is planned from the dual perspective of entering the working world and the pursuit of further studies.

Dual certification is awarded on completing an SAE course, in the form of a diploma for completing secondary level education and a certificate of level 3 vocational qualifications.

Depending on areas, the SAE is structured on basic education (2nd. and 3rd. cycles) for Dance and Music, which should be taught at an early age and in sequence, and is completed in secondary education; or it is begun and completed at secondary level in the Visual and Audiovisual Arts and Theatre, where early teaching is not essential.

SAE courses may be administered by the network of public, private and cooperative schools.

2.1.4   Technological Specialisation Courses

Technological Specialisation Courses (TSC), as part of the *New Opportunities Initiative*, were thoroughly reorganised in terms of access, training structure and entry conditions for TSC diploma holders to higher education.

These courses are part of the National Qualification System and have the same certification and vocational qualification characteristics, providing non-higher, post secondary training in the same area or in a training area similar to that in which the candidate obtained level 3 vocational qualification. They lead to a diploma in technological specialisation that corresponds to a level 4 vocational qualification.

These courses are for: i) those who have a course in secondary education or a legally equivalent qualification; ii) those who have been approved in all disciplines in the 10th and 11th years and who have been enrolled in the 12th. year of a secondary education course or legally equivalent qualification and have not completed it; iii) those with a level 3 vocational qualification; iv) those with a diploma in technological specialisation or those with a higher education level or diploma who want vocational re-qualification.

2.2   A new opportunity for adults

2.2.1   National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies

The National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies, implemented in 2001 at the joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, was boosted decisively by the *New Opportunities Initiative*, particularly with the expansion of the Network of Centres that promoted it, now known as the New Opportunities Centres, and an increase in the levels of qualification and services to which adults have access.

One of the essential objectives of the National Qualifications System is to reinforce and consolidate the process of recognition, validation and certification of competencies. In line with this objective, the *New Opportunities* Initiative promotes the expansion of the Network of New Opportunities Centres, as structures well suited to responding to the needs of qualifying the adult population, to extend their action to secondary level and to recognizing and validating competencies for vocational purposes while, at the same time, improving the quality of the work they do.

The work of the New Opportunities Centres is designed for adults who are 18 years of age or older, with no qualifications or with a qualification that is not suitable or sufficient for their needs or the needs of the labour market, and who have not completed the 1st., 2nd. or 3rd. cycle of basic education, or secondary education, or could we not have non-higher dual certification.

The New Opportunities Centres are responsible for the following:

- Channelling students towards the education and training best adapted to profile and needs, and to the motivation and expectations of each adult;

- Recognition, validation and certification of competencies acquired throughout life for the purpose of positioning in paths towards qualification;

- Recognition, validation and certification of competencies acquired throughout life for the purpose of obtaining a level of schooling and a vocational qualification.

Processes for recognition, validation and certification of competencies are based on a portfolio of past learning, a repertoire of experiences recorded using a combination of methodologies (for example, balance of competencies, biographic approach, practice and observation of specific activities), and are developed based on Reference Competencies, a key to Education and Training for adults, at basic and secondary level, and on Standards for Vocational Training, included in the National Qualifications Catalogue.

The New Opportunities Centres are promoted by public and private bodies, such as schools, vocational training centres, local authorities, companies and associations, duly qualified or certified, well represented in terms of location or sector and with technical capacity, depending mainly on target sectors and public.

The National System for Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies, through a formal certification of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in personal, social or labour contexts, have contributed significantly towards raising the school and vocational qualification of the Portuguese population, as well as improving conditions of employability and encouraging a return to the formal process of education and training.

Seeking certification through the process of recognition, validation and certification of competencies, has increased significantly, which seems to confirm that it is an instrument that responds to personal expectations for further education and vocational improvement.

2.2.2   Courses for Adult Education and Training

Courses for Adult Education and Training have proved to be a central instrument in public policies for adult qualification. They aim to reduce deficits of qualification and so encourage more active citizenship and better levels of employability, as well as social and professional inclusion.

Originally an experimental network implemented by training bodies selected for the purpose and applied to basic education using the dual certification approach, these courses have been gradually extended to take in a growing number of promoters and adults in training. Within this framework, the launch of the *New Opportunities* Initiative was a fundamental landmark for expanding and consolidating this service, either by increasing the number of courses available at basic level and the number of adults covered, or by creating a new service for secondary level, including in this service courses for school qualification.

Adult Education and Training Courses are for people aged 18 or over, without adequate qualification for entering or gaining promotion in the labour market and, in first place, those who did not complete basic or secondary education.

Adult Education and Training Courses are promoted by public, private or cooperative bodies, namely schools, vocational training centres, local authorities, companies or corporate associations, unions and local, regional or national associations, providing they are a part of the network of training bodies within the National Qualifications System.

Adult Education and Training Courses are organised:

- To provide lifelong learning, as an instrument promoting social and professional (re) insertion and higher qualification;

- Into flexible training courses when defined based on processes for the recognition, validation and certification of competencies, processes implemented in the New Opportunities Centres;

- Into training paths prepared in a coordinated way, including basic and technological training, or only one of these;

- On a structured modular training model based on key Reference Competencies for Adult Education and Training, at a basic and secondary level, and Vocational Training Standards, included in the National Qualifications Catalogue, promoting differentiation in training paths and putting them into context according the social, economic and vocational background of students;

- On the development of training centred on reflective processes and on acquiring knowledge and skills that facilitate and promote learning, using the module *Learning with Autonomy*, for basic level courses, and the *Reflective Learning Portfolio* for secondary level courses.

Adult Education and Training Courses at secondary level are organised into three types, that take into consideration the school qualification adults have already obtained. Learning paths were built for those who already have the 9th. , 10th. and 11th. years of schooling.

Adult Education and Training Courses provide certification for a level of schooling and a level of vocational qualification (dual certification), or only one of these components in the case of an adult who already has the other, conformity with the references in the National Qualifications Catalogue being assured.

There is no doubt that this type of Adult Education and Training has raised at the school and vocational qualification levels of the Portuguese population.

2.2.3   Modular Training

Also part of the framework of the *New Opportunities* Initiative, apart from Adult Education and Training Courses, the development of short duration modular type training has also been pertinent in responding to the needs of qualifying the adult population, in particular the employed population. This modular training promotes access to training modules in short in duration training units and can be capitalised for one or more qualifications, based on the adult education and training paths planned in the National Qualifications Catalogue.

Modular Training is for people aged 18 or over, without adequate qualification for the purpose of entering or gaining promotion on the labour market and, above all, for those who have not completed basic or secondary education.

Successfully completing modular training leads to an autonomous form of certification and capitalisation of short duration training units for one or more qualification paths in the National Qualifications Catalogue.

Short duration training units inserted in basic level paths are designed, preferably, for adults whose school qualification is lower than the 3rd.cycle of basic education.

Access to short duration training units inserted in secondary level paths, demands a school qualification of, at least, the 3rd. cycle of basic education.

Access to short duration training units inserted in non-higher post-secondary paths follows the legal rules of Technological Specialisation Courses.

Modular Training is promoted by public, private or cooperative bodies, such as schools, vocational training centres, local authorities, companies or corporate associations, unions and local, regional or national associations, providing they belong to the network of training bodies within the scope of the National Qualifications System.

2.2.4   Recurrent Education

Recurrent education, implemented in basic and secondary level education, is part of an education policy aiming to provide schooling to those who did not benefit from it at the right age, those who dropped out of the education system early and all those who want this form of learning for reasons of cultural, technical or vocational promotion.

Rising to the challenge that experience with this type of training demonstrated, the *New Opportunities* Initiative establishes reorganisation of the model for second chance learning as a measure, and it becomes a training response based on the layout of Adult Education and Training Courses, as these can provide more agile and flexible training paths, although safeguarding the second chance solution at secondary level adjusted to the pursuit of studies.

Within the framework of Curricular Revision for Secondary Education, second chance secondary education is an approach in adult education, providing a second opportunity for training in the school context, based on an organised study plan, an assessment model and specific programmes that make it possible to balance study time with work.

Recurrent education courses are for individuals who, having completed the 9th. year of schooling or the equivalent, want to obtain secondary level training and, depending on the course, a level 3 vocational qualification.

These courses may be attended by (i) pupils attending class, in which assessment is continuous, with pupils grouped in classes, and expected to apply themselves; or (ii) pupils do not attend classes in person but do assessment tests in due time.

Recurrent secondary education functions currently as a system of modules that can be capitalised per subject and subject area and cover science and humanities courses, technological courses and specialised artistic courses in the visual arts and audiovisual arts, organised according to subject, on a modular basis, completed in three years, the curricula for which include components of general, specific, scientific and technological training.

3.   **First results: More and better education for all**

Improving the public school as an instrument for equity and social cohesion became the driving force behind the principal changes introduced to the education system. The major idea underlying educational policies in the past four years has been based on a view of the education system as an organisation equipped with a series of human, technical, physical and financial resources, whose efficient use must necessarily lead to obtaining good school results in terms of quantity and quality to meet the needs and interests of pupils, families and society. In other words, the public school adopted a mission statement in which the objective is to have the largest number of pupils achieve the highest levels of educational success at any level, and in any type or sector of teaching.

Educational policy on basic and secondary education was centred on five areas of intervention: a) equality in gaining access to educational opportunities - inclusion; b) promoting learning quality, better results and educational success; c) improvement in organising resources and operating conditions of schools: more responsibility, assessment and autonomy; d) modernising and re-equipping schools; e) an openness to the outside world and the partnership of the community in the life and management of the school.

On what concerns education and training for young people and adults, it's important to mention the vocational and technological courses, the recurrent education, adult education and training courses. However, the indelible mark of educational policy for young people and adults who left formal education before completing it, is the *New Opportunities* Initiative with all its innovative ways of providing training and re-qualification. This programme, the biggest reform in recent years, has not reached its full potential and probably some of the ways in which it provides training may require readjustment, while others demand more personal and intellectual investment by those for whom it is designed. However, the success already achieved suggests that this initiative as an education and training policy that is truly inclusive and provides a second opportunity, can be expected to have a positive impact in more efficient reorganisation of traditional training and formal education, without overlooking its short and medium term effects on improving the skills of the labour force on a labour market where re-qualified supply is becoming more widespread.

From the global point of view, there has been more legislation and regulation that, step-by-step, aims to readjust educational structure, generate new leaderships, improve the results of education and training systems, build up a new environment of confidence and greater responsibility among teaching staff, school managers, as well as pupils, their families and educational communities. A systematic assessment of school results, covering a new training public with a variety of solutions as well as more efficient approaches to the performance of the different users and agents of the system tend to suggest a new educational and training praxis and a new school ethos.

It is likely that the radical changes made will bring valuable contributions, not only in avoiding school failure and early dropout, but also in improving incomes on more education and more training with beneficial effects in the fight against poverty and against all forms of educational, social and economic exclusion, among others.

The most serious trends in the changes described suggest new expectations sustained by lifelong education and training that tends to combine better quality of learning while at the same time addressing the complex dimensions of education for inclusion while mindful of diversity.

This is a background responsible for some improvements in school results and the way in which schools are run should be seen. The observer may note - perhaps in the uncertainty and anxiety of any change and with some discontent - a new look at education together with a new demand that counts on the collaboration, not always assumed, of more participation of all partners: political agents, educational agents, school managers, pupils, families, companies, municipalities and educational communities.

PART II

EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

1. Building the inclusive school

Faced by the constant and rapid changes affecting current-day societies, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the European Union, at the Lisbon Summit (March 2000), assumed the strategic objective of turning Community Europe into a space based on the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, promoting more and better jobs and more social cohesion.

Difficulties revealed by the international and Community economic situation in 2005 led to revising the goals fixed under the Lisbon Strategy, refocusing on the importance of economic growth and jobs, reinforcing some dimensions of their governance and proposing greater simplification and transparency in procedures. Furthermore, there was a need to strengthen the social dimension in the revised Lisbon Strategy, guaranteeing cohesion and mutual reinforcement between the objectives of growth and employment and those of social cohesion.

In fact, "the joint interim report from the Council and the Commission, dated 23 February 2006, on implementing the work programme "Education and Training for 2010", underscores that attaching equal importance to the objectives of efficiency, quality and equity in education and training systems is "*a* sine qua non *condition for implementing the Lisbon objectives, reinforcing both the European social model*", which "*may not choose between efficiency and equity*" and also that "*in particular, investment in pre-primary education is of fundamental importance, (....) in terms of preventing school failure and social exclusion*".

From the same perspective, in the conclusions of the European Council of 23-24 March 2006, which relaunched the Lisbon Strategy, it is emphasised that "education and training are determining factors, not only for developing the competitive potential of the EU in the long term, but also for *social cohesion*", and that "*reform processes should lead to creating high-quality education systems that are both efficient and just should be accelerated*" and also that "*investment in education and training generates high incomes, which far exceed the costs and that will have repercussions far beyond 2010*".

On the same occasion, the Heads of State and Government declared that: "the inequalities in education and training systems, that lead to lower levels of success and school dropout, including leaving school early, generate hidden heavy social costs for the future that could far exceed the investment made. The development of effective, just, high quality education and training contributes significantly to reducing the risks of unemployment, social exclusion and the waste of human potential in a modern, knowledge-based economy".

This explains why the European Council in the spring of 2006 approved a series of new Common Objectives for protection and social inclusion.

Following on from this and based on an analysis of the situation and of the principal national trends and challenges, Portugal outlined, in the *National Action Plan for Inclusion 2006-2008*, a global strategy for social inclusion, in which the main priorities for intervention are identified and the political measures underway or to be implemented are defined.

With low levels of schooling and the poor qualification of the Portuguese population both factors of social exclusion, one of the priorities was geared to promoting more and better skills and qualifications throughout life, helping the social and economic development of the country as well as the social cohesion.

Based on recognition of the fact that the weakest processes and situations were not equally distributed throughout the different social groups, some being traditionally more affected, another priority distinguished those with a disability or a handicap and immigrants as the groups, although not the only ones, requiring preferential treatment.

The global strategy for social inclusion defined in the National Action Plan for Inclusion 2006-2008, that the National Action Plan for Inclusion 2008-2010 reinforces and extends, assumes the major aim of inclusion for all citizens, guaranteeing access to resources, rights, goods and services, as well as promoting equality of opportunity to be able to participate socially in a society with better quality and social cohesion, and based on a series of *guiding principles*, among them:

- Respect for basic citizenship rights, demanding the right to work and basic support with a view to insertion, but also to the exercise of civic rights, to culture, to education, to decent housing and to participation in social and cultural life;

- Making the whole of society and each person more responsible and involved in the effort to eradicate situations of exclusion;

- Integration and a multi--dimensional approach by way of bringing together economic, social and environmental measures with a view to developing and promoting local communities, calling for a convergence of synergies and a congregation of resources;

- An adequate combination between universality and positive differentiation, that is, the guarantee that in meeting the objectives of social inclusion, all citizens are effectively treated as equals based on the diversity of their situation and needs, in relation to resources and opportunities;

- Taking intervention into closer proximity with localities and adapting to specific local needs, and creating locally the best possible use of resources and competencies;

- Recognizing the importance of equality of opportunity and gender equality as ways of guaranteeing rights whether public or private.

Within the framework of these guiding principles, the national strategy for social inclusion for the period 2006-2008 assumes the following as major priorities:

- Correcting disadvantages in education and training/qualification;

- Overcoming discrimination, improving the integration of people with a   disability or handicap and immigrants.

1.1   Correcting disadvantages in education and training/qualification

In this specific priority, policy measures reflect the need to take specific action to correct situations of major structural vulnerability in terms of the formal qualifications of the different target groups, by strengthening them, but also by promoting the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal qualifications acquired by citizens.

Guaranteeing general access for all children between the ages of 3 and 5 to pre-school education, is a fundamental priority both in terms of equal rights and for the positive repercussions it will have for the children themselves and for their families. Basic learning and the consequent development of individual skills encouraged by a variety of activities for personal and curricular improvement, represents an added value that is indispensable for providing a solid basis on which to pursue subsequent learning levels and increasing the likelihood of success.

Increasing the number of places in courses leading to professional qualification and the provision of curricular alternatives for dual certification able to draw young people with most learning difficulties back to school, increasing the possibility of their completing compulsory schooling or secondary education, is of major importance for giving these young people alternatives in education and vocational training, increasing their skills and, as a result, helping their transition to working life.

The process of qualifying adults of working age, addressed in the *New Opportunities* Initiative, either through education and training courses or through the recognition and certification of competencies acquired throughout life and from the different life contexts, is a challenge particularly for those with no qualifications and who could increase their employability, particularly through processes for the recognition, validation and certification of competencies and by attending adult education and training courses.

With the aim of preventing the risks of information exclusion affecting the Portuguese population, more general access is provided to the new technologies by extending broadband throughout the whole country and making areas available where inter-net access is free to the public.

This priority is co-ordinated with the measures in the National Action Plan for Growth and Employment, which consistently covers the Programme for Stability and Growth, the Technological Plan and the National Employment Plan.

Also among measures for children and young people to overcome failure and school dropout is: the Educational Project for the Mobile School, particularly geared to pupils who are the children of travelling workers.

1.2   Educational project for the Mobile School

The Mobile School is a distance learning project, using a technological platform as a learning aid. It began in 2005/2006 and is geared to pupils in the 2nd.and 3rd. cycle of Basic Education, the children of travelling workers, and its objective is to respond to the specific needs of this community for basic education. The Curricular Plan of the Mobile School began with the disciplines of the National Curricular for the 2nd. and 3rd. cycle of Basic Education, with the exception of Physical Education.

This project will consistently find ways to strengthen the relationship between curricular plans and the specific needs of this group of pupils, by restructuring the curricular layout with implementation of Curricular Alternatives, based on a strong artistic component to meet the characteristics of pupils.

The success of pupils at the Mobile School is reflected in their completing compulsory schooling and possibly continuing with their studies, particularly by attending vocational courses.

In the 2007/2008 school year, the project was extended to other groups, covering not only the children of travelling workers, *Ajuda de Mãe* adolescents and pupils over the age of 15 who, for different reasons, did not complete compulsory schooling. It is also extended to secondary level.

2.   **Overcoming discrimination, reinforcing integration of those with a disability or handicap and immigrants**

Building a democratic society, based on personal dignity, means guaranteeing those people subject to discrimination the ability to exercise their rights, so that the population with a disability or handicap, immigrants and ethnic minorities justify attention.

Those subject to discrimination are prevented from participating socially and professionally, so that there is a need:

- To develop the competencies required to exercise citizenship, either when dealing with the strategic agents of social intervention, or the population as a whole;

- To introduce in social and organisational structures the changes required to reinforce access to essential services and opportunities;

- To guide awareness and mobilisation campaigns towards building an inclusive society founded on equality of opportunity.

Active policy measures that aim to prevent and repair, designed for those with a disability or handicap are centred on education, qualification and employment as key dimensions to intervention, continuing to invest in training and integration on the labour market, so that these people can participate socially and professionally and be economically autonomous.

Political measures for immigrants and ethnic minorities, that aim to prevent and/or repair, are centred on information, education, qualification and employment, reflected particularly in systems and support for practical information, in language teaching and Portuguese culture and in vocational training and integration.

2.1   Integrating people with a disability

Among the measures designed for people with a disability or handicap mention should be made of *promoting equality of opportunity and social and educational inclusion of young people with special educational needs:*

"Within the framework of educational equity, the system and educational practices should ensure the management of diversity, from which different types of strategies arise that respond to the educational needs of pupils. In this way, the inclusive school assumes there is an individual and personal approach for all individuals."

Within the framework of educational policy, the Basic Law for the Education System includes the right to integration for all pupils with specific educational needs due to physical and mental disabilities.

Important legislation published by the Ministry of Education dates from 1973/74 that, for the first time, assumed the integration and education of children and pupils with disabilities.

Since then developments have taken place at several levels:

- From the perspective of assistance centred on Social Security to the perspective of current inclusive education followed by the Ministry of Education;

- From private initiative ensured by colleagues, disabled associations, Cercis, to public initiative ensured by regular teaching schools;

- From segregation to integration and inclusion.

The inclusive school model is a social and political demand that fulfils values such as democracy, social justice and solidarity and the right to education for all.

2.2   Integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities

Plan for the Integration of Immigrants

Portugal, a country with a tradition of emigration, is becoming a destination for immigration, and immigrants now account for approximately 4.5 % of the national population and 9% of the working population.
In this situation, the migratory phenomena takes on new meaning for Portuguese society. On the one hand, it is an important contribution to the situation of low demography, to economic growth and the cultural wealth of the country. On the other hand, this reality determines the priority of integrating immigrants to achieve social cohesion and to integrate and manage cultural diversity better. The positive role of immigrants in Portuguese society cannot, therefore, be dissociated from the specific policies and measures for receiving and integrating them. With this in mind, the Government presented the *Plan for the Integration of Immigrants*, prepared based on the joint work done by all ministries, with contributions from civil society. Although the measures planned fall within the sphere of State action, they are also an incentive to the participation of civil society, in its own specific area for action and in partnerships with the State.

Having immigrants participate and be made co-responsible for the design, development and assessment of immigration policies is also encouraged through their associations, with emphasis on the role of the socio-cultural mediator.

The joint action of the different ministries and the definition of the respective competencies, led to developing a wide-reaching political programme for integrating immigrants in Portuguese society, both by launching new initiatives and by ensuring the consolidation of existing initiatives, as well as simplifying processes and reducing bureaucracy.

Particular importance is attached to measures that seek to avoid school dropout and failure of the descendants of immigrants; reinforcing vocational training geared to immigrant communities; intensifying programmes for teaching the Portuguese language; and instruments to help immigrants enjoy their full individual and social rights to health, housing and justice.

"Portuguese as a foreign language"

The measure *"Portuguese as a foreign language"*, making the effective integration of all pupils in the national education system possible, does merit further development.

Changes that have taken place in Portuguese society in recent decades, as a result of migratory movements, present schools with constant challenges in the additional effort that has to be made to turn diversity into a factor for cohesion and integration.

Furthermore, socio-cultural diversity and the linguistic diversity of pupils is an asset that requires innovative pedagogic and didactic conditions adequate for learning the Portuguese language in all learning and social areas.

In multicultural societies, recognition and respect for the individual needs of all pupils in a context of diversity and for the specific needs of pupils who have recently entered the national education system, should be assumed as a fundamental principle in building regular projects suitable for a context of cultural diversity and that ensure equal conditions of access to the curriculum and to educational success.

The school is the best place for developing social, cultural and professional integration for children and young people who have recently arrived in the country. Their school success, intrinsically linked to a command of the Portuguese language, is the essential factor for this integration. Ensuring effective, quality integration is the duty of the State and the School. This socio-cultural reality requires the commitment of the school and society with a view to:

- rethinking education based on linguistic and cultural diversity, encouraging a school culture;

- making teaching practices flexible, adapting to the needs of pupils and mobilising and improving their linguistic skills and other knowledge so as to facilitate access to the common curriculum;

- guaranteeing pupil integration not only in the school but also socially and emotionally;

- guaranteeing the participation pupils as citizens in their own right, bound by the same duties and with the same rights as national citizens;

- creating the conditions to receive and monitor the learning process.

2.3   Qualifications for those with a disability or a handicap

As part of a sustainable national strategy for economic growth and social cohesion, the *New Opportunities* Initiative, integrated in the National Employment Plan and in the Technological Plan, reflects the work currently underway in the area of qualification for the Portuguese population.

At the same time, among the legal instruments approved in the international and Community plans, a new policy for the effective promotion of social integration for those with a disability or handicap has been implemented, an example of which is the aforementioned *National Action Plan for Inclusion 2006-2008* continued in the *2008-2010 Action Plan*.

In this context, the guiding principles underpinning access for those with a disability or handicap to the process of recognition, validation and certification of competencies are established, as well as the different forms of adult education and training. This leads to a society that is more just and inclusive, developing, in the field of qualification for the adult population, the principles enshrined in the general legal regime for inclusion, qualification and participation of any person with a disability or handicap.

Those with a disability or handicap have access to the process of recognition, validation and certification of competencies acquired formally, non-formally and informally and to adult education and training, including education and training courses and short duration modular training, leading to a school qualification.

The New Opportunities Centres and the training bodies providing education and training integrate those with a disability or handicap in the activities designed for the population as a whole, using diversified models for integration.

Currently, New Opportunities Centres are functioning in Portugal that are specifically designed for the deaf, blind and those both deaf and blind, those with cognitive deficiency and with sensorial/motor deficiency since 2006, and for those with cerebral palsy since 2007, and another centre was created at the start of 2008 to handle mental health cases.

The special nature of those attending the Centres is also reflected in the technical-pedagogic teams working there and working with the training bodies providing adult education and training. Aware that the reality of disability or handicap is transversal, multi-disciplinary and highly varied, a Monitoring Committee plays a role in executing, divulging and improving this specific strategy providing qualification for those who are disabled or handicapped

3. From education for diversity to education for inclusion

From extending compulsory schooling to bringing democracy to teaching, the changes made in Portuguese society as a result of migratory flows, has led to increasing diversity in the education system related to the different rhythms, interests and socio-economic, linguistic and cultural contexts of pupils and teachers.

Effective strategies have to be built up and put in context to respond to the many diversities of the current school.

The objective of democratised education systems in globalisation is to achieve quality teaching and education for all children and adolescents, regardless of their social, ethnic or religious origin. Diversity is in itself is an enormous potential asset which means that in productive working conditions the demand for quality should be assumed and retained by children, so that there is no excuse for not providing all pupils with the means to achieve all the necessary acquisitions and basic skills.

Diversity demands the inclusive school and to achieve this objective schools and communities must promote standards of inclusion according to the real context in which pupils are a part.

The inclusive school is open to diversity and involves pupils as partners; it is inserted in the local community and collaborates on different networks, encourages joint action and counts on all those learning to cooperate through the inclusion/integration process that should encourage the success of all involved.

In other words, inclusive education is an education able to receive and integrate all who come to it, either through a school that promotes the development of its pupils and where all are learning, or through the process of lifelong education; a school where all pupils find the necessary support when they run into difficulties; a school that actively helps pupils to build up a vocational identity and provides successful access and attendance in acquiring a vocational qualification.

Democracy led the way to general access to education, but it must be noted that at the start of the twenty first century there are still major obstacles in the way of inclusive education. Persisting exclusion processes underlie the lower qualification of the Portuguese population, with serious consequences on the education level of their children. In fact, success difficulties in school and inadequate education processes throughout life prevent certain fringe groups of the population from being able to recover through attending inclusive education.

Revising education for inclusion is as important as it is certain that the traditional public school has proved till now to be unable to guarantee education for all, and particularly, to be able to receive in a different way pupil groups who are equally different.

The inclusive school of the twenty first century will have to confront and overcome major challenges, among them: i) high levels of school dropout throughout schooling, particularly in secondary education; ii) considerable rates of school failure, leading to early school dropout; iii) prevalence of a type of "part time school" that prevented many families from sending their children because of timetables incompatible with the work of the parents; iv) ineffective and inefficient promotion of learning, although the school should be seen

to function well for part of its pupils; v) difficulty in making the school responsible for school syllabuses due to instability of the teaching body, lack of pedagogic continuity and insufficient monitoring of pupils; vi) inadequate supply of vocational training with a large number of adolescents leaving school with no qualification.

Building an inclusive school without political and pedagogic complexities and that responds to the specific educational needs of its different pupil groups is a major challenge facing the societies of globalisation. It must be recognized that certain practices and approaches to special education function, certainly with the best of intentions, in a kind of marginalised or contrary way to education systems.

Overcoming the traditional view of social exclusion implies the move to a new culture for equality of opportunity, that is, the assumption that there is in a new inclusion culture. The inclusion culture will also imply, inevitably, significant investment to: a) prepare and provide alternative diversified curricula; b) research, test and make available the innovative pedagogic strategies for inclusion; c) specifically train and maintain, through on-going training, a specialised teaching body capable of dealing with the complexities inherent in inclusion; d) list, develop and provide different pedagogic skills as well as different materials able to overcome formats that are structurally segregating that belonged to education systems developed to deal with all in the same way and not to attend to each one according to needs and capacities.

It is important that approaches, good practices, experiences and examples of how to promote the truly inclusive school should come out of the 48th meeting of the IEC, so that the inclusive school can gain from the added value and bring out the potential of what is different rather than marking it out all the better to exclude it.

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