Country Report Portugal

Is parental involvement an issue in school laws and/or regulations a current topic?

Parents' Associations have been present in schools in Portugal since 1974 and before, but their existence was first recognised by law in 1977 (Law 7/77) and their participation in schools was established in 1979 (Regulation 122/79).

The participation of parents in educational centres has been regulated on several occasions over the last 30 years.

The Decree-Law 75/2008 of 22 April, which reviewed the legal regime of the autonomy, administration and management of schools, strengthened the role played by the families and by the community in the strategic management of educational centres to establish strong leaderships.

This objective was established by the creation of a strategic management body with representatives from the teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents, students (in the case of secondary and adult education), town councils and other economic, social, cultural and scientific agencies.

This collegiate management body, called the *General Council*, approves the main regulations governing the school (internal rules), strategic and planning decisions (educational project, plan of activities) and reports on these issues (annual activity report). This body may elect or dismiss the school principal.

Article 12 of that decree establishes that the representatives of the teaching and non-teaching staff must not exceed 50% of the members of the General Council, which must comprise an uneven number of members with a maximum of 21. The Council includes, apart from teaching and non-teaching staff, representatives of the parents, students and the town council. The school principal participates in the meetings without the right to vote.

Parents' representatives are elected by the parents' general assembly at each school based on the proposal of its representative organisations. If those organisations do not exist, the participation of parents will be regulated by the school's Internal Rules.

Apart from regulating participation in the General Council, the same Decree-Law also regulates the participation of parents in the *Pedagogical Council*. This is the pedagogical co-ordination, supervision and educational orientation body of the school that oversees the education and monitoring of students and the initial and permanent training of teaching and non-teaching staff.

This body comprises a maximum of 15 members. It includes department co-ordinators, people from other co-ordination structures, pedagogical supervision and educational orientation bodies and representatives of the parents and students in the case of secondary or adult education.

Finally, we can mention that this Decree dedicates a separate chapter (*Chapter V*) to the participation of parents and students, recognising the general principle of their right to take part in school life and defining how they can participate.
➲ http://min-edu.pt/np3content/?newsId=1953&fileName=decreto_lei_75_2008.pdf

Are there any measures to support particular students (migrants, ethnic minorities) at school level?

Portuguese schools cater for students from 120 nationalities that speak 80 different languages. This is the conclusion of a survey at over one thousand basic and secondary educational centres that shows how the Portuguese educational

system is also affected by new migration flows. Angola and Cape Verde are the main points of origin, but after Brazil, the fourth place is taken by the Ukraine. France, Moldavia, Germany and Switzerland also provide a growing number of students in Portuguese schools, apart from ethnic Gypsy students.

Of the 80 languages spoken by students at home, the most common are Creole variations of Portuguese from Portuguese-speaking African countries, followed by Ukrainian.

In order to encourage their integration into schools, the Portuguese Ministry of Education has implemented a number of measures under the title "Portuguese as a Non-Mother Tongue".
➲ www.min-edu.pt/np3/97

The General Directorate for Educational Innovation and Development of the Portuguese Ministry of Education is responsible for publishing and disseminating the different measures that form part of this plan, including the publication of programme-based guidelines.
➲ http://sitio.dgidc.min-edu.pt/linguaportuguesa/Documents/OrientProgramatPLNMVersaoFinalAbril08.pdf

Furthermore, the Ministry has published suggestions to support students with a basic or intermediate level of knowledge of the language:

- The use of Assisted Study periods to develop activities in relation to Portuguese as a Non-Mother Tongue. Students will have these activities out of their reference groups and will be organised into levels based on their knowledge of the language.
- The use of non-curricular subject periods (Assisted Study, Civic Education) to perform activities and projects in connection with Portuguese to introduce a transversal mode of working with the language.
- Management of the basic education syllabus, taking advantage of schools' autonomy and their educational profile, with a view to pro-

posing other specific diversification measures; excluding the creation of specific groups.
- Recovery Plans that include specific measures aimed at teaching Portuguese.
- The use of half a teaching period (45 minutes), to be decided by each school, to offer activities in relation to Portuguese as a Non-Mother Tongue.

Basic structure of the Portuguese school system
➲ http://www.gepe.min-edu.pt/np3/9.html

Pre-school education is not compulsory, starts at the age of three and it is free at public nursery schools.

Basic education is compulsory from six to fifteen years of age, it comprises of 9 years and is divided into three successive cycles. The public system is free.

In the 1st cycle, the teaching is global and it pursues the development of basic competences in Portuguese language, mathematics and science. A foreign language, physical education and music are compulsory subjects.

The 2nd cycle is organized around disciplines and study areas with a multidisciplinary character.

The 3rd cycle is organized by disciplines, introducing the second foreign language as compulsory.

Students who reach the age limit without having concluded the 3rd cycle, can continue their education in other educative and formative modalities for young and adult students.

Through the basic education years, students must attend an internal summative evaluation which turns into an external one at the end of the 3rd cycle on areas such as Portuguese Language and Mathematics. Students who have successfully completed this cycle are awarded a Basic Education Diploma.

Secondary education has a small enrolment fee for students. It is organized differently for those students hoping to continue on to higher education or for those seeking to enter the job market. It lasts three years and it includes four different modalities: scientific – humanistic (focused on the continuation to higher studies) technological (focused towards the labour market but allowing later incorporation into higher education), artistic and vocational.

In all secondary courses, students have an internal summative evaluation. In the case of scientific and humanistic teaching, students are required to sit for national examinations.

Students who complete their Secondary Education are awarded a Secondary Education Certificate. Besides, technology students, special arts or vocational ones are given a vocational qualification award.
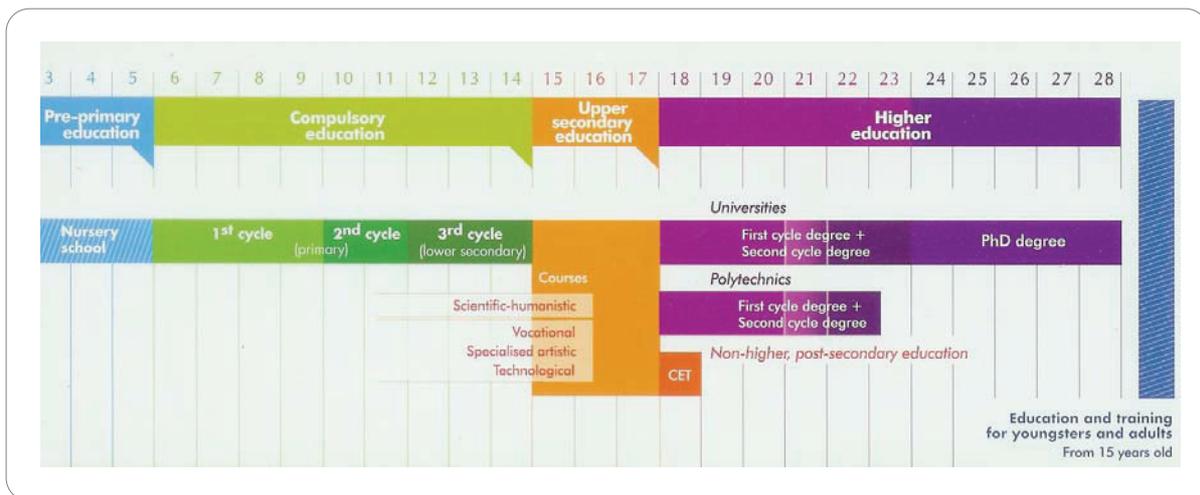
Statistics on parental involvement and school achievement

No statistics on the involvement of parents with a migrant background could be found.

Projects and measures to foster parental involvement

The Technological Education Plan: a way of improving students' school results.
➲ www.escola.gov.pt/inicio.asp

The object of the Technological Education Plan is to rank Portugal among the five most advanced European countries concerning the technological mdernisation of education. More specifically, the plan pursues:
- The improvement of education and of students' school results.
- The equality of opportunities to access technological means.
- The modernisation of schools, by connecting them to a network and improving teachers' possibilities of co-operating with each other

This plan is based on three axes: technology, contents and training. The involvement of parents in school life is fostered in one of the technological projects: the extension of the use of electronic cards by students.

These cards will be used to control access to educational centres and register attendance; they can also be used as pre-paid cards and to improve management and safety in second and third cycle education centres (from nine to fifteen years of age).

Starting in the 2008/2009 course, the cards were used by almost 800.000 students, making it easier to control attendance and when students access or leave the centres. They will also contribute to eliminating the use of cash in schools. Parents will be able to transfer money to the cards through their banks or via the Internet.

The cards are of the no-contact type. Cards featuring bar codes, magnetic bands or chips were rejected. They feature a 1 Kb memory capacity, a 10-year memory life at least, high communication speeds (106bps), low energy usage, mutual authentication system and the possibility of personalising the card (with a student's name and photograph).

This plan also proposes extending the use of these cards to teaching and non-teaching staff at the schools.

The general use of electronic cards will provide schools and students' families with information on when students' access the educational centres and the different installations in the schools, on when they are used in school canteens or for stationery and they will provide access to information registered at educational centres. Access to that information will be obtained via the Internet or information points (stands) located at the schools. The cards can also be used to manage electronic communications and contents between the centres and the families (SMS, e-mail...). Finally, they can be used to download and upload computer school applications.

Important notice:

Information is correct at time of going to print but may be subject to change.

Useful links

- http://min-edu.pt
- http://min-edu.pt/np3content/?newsId=1953&fileName=decreto_lei_75_2008.pdf
- www.min-edu.pt/np3/97
- http://sitio.dgidc.min-edu.pt/linguaportuguesa/Documents/OrientProgramatPLNMVersaoFinalAbril08.pdf
- http://www.gepe.min-edu.pt/np3/9.html
- www.escola.gov.pt/inicio.asp

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