



## Unfreeze the pedagogies: introduction of a new innovative measure in Portugal\*

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### **Abstract**

Calibrating the right developmental approach when introducing a new innovative intervention is a complex task for governments, and schools alike. The new Projeto-Piloto de Inovação Pedagógica offers six schools an opportunity to break most of the rules in order to unfreeze pedagogical and curricular traditions and open the “black box” classrooms. The paper examines what this intervention means for the Ministry and for the schools involved and reflects on its prospected outcomes.

**Key words:** innovative intervention; school change; pilot project

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## Descongelo da pedagogia: a introdução de novas medidas educativas em Portugal

### Resumo

Ajustar a abordagem de implementação ao introduzir intervenções inovadoras é uma tarefa complexa tanto para governos como para escolas. O novo Projeto-Piloto de Inovação Pedagógica oferece a seis escolas uma oportunidade de quebrar a maioria das regras instituídas, e descongelar tradições pedagógicas e curriculares para abrir a “caixa preta” que são as salas de aula. Este artigo examina o que essa intervenção significa para o Ministério e para as escolas envolvidas e reflete sobre os resultados esperados.

**Palavras chave:** intervenção educativa; mudança da escola; projecto piloto.

## Descongelo da pedagogía: la introducción de nuevas medidas educativas en Portugal

### Resumen

Calibrar el enfoque de implementación al introducir intervenciones innovadoras es una tarea compleja tanto para los gobiernos como para las escuelas. El nuevo Proyecto Piloto de Innovación Pedagógica es una oferta para seis escuelas que tengan la oportunidad de romper con la mayoría de las reglas instituidas, y descongelar tradiciones pedagógicas y curriculares para abrir la “caja negra” que son las salas de aula. Este artículo examina las implicaciones de la intervención para el Ministerio y para las escuelas participantes y reflexiona sobre los resultados esperados.

**Palabras clave:** intervención educativa; cambio de la escuela; proyecto piloto

## **Introduction**

With the world changing ever so fast it becomes of utmost importance to have its dynamics reflected into the boundaries of schools, curricula and pedagogies. The key educational actors, from national governments to individual school teachers often turn to innovation for answers, even though innovation is a concept of which it is rather difficult to gain a joint understanding.

This paper examines the potential of a new legislative order in Portugal which, instead of prescribing specific innovations to the schools, is asking the schools to make tailored changes, challenge their routine curricular practices and develop their own innovative pedagogical solutions. The Pilot Project for Pedagogical Innovation (Projeto-Piloto de Inovação Pedagógica) which has been introduced only a year ago provides a unique opportunity for a set of six pilot schools and already seems to show interesting conclusions.

This paper attempts to capture the scope of this innovative intervention, along with how it is reflected at the school level. The discussion part of the paper offers an analysis of the data against the most prominent literature on curricular innovations in education and gives a comment on the ideas related to its implementation and future prospects.

The data for this paper was collected through a focus group interview with three key figures from the Ministry of Education (Direção-Geral da Educação) and a school principal of one of the participating schools. The focus group was specifically designed for expanding understanding about the new legislation, and it was accompanied by relevant document analysis.

The paper is structured to first introduce significant theoretical ideas related to implementation of innovative interventions and how they connect to and reflect the

work of teachers and school staff. This is followed by a brief overview of Portugal as a context for innovations in education, which thus intuitively leads to a brief presentation of the most important notions of the Pilot Project for Pedagogical Innovation intervention. The presentation of the relevant data, thus, gives appropriate input for a discussion which tends to bring the literature and this Portuguese case together. Finally, the paper allows for several conclusions and opens up avenues for further exploration.

## **Backdrop of literature: the key to innovation**

Ever since the mid-1970s, public policy interventions, and particularly those inspiring innovative practices, shifted towards being more appreciative and understanding of local, grass-root processes (McLaughlin, 1990). The Rand analysis found out that within the implementation process and in cases where innovation has successfully rooted into the school culture, adoption of the intervention was merely a beginning. Thus, adoption of the innovation needed to be followed by a strong localised adaptation of the proposed changes which might not be easily visible within the greater picture (MCLAUGHLIN, 1990).

Furthermore, the ways schools react to the implementation process was well elaborated by Snyder et al (1992) who worked with a pre-existing idea of polarised perspectives, including fidelity perspective and mutual adaptation perspective. The third perspective that was brought in by the researchers was imagined as “evolving constructions of teacher and students enactment” of the proposed curricular change, thus named curriculum enactment perspective (SNYDER, BOLIN, & ZUMWAIT, 1992, p. 402).

Table 1 illustrates the important differentiations between three implementation perspectives which particularly focus on the teachers and their role.

Table 1: Perspectives of curriculum implementation (adapted from Snyder et al., 1992)

Fidelity perspective	Mutual adaptation perspective	Curriculum enactment perspective
Produced by experts and specialists for teachers to implement through given instruction		Developed through joint engagement of teachers and students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavily structured approach</li> <li>• Role of teacher: passive recipient who is / will be trained to transmit the content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers given instruction on how to implement content</li> <li>• Alterations can be made during the procedures</li> <li>• Involves a compromise between the developers and the implementers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum provided by an external body / institution</li> <li>• There is no strict instruction</li> <li>• The syllabus and the material considered as tools for both teachers and learners when they engage in enacted classroom experience</li> </ul>

The idea that the teacher's role is of particular significance for the implementation of a curricular change is rather obvious; from the perspective of being a passive receiver of an instruction to the concept in which the instructions, including the curriculum, are used as tools for creating new working and learning experiences, it is the teacher that initiates and transitions the idea and the working morale to the classroom.

This said, it is not possible any more to talk about a school change and not reflect on the roles of both the teacher community and the school leadership (KOVACS & GREGORZEWSKI, 2017). With respect to teachers, innovative intervention highly depends on the ability to stimulate teacher professional development and develop a learning community among the teaching staff. Curricular innovations go hand in hand with teacher learning, hence to embrace innovation a teacher needs to modify, change, learn how to apply and, quite often, think outside of the routine work range (KOVACS, 2017). In such a setting, innovations lead to "a change in knowledge, beliefs or practices even when a teacher did not have the intention to learn from the activity" (BAKKENES, VERMUNT, & WUBBELS, 2010, p. 536). Nevertheless, the value of self-inflicted learning among teachers is a crucial element in school's exposure to innovations. In their study of a Dutch innovative intervention, Bakkenes et al. (2010) developed a categorisation that included six types of learning activities that are present among teachers when facing with the innovation. Among the six, experimenting and

considering own practice accounted for 2/3 of the learning activities.

Furthermore, in order to understand the scope and success of teacher involvement in innovations, there are two important starting points to consider; first, it is necessary to see teacher learning as a continuum (BEIJAARD, KORTHAGEN, & VERLOOP, 2007; COCHRAN-SMITH & DEMERS, 2010), and secondly, teacher learning comes with a high level of complexity that demands understanding of how, why and under which circumstances learning occurs in the teaching profession (OPFER & PEDDER, 2011). This goes along the distinction on what types of knowledge are stimulated by what types of learning practices, including the distinction between knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice and knowledge of practice (COCHRAN-SMITH & LYTLE, 1999). While all three are equally important, the latter two are slightly less considered, highly embedded in the teacher's daily work and created by or among teachers. In addition, knowledge of practice usually only occurs in conditions where classrooms are considered as places of knowledge generation.

Even though it might seem that pedagogical innovations are the main concern of the teaching staff, it is necessary to understand that schools are specific workplaces that historically involve a hierarchical and centralised pattern in which the school leadership is the mid-way between authorities and practitioners. Therefore, a successful school functioning has been examined and brought into connection with school leadership (DAY et al., 2009; HALÁSZ, 2011; HARGREAVES, HALÁSZ, & PONT, 2007). Providing sufficient time and attention to development of a knowledge creation strategy within a school makes a significant difference on how the innovation will be implemented and can act as the central feature of innovative learning environments (OECD, 2015b). Additional to this, following the seven principles of the OECD's Innovative Learning Environments framework, it is stated that learning should become central to schools as institutions. This comes in a package with three organisational elements including innovations of the pedagogical core, strong and reflective school leadership and generation of knowledge through external partnerships (OECD, 2015b).

Finally, it is also important to stress that in different types of innovations, especially when they are introduced by the governing authority and when they focus on curriculum developments, there are three perspectives to take into account (VAN DEN AKKER et al., 2005). Table 2 presents three levels of how a (new) curricular intervention is introduced from an intended idea, across implemented practice and ending with attained outcome.

Table 2: Typology of curriculum representations (van den Akker et al., 2005, p. 19)

	<b>Ideal</b>	<b>Vision (rational or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum)</b>
Intended	Formal / Written	Intentions as specified in curriculum documents and / or materials
	Perceived	Curriculum as interpreted by its users (especially teacher)
Implemented	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action)
	Experiential	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
Attained	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners

This provides yet another insight into the significance of understanding teachers’ but also other school staff’s involvement in how the curricular intervention is proposed, and points out the possible gap that occurs between intended and implemented initiative.

In conclusion of this part, while it is close to impossible to aggregate a set of rules and prescriptions for an innovative intervention to settle well and implement in the best possible way, the provided literature does indicate certain ideas that if carefully considered may significantly support the implementation process.

**Contextual background: Portugal’s take on innovation**

Portuguese schools are not unfamiliar with innovative interventions, yet as Roldão (2003) argues innovations in the Portuguese school landscape were usually introduced as experiments that act “as an exception to the general rule that remains otherwise untouched” (p. 89-90). First such experimentations were introduced in 1960s through a go-

vernmental legislation called the Law of Pedagogical Experiments (DL 47 587/1967). Ever since, the experiments have been embedded into the teachers’ professionalism as initiatives that are leading towards bettering the practice and outcomes, however as exceptional and as something that does not intervene with the routine (ROLDÃO, 2003).

The real urge to reform and modernise the education system came after the abolishment Salazar dictatorship in 1974. The 1974 Revolution ended with an urgent need for a new national reform due to the pressures the schools have faced, including the need for opening new schools and training additional teaching staff due to the high levels of student enrolment (AMARO, 2000; ROLDÃO, 2003). This led to the Education Act in 1986 which introduced a reconstruction and reorganisation of the schooling system at the national level, opening the ways for the Global Proposal for Education in 1988. It was evident at the time that Portuguese education system needs to open up to the general educational principles which included the universal rights to education together with a real and equal opportunity for all, good citizenship preparation and provisions in lifelong learning and social development, thus preparing Portugal for the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century (AMARO, 2000).

A research group, under the name of Group Fraústo, was placed in charge to study and deliver a framework for the new curriculum development. Their proposal stated four core issues that any new reform would need to tackle and this included (FRAÚSTO DA SILVA et al. in AMARO, 2000, p. 6):

1. The inexistence of structures responsible for the guidance, support and co-ordination of any curriculum development process
2. Excessive centralism in the decision-making process, hindering the surge of innovative experiments that could contribute to a better adequacy to local conditions
3. Lack of investment in the organisation of local and regional networks that could support teacher training

4. Unavailability of didactic resources and materials rendering the realisation of pedagogical guidelines impossible.

Other provisions of innovative interventions brought in ideas of open plan schools in Portugal, an architecturally different setting for teaching and learning that insisted on *team teaching* and cross-curricular learning plans (MARTINHO & DA SILVA, 2008). Building open plan schools was a large movement pushed by the OECD Mediterranean Regional Project and implemented through the Development and Economy in Educational Building that emerged in the 1960s. Portugal counted 371 schools that were developed in an open space manner in 1985. This was known as P3 project schools that was developed aiming at allowing several possibilities for individual and group teaching, including the idea of introducing a wide range of diverse learning activities, and constructing buildings with two or three large “classrooms” with the possibility of adapting the site conditions to various numbers of students (MARTINHO & DA SILVA, 2008).

It is also important to mention that the P3 project schools were not identical in their structure allowing more flexibility to the local specificity (MARTINHO & DA SILVA, 2008). The idea of reorganisation of school spaces returned again in 2007 when the Council of Ministries pursued a modernisation programme that included refurbishment of school spaces in ways they respond more adequately to characteristics and needs of the individual school settings (HEITOR et al., 2009)

The 1986 Education Act defined a cross-curriculum area of personal and social education in Decreto-Lei No. 286/89 in 1989 and was to be implemented at four levels” (OECD/CERI, 1998, p. 45):

1. In every curriculum area or discipline
2. In interdisciplinary enquiry based on projects and themes
3. In extra-curricular activities

4. In a separate curriculum element (known as “Personal and Social Development”).

According to Amaro (2000) the Education Act thus brought in light the “fact that the educational act depends not on formal curricular activity alone but, significantly, on the level of teacher, student, family and community participation” (p. 8), creating an environment in which schools need to work on developing locally credible educational goals.

The major national curriculum reform hit Portugal in the period of 1989-1991 and focused on better organisation and modernisation of the curriculum across the education systems, allowing space for interdisciplinary projects which will be developed autonomously by schools and as such continue to involve personal and social education spaces and objectives. While these interventions seemed innovative at the time, they greatly avoided to include teachers in levels of decision-making, curriculum organisation and arranging school practices (ROLDÃO, 2003). Nevertheless, this period raised the overall national concern for curricular matters in education, leading to a national debate in 1996 and resulting in two important parallel governmental initiatives: Elementary Curriculum Reorganisation (1996-2001) and Good Hope Programme (1998-2001). The two educational innovations were an attempt to mix the top-down and bottom-up interventions allowing the schools on one side to capitalise on greater autonomy in curriculum re-conceptualisation that included a new model for reorganising the curriculum timetable, and on the other side tap into the successful practice of 28 schools that were selected to develop new curricular approaches. The overall aim of Elementary Curriculum Reorganisation and Good Hope was to “change the process as a formative tool for schools generating from the ‘experiments’ and informed action within those schools and towards the others they are in contact with” (ROLDÃO, 2003, p. 91).

Finally, a new legislation (DL6/2001) was introduced with the objective of schools having the obligation to define their own curriculum project as well as the specific class project, which would be adjusted to the local

circumstances and different student needs. Furthermore, in 2013, Portugal had an above average spending on education at 6.8% as proportion of the national GDP, which in the 2015 overall budget decreased. The budget for primary and secondary was in total reduced by over 11%, with the main reason being the large decline in teaching staff numbers (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015). Some of the measures to increase the efficiency in education spending integrated a formula introduced after 2013 through which the teaching hours could be optimised. This also included an introduction of a publicly transparent comprehensive information on school performance through the web portal [infoescolas.pt](http://infoescolas.pt).

A great success was however evident in the field of student retention; Portugal managed to cut early-school leaving rates by almost double (30.9% in 2009 compared to 17.4% in 2014). New tools introduced in 2013/2014 that monitor absenteeism and student performance have also helped to battle with the school failure and early school leaving issues. Support in terms of tailor-made school-level solutions to student learning and outcome issues is probably best seen through a Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária), known the TEIP programme, which was introduced in 1996 as a Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas as a tool for supporting inclusion in disadvantaged areas (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015). As an intervention, TEIP has followed practices similar to other international examples (i.e. Zones d'éducation Prioritaire in France, Head Start and Follow-Through in USA and Education Action Zones in England) in order to tackle problems related to social inequality and school failure (SAMPAIO & CARLINDA, 2015). The first cycle of TEIP also brought forward the established of school clusters (*agrupamento de escolas*) has spread nationally and has been kept as a model that allows better resource management and organisation of educational objectives. Overall, TEIP is also seen as a successful initiative that continues to be supported by both national legislation and school engagement.

In 2011-2013 there was a significant drop in recruiting new teachers which influenced the ageing of the tea-

ching profession. There have been several reforms that were targeted at improving the quality of teaching staff. One such was the entry requirements for initial teacher training, as well as the annual renewal of fixed term contracts that is now limited to five years. There has been a new system implemented for teacher continuous development from 2014. The new programme introduces training criteria for courses mainly targeted to teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. There has been also an attempt to increase the in-house capacities of school clusters (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015).

### ***Projeto-Piloto de Inovação Pedagógica: a look inside***

The following section gives an overview of the new governmental initiative by using the data collected through the focus group interview, accompanied by relevant documents. As mentioned in the introduction, the focus group interview included three highly relevant Ministry officers (marked here as DGE 1, DGE 2 and DGE 3) and a school principal (marked here as School Principal).

In the early 2016, the Portuguese Ministry for Education created a directive inviting six schools to pilot a set of pedagogical innovations through an intervention called *Projeto-Piloto de Inovação Pedagógica* (PPIP). The aims of the intervention were to create and implement alternative strategies that will enhance the quality of learning for all students as well as further tackle the issues of student retention.<sup>1</sup> The idea was to enhance schools' autonomy in order to support school-level pedagogically innovative solutions to locally specific needs.

“We created a pilot which would challenge the schools and they could do almost anything within two conditions: 1. The new school activities cannot cost more than what is predicted by the budget; and 2. The mechanisms of teacher recruitment cannot be changed” (DGE 1).

Pilot schools were offered full freedom in reorganising classes, defining a suitable curriculum, proposing new working methodologies, programmes and timetables. With this attempt, the schools would not only work on

further improving retention, but also providing a meaningful learning experience for all students. It was however necessary to have as close to realistic conditions as possible:

“We wanted the pilot to follow the same basic conditions as the other schools, otherwise we would be creating an artificial project. We needed to have this pilot as close to the realistic and natural context as possible. It is useless to create something small and beautiful which is impossible to scale up” (DGE 3).

From the perspective of the schools, accepting the challenge and the call from the Ministry was a crucial decision:

“We felt this was an opportunity to find and work on some problems that the school has. It was critical that we all agree and say ‘yes’ to the challenge. It was an excuse to internally reflect and try to find new innovative strategies to deal with old problems” (School principal).

The idea of the school leadership being ready for the challenge appeared more than just once in the conversations. In fact, school leaders were asked to provide a brief strategy for their 2-year plans for the pilot, and it was of utmost importance that the schools had principals with a clear vision of their school’s future not only for this particular project but also in a broader sense. The significance of bringing in capable and insightful leadership was considered a key aspect for the pilots to have a good start.

“The school leaders we have selected to work with in PPIP are all exceptional and experienced leaders and in their first steps, they took the time to negotiate the new measures within their schools and among the school staff, but as well externally with parents, municipality and the community. From our side, the negotiations with us was not as important as it was to see that the schools connect to their communities and do the next steps because they internally and within the communities decided to do them. Often, if there is something imposed from the public administration, it fails almost immediately” (DGE 3).

The goal was to have as much as possible the plurality of Portuguese school contexts represented among the piloted projects. Thus, the aim was to get regular schools on board, but within the mix of contexts, from unprivileged to exceptional, from big schools to small ones, in rural and urban settings, and as much as possible spread across the country.

This reflected on how the innovations are understood within the entire project, especially since the plurality of the contexts and initial school conditions might require individualised understanding of innovative solutions. From this perspective, it was evident that schools might have diverse innovations, most of which can be placed in one of the following groups:

1. Organisation of student classes – “the organisation of students into classes has been so far done more as an administrative measure, and perhaps not as a pedagogical one. The schools have the freedom to change how students are organised in a way that better suits them and that seems more pedagogically logical” (DGE 3)
2. Organisation of subjects – the current subject division can be changed to a more suitable manner, including bringing subjects together or abolishing them and proposing new ones
3. School timetable – there is an absolute freedom that schools can take to reorganise the class length, as well as the division of academic terms
4. Curriculum – the schools have taken the freedom in shifting the curricular content, abolishing unnecessary elements, introducing their own contents and overall negotiating the more local and more relevant curriculum.

The overview of innovations being implemented at different levels and through different aspects of school function indicated another very important idea:

“The bottom line is that all these things [innovations] are sometimes only strategies to a certain goal. And perhaps how we see it, the goal is to

individualise and differentiate learning and teaching in schools, to unfreeze the pedagogies that we have been stuck with since the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (DGE 3).

From the perspective of the schools, the first year of their involvement in the PPIP did result in making some critical decisions related to the procedures and curriculum. The school represented in the focus group indicated that from next year they will be abolishing the yearly assessment and will switch from a summative to a formative assessment that will be carried out at the end of each academic cycle providing a better alignment and continuation of learning outcomes. Also, from the following year, they will eradicate the classic subject separation and introduce teacher-teams that will work with project design, having several subjects huddled into one project. This will create a notion of integrated curriculum that better reflects the life skills and challenges of authentic contexts in the real world.

Yet, however exciting these new components are for the school, the realisation of the great importance of the role teachers has surfaced many times through the conversations.

“Some of them [teachers] are ready for these changes, but most in my opinion are not. So, that is the key challenge for these schools – how to prepare the teachers to be innovative. This is one key challenge and it is so important that the success of this measure practically depends on this. The schools [leadership] need to understand how to create the conditions for teachers to work professionally” (DGE 1).

“The teachers [in our school] know they need to adapt to the changes and that they need to be more prepared to what is coming. Luckily for us, there were a few innovative interventions in the past that opened the classrooms in some way and teachers became more flexible. A lot of these measures included two-teacher collaborations so now they are not unfamiliar with the concepts of partnering up and working together” (School principal).

“This will be a great challenge for teachers. But hopefully a good one. It is important to change the old idea of a classroom as a black box that we don’t know what is happening there. This is an attempt to open this box and make real changes” (DGE 2).

In fact, the opinion was shared among the focus group participants that the involvement of all stakeholders from the very beginning is a crucial step. Furthermore, the school principal indicated that full involvement of the teaching staff, and later on also of parents and the different representatives of community, such as NGOs and employers, as well as the municipality, was a key strategic move. To have everyone making the decisions and taking the part of the school refurbishment in every possible sense was vital for new ideas to be accepted and owned by the school staff and the local community.

“It is important to understand that it is not only the school that needs to change, but also the society and how overall learning and knowledge are perceived, what it means, what is essential. It is of utmost importance to have a clear and shared vision in such a big change” (DGE 1).

The implementation of the PPIP conveniently coincides with the finalisation of a long and comprehensive process of public debating at the national level around the new national competence framework. The result of this process was the creation of a 24-page document called *The student profile after completing the compulsory education* (Perfil dos alunos à saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória<sup>2</sup>) which contains a negotiated list of competences, knowledges, skills and attitudes, that each students should possess after completing their mandatory education. The importance of this document reflects on the role of schools and the fact that “from next year all schools will be free to teach the essentials and manage the other elements of the curriculum freely. This will provide conditions in which the teachers can have the room for manoeuvre with a curriculum that is more relevant to the local needs, enhance, skip or substitute relevant curricular content and execute using different pedagogies” (DGE 3).

The notion of unfreezing pedagogies was repeated several times and the common idea for the outcomes of the project was reflected in several ways:

“It is necessary to understand that the change here is for the teachers and schools, as well as the community which is now involved, that it is not only teaching the content, but that education is a process of building a person. Lot of teachers believe that if they teach, the students will learn, and they forget that these two sometimes are not necessarily linear” (DGE 2).

“It is a problem of [pedagogical] concepts because it is widely accepted by teachers and parents that the key to learning is repetition, and if we are rigorous about this they [students] will learn. This needs to change” (School principal).

Thus, the idea of “unfreezing” mainly reflected the necessity to abolish close-minded perceptions on education and support teaching and learning to evolve into a more flexible, reflective and rewarding activities. In the opinions of the interviewees, the “frozen” state of schools was described through non-collaboration within and outside of schools, teachers stubbornly clinging onto old methods and schools resembling 19<sup>th</sup> century factories.

Being aware of these elements, as well as how they persist through time, made the interviewed participants agree that things cannot happen radically, but it is necessary to introduce changes in a careful, slow, but active way with lots of external collaboration. Additionally, this also informs the idea that the school would see a higher rate of accountability within the local environment as one of the important success factors after two years of implementation.

“It would bring power back to the schools” (DGE 2).  
“From our side of the story, the success would be reflected in understanding what kind of conditions we should provide to the schools in order to function better internally and for the sake of their own communities” (DGE 1).

Thus, the whole purpose of the PPIP ends with generating knowledge for schools and policymakers in Portugal

about what are those elements that can support a more successful education system.

### ***Discussion: the essence of “unfreezing”***

Innovations in perspective of pedagogical mastery are not easily defined, they are highly contextual and extremely dependable on an array of factors. However, the essentials for “unfreezing pedagogies” are quite favourable in the example of the new PPIP intervention in Portugal. There are several important notions ready to be discussed and analysed that might indicate positive conclusions for the success of the interventions even at the early stages of its implementation.

Looking from the perspective of adopting the change and adapting to the change, implementation of an innovative measure quite often depends on what the position of teachers is going to be. The active curriculum enactment calls for substantial teacher engagement and active role in co-creating the curriculum (SNYDER et al., 1992) and PPIP allows this in terms of giving the teachers the very basic which they need to follow and plenty of freedom to decide on how the curriculum will be enacted and what pedagogy will enable it.

Furthermore, looking at some of the previous Portuguese interventions and analysing what were the critical bottlenecks in the implementation processes, one of the conclusions was that in many cases the intervention received teachers’ negative reaction to a new *modus operandi* as well as the lack of negotiation in how the more traditional ways of teaching will be or can be replaced. In its report, OECD (1998) notes that innovative interventions proposed from the top-down perspective often include a gap in involving teachers as early as possible in the reform (OECD/CERI, 1998). For instance, Área Escola did not get the approval of the teachers, and the lack of time allocated to getting the conditions set up as well as lack of teachers’ participation in the process of creating the conditions significantly limited the overall acceptance of the new approaches (AMARO, 2000). Similarly, the P3 project schools faced a great level of school staff disapproval. Thus, schools that were built with an open

floor plan were soon reduced to smaller match-box classrooms. As it was explained by Hargreaves (in MARTINHO & DA SILVA, 2008, p. 3) traditional teaching is characterised by a strong culture of individualism. Additionally, similar to many other innovative interventions that required even the slightest pedagogical adjustment, teachers were not well prepared for embracing the new paradigms. Thus, in the attempt to open the classroom's "black box" and "unfreeze" the traditional notions of teaching, the PPIP envisages a gradual introduction of the intervention which is characterised by a strong involvement of the teaching community.

The most potent element in this equation is the element of teacher professional development which was recognised by both the governmental representatives and the representative of the school. Besides of being allowed to experiment and reflect on their own practice (BAKKENES et al., 2010), which includes valuable opportunities for teachers to 'tinker' (D. H. HARGREAVES, 1999), the school principals of the PPIP schools have invested significant time to develop strategies for knowledge creation which are essential in successful school functioning (SCHLEICHER, 2015; KOVACS AND GREGOZEWSKI, 2017). Alongside the opportunity to innovate the pedagogical core and the notion of reflective and mindful leadership, investing in external partnerships (OECD, 2015a) in order to get a common consensus on learning outcomes and benefits was a significant element in setting up the PPIP. The core DNA of this intervention acknowledges that a reform cannot rely on formal curricular activity only, but has to be enhanced by a high level of participation of teachers, students, families and community, which was another shortage of the reforms for modernisation at the beginning of the 1990s (AMARO, 2000).

This strong attention to the involvement of different actors in the process of change also becomes operational when viewed from the perspective of how the new curriculum, along with other changes, is embraced at different levels, thus how an intervention moves from an idea formulated in a written document, through how it is operationalised and at the end how it is experienced by those in schools (VAN DEN AKKER et al., 2005). In the case

of PPIP it can be observed that in addition to what was already analysed above, emphasis was given to a strong collaboration between all relevant stakeholders in order to capture a fair level of understanding for expectations at each level and, additionally, bring in the localised feature to the innovation and change (MCLAUGHLIN, 1990).

## Conclusions

Pinar (2005) notes that it should not be assumed that education can be fixed like an automobile engine by simply putting elements together and fitting the right adjustments. It takes much more understanding in attempting to unbox the potentials of pedagogies in achieving the educational goals, whichever they might be. The traditional system inscribes a conjunction of curriculum and teaching, creating a dangerous environment in which "teachers are held responsible for student learning" (PINAR, 2005, p. 2). This is tightly connected, as suggested by Pinar (2005), to looking at learning as a sole consequence of teaching and, thus, a process of knowledge acquisition becomes captured in a curriculum that only serves a successful end assessment. In agreement with this, Biesta (2012) notes that learning should not be narrowed down to only what counts, and that diversity in educational thought and practice should not be reduced to uniformity.

In reflecting over an education system, and with respect to what was presented here, bettering school practices and bringing change into the school environment has to follow a differentiated pattern that will allow the schools to understand how they relate to the context they are set in, as well as what kind of individualised adjustment they need. Additionally, the expectation that each innovative solution will be developed in the relation to the socio-economic reality of each school actively supports the further generation of richness of the approaches which is absolutely necessary in school change. In this way the schools can select from this rich diversity of solutions and try out those that best fit their purposes. Furthermore, the "purpose of education is *not* that children and students learn, but that they learn *something* and that they do so in the reference to particular *purposes*" (BIESTA, 2012) which exactly requires an effort to return the power to the

schools along with the trust in teachers and their professionalism in adjusting the right pedagogical approach to the characteristics of their classroom settings.

Finally, it might be essential to re-emphasise that schools are systems that sometimes “tend to be resistant to change and it is necessary to be knowledgeable about them when trying to introduce innovation. If enough support is not provided to change and its agents, conflicts are eminent” (AMARO, 2000, p. 39). The timeliness of piloting a radical innovative intervention while a significant document on competences is debated and decided upon at a national level could not be more appropriate for the overall success. Additional to that, the idea that one out of three years of implementation is dedicated for working out the exact components and strategies over the necessary procedures offers more trust in getting a better result at the end. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to follow this intervention to its finale and look into the individual cases of how schools have tackled their challenges and overcame the bottlenecks while calibrating the right innovative approach.

## Notas

1 <http://www.dge.mec.pt/noticias/projeto-piloto-de-inovacao-pedagogica-ppip>

2 [http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Legislacao/escolaridade\\_12\\_anos.pdf](http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Legislacao/escolaridade_12_anos.pdf)

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