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Policy Analysis on Early School Leaving (ESL) - Portugal

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Responsible institution: **University of Porto | Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Educativas | Centre for Research and Intervention in Education [FPCEUP]**

Authors: **Helena C. Araújo
Cristina Rocha
António Magalhães
Eunice Macedo**

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Introduction

In the last 20 years—and until the recent financial crisis—Portugal has increasingly invested in education. Since 2000, educational and social contexts have gone through a great number of changes that have reshaped the field of education and paved the way to understanding concerns about reducing early school leaving (ESL). The tension between the normative prescription of compulsory schooling and the social and political capacity to guarantee its effective universality (Capucha et al., 2009; Azevedo, 2012) became more visible between 2000 and 2013. This period was marked by political, social, economic, and cultural changes with an impact on education and training systems for the following reasons:

- Throughout this period, the financial crisis gave rise to high rates of unemployment, which affected young people in particular, together with the general impoverishment of the population.
- Until 2010, there was a growing flow of migrant people, which decreased with the economic crisis and employment precariousness.
- The period between 2005 and 2010 was characterised by strong investments in modernisation and technological innovation.
- Mostly after 2011, conservative measures were implemented in education and training.

With regard to education and training policies, we have identified three phases. The first phase lasted from 2000 to 2004. It was in this period that the Ministry of Education identified ESL as a political issue. They produced the first documents on school dropouts, making a distinction between “anticipated school leaving” and “early school leaving”¹ to distinguish those students leaving compulsory schooling (lower secondary school) before reaching 15 years old from those leaving school before the completion of upper secondary school (non-compulsory at the time).

In the second phase, between 2005 and 2010, the Ministry emphasised the effectiveness of the extension of compulsory schooling in parallel with the implementation of measures to consolidate public schooling. Financial support to low-income families to postpone their children’s entry into the labour market was to be emphasised among these measures. In 2009, the extension of compulsory education up to the age of 18 years constituted a milestone in Portuguese education. It came hand in hand with other political measures to optimise secondary schooling and to reduce dropout rates. In particular, the provision of resources to schools and the correction of the system’s inefficiencies were targeted to increase young people’s skills and competences (Rodrigues, 2010).

The third phase, from 2011 onwards, has been marked by conservative features. The Ministry of Education has emphasised the quality of basic and secondary schooling; however, the focus on countable results rather than on the process of teaching and learning came to the forefront. Vocational education became presented as a solution for those students whose learning performance did not fit the patterns of mainstream education. An early vocational path was piloted in 2011 and

¹ In Portuguese, “saída antecipada” and “saída precoce.”

has been developed since then to enrol those apparently less able children as early as 12 years old.

Transnational organisations' recommendations and instruments have had an impact on national education and training. This is the case of OECD's provision of comparative data (e.g. *Education at a Glance*, OECD 2010, 2011, 2012) and of the dissemination of powerful political instruments, such as PISA. OECD has pointed out the need to correct some indicators related to school attendance, high rates of ESL, and the enhancement of educational learning outcomes.

In this paper, we focus on policies and measures produced by the state and other education stakeholders, and according to the EU initiatives. We will emphasise that some ministries produced joint measures (Ministry of Education and Ministry for Solidarity, Employment and Social Security), particularly regarding the relationship between education and the labour market.

Following the Introduction, we will clarify the methodological procedures and the processes of data collection on which they were based. In the next section, we explore the rationales of social and education policies related to ESL, focusing on the policies and measures designed under EU recommendations, on those addressing national priorities, and on those developed by local actors. Next, the field description underlines the characteristics of the selected research areas (Porto and Amadora). In the following section, "Paths and Processes of Resistance to EU Initiatives Related to ESL," we highlight the ways in which national and local actors have contributed to or resisting the implementation of EU directives. The last section is dedicated to showing the educational and social policy "good practices" that affect ESL.

Methods

Data collection was based on the academic literature on the subject and on the analysis of educational documents issued by the government from 2000 through 2013, compiled both on the sites of the Ministries referred to above and on the sites of other relevant stakeholders such as teachers' unions, parents' associations, and professional and entrepreneurial organisations. The analysis was further reinforced by primary data collection through seven semi-structured individual interviews, as described here:

- At the European level, we interviewed a Portuguese opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Culture, and we received one written answer to the interview guidelines by a Portuguese opposition member of the European Parliament.
- At the national level, we interviewed the vice director of the Directorate-General for Innovation and Curriculum Development, and the director of the Vocational Training Department of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training.
- We selected as representatives of local governing bodies for education the councilwoman of Education and Training of the Municipality of Amadora and the vice director of the Directorate Services of the Northern Region. The latter also provided a written answer to the interview guidelines.
- The set of interviews was completed with two directors of training of the Entrepreneurial Association of Portugal, Northern Region, and the director of training of the Entrepreneu-

rial Association of the Lisbon Region.

Educational stakeholders expressed their views in two focus group discussions, one per research area, with representatives of institutions and intervention projects in local education focusing on ESL policy implementation, including the alternative learning arenas.

The participants from the Porto FGD were:

- The director of *Qualificar para Incluir* [Qualify to Include] - Association for Social Solidarity
- A psychologist of the School of Commerce of Porto
- A coordinator for the northern region of the Program *Escolhas*.
- A coordinator of the educational services of the House of Music
- A pedagogic coordinator of the training and consultancy firm “Metamorphose”
- A director of a second opportunity school (Matosinhos)
- An officer of the Northern Region of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth
- A coordinator of the youth project “*Lagarteiro e o Mundo*”

The participants from the Lisbon FGD were:

- An education assessor of the vocational school “*Chapitô*”
- A director and a teacher of Gustave Eiffel Professional School
- Representatives of the youth association “*Moinho da Juventude*”
- The director of EPIS, Entrepreneurial Association
- A representative of “*Orquestra Geração*,” a youth inclusion project
- A representative of APEDI (*Associação de Professores de Educação Intercultural*). Teachers’ Association for Intercultural Education

Rationales of Social and Education Policies Related to ESL

The following seem to be the main EU political rationales endorsing ESL policies: sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion; the promotion of equity and active citizenship to respond to the needs of the knowledge-based economy; and the preparation of young people to participate in the highly competitive knowledge society. Education and training are seen as key factors for socio-economic development. The ESL population’s risk of marginalisation, poverty, and economic and social exclusion may put at risk the whole EU desideratum traced by the Lisbon Strategy (EP, 2000) of being the most competitive region in the world, targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy². Reducing the ESL population, while assuring qualifications and certifications to a greater number of young people, is assumed essential for full employment and social cohesion. However, in our interviews, one Portuguese member of the European Parliament asserted the following:

Ambiguity is the term that best identifies the transposition of the EU guidelines for public policy education in Portugal.

She sees it as follows:

² http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf

Many of the EU initiatives do not solve the real problems, but local regulation ultimately gives them the contours needed to make it useful in each case. . . . There is a contradiction between the objectives of the EU and, in particular, the 2020 Strategy and EU action in Portugal through Troika, which has led to substantial cuts in the education system.

Some difficulties need to be overcome. An officer of the Portuguese Institute of Youth and Sports, said:

We have the question of development at the national and European level. What is the law and then what is the practice: the mismatch existing between the two realities.

In the same vein, the director of the vocational training from the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, referred to the clash between the political intentions and practice, saying:

EU educational policies related to ESL aim to provide training to young people, and the organisation of different responses with contemplative dimensions; and a qualification that, if they wish, allows them to enter the labour market ... I evaluate this type of initiative very positively. However, there is a mismatch between affirming the concern to find solutions to combat ESL and the rationality of the solutions that are in place. From professional courses to vocational courses, which are exemplary in this regard, there is clear concern not to exclude those who have more difficulties ... but we are not able to create responses that do not discriminate them post education.

The need to get closer to the European model has been at the roots of the educational reform. The concern with the enhancement of qualifications within the “knowledge society” has been a major rationale. For instance, the extension to 12 years of compulsory schooling was built on the idea that the country needs extended education to develop the economy and to position individuals in the new labour market (Justino, 2010; Rodrigues, 2010). Increasing qualifications and the completion of upper secondary education came hand in hand with the broadening of democratisation and as a path for young people’s employability (Silva, 2012). However, this problem is far from being overcome, as the Portuguese opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Culture explained:

Many people talk about a "competences mismatch" between what our economies need and the workforce profile. In Portugal the lack of qualification of the workforce is our main tragedy. The reason why we cannot change our production profile rapidly is because most of our workforce is poorly qualified, although in recent years some efforts have been made to enhance qualification.

The concern about the rationalisation of the educational structures and resources was also present in the reorganisation of school clusters, and more recently in the creation of mega-school clusters. The Ministry of Education aimed to ease students’ transition between school cycles and was supported in the production of guidelines to involve municipalities.³ Simultaneously, the need to assure that more students complete their educational pathways justified the diversification of the educational supply, at least up to their upper secondary education or the equivalent. The Ministry developed these processes under the framework of the increase of privatisation and commoditization of education. The member of the opposition in the European Parliament stressed this, saying:

In the last two years a brutal shift in some angles has emerged. From about 2011 the focus on increasing academic qualifications in the field of new technologies and scientific re-

³ Dispatch 4463/2011

search was the dominant trait. With the arrival of Nuno Crato⁴ to the government, the orientation to early vocational training, with decreased academic qualifications and a growing concern in lowering wages began to guide the decisions on education policy of the Portuguese government.

In spite of criticism from some educational stakeholders, one may say that the main ESL education policy drivers in Portugal, after the Lisbon Strategy, follow the major concerns of the EU, as expressed in the initiative Youth on the Move, by reducing ESL, promoting literacy and more flexible learning pathways, validating non-formal and informal learning, and developing ICT competences and mainstreaming them in teaching and learning.

Policies and Measures Designed Under EU Recommendations

In the framework of the Portuguese strategy in education, training, and qualification, one can see the EU policy's influence on tackling ESL in three main rationales: (a) social inclusion, (b) educational quality and effectiveness, and (c) qualifications for work and labour market. These rationales assume different forms in the different phases and shape particular sets of measures. In the immediately following section, we will bring to the forefront the main measures in the first two periods on each rationale and according to the views of different educational stakeholders. We will provide details for the period from 2011 onwards in the following section as part of the current national priorities.

2000-2004 - Phase 1: Early School Leaving As Political Issue

Social Inclusion

The national plans for inclusion started in the period between 2000 and 2004 and extended to the following: PNAI - Plano Nacional de Acção para a Inclusão 2001-2003, 2003-2005 and 2006-2008. These plans followed the Treaty of Amsterdam on the struggle against social exclusion as an important political desideratum of the EU social policy. The InterCultural Secretariat⁵ was created to comply with the objectives for education and training as described in the Report on Education of the Council of the EU (CEU 2001) for immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Financial support to families revealed how essential it is to reduce ESL. Since the generalisation of the Minimum Income Measure (Rendimento Mínimo Garantido), from July 1997 to December 2000, 711,315 people received support from this subsidy, and 41% of children or young people under 18 returned to school education (PNAI, 2001-03).

Measures against the discrimination of children and young people attempted to influence the social context to keep young people in school and reduce ESL. In this vein, there was a redefinition⁶ of

⁴ The interviewee is referring to the Ministry of Education of the current government that has a conservative tendency

⁵ Dispatch 5/2001

⁶ Resolution 37/2004

the functions, objectives, and structure of the Programme to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labour (PEETI - Plano Nacional de Prevenção e Irradicação do Trabalho Infantil) in order to increase policy effectiveness in combating child labour by providing mechanisms to identify children in undue labour situations and by providing measures in education and training to promote the completion of compulsory education and vocational training adequate to future working conditions when possible. The international context recognized PEETI's action as unique and as allowing for various public and private partnerships.⁷

Also significant for their pertinence and continuity are the Program of Educational Intervention Priority Areas (TEIP), which was launched before 2000, and the Program *Escolhas*⁸ that started in 2001. Both are still running as of this writing. (See further details in Section 3.) Moreover, the *Chart of Students Rights* (Estatuto do Aluno)⁹ was introduced to promote students' integration in the education community and school, their attendance in compulsory schooling, and the success of schools and the education system through the acquisition of knowledge and competences.

Educational Quality and Effectiveness

In this period, the concern to reform the education system shaped the quality and effectiveness in education. Measures were designed at different levels to ensure the ESL population had extended access to education and training.

We must emphasise the guiding principles of the curriculum organisation and the management of general and technical secondary education with a view on quality and effectiveness: to improve learning and the link between education, training, and society; to encompass compulsory experimental science; to ease the transition to work; and to create conditions for lifelong learning. Changes in assessment and in the national curriculum¹⁰ involved the liaison between basic and higher education and work, and the emphasis on meaningful learning. Among others, the *Area of Project* and the *Education for Citizenship* programs were set up to assure a more holistic approach to young people's education by means of the introduction of new content, openness to local communities and hands-on learning methodologies.

The analysis of the Guidelines for Curriculum Review and the "Reform of Secondary Education - Regulation Stage of Technological Courses" of the Ministry of Education, by the National Council of Education (CNE, 2003) with regard to the call of the EU.15, stressed the need for stronger investment in schooling for the population aged 16 to 24 years. This was in line with the Lisbon European Council (EP, 2000), and the Stockholm (2001) and Barcelona (2002) Summits, where EU ministers agreed that by 2010 the percentage of ESL students should be 10%. CNE called for urgent intervention against ESL and underlined the Ministry of Education's mere reference to the need to combat ESL when outlining the strategic objectives for upper secondary education.

⁷ Preamble, Ministers Resolution 37/2004.

⁸ The Program *Choices* ('*Escolhas*') aimed at promoting social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, at attaining equal opportunities and strengthening social cohesion. It is a governmental program, funded by the European Social Fund, integrated in the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI), the Social Security Institute and the Directorate General of Education.

⁹ Law 30/2002

¹⁰ Decree 7/2001

Entities such as FENPROF (2003), one of the main Portuguese federations of teachers' unions, underlined the need for urgent reform of secondary education, given the Portuguese delay of about 25 years in relation to the most advanced European countries. However, in 2004, this organisation criticised the government's lack of clarification on the various educational paths, the lack of correction of the distortion between student demand and courses supplied by the Ministry of Education (in particular in the technological areas), and the need to overcome a system of evaluation that promoted underachievement and ESL. Secondary education was pointed out as the most selective sector of Portuguese education, producing high levels of social exclusion.

Qualifications for Work and the Labour Market

In this period, Portugal also created Education and Training Courses (CEF – Cursos de Educação e Formação)¹¹ and the National Plan to Prevent ESL (2004), taking into consideration the essential role of education and training in making the EU economy the most competitive knowledge-based economy, by 2010. This was in line with the Council and the Commission's "Joint Interim Report on the Follow-Up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe" (Council of the European Union, 2004) and with the objectives of the Stockholm European Council of 2001, to increase the quality and effectiveness of education and training in the EU. CEF were aimed at promoting school success to students younger than 15 and at preventing ESL. CEF curricula are vocational and cover different socio-cultural, scientific, technological and practical training areas, providing both qualification and certification. In spite of the fact that these initiatives might have been designed for inclusive purposes, some may have a stigmatising result at the time of labour insertion, as highlighted by the director of vocational training, Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, who said:

In schools, talking about CEF brings a discriminatory connotation. When we get to the stage of integration, if we mention the young person has a graduate from CEF, a vocational course or an apprenticeship course, the receptivity of this young person is different ... These measures aim to integrate, but the solution is not, in fact, the most effective in this integration. It is exactly the opposite.

The National Plan to Prevent ESL—broadly understood as exiting young adults under 25 early from the school system, vocational training or education and training—is aimed at developing systematic initiatives to combat ESL in compulsory education and at creating social support centres for schools (CASE), in parallel with technological and vocational education, and information services of professional guidance (ME/MTSS 2004). The National Confederation of Parents alerted the Ministry of Education later (CONFAP, n.d.) that many of the measures of the plan were either discontinuous or hardly implemented (CONFAP – Confederação Nacional de Associações de Pais).

The Integrated Education and Training Program (PEF – Plano de Educação e Formação)¹² was aimed at encouraging the completion of compulsory schooling and school and professional certification to minors from the age of 15, in situations of exploitation of child labour. PEF had a set of measures/actions for school reintegration through regular or alternative schooling, including non-

¹¹ Dispatch 453/2004, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Security

¹² Decree 948/2003, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

formal education and vocational guidance. It consisted of a plan under the principles of individualisation, accessibility, flexibility, and updating.

2005-2010 – Phase 2: Consolidation of Public School

Social Inclusion

A set of programs that were launched before or during the period between 2000 and 2004, and that were successfully implemented, were reformulated and expanded in the 2005-2010 phase. This was the case of the *Program of Educational Intervention Priority Areas* (TEIP – Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária), whose territorial action was expanded, and of the *Program Escolhas*, whose area of action also moved from dealing with avoiding criminal behaviour to the wider promotion of social inclusion (further detailed in Section 3).

Educational Quality and Effectiveness

Between 2005 and 2010, educational quality and effectiveness were shaped under the concern about broadening school access and success in order to promote social development. Recognising education and training as a central factor for economic and technological development, social cohesion, personal development, and the full exercise of citizenship (Lisbon Strategy, EP, 2000), the education initiative of 2006-2007 designed 70 measures to improve public education¹³ and took as a strategic challenge the increase of qualifications. The Ministry of Education launched specific measures at the first cycle of basic education (until year 4) to overcome the disinvestment leading to school maladjustment in the face of demographic changes and the inequality of access to education and educational resources of diverse groups of the population. These measures included prioritising, reorganising, and upgrading school networking and generalising full-time school, extra-school time, and study support; early detecting of underachievement risks; monitoring and intervening (recovery plans, alternative curricular); creating maths and reading plans; creating a technological plan for education; and modernising school buildings.

The Ministry of Education created Curriculum Enrichment Activities (AEC – *Atividades de Enriquecimento Curricular*), including supplying sports, music, and English language classes as part of the mandatory school supply. This measure reflects the assumption that Portuguese education needed higher standards of training and qualification and multilingual and multicultural awareness.

By the same token, the National Reading Plan (*Plano Nacional da Leitura*) represented an institutional response to the low level of literacy of the population and particularly of young people outside compulsory education. It defined a set of strategies for the acquisition of reading skills and habits.¹⁴

In 2009, the extension of compulsory education to 12 school years¹⁵ for children and youth between 6 and 18 years represented a crucial change at the curriculum level, together with the uni-

¹³ Educação 2006-2007 – 70 medidas para melhorar a escola pública (ME 2008).

¹⁴ Resolution 86/2006 was an initiative of the Ministry of Education, also signed by the Ministries of Culture and the Office of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, and the Portuguese Institute of Books and Libraries and Media Institute.

¹⁵ Law 85/2009.

versality of pre-schooling for children from 5 years of age as a pre-condition for school success and the reduction of ESL. Universal and free compulsory basic and secondary education were the main drivers in this period, in line with the rationale of ensuring the right to fair and effective equal opportunities to school access and success. The General Union of Workers (UGT) welcomed this measure as an essential step to bridge the deficits of educational qualification of the Portuguese people (UGT, 2009).

The director of vocational training at the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training emphasised this, saying:

Allowing preschool children the preparation that will enable them to succeed in their schooling is a recurring concern ... The extension of compulsory education to the age of 18 years is one of the measures aimed primarily to combat ESL. There are other choices while getting compulsory education as apprenticeship and vocational courses.

Together with an emphasis on teacher performance evaluations,¹⁶ the General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC) carried out school assessments¹⁷ and established the bases for compulsory self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools or school clusters. Aiming at international comparability, IGEC assessed the performance of the national education system, starting with diagnosis and the definition of terms of reference for higher levels of performance in order to identify good organisational practices.

Upgrading citizens' skills and competences to be part of the knowledge society was the rationale underlying educational modernisation. This included reorganising the school networks, broadening pre-schooling and the school libraries network, and adding the provision of information communication and technology (ICT). The Program to Modernise Secondary School Facilities¹⁸ was approved as a national project to integrate all children and youth in school by providing a motivating, challenging, and rewarding learning environment to overcome the backwardness of Portuguese education compared to European standards. The provision of school facilities to students, teachers, and other educational agents, with conditions of functionality, comfort, and health, and the introduction of new technologies took place mainly between 2007 and 2011. In the words of the opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Culture, modernisation was worthwhile:

In a time of crisis ... the program of schools renewal, of the school infrastructures, was also very important from the point of view of the economy. Schools with a better infrastructure are also schools that are targeting school leaving by both direct and indirect methods.

The Operational and Organic model of the Technological Plan for Education¹⁹ (PTE – Plano Tecnológico da Educação) defined ICT as an essential tool to put Portugal among the five most advanced European countries in the technological modernisation of education by 2010. The PTE was structured around three axes of intervention: technology, content, and training to be developed

¹⁶ With regard to teachers, together with changes in the statute of the teaching career and a "Teachers National Award," it is worth mentioning that there also came about a new system of teachers' performance evaluation structured by indicators defined by school clusters for reducing ESL, improving students' educational achievement, and providing learning support, among others. This illustrates the effort put into greater educational accountability and the attempt to change school from within.

¹⁷ Dispatch 31614/2008

¹⁸ Resolution 1/2007

¹⁹ Dispatch 143/2008

through key projects, addressing the factors inhibiting the use of technology in teaching and favouring students' achievement.²⁰ It included the expansion of "fast Internet for schools," the distribution of minicomputers Magalhães to first cycle pupils; and the e-schooling program²¹ to promote pupils and teachers' e-inclusion. It clearly pointed out the value of ICT as compulsory subject. Evaluating this plan, the director of a second opportunity school asserted:

Because of the European Network of Schools I have travelled a bit, and it is difficult to find other countries where public schools are so well-equipped. Therefore, there has been a big jump, but now the question is what the next step is. The new challenge is probably of the quality of performance, the pedagogical relationship, etc.

Qualifications for Work and the Labour Market

After the approval of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning as a common device of translation of the member states' qualification systems,²² the National Qualification Framework (QNF - *Quadro Nacional de Qualificação*)²³ focused on learning outcomes that allowed for the comparison of competences and skills.

The expansion and diversification of professionally qualifying training and the expansion of the National System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC - *Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências*) exemplify the value attributed to certification of education. RVCC allowed adults over 18 years to receive the recognition, validation, and certification of educational, professional, and other skills and competences acquired in social professional and personal life-learning situations for the award of a formal, academic, or vocational qualification.

At the level of training, we need to emphasise that the enhancement of further remediation measures after students leave school, such as the New Opportunities Initiative (PNO – Programa Novas Oportunidades) that was aimed at ensuring that 650,000 young people would be included in education and training and that by 2010 at least 50% of the supply of programmes would be vocational. This did not happen as planned. PNO measures included monitoring plans to combat students' failure and ESL in basic education (9 years); mechanisms of reorientation by means of alternative curricular and education-training programmes for elementary school students at risk of ESL and widening vocational and apprenticeships courses,²⁴ etc. The increase of 8,500 students in basic education attests to the government's investment in reducing dropouts and the enhancement of basic education as a pillar for success (ME, 2008). The Portuguese Economic and Social Council evaluated as very positive the expansion of NOP and the consequent increase of attendance of vocational programmes at the secondary level (CES, 2008).

²⁰ Resolution 137/2007 - The TPE was consolidated through a partnership between the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications, the telecommunications operators, producers of equipment and software in Portugal, who contributed to a Fund (more than 500 000 Beneficiaries).

²¹ Resolution 51/2008.

²² Official Journal of the European Union. 2008.

²³ Dispatch 782/2009.

²⁴ Apprenticeship Courses constitute youth-oriented alternative initial training, focusing their integration in the labour market and allowing further study. Taking vocational courses is one of the secondary education pathways, characterized by a strong connection to the professional world. Taking into account students' personal profiles, learning focuses on professional skills in conjunction with the local business sector.

Moreover, The Ministry of Education reinforced the path to decentralisation by measures such as the “transfer of competencies” to municipalities reflecting the concern with strengthening school and community involvement, increasing school autonomy and management, enabling the schools to direct hire their staff, and broadening and finding responses to cases of ESL motivated by child labour or other forms of child exploitation. In this vein, the Educative Chart that municipalities had to produce proved to be central in educational networking and training offers, as well as in the construction, equipment, and maintenance of preschool and basic school buildings.

Policies and Measures to Address National Priorities

In this section, we detail the current national priorities in their relation to the influence of the EU. As argued above, European priorities seem to have been imported to the national priorities. However, the current government cancelled many measures introduced in 2011 in education and training. This was the case of the New Opportunities program (PNO) and the “Project Work” and the “Citizenship Education” in school curricula and of the appalling reduction of funding for education and research.

Under the assumption that it was urgent to “adapt the legal framework to compulsory schooling,” the effective implementation and completion of 12 years of schooling appear to have been maintained as the national priority. Moreover, the structure of the education system was mandated to adapt to the so-called “new audiences” under the rhetoric of the impact it should have for society and for the country’s development: “new educational supply and curricula deemed relevant” to respond to what is “essential” for students and to guarantee the “inclusion of all” in schooling (PNO).

2011 onwards – Phase 3: Conservative Features – Vocationalism and Countable Results

Social Inclusion

The Program for Educational Intervention Priority Areas (TEIP)²⁵ that was created to enable the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs²⁶ continued in the 2011 period. The third version of the program, TEIP3, ruled over program contracts between school clusters and the Ministry of Education to develop projects aimed to improve the quality of education, academic success, transitions to working life, and community integration. Emphasising the attempt to adapt to students’ diversity, namely through cultural and linguistic mediators, the sub-director for Innovation and Curriculum Development mentioned TEIP3 as a good example of an inclusion policy:

TEIP3 is different from the first because, at the time, cultural and linguistic diversity was not a top topic on the agenda. If you look at the map of resources assigned to schools per year, at the beginning we had mostly psychologists and social workers, today there are more cul-

²⁵ Dispatch 8065/2009

²⁶ Official Journal of the European Union 2012

tural and linguistic mediators—in the case of schools with Roma youngsters other students speaking other languages than Portuguese.

In a time of economic crisis, the endowment of conditions to enable school attendance by means of financial and social support by the Ministry of Education has assumed an “assistencialist” character. It focuses on food and transport support and similar aid to a small number of selected primary and secondary school students. The same stakeholder revealed the growth of this support, saying:

School social support enables young people without economic resources to attend school with some aid (transport, food). We increasingly support more students ... In secondary education, there are scholarships. They did not grow because the budget has not grown either.²⁷

Evaluating these measures, an officer of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth emphasised the fact that basic needs have not been overcome:

Unemployment has an influence on people's lives, including access to school, going or not going to school also in secondary education. Huge problems have caused young people's ESL. They do not have money for books, for the canteen, for a number of other things ... Apparently, it seems that all is well, from the standpoint of discourse, but in practice, people who are in the field see that there is a set of obstacles.

Top-down inclusion policies ascribe some responsibility to local powers and other stakeholders, and the rhetoric of decentralisation prevails. However, no real change was introduced. Citizens' dependence on the state increased as insufficient unemployment and survival funds did not grant dignifying life standards.

Educational Quality and Effectiveness

The educational quality and effectiveness gave room to the rhetoric of individual and social responsibility. Some mechanisms were reinforced²⁸ to provide “greater flexibility in the organization of teaching activities, increase efficiency in service delivery and enhance educational outcomes.”²⁹ This pedagogical and organisational autonomy is in line with the principles of the legal regime of autonomy, administration, and management of public pre-, primary, and secondary schools.

The renewed regulation of the system of registration and attendance in compulsory education for children and youth aged 6 to 18 came together with other measures to prevent underachievement and ESL.³⁰ The following measures were applied in basic education when learning difficulties were detected: the monitoring of students who enrolled but have been absent during the school year, the constitution of temporary groups of students with relatively homogeneous school performance in the “structural disciplines” (maths, Portuguese, and sciences), and the exceptional adoption of alternative curricula and integrated education-training programs tailored to students profile, which included modular systems as an alternative to the general curriculum for students aged 16.

²⁷ Student funding is commonly provided by the Holy House of Mercy (Santa Casa da Misericórdia), which is a powerful Catholic Church charity. It is an entity of Public Utility. It is best known for its social action and for the operation of the social lottery (Totoloto), as well as for their works in health, education, and culture, and in improving quality of life.

²⁸ Ordinance 265/2012

²⁹ Dispatch 13-A/2012

³⁰ Decree 176/2012

The *Chart of Student Rights and School Ethics* (Estatuto do Aluno e Ética Escolar)³¹ (2012) includes the commitment to parents' education and training and to other members of the educational community and envisages remedial measures and children's integration in school. It followed the drive to assess children and young people in order to promote attendance of compulsory schooling; school and educational success; the acquisition of knowledge; and issuing responsibility to school, family, and the educational community.

According to an Officer of the School of Commerce of Porto:

In the event of school absence or failure, compensatory measures are provided in the Chart of Student Rights. It is not enough. Schools end up developing measures of their own. Some look at other schools for the best practice and try to set realistic measures. A student that does not attend lessons, who is not assiduous and who is at risk of ESL, won't certainly be made succeed by the compensation measures.

The focus on assessment was expanded by the current government to entrench the culture and practice of evaluation in all dimensions of education and training. It assumed a close relationship between assessment and the process of school autonomy within a vein of responsibility, accountability, and evaluation, as reflected in the appointment of external evaluators (experts) to be part of the school and students' external evaluation teams. Reflecting major changes in the evaluation process, which emphasised the content of learning, external evaluation was formalised by the introduction of final exams in basic education and of national final exams in lower secondary education in 2013. External exam juries³² were integrated into the General Inspectorate of Education in order to entrench "certification with equity" as expressed in official government documents.

Qualification for Work and the Labour Market

The current government has given priority to the articulation between education and labour with consequences on the disinvestment, as mentioned, in areas such as project work, citizenship, and artistic education.

The establishment of Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (CQEP – *Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional*)³³ for young people aged 15 years or more and the extinction of the New Opportunities Centres were justified by the discourse on "more rigorous and demanding performance" and "quality assurance of . . . qualification and employment and lifelong learning policies." The CQEP are said to be aimed at creating an "interface with other responses available within the National Qualifications System" providing "guidance to young people and adults": information on schools' supply, professional or dual certification" in order to promote "a realistic choice . . . meeting the individual profiles and the diversity of study paths, to face the present and prospective needs of the labour market."³⁴

Secondary education has increasingly been organised in permeable courses, leading to further study or labour. Moreover, whereas the former vocational offer addressed students in secondary

³¹ Law 51/2012

³² Decree 14/2012

³³ Ordinance n.º 135-A/2013

³⁴ Decree 14/2012

education, a pilot early vocational training offer³⁵ was introduced in basic education in 2012-2013 to be extended to 2013-2014 and onwards. It is addressed to students over 12 who have had school failures. These early vocational courses (CV – *Cursos Vocacionais*) emphasise the acquisition of knowledge in Portuguese, maths, and English, and the first contact with vocational activities, allowing further studies in secondary education. This is seen by some education agents as a measure to be expanded, for instance, by the sub-director of the Directorate General for Innovation and Curriculum Development, as it mirrors the government's compliance to the EU guidelines and the opportunity given to students:

The European Commission insists much on flexibility within the system—students' possibility at any point in their education to move from one track to another ... Portugal can increase the diversity of vocational education and training. It is a pilot test which aims at creating a new path parallel to the other.

By the same token, the Portuguese Industrial Association (AIP, 2011) argued for the development of continuing vocational training to enhance labour productivity, business competitiveness, and workers' remuneration. The association understands that the high rate of ESL results from individual performance and indicates the lack of efficiency of the education system in terms of its suitability to students' expectations and less attractiveness than the labour market. However, other stakeholders in education are critical about the quality and value of some of these measures. The Portuguese opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Training analysed the early vocational tendency with some resistance, saying:

From what the new minister says, there is a stake in vocational education ... It is important to bet on vocational education, but not at the expense of an education that provides a broader basis of knowledge to all citizens to be supplemented by vocational education. As in so many other policies of the current government, we are doing exactly the opposite of what would be needed to respond to the situation of crisis.

Emphasising the disparity between the attribution of certification and effective educational quality to deal with exclusion, the coordinator of a youth program in a priority area said:

People are more certified but not more qualified. Exclusion continues. A young man who goes to school because the family still has to get RSI [Rendimento Social de Inserção],³⁶ tends not to attend school, at least the maximum he can, but as teachers will turn a blind eye because it is necessary ... the truth is that he will reach the 9th or 12th grade and will not achieve the same level of the majority who has a more regular route.

As argued, if on the one hand, compliance to the EU may be in the horizon of some of the policies that have been implemented with a view to ease young people's future insertion in the labour market, on the other hand, these measures appear to put at risk the universality of basic school. The educational system has become increasingly selective in determining the students who can and cannot learn what is considered to be valuable knowledge, thus increasing social inequalities.

³⁵ Ordinance n.º 292-A/2012

³⁶ 'RSI' stands for Social Insertion Benefit

Policies Designed by Local Actors

The list of local policy initiatives of civil society is quite long; however, we have selected some to show the problems and conditions for success in tackling ESL as identified by stakeholders in the focus group discussion sessions. The emphasis was put on the manifold and casuistic answers, the need for partnerships and networking, as well as on the transferability of knowledge acquired in different contexts. We start with a diagnosis of ESL provided by two different stakeholders and move to bring to light initiatives that are currently taking place in our selected research areas. The participants voiced poverty as having an impact on ESL, as well as other individual and contextual factors. The Coordinator of the *Social Solidarity Association Qualify to Include* asserted:

There is still hunger ... Students go to school without breakfast. Enough money for food remains very difficult. I'm talking about people who rely on the social insertion income—40% under the poverty line. We are constantly faced with such problems. Sometimes we do not know what more we can do. Only through the state and public institutions is increasingly difficult to respond.

And the Director of a Second Opportunity School added other factors:

Young people leave school due to sexual orientation, ethnicity, family situations, cognitive deficits, disability, etc. It is important to promote diversification, mixing, for example, our young students with university students, with international projects ... We are one of the ten case studies in the European Report among the models to be replicated and funded in Europe.

Finding measures to deal with the problems referred to above is at the core of the stakeholders' interests and actions. Some examples follow in what concerns the two research areas where Portuguese RESL.eu research will run: Porto and Amadora (Lisbon). We must emphasise that both in individual interviews and in the focus group discussions for the two research areas, social inclusion was not a central topic and was shaped by students' inclusion rather than by the promotion of community inclusion through education.

The Local Contexts

The first criterion concerned urban contexts with populations between 100,000 and 5,000,000. Therefore, in Portugal we chose two regions. In the northern region, the urban municipality of Porto has a resident population of 237,591, and in the Lisbon region, the urban municipality of Amadora has 175,136 (Census 2011 in National Statistics, 2013a).

The transversal criteria "high rate of ESL" was taken into account in selecting the research areas. According to the INE (National Statistics, 2013a) in Portugal in 2012, the ESL rate reached 20.8%. In the same period in Porto, the rate was 21.2%, slightly above the national average; and in Amadora (Lisbon region), the value was slightly below at 20.1%.

Regarding other criteria of similarity "under the same political framework on education, training and work," it is important to mention that the Portuguese systems of education, training, and work are centralised under the same national law. This means that both selected municipalities and the remaining others are under the same central law, even if local initiatives are being taken under the drive of decentralisation.

Moreover, the “youth unemployment rate” (the fourth criterion) has been quite high in both regions compared to the national average. The Employment Inquiry of the National Statistics (2011a), building on data from 2010, considered one group from 15 to 24 year olds and another from 25 to 34 year olds. It showed that the average unemployment rate was 32.8% for the first group and 18.8% for the second group, in the northern region, and was even higher for the first group (15-24) in the Lisbon region at 43.8%, and for the second group, 18.6%.

Additionally, the labour market indicators, by NUTS II, 2010 (National Statistics, 2011b) (Graph 3) brought into evidence the rate of youth activity in the northern region at 1.08 times the national average and in the Lisbon region, at 0.90 times the national average. According to the same source, the rate of youth unemployment in the northern region was 1.02 times the national average whereas in the Lisbon region it was higher, at 1.12 times the national average. Hence, with regard to the labour market in 2010, the active population in Portugal amounted to 5.6 million individuals (52.5% of the resident population). The northern region exceeded the national rate of activity (53.1%). Considering the segment of the young population (15-24 years), the northern region with 39.7% had an activity rate that was greater than the national average (36.7%) while the rate in the Lisbon region was less than the national average (MFAP, n.d.).

No data is available in terms of these populations’ ethnic backgrounds (which would answer to the first criterion of differentiation) neither for either the regions nor for any other, rather only in terms of nationality per country. However, the Amadora region is known for having several different ethnic groups in very expansive numbers.

The municipality of Porto is inserted in the Porto County where in 2012 the foreign-born resident population was 23,440 (SEF, 2012). People of 143 nationalities live there. Most of the immigrant population has Brazilian origin (7,845), followed by Ukrainian (2,999), Chinese (2,006), Cape Verdean (1,161) and Spanish (1,044). The number of people from other nationalities has always been below 900. From the African continent, people from Angola are at the greatest (820), followed by those from Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, San Tome and Principe, and Morocco (between 200 and around 300). People from India also fit in this group (249). In turn, the municipality of Amadora is inserted in the Lisbon County with a total of 181,901 foreign-born residents in 2012 (SEF, 2012).³⁷

People of 166 nationalities live in Lisbon County, with most of the immigrant population being of Brazilian origin (48,100), followed by Cape Verdean (27,149), Guinea Bissauan and Angolan (13,411 and 13,107, respectively), Romanian and Ukrainian (12,796 and 12,351). People from China and Sao Tome and Principe are also greatly represented (6,655 and 6,565), followed by those from Moldova (3,876), India (3,827), and Spain (3,238).³⁸

To understand the socio-economic characteristics of the two research areas, the results for 2010 show that of the 30 Portuguese sub-regions NUTS III, only four (located in the coastline continent)

³⁷ One can find also people arriving from Central Europe: from Germany (515), followed by Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. After Ukraine (already referenced), Romania (679) is the most represented of Eastern Europe, followed by Russia, Moldova, and Poland. People of other nationalities include around 200 from Venezuela, and around 100 from Turkey, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Iran, Lithuania, Cuba, Japan, and Hungary.

³⁸ In an interval between around 1,000 and 2,500, one can identify decreasing numbers of people from Italy (2,413), the United Kingdom (2,114), Bulgaria, (2,028), Germany (1,932), Pakistan (1,709), France (1,659), Mozambique (1,482), Russia (1,476), Nepal (1,353), Guinea (1,249), Senegal (1,074), the United States (990), Bangladesh (949), and Holland (753). All the remaining nationalities are represented in the interval between 1 and 500 (SEF, 2012).

had an index of competitiveness above the national average: in descending order, Great Lisbon, Great Oporto, Baixo Vouga, and Ave.

Porto

Social Inclusion

Intergenerational links and proximity to school and inter-institutional work are at the core of some initiatives, as indicated by the director of a social solidarity association:

Qualify to Include is a private non-profit association ... The House of Music worked with Qualify to Include. I found it wonderful. It had enormous potential to bring parents and children closer, and parents closer to school and caused important changes ... A group of adults from a cooking course made a musical piece to present to children.

Local use of institutional funding also has shown to have positive results in the inclusion of disadvantaged communities through informal education, as indicated by the coordinator of a local project funded by the Programme Escolhas:

This project has had its action in the neighbourhoods since 2001. We worked closely with non-formal education, formal education, in guiding young people who have particular difficulties in integration.

Educational Quality and Effectiveness

Taking the risk of increasing student inequality by amplifying the distance between low performing and high performing students, some initiatives have attempted to homogeneously organize students according to their performance level to help them succeed in school through compensation measures, a condition to reduce ESL. The Director of Training of the Entrepreneurial Association of Portugal saw this as an inclusive measure:

There is an initiative to recuperate kids who are getting behind. At the beginning of the year the school makes a re-composition of classes according to the level of intellectual development ... joining those who are weaker to give them a series of compensation ... It is precisely those with whom a team of teachers will make an extra effort ... It is an inclusive perspective! This is the result of a local initiative, good leadership of the director and half dozen teachers!

In spite of central decisions that may negatively intervene in learning, alternative learning arenas have put into action remediation measures and individualized psychological support to students with a view to developing skills. The psychologist of a vocational school said:

The school has about twenty-four years in vocational education, especially targeted at students between 15 and 20 years. The practices we try to implement are the responsibility of the psychology service in vocational education. How do we keep motivated a student who has no skills to monitor the approved curriculum?

Public accountability, inter-municipality and international cooperation as well as the diagnosis of situations leading to ESL may be on the start-up of effective initiatives, as accentuated by the director of a second opportunity school:

The approach to ESL owes to the Portuguese good will but there is no public accountability. There should be a device to identify children and young people without training service and needing intervention ... Our school has sought to make this identification. People should draw up the plan of intervention and assure that there is effective integration of the young person in these responses ... We are a project that works precisely in the field of early school leaving for six years already.

Qualification for Work and the Labour Market

The concern with providing young people qualifications for better labour insertion is present in some initiatives developed by alternative learning arenas dealing with ESL students. This is the case of the School of Commerce of Porto (SCP) that works with young people older than 13, some of whom are immigrants. Following the mainstream model of apprenticeship courses, SCP offers vocational courses in sports, commerce, and tourism for the 9th year; and a set of vocational courses, allowing the attainment of 12th year, both targeted to the entry into the labour market. The school provides a psychology service to meet students' individual needs. The executive director and coordinator of the Training and Consultancy Enterprise at Metamorphose said:

We have been dealing with apprenticeship courses since 2001. We have about ten courses being developed for this age group. My work is more connected to training but I have some vision of the day-by-day problems.

Amadora

Social Inclusion

As mentioned earlier, the concern with social inclusion was not so central for the interviewees. However, student inclusion is at the core of some local initiatives. The need to provide meaningful learning to keep students in school was stressed by the education assessor of the Vocational School *Chapitô*:

Chapitô is a second, third, and fourth chance school for many—a place for inclusion. Our concern is rigor and excellence, hetero-esteem, and socio-moral development. We have to make school routes meaningful. This implies social and civic engagement.

In the view of the director of the vocational school Gustave Eiffel, there is a need to build alternative learning that overcomes the lacunae of mainstream school:

Many young people are angry with the traditional school. Vocational education appears as alternative because we link them to a profession they like. They cease to be listening to the teacher and they learn by doing. That makes all the difference. In Gustave Eiffel there is no selection, we fill up the classes as students arrive. We work in a region that is not easy, [having] many cultures, many socio-economic realities. We have to make sure they enjoy being in school.

Others invest in teacher training to improve learning, as indicated by the Board of Direction Intercultural Teachers Association, (APEDI):

We have a training centre that has provided training for teachers outside Europe, PALOPs, Sao Tome and Principe, etc. Teachers will work and collaborate with students. The aim is precisely inclusion; working valences as new activities and social inclusion.

Educational Quality and Effectiveness

Prevention and compensation measures contain a casuistic dimension and combine formal and non-formal learning. The education assessor at Vocational School Chapitô explained:

Chapitô focuses on building highly motivating curricular paths, in which they feel valued. The incidence in the content, organization of the courses and learning processes, and teacher/student relationship is vital. We have a more formal education, equivalent to the 12th year, and a set of non-formal routes at weekends, afternoons, workshops, ateliers, as prelude to reconciliation with the more formal route.

Institutions try to adapt to new educational needs, according to the director of the Entrepreneurial Association:

EPIS works more with intervention but is entering remediation. All these systems coexist. We are making a pilot in the first cycle. We want to understand how to potentiate young people from the age of six as they bring background differences to school. It is to the educational systems to compensate for the family capital.

Qualification for Work and Labour Market

In a time of crisis, the hardship in keeping students in school or making them come back is emphasised by the director of the vocational school:

Due to the problems the country is facing, some students have to go to work to help their families. We teach them a profession and before finishing their course they already know something and start working, they begin to move away from school to earn money.

The contribution of the diverse stakeholders shows the mobilization of civil society at diverse levels and according to different interests to promote more inclusive and effective education through diverse means. The centrality of the learners has become apparent.

Paths and Processes of Resistance to EU Initiatives Related to ESL

As shown above, in Portugal, the relationship of various stakeholders with European drivers and rationales is mainly an effort of re-contextualisation. This applies to the relationship between education and labour, seen as a joint compromise among stakeholders. Often, the documents and interviewees assumed a view of the Portuguese deficit in comparison to the EU and the OECD countries. There may be dangers in this attitude, as has been well emphasized by the opposition member of the EU Parliament, who reformulated the idea of resistance to refer to the local contextualisation of European initiatives, saying:

The European Community boards have no legal means to impose directives in education, we witness a process of importing ideas and educational policies that circulate and are disseminated from the EU and OECD core countries through the voice of the designated “experts” who issue opinions and judgments in supranational decision-making instances. The application of these ideas is locally modelled by the intervention of actors, as recipients and implementers of educational policy measures decided at the national level. It is through local resistance and regulation that supranational initiatives are translated into public policies.

Not many signs of resistance have been present at the level of official policy/ administrations. A wide range of legislative documents produced in the aftermath of 2000 Lisbon Strategy by the Parliament or the Ministries illustrate the attempts to conform to the European policies and the international educational agenda. Compliance can also be identified in civil society organisations that see Europe as the “centre of gravity” they are taken to join in (Radaelli, 2003). These organisations do not provide much analysis of the possibilities and difficulties of adapting the European requirements to Portuguese and local needs. One can find among these entities initiatives to promote youth qualifications, to keep them in education or training and to foster the transition to work in less fragile positions. However, there are clashes between stakeholders’ interests and views, and some local entities do not seem permeable to European drivers, even though EU discourses and priorities have begun to implicitly emerge.

The sub-director of Directorate Services of the Northern Region attributes the fragility of school autonomy and decentralisation—as tools to reduce ESL—to the routines in the peripheries of the system:

There are many spaces of autonomy. The great enemies are the routines, one way of organizing school as the easiest. Often we do not create “noise” because our direct interlocutors (teachers, operating assistants) are used to work in a certain way. We need to look at the school and think “What is its essence?” It exists as public service of education. This change is being achieved with great effort but cannot be achieved from one day to another. We must assume that those who have autonomy take risks and responsibilities.

But one director of training of the Portugal Entrepreneurial Association accentuated the inadequacy of the measures and the disparity of realities:

One of the initiatives proposed by the European Commission is more autonomy to schools. This is a good way for local principles to gain visibility because there are different realities! When they say all classes must have 30 students, [they are not aware that] there will be schools that do not even have 30 students. Situations of ESL suffer from the same. Reasons of ESL in certain counties are different from big cities!

And the other director claims that for effective decentralisation, beyond central control:

Measures must be decentralised! Despite the effort that has been made and some openness to decentralisation, the Ministry has mostly given responsibilities to town halls in some matters. This is not decentralisation at all ... There is an obsessive control of content and regulation.

In turn, the director of the Entrepreneurial Association EPIS emphasised the Portuguese replication of programs developed in other European countries under the idea of shared drivers and purposes, as expressed by a representative from the Employment Institute:

The Program Escolhas was inspired abroad, the Phoenix Program, and TEIP were inspired in French models, and the Orchestra Generation comes from Venezuela. This is good. All

these solutions contribute to the same purpose under the same principles ... the psychology of the cycle of change ... This is the standard way that EPIS is working with IEFP.

If we can ascribe some resistance to change to educational institutions in the system's periphery, most of the measures have been centrally designed, sometimes without provision of resources and conditions. And alternative learning arenas, both in and after compulsory education, have had a very significant role in reducing ESL, as recognised, for instance, by the OECD (2012).

“Good” Practices: Educational and Social Policy Measures Affecting ESL

Complementing or controverting the measures mentioned above, in this section, we illustrate adhesion to the EU paradigm for education and training. This paradigm brings to the forefront institutional “good practices” aiming to keep students in education or training, where the connection between qualification and labour becomes apparent. However, “good practice” is a contested notion that may give room to “neo-liberal educational measures” (Opposition member of the European Parliament), not exempt from criticism. Education may shift into an educational battlefield, as noted by the opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Culture:

Since the crisis and above all with the change of government there have been very abrupt changes in educational policy, in a situation of ideological combat ... that most of the time is nothing more than prejudice. We moved from the narrative of lost generation and scorched earth in education to the narrative of the more qualified generation ever, in two years.

Good practice may be due to voluntarism rather than public policy, as emphasised by the director of the Entrepreneurial Association of Portugal:

Good practices sometimes arise from the combination of fortunate serendipity, a persistent leader, a group of dedicated teachers, or a local authority who pulls in things and has good ideas, a creative person in a particular industry and rarely from structured public policy, which is a shame! Good practices are usually the result of qualitative involvement of several entities.

Even if the character of these initiatives is manifold, the main rationales may be identified as the following: (a) engaging the community in education, (b) involving young people as stakeholders of their educational process, (c) easing the transition to labour, and (d) bottom-up and top-down collaboration. The emphasis is on networking in education, learning in transition in school, easing the transition to labour, prevention, and remediation measures.

Many of the local initiatives and national policies, measures, and programmes that have been mentioned can be seen as good practices. This is the case of the Program for Educational Priority Intervention Areas (TEIP), now in its third version, which aims at promoting territorial policy criteria of priority and positive discrimination in specific regions to combat school failure and ESL through multi-year projects. Over time it has expanded territorially and has involved more local communities and schools.

Engaging the Community in Education

Aiming to unravel organizational factors that promote learning for all and combating school underachievement and ESL, several school clusters have developed projects with communities where one can find immigration, unemployment, poor education, and lack of family support and expectations. Appropriate responses have several key aspects: an open relationship to global dynamics and a commitment to the local community, participation of local actors in school life, partnerships with schools and other local institutions to broaden the educational experiences as well as social integration and future employability, curriculum management and school organisation that values local cultures, provision of school spaces for community activities, and support services to students and families, including cooperation and referral to other institutions (CNE 2010).

The importance of sharing resources and giving specific answers was accentuated by an officer of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth:

It is important to share resources, not only technical but also material ... Joint work: volunteering and training people within school ... to work in other contexts; specific answers to teachers as well. Through these programs, we will give some specific response ... The majority emerge from the local context and our interaction with reality.

As already mentioned, the Program *Escolhas* has been recognised as the most effective and efficient public policy in the social inclusion of children and young people at risk, particularly second generation immigrants and ethnic minorities. In 2011, the European Commission selected it as a Good Practice in combating ESL. The project moved from centralised logic to local planning. Through 2015, *Escolhas* has agreements with consortia of 110 local projects of social inclusion. The program coordinator explained that the matching up of efforts reveals essential things to young people's inclusion and to the reduction of ESL:

Its mission is the inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable contexts young people who are in situations of school disengagement and ESL. The program makes an inter-relational approach to the various systems. It currently supports initiatives in quite diversified and expanded consortia, with local institutions that are aware of the local reality and problems: schools, youth and emigrant associations, parishes, local power.

Involving Young People as Stakeholders of Their Own Educational Process

A member of a Youth Association underlined that involving students in meaningful activities in which they have a say is certainly relevant:

We keep youngsters occupied. After school they come to us for an hour, an hour and a half, do homework and physical activities. We work with the football club Benfica. An exceptional thing for the kids is that in order to play in Benfica, they have to be studying. We are developing a protocol with them to captivate students through sport, music, dance, and more.

Even if vocational courses may have exclusionary dimensions, one director of Gustave Eiffel emphasised their good side in keeping young people in school:

We joined the pilot of basic vocational programs, welcomed some young people with a somewhat complicated route. Yesterday we had photo contest awards ceremony at school in partnership with a brand of cameras. Students from vocational courses had to cover the

event, taking photographs. If you just saw their happiness! They laughed, very excited. In the end I asked one of them if he was enjoying being at school. With his little eyes shining, he said, "I'm loving being at school." I joked, "Not yet repented?" "Never in my life time!" We put a good camera in his hands, gave him some responsibility, something he loved to learn.

Responsibility, enjoyment for learning and happiness are important features in the set of choices. A young member of a youth association emphasised the same sense of engagement and self-value, together with a sense of social responsibility:

I do forum-theatre and theatre of the oppressed, at the Group Theatre of the Oppressed ... We have a show: "Dreams, try again later." We already presented it in several schools. The play talks about the dreams we had and that we are losing due to barriers we are imposed ... With the forum theatre we put a problem on stage, present it to the community who then tries to solve the problem in the best way.

Indirect responses in dealing with ESL also have resulted from musical education projects that promote young people's qualities and skills that are useful to school, as the coordinator of the educational services accentuated:

The House of Music does not work directly with the population at risk of ESL or that has left school. We work often on projects and engage people who are on that fringe ... Art and sports can enhance the qualities and develop skills of the people who are involved.

He also underlined that training good professionals to work with disadvantaged communities, building on youth cultures, making the best of group heterogeneity, and bringing young people back to informal learning arenas may be essential features in dealing with ESL:

Every year we have a training course essentially for musicians/teachers who want to work with excluded communities or at risk of exclusion ... prisons ... people who are receiving social inclusion income ... projects in social housing neighbourhoods, e.g. the Batucada Radical. We often develop projects with other institutions, involving young people. We did a beat box ensemble, trying to leverage trends and urban cultures. Not only we had people in the neighbourhood who had left school, we also had a medical student, people who are interested in beat box ... a very interesting group.

Informal learning within the local context has also been valued as a way to bring students back to school, as an officer of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth expressed:

The Institute provides non-formal education, those forms of integration ... Most of them emerge from the local context and our interaction with reality. The program "Educ'Arte" is very interesting. We use our technicians in photography, visual arts, giant puppets, percussion ... We are partnering with schools ... We are giving a new look to school sports, engaging students within school, and through federated clubs to call these students back to school.

Easing the Transition to Labour

The dimension of easing the transition to labour was not at the core of the interviewees' views. However, the Association of Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion (EPIS – Associação Empresários pela Inclusão Social) has developed projects to combat school failure, and ESL in particular, in training young people at risk and their families and in addressing the dissemination of good management practices in schools. For example, their project "New Good Students: Network of Mediators for School Success until the 3rd Cycle" was the result of a partnership between the Ministry of

Education, municipalities, schools, and local businesses, with about sixty-five specialised mediators in several municipalities including Amadora and Porto. The project was selected as an international case study by Clinton Global Initiative in 2009 (EPIS).³⁹

Also the project "Principles of Entrepreneurship and Creativity for Trainers in the area of Social Inclusion" (CESSIT) has been being developed since 2009 with countries such as Austria and Poland as part of the Grundtvig Program. The project is aimed at providing educators with tools to develop ESL students with skills of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship as increasingly important tools in the labour market. It also assesses the needs of trainers/teachers working with ESL students, identifies and disseminates good practices, has developed a Handbook for Tutors/Managers, and promotes national workshops to discuss creativity and entrepreneurship and its impact on training and competences.

Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Side-by-Side Cooperation

Cooperation was identified at different levels of decision making as a key-factor in "good practices." This is the case of the agreement between the National Confederation of Parents Associations (CONFAP Confederação Nacional de Associações de Pais) and the Ministry of Education, based on students' prioritisation as citizens in education, of the school as educational community, and of the centrality of education in the government policy. This agreement assumes that appropriate responses are needed to combat schools' underachievement: the curricula and syllabus must respect the rhythms and learning capabilities of each individual. In its Parental Agenda (2009-2013), CONFAP stated that making a better school is not a question of law but rather of cultural, and of social and community change.

Along the same lines, the director of a second opportunities school underlined the need to get closer to families:

There are many families—and not only the poor—who do not know how to guide their children for many reasons. The problem is that it is useless to create an obligation to go to school if we do nothing else. Indeed, we must establish a relationship with the family on the basis of communication, rather than on blaming.

The sub-director of the Directorate-General for Innovation and Curriculum Development valued the matching up of diverse entities in dealing with children protection, including ESL, and said:

Our model of children and youth protection committee [CPCJ, Comissão de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens] is excellent. There are three hundred CPCJ... I wanted to highlight it as good example of articulation among sectors... The core committee includes representatives from the municipality (regionalization policies), social security, education, and civil society. Almost all municipalities have CPCJ. They care for maltreated children and much more. The prevention and remediation of ESL is in their mandate. Moreover, the new Chart of Student Rights (2012) has seven or eight references to CPCJ... It requires the school not only to communicate problems to CPCJ but to be part of the solution.

While they are still being implemented, the use of technologies may be a step further in controlling student absence and ESL, as the sub-director of the Directorate-General for Innovation and Curriculum Development explained:

³⁹ www.epis.pt/

Through the introduction of electronic enrolment, the dematerialization of the registration process, each student shall be given a number. This will allow fulfilling one of the key ingredients of Early Warning Systems, which is the ability to issue alerts whenever absenteeism goes beyond what we define as critical ... It enables monitoring absenteeism and ESL by the class director, the school principal or the offices of psychology or tutoring. Many countries are doing it. It is an electronic tool. It is expected that within three/four years, all school registrations are electronic or associated with a number.

In the same fashion, the Portuguese opposition member of the European Committee for Education and Culture emphasised several measures that were taken in recent years as being important:

The application of the digital agenda in schools was very well done. As important was the introduction of English, the increase in school hours, the introduction of new technologies and the computer Magalhães ... The fact that the computer belongs to each student provides a gain of autonomy.

As shown, engaging the community in education and involving young people as stakeholders of their own educational process, together with the concern of easing the transition to labour, have proved to be important aspects of bottom-up, top-down, and network cooperation, in dealing with ESL.

Conclusions

This paper on Portuguese policy analysis on ESL aimed to identify rationales and modes of resistance to European policy implementation as well as “good practices,” following the Lisbon Strategy. The period under consideration (2000-2013) is one in which Portugal has experienced social and educational transformations in part related to governmental changes in the country. Three periods were identified. From the second to the third period, the second socialist government was replaced by a conservative one at the heart of a deep economic crisis. The adherence to European Educational policies was probably clearer in the first and second periods, i.e. until 2010.

The current period appears to be strongly influenced by the German vocationalist and the “dual system” as reflected in the introduction of vocational courses in the expectancy that 13-year-old children—mainly those with learning difficulties—will choose it. There is a clear shift away from the discourse and measures on equal opportunities and from increasing social and economic development, and social inclusion. Presently the main driver focuses on cost reduction and enhancement of the relationship between qualification and the labour market. A relation whose contours have become increasingly complicated due to the volatility and precariousness of a quickly changing labour market whose strict needs have become very difficult to identify and whose exclusionary dimensions of lower skilled workers are accentuated.

The interviews and focus group discussions brought to the forefront diverse interpretations of the current educational policies illustrating and detailing how the priorities shape national and local realities. They also showed different and conflicting views, which may challenge a broader perspective of what values, routes, and curricular education should pursue. The interviews and the focus group discussions also brought to the forefront the need for effective change at the level of educational practices. Placing young adults at the core of their own learning and as responsible

stakeholders, civil society's mobilisation of material and human resources in developing local, small scale educational community projects seems to be the conditions the stakeholders involved valued most. There seems to be room in education to promote social inclusion, educational quality, and effectiveness, as well as to strengthen young people's insertion into the labour market. Even if there is no recipe, simultaneous resources to a holistic and case-by-case approach, moving throughout diverse levels of decision making and action seem to be important dimensions of such change.

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