External evaluation and the organizational development of schools in Portugal: new challenges for the General Inspectorate of Education

Alexandre Ventura
University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal
Jorge Adelino Costa
University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

Abstract
Analyzes the development of the external evaluation models of schools in Portugal. Gives special emphasis to the current situation and role of inspection with a constant retrospective view of the administration of the educational system. Reveals that the Portuguese education system has been changing, with more autonomy being placed on schools which places importance on the evaluation process. Concludes that the evaluation process should be developed as a way of controlling the educational system.

Introduction

Like other countries in the same geographical area, Portugal has a history distinguished in great part by a centralised administration of the educational system. In this context, most schools had no autonomy and were subject to different forms of external regulation.

Due to the Education Act (1986) that was introduced in Portugal, schools have been progressively given more autonomy as builders of their own educative project and with capacities for innovation. The result is a school with the potential to develop reflexive processes and self-evaluation, revealing signs of a learning organization.

From this point of view, the General Inspectorate of Education (IGE), the main entity responsible for the evaluation of the Portuguese educational system, has been progressively adjusting its attitude towards schools, according to the qualitative or naturalist pattern in a formative perspective of evaluation and orientation. In order to improve schools' performance, the role of the IGE has changed from one of inspection and control to one of supervision and evaluation.

The "Integrated Evaluation of Schools", which began in 2000, is a vital component of the IGE's new policy and practice. This program puts into effect a regulation model based on the articulated action of school governing bodies, teachers and the administration of the educational system.

The main goal of this study is to analyze the development of the external evaluation models of schools in Portugal, with special emphasis on the current situation and the role of inspection, having constantly in mind a retrospective view of the educational system administration and of the schools in Portugal.

The centralized-bureaucratic tradition of the Portuguese educational system

The public administration history of Portugal, like other European countries such as Spain, France, Italy and Greece, has been characterized by the presence of a centralized-bureaucratic model: the city capitals created, defined, regulated and governed the *res publica* of each country.

The educational systems did not escape from this political situation and there were also good examples of this administration model. This was the case in Portugal with a centralized educational system that, until the end of the twentieth century, took the decisions exclusively in the educational state department in Lisbon. From this centralized system came a uniform and detailed regulation of all the procedures and also a centralized control of all the activities that were visible in dependent school practices and the lack of school autonomy[1]. This is, according to Formosinho and Machado (2000, p. 50):

> ... one excessively normative tradition of the public administration that comes from the Napoleon influence, regulates all the details, leaving the individuals with little autonomy for strongly participating in the creation of rules and hoping that they would act in conformity with the established procedures.

The model we have been describing builds a conception of a uniform school, exhaustively regulated and with no autonomy (based on legislation imposed by the central government), with no means to implement the principle of pedagogical and organizational diversity and without credibility to create a proper educational project and usually, being subject to an external control from the inspectorate structures, based on the examination of legal conformity.

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at
http://www.emeraldinsight.com/0951-354X.htm

[169]

Alexandre Ventura and
Jorge Adelino Costa
*External evaluation and the
organizational development of
schools in Portugal: new
challenges for the General
Inspectorate of Education*

A school regulated from the central government, exposed to the external inspection in conformity with the law

The bureaucratic administration model proceeded through a detailed regulation of schools, demanding that they follow the formal procedures imposed by the central government. This created excellent and responsible experts of the rules and legislation among teachers in a way that, acting in legal conformity, could more easily answer the bureaucratic demands of the educational inspection of schools.

This is the evaluation model that reigned in Portuguese schools: an external inspection of legal procedures, as was traditionally the case, that is beginning to change at the turn of the millennium. According to the conceptualization of schools as public departments of the educational system without autonomy, one must follow the legal procedures, which, in a Tayloristic logic of separation between the conception and the execution, did not grant the power to think, but instead demanded that superior orders be followed (Costa, 1996, pp. 33-8). It was not surprising that the issues connected to the self-evaluation of institutions were not found in the legal procedures and not even considered at the level of school practices. The schools that followed this model did not have self-evaluation practices and, certainly, with legitimacy because they did not have decision-making authority.

The evaluation was put into practice, most likely an external evaluation, or even better, an external control (bearing in mind that the evaluation concept is not the most suitable for these procedures)[2], which was carried out by inspectors who tried to find in each institution some irregularity in the procedures defined by the government and to check if they were being correctly implemented. From this perspective, the evaluation is not for the school or with[3] the school (as a feedback for improvement), but is a formal inspection that turns inspectors into policemen of schools.

However, in the 1980s, a debate on the Portuguese educational system began. Several political changes took place in the reality of schools, namely the conception, the organization and management of school models and the evaluation processes that we are going to describe in the sections that follow.

The 1980s: the Portuguese Educational Act and the emerging movement of educational reform

The 1980s were a period of strong educational changes in Portugal as in other European countries. During this period the Portuguese Educational Act (no. 46/86, 14 October), which is still in force today, was published. This act introduced several changes in the educational system, following a regulation period and application of the several principles and strategies leading to a coherent and global reform of Portuguese education.

The organization and management of schools are some of the most important areas of the Portuguese Education Act. Principles such as the decentralization of the educational administration, the partnership and integration of schools in the community, the democratic participation of all members of the educational process in education and school administration (Portuguese Education Act, articles 43, 44 and 45) and a recurrent discourse of demands for more autonomous schools were established as common principles of the movement and of the political discourse of reform.

Nonetheless, these proposals were not completely applied to the reality of schools during the 1980s; the government has been giving schools more autonomy. The current law of autonomy, administration and management of the non-higher education public schools (Decree no. 115-A/98, 4 May) is the most recent example of this.

The "decentralization" movement of the political educative decisions presented schools as progressive organizational units of decision (Costa, 1997, pp. 35-51) and, consequently, with more responsibility in several areas, namely the one we are going to develop in this paper: the evaluation and accountability of institutions. However, this "decentralization" seems similar to what Barroso (2000a, p. 58) calls "'soft autonomy' policies, limited to the strictly essential as a way of decreasing the pressure above the state and keeping its power, organization and control".

Development of schools' autonomy and evaluation: the creation of educational projects

When comparing the level of autonomy of Portuguese institutions with that of institutions in other European countries, we realize that we are far from reaching the expected results. Standaert (1998, p. 24), quoting results from the OECD (2000) famous publication *Education at a Glance*, shows that in 1998 the data, in terms of percentage, related to the decisions taken for lower secondary public education were as shown in Table I.

Table I
Decisions at school level for public lower secondary education

	%
Greece	23
Portugal	24
Belgium	26
France	29
Italy	33
Spain	41
Austria	24
Ireland	54
Germany	38
Denmark	32
The Netherlands	76
England	62
Sweden	66
Scotland	40
Finland	36

Source: Standaert (1998, p. 24)

The centralization of the educational decision processes at the Ministry of Education in Lisbon is clear. However, it is necessary to emphasize that these data are prior to changes that gave more autonomy to schools after 1998. When we analyze the reality of Portuguese schools, we conclude that, due to reasons attributable to the educational system administration and members of the schools, the much-expected decentralization, which was more restricted at this time, did not follow the purposes of the Portuguese Educational Law. Due to this conclusion, we may be facing at least two possible situations: either the school autonomy law may not be enough "to create the needed conditions for individuals at schools, in the practice of their functions, decide with more autonomy and in different levels of decisions" (Barroso, 2000b, p. 25); or, in spite of the proper normative and administrative autonomy, the individuals do not know or do not want to deal with the increased level of autonomy. Obviously, the decentralization of the administrative and educational decisions to schools brings more professional and social responsibility to the school members and more work for the teachers. Besides that, at this level of transition to a more autonomous school, it is necessary to emphasize the crucial importance of what Senge (1999, p. 23) calls a mental model: "only by changing our way of thinking, it is possible to alter political ideas and practices deeply fixed in our minds". This difficulty in changing mentalities is common to the public administration agents and also to the school members, who constitute one of the greatest factors that prevent innovation.

It is necessary to say that, in spite of few people being ostensibly against the growing autonomy of the educational institutions, there is a considerable number of people that do not agree with the given and "conquered" autonomy of schools, especially with the former. Glenn (1998, p. 16) refers, for example, "that teachers may feel that their individual rights are better protected in schools or universities, which have limited autonomy". Another problem identified by Glenn (1998, p. 16) about this issue is the potential danger of autonomous schools treating their students and teachers unfairly. But the most important aspect is the real danger that autonomous schools can face by not being able to "arrive at common educational goals" (Glenn, 1998, pp. 15-16), therefore affecting their coherence.

The new autonomy in Portuguese schools is still distant from the situation of some other countries, particularly concerning the autonomy to create its curriculum, to manage its financial budget and to recruit teachers or educational staff. Either way, schools will progressively implement new places of decision in order to have their own educational projects.

The most recent purposes in school organizational and management have emphasized this principle of organizational diversity, namely through the idea that each school must create its educational project. According to the Law no. 115-A/98, the educational project is understood as the "document that contains the educational orientation of schools, created and approved by them for three years, where the principles, values, aims and strategies to be followed by the school are explained".

Portuguese public schools start, in this way, to have the means needed to create their pedagogical proposals and open new educational orientations for their action. We believe that this challenge will put into effect autonomy in schools, which is now dependent on human action, on the part of all the educational members who have to work in order to get the necessary level of autonomy for the educational project to materialize and essentially to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Autonomy is not an abstract entity. It will be the result of cooperative teamwork: people who will delegate the responsibilities and functions and people who will have to put them into practice.

From this perspective, autonomy must be understood by all educational members and by schools as a matter of accountability, in which answering to the educational community and society in general is a *sine*

[171]

qua non condition for practicing an authentic autonomy (Escudero Escorza, 2001). If schools answer to the educational community and society and if they assume a transparent position about decisions and results, they will be able to use their autonomy with more credibility.

However, as is the case in other countries, the Portuguese government has tried to build a more sophisticated control device that permits it to keep its power over schools. According to Broadfoot (2000, p. 44), "as far as the traditionally centralized systems become more decentralized, the role of evaluation as a control device increases proportionally". One of the most important parts of this control device in Portugal is the "Integrated Evaluation of Schools Program" developed by the IGE.

Response of the IGE to the recent evolution of the Portuguese educational system

The Inspectorate of Education is a widespread institution. It has a central department in Lisbon, responsible for planning and coordination at national level, and it also has five regional delegations (Oporto, Coimbra, Lisbon, Beja and Faro), which are responsible for evaluation of the educational system in kindergarten, schools of compulsory education, secondary schools and universities (SICI, 1998, p. 47).

Figure 1 shows the configuration of the Portuguese IGE.

According to The Standing Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education (SICI, 1997) and to IGE (1999a), we can identify the most important roles of the IGE:
- provide the Minister of Education with the results of an external evaluation to describe school performance (national reports);
- report on the adjustment, or the lack of it, to statutory regulations;
- advise on possible measures to improve the system;
- call the attention of schools to the importance of and the need for a self-evaluation process;
- advise, help and assist principals and teachers in the management of schools and in pedagogical issues related to their jobs;
- answer to students' and parents' complaints about specific questions regarding problems with the educational services;
- carry out disciplinary investigations in situations of non-compliance to legal norms and regulations or irregular behaviour of the different members of the school staff.

Due to the recent changes in the Portuguese educational administration system, already pointed out, the attitude and actions of the IGE need to change. It has been progressively looking for development from a perspective in which the main point was the examination

Figure 1
Organization chart of the IGE
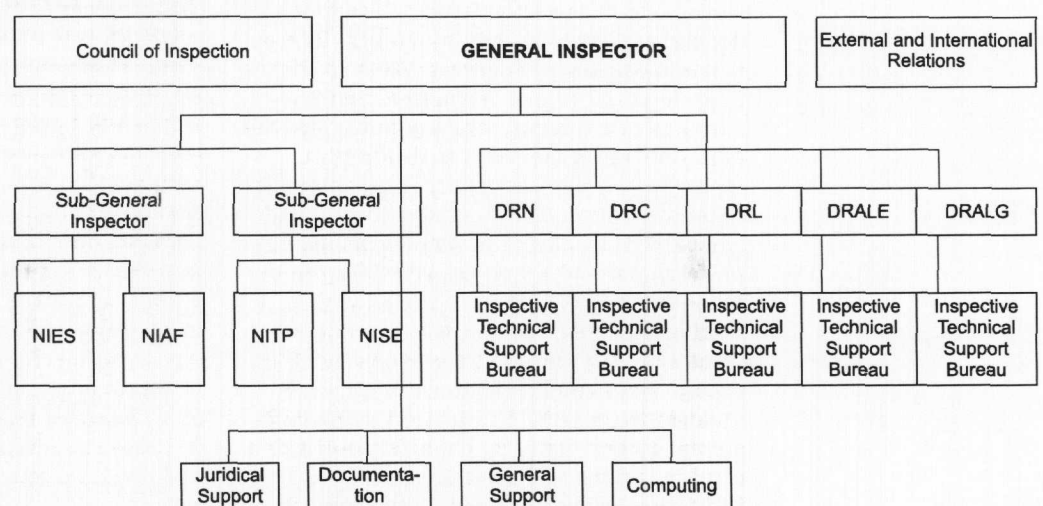
NIES – Higher education Inspection Bureau
NIAF – Administrative and Financial Bureau
NITP – Pedagogical Inspection Bureau
NISE – Services Inspection Bureau

Source: IGE (1999b, p. 5)

of legal conformity to a perspective of "organizational supervision and of communication between the different stakeholders and the administration levels" (Climaco, 2000, p. 1). Maintaining its disciplinary role as a guarantee of the right to access a good quality education equal for all, the IGE has a tendency to integrate a "kind of network that supports the schools' action" (Afonso, 2000, p. 56).

The Portuguese educational system seems to give more autonomy to schools, in such a way that they are able to assume crucial decisions without depending on the government. According to Afonso (2000, p. 57), the educational administration will assume towards schools three different functions:
1 support network that gives schools the main principles to guide their action;
2 resources (mainly financial);
3 regulation, inspection and evaluation to define the development of the educational system.

We believe that nowadays, the IGE is developing a function with hybrid characteristics that can be difficult to gather in just one entity. At the same time, the inspectors' teams assume a dual position as supporters of the development of school activities and inspectors of that same activity. On the other hand, these inspectors assume the function of disciplinary agents when there are infractions of the law. These complex activities provoke two problems: the first being the inspectors' credibility among the school staff and second the difficulties in training. There is a significant risk that the school staff may look at the inspection and its agents, the inspectors, as having a "paternalist" attitude by mixing help and disciplinary sanctions. Is it possible to have just one entity playing all of these roles? If we take into consideration that the IGE is still a Unit of the Ministry of Education, centrally administered and controlled, will the inspector' actions be credible, genuine and stable?

We fear this situation will not be easy to resolve, especially without having empirical results to give the expected "answers" and without enough time to realize the new performance of the IGE. Nonetheless, this unit seems to be changing from a power attitude to an attitude based on its agents' ability and credibility. An example of this change is the creation (2000) of the inspectors' professional training through the co-operation between the IGE and some Portuguese universities. We will have to wait and see if this significant investment will have an impact on the performance of the Portuguese educational system.

The "Integrated Evaluation of Schools" as a vital component of the new policy and practice of the IGE

After we have described the new position of the IGE towards the recent evolution of the Portuguese educational system, we are going to present the "jewel" of this new policy and practice, the "Integrated Evaluation of Schools" project.

According to some of its members, this program, initiated in 1999-2000, aims to reach all Portuguese educational institutions in the next six years. It is the first generalized effort of the IGE to re-organize its political strategy and to establish schools' evaluation in order to assure a good quality of the educational system.

This evaluation process belongs to an educational policy that has the intention of promoting a local strategy movement through systematic evaluation processes of schools, involving internal and external agents (IGE, 2000a, p. 9) and that considers from an integrated perspective the complex features of those schools: social, political, pedagogical and cultural.

This evaluation program aims to achieve an articulation between external evaluation, promoted by the IGE, and self-evaluation mechanisms that schools possess in a co-operative work with the main purpose of improving the processes and results. The IGE mentions: "it is natural and advisable that the external evaluation may become a part of the self-regulation of each school. Both systems, even in different ways, have many aspects in common, namely due to the fact that strategy is to improve and secure the quality". It is also expected that this evaluation process will involve the administration, management and pedagogical areas, and it will be put into practice by "groups of inspectors of different training areas and with different stages of intervention according to the schools' educational levels" (IGE, 2000b, p. 13). The most important purposes of the program are:
• to improve education in schools;
• to inform schools about the processes and results of their action, identifying strengths and weaknesses;
• to make the information available to the public and characterize the educational system performance.

These purposes are presented through a conceptual model that reveals the great dimensions of the process and the respective observation fields, selected by the IGE. This conceptual model for the Integrated

Evaluation of Schools Program presents the following broad domains of analysis: organization and management; climate; education, teaching and learning; socio-familiar background; pupils' performance level results, that can be deeply analyzed in Figure 2.

On the one hand, this conceptual model has positive aspects and represents a great effort from the IGE, essentially developed since 1999, to adapt to the reality of the Portuguese educational system. On the other hand, simultaneously, it is still a standard institutional evaluation model[4] with a significant inflexibility on account of its mass application to a large and heterogeneous school system.

In this sense, it appears to us that the compatibility between a clear evaluation of the educational system and a real contribution for the development of schools needs to consider a flexible conceptual evaluation model, allowing the inspectors in the field to take the wisest decisions. We believe that this flexibility is a better means to gather the information, contribute to the inspectors' autonomy and improve their work.

Even though they do not have an established system of evaluation of the Integrated Evaluation Program of Schools, the Global IGE Report (IGE, 2001) presents, however, crucial information about the schools' inspection and state comments of the schools' performance. From the 110

reports[5], the IGE selected a pattern "that took into account the balanced distribution between the school levels, typology and geographical location of schools" (IGE, 2001, p. 11). One of the report's conclusions is as follows: "in most of the schools there is no self-evaluation «culture»" (IGE, 2001, p. 34).

The difficulty in establishing this self-evaluation "culture" leads to a more complex implementation of this evaluation model. The real impact of the evaluation process at an organizational development level may become questionable if there is not cooperation between the IGE (external evaluation) and the schools (internal evaluation).

Final considerations

Even with a bureaucratic and centralized tradition, the Portuguese educational system has been changing, namely in its administration, organization and management of schools.

The growing autonomy of schools has given progressive importance to the evaluation process, in which the IGE has developed an important role through the Integrated Evaluation of Schools Program. Nevertheless, this evaluation model presents some limitations when applied to the reality of schools. It seems that the greatest obstacles are the lack of self-evaluation "culture" in schools, and the development of a massive evaluation model that shows inflexibility in

Figure 2
Conceptual model for the Integrated Evaluation of Schools Program
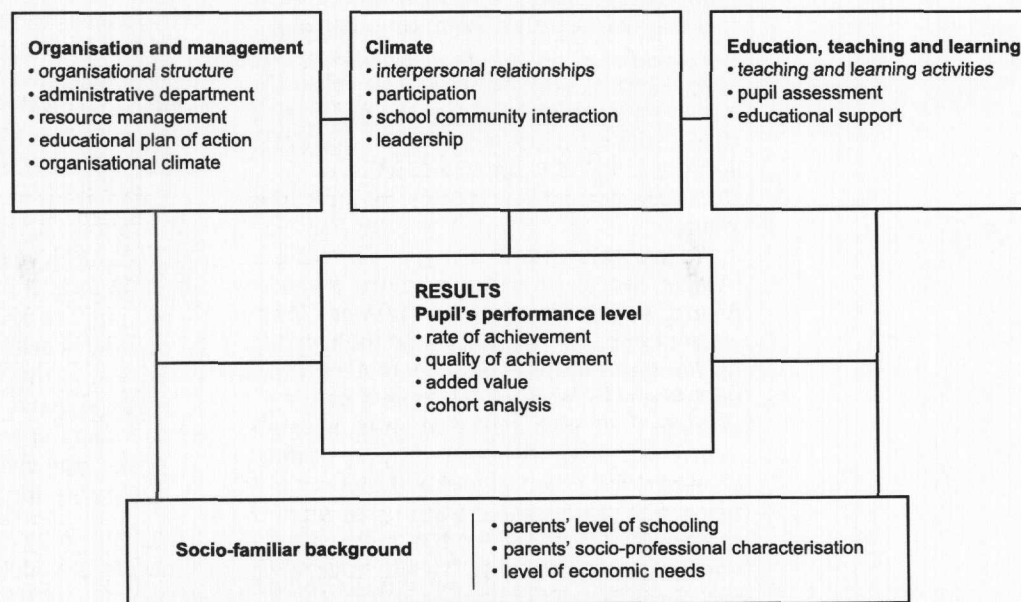
Source: IGEa, (2000a, p. 6)

its application by the IGE. Although it has some imperfections, the Integrated Evaluation of Schools program permits the collection of important information about the quality of the educational system and also permits the introduction of changes leading to organizational development. Yet, one must keep in mind that this program has the shape of an "evaluation as a way of control above the educational system" (Broadfoot, 2000, p. 50).

Notes

1 The "Carnation" revolution of 25 April 1974 put an end to the dictatorial period in Portugal, promoting deep educational and political changes, but soon "established" and "rebuilt" the centralized paradigm (Lima, 1992, pp. 216-72), which means that, in terms of the educational system administration, the 25 April revolution did not change the situation. A certain dependence on central power and a lack of school autonomy was still visible, namely at the level of the curriculum, pedagogical, administrative and financial management and also in the recruitment of human resources. This situation began to change after the 1980s, as we will describe.
2 We adopted the difference made by the General Inspectorate of Education (IGE, 1999a, pp. 1-2) between "control" and "evaluation": control – "group of procedures that verifies one program or action to the aims that were previously established"; evaluation – "systemic description of one analyzed object, aiming the explanation of behaviors, the understanding of specificities and the capacity to give opinions about the results, or the working of a process".
3 According to Cracknell (2000, p. 65), in the participatory approach the evaluator should be "merely part of the team that is participating in an on-going manner in the process of monitoring and evaluation".
4 According to Escudero Escorza (2001), inflexible models contain several methodological difficulties when applied and are theoretically questionable.
5 For each school there is a school report that describes the school performance.

References

Afonso, N. (2000), "O novo modelo de gestão em jeito de entrevista com Natércio Afonso", *Informação*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 51-60.

Barroso, J. (2000a), "Autonomie et modes de régulation locale dans le système éducatif", *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, Vol. 130, pp. 57-71.

Barroso, J. (2000b), "Avaliação e autonomia: algumas reflexões sobre a avaliação externa do regime de autonomia, administração e gestão das escolas", *Informação*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 20-34.

Broadfoot, P. (2000), "Un nouveau mode de régulation dans un système décentralisé: l'État évaluateur", *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, Vol. 130, pp. 43-55.

Clímaco, M. (2000), "Reforçar a solidez e a confiança", *Nota Informativa*, Vol. 8, pp. 1-2.

Costa, J.A. (1996), *Imagens Organizacionais da Escola*, Edições ASA, Porto.

Costa, J.A. (1997), *O Projecto Educativo da Escola e as Políticas Educativas Locais: Discursos e Práticas*, Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro.

Cracknell, B.E. (2000), *Evaluating Development Aid*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Escudero Escorza, T. (2001), "Modelos de Avaliação de Escolas", conference at the University of Aveiro (published).

Formosinho, J. and Machado, J. (2000), "A administração das escolas no Portugal democrático", in Formosinho, J., Ferreira, F. and Machado, J. (Eds), *Políticas Educativas e Autonomia das Escolas*, Edições Asa, Porto, pp. 31-63.

Glenn, C. (1998), "In what ways is it not desirable for schools or universities to be autonomous?", *Autonomy in Education, Yearbook of the European Association for Education, Law and Policy*, Vol. III, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, pp. 11-20.

IGE (1999a), *Funções e Tipologia das Intervenções da Inspecção-Geral da Educação*, documento de trabalho reservado, Inspecção-Geral da Educação, Lisboa.

IGE (1999b), *Balanço Social de 1999*, Inspecção-Geral da Educação, Lisboa.

IGE (2000a), *Integrated Evaluation of Schools: Concept and Procedures*, concise version, Inspecção-Geral da Educação, Lisboa.

IGE (2000b), *Avaliação Integrada das Escolas: Apresentação a Procedimentos*, Inspecção-Geral da Educação, Lisboa.

IGE (2001), *Avaliação Integrada das Escolas – 1999/2000. Relatório Nacional das Avaliações Integradas*, concise version, Inspecção-Geral da Educação, Lisboa.

Lima, L. (1992), *A Escola como Organização e a Participação na Organização Escolar. Um Estudo do Escola Secundária em Portugal (1974-1988)*, Instituto de Educação da Universidade do Minho, Braga.

OECD (2000), *Education at a Glance. OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

Senge, P. (1999), *A Quinta Disciplina*, Best Seller, São Paulo.

SICI (1998), *Full Inspections of Schools: Concept and Experience*, Report on the Workshop, 16-18 October 1997, organized for the Flemish Inspectorate of Education for SICI.

Standaert, R. (1998), "Deregulation versus regulation: a European perspective", *Autonomy in Education, Yearbook of the European Association for Education, Law and Policy*, Vol. III, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, pp. 21-7.