



NRT PORTUGAL 2019

Report

Author: Sofia Marques da Silva, Daniela Silva, University of Porto – Centre for Research and Intervention in Education - FPCEUP

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Context

Immigration to Portugal started to increase significantly in the late 90s and early 2000s, increasing from 1.3% in 1991 to 8.3% in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). In 2017, the percentage was 13,9%, with a total number of 480.300 residents with legal status (SEF/GEPP, 2018). The countries of origin with the highest percentages are Brazil (21,9%), followed by Cape Verde (7,2%), Romania (6,4%), Ukraine (6,1), UK (5,5%), China (5,5%), France (4,1%), Italy (4,1%), Angola (3,9%), Guinea (3,4%) and a percentage of 3,4 % for other nationalities (SEF/GEPP, 2018).

The Governing of Education is under the Ministry of Education (MoE), which has the mission to conceptualize, conduct, execute and evaluate national policy concerning the education system, from preschool education, to basic and secondary education, as well as extra-school education . Other organizations under government action or outside this scope play an important role in promoting formal and non-formal education.

There are laws that try to support the integration of migrants, but are not specific to immigrant children's education: Decree-law n° 6/2001 of 18th January, which ensures basic education for all, no matter their nationality, and the integration of the curriculum of education for citizenship; implementing order n°7/2006 which defends the recognition and respect for the individual needs of all students and ensures the support to learn the Portuguese language; in July 2005, the Guidance Document for Portuguese as Non-Mother Tongue was published.

Concerning the migrant population, the High Commissioner for Migration (HCM) is articulated with the MoE in the field of education. The HCM is a governmental institute, dependent of the Council of Ministers, which promotes public policies that favour social inclusion, equal opportunities and diversity appreciation. Worthy of note, at this level, is the Strategic Plan for Migrations, aimed at fostering answers to address complex problems, towards the development of a modern and fair migration policy. As mentioned on the website of the HCM: "The High Commission for Migration, Public Institution, directly dependent of the Presidency of the Ministers Council, has the mission of collaborating on determining, executing and assessing the public, transversal and sectorial policies concerning migrations, which are relevant for the integration of migrants in the national, international and Portuguese-speaking contexts, for the integration of the immigrants and ethnic groups – in particular, the Roma Communities – and for managing and valuing the diversity between cultures, ethnicities and religions" . Under the aforementioned strategic plan, there are specific measures to promote intercultural education and to address school abandonment.

Under the promotion of social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, there was the creation of the Programa Escolhas [Choices Program], a national governmental program with the central mission of promoting social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, including migrant children and young people.

Educational policies for immigrant children

Under the promotion of social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, there was the creation of the Programa Escolhas [Choices Program], a national governmental program with the central mission of promoting social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts. This is done by involving children and young people in after school programs to enhance their



engagement in informal educational activities, aiming to also promote school engagement among at-risk children and young people, as well as promote several activities, such as computer learning, language learning, sports, etc. The Choices Program is applied in vulnerable socio-economic contexts, not exactly schools, but in connection with schools that serve those contexts. Students in many schools from those contexts attend this program.

An 'Intercultural School Stamp' policy initiative has been developed since 2012, involving the General-Directorate of Education (MoE), the HCM and the Aga Khan Foundation, and it evaluates schools and assigns them to different levels, depending on how school practices 1) promote the recognition and value of diversity as an opportunity and source of learning for all; and 2) implement specific strategies/actions to promote interculturality, equal opportunity and educational success for all. This framework also aims to provide means for schools to critically examine and improve their practices toward interculturality, and to motivate schools to share knowledge and experience (Szelei et al, 2019: 179).

Another joint initiative to promote Intercultural Education in Schools is the Intercultural Schools Network.

The Intercultural Schools Network is a program also promoted by the HCM,I.P., the General-Directorate of Education and the Aga Khan Foundation, to support the capacity building of schools and the sharing of good practices in intercultural education. The Network is composed of schools committed to promoting the reception, integration and educational success of all children and young people, regardless of their cultural or national origins, and to promoting a culture and practice of opening up to difference and establishing positive interactions between students and other members of the educational community from different cultures.

Participation in the network means to integrate intercultural education practices in the School Education Project and the Annual Plan of Activities in the following areas: culture of the School; Curriculum (content, resources and didactic activities) and Community engagement; to provide intercultural training sessions to different actors of the educational community; to participate in mentoring, supervision and monitoring activities and to share practices and resources using a collaborative platform. In 2017-2019 the network involved around 120 schools.

National Round Table

The Portugal NRT took place on 27th June 2019, between 14h30 and 17h30, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto.

The event was organized under the scope of a focus group discussion where the participants were invited to answer and discuss some questions proposed by the organizing members. It was carefully taken into consideration that all participants would have the same time to discuss and present their points of view.

19 participants from different organizations were distributed the following way:

- 1 professor/researcher from the University of Minho, with expertise in intercultural education and coordinator of the Observatory of the Roma Community.
- 1 researcher from the Centre for Human Development Studies, with expertise in Anthropology and multiculturalism;
- 1 researcher of the University of Porto with a PhD in Migrant students in Higher Education;
- 1 researcher of the University of Porto finishing a PhD in youth and citizenship in schools.
- 1 researcher of the University of Porto developing a PhD in Intercultural Competences and youth participation;
- 1 member of the High Commission for Migration (HCM);
- 2 professors/researchers from the University of Porto, CIE-FPCEUP coordinating projects on migrants and minorities and radicalization.



- 1 professor coordinator of the Paulo Freire Institute;
- 4 basic and secondary teachers;
- 1 member of a school board;
- 2 psychologists working in a school;
- 3 social mediators working in a school

The main focus of the NRT was to discuss the development of intercultural competences in different educational contexts, but with a particular focus on formal education contexts. The educational field, in general, and schools, in particular, represent some of the most challenging contexts when it comes to issues related to multicultural societies, particularly with regard to how all pupils are integrated or how curricula might be more inclusive. The organization of western schools is targeted towards a mass culture and, although the discussion about multiculturalism arises, this discussion enters the educational system by talking about the school performance of children with minority backgrounds (Dietz, 2003). Although school constitutes a multicultural context, comprising a heterogeneous community, which recognizes the positive potential that can emerge from the interaction with different others (Ribeiro, 2014), at the same time, it is recognized as a space where young people experience exclusion (Ribeiro, 2014) and a sense of *strangeness* (Silva, 2013). Interculturality is a less expressed reality that requires availability and inter-knowledge.

The concept of *intercultural competences* demands an interested, curious and “free-thinking” spirit towards communities that have distinctive cultural imprints and the ability to understand and interpret their practices, values and speeches (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). At the same time, these competences settle a relational dimension among those who are involved in the daily interactions. This is the dimension that young people seem to value the most (Silva & Silva, 2018). Given the impact of migration in Portugal, we aimed to contribute to the discussion of strategies to promote the integration and inclusion of pupils with a minority background in schools, and to understand the struggles that schools are facing in dealing with specific communities. Therefore, we considered that our aim was not only to identify intercultural competences that are being developed in educational contexts, but also to discuss strategies to promote them.

Inputs and debate points

The NRT was activated by the following questions:

- **How are schools organized to improve inclusion?**
- **What is our understanding of *intercultural competences*?**
- **Which intercultural practices/activities are under development in schools?**
- **How may educational contexts, schools specifically, contribute to the development of intercultural competences?**
- **How may schools, different organizations and the academy work, collaboratively, to foster quality inclusion?**



The discussion started with the presentation of each participant who briefly explained their work with minorities and migrants in their contexts. School members explained some specific activities and strategies carried out to address migrant inclusion: specific projects and activities involving the Roma community (two of the schools presented at the NRT have a large number of students from the Roma community).

Creating safe spaces and nurturing close relationships

There are different strategies to be carried out when a migrant arrives at school. One example is given by a NRT participant who explains the option of including a newly arrived migrant student in a small class with a specific profile, which may contribute to a better integration. The decision for a specific class is based on the students' class profile and the teachers' personalities. Another reported strategy to be more inclusive is to develop projects that involve parents in the school life, including developing learning activities inside the classroom. This strategy aims to create bridges and bonds between the school and families, which are the foundation of a trusting relationship that plays a crucial role in creating safe places and a sense of security.

For the Roma community, one participant referred that it was very important to create bonds with students and especially with families, namely knowing and reproducing their culture in school so as to create a sense of belonging in school. This led to the creation of a formal project that was extended to classroom strategies and curricular adaptations related to these students' interests.

Participation and voices spaces

Following the previous examples, participants mentioned the development of "interactive groups", in which families are motivated to participate in group activities with students.

Teachers and other participants mentioned that taking into account what students need, as well as their values and cultures, is a very important part of their work. The students' voices were mentioned as the starting point for all pedagogical work.

Obstacles to integration and inclusion

Participants from schools were unanimous in mentioning language constraints as one initial and difficult obstacle to overcome. Aligned with this effort were diverse programmes that all schools are developing to improve learning of the teaching language: Portuguese.

Another obstacle is related to refugee students: many times they do not present documents, schools do not know their level of knowledge and learning, and there are no specific guidelines for this from the government. Schools are placing the students in classes according to their age and are dealing with possible difficulties throughout the school year with special support and help for these students.

Positive discrimination or just discrimination?

One topic raised by researchers was the fact that certain measures addressing only specific communities (minorities) may be worse and conducive to a more stereotyped view of those groups. This aspect was understood by practitioners as a dangerous way of creating a gap but, on the other hand, it may raise awareness of the



difference which indeed exists and which needs to be addressed as an opportunity to learn and to promote social change.

Levels and contexts of intercultural competences

This discussion put into perspective another layer of how we may understand intercultural competences which, beyond the individual or even the group levels, must be integrated in the culture of the organization. Therefore, we would talk about organisational competences to work with diversity, rather than individual competences. Organisational competences have a wide spectrum when considering needs in working with ethnic minorities, specifically. From the discussions, we may indicate the following:

(i) motivated leadership; (ii) resilience; (iii) value the “other”; (iv) cooperation between partners; (v) intentionality of actions; (vi) human rights culture. At the individual level, the following competences were recognized: (i) recognition of one’s own prejudices; (ii) life experience and worldview; (iii) work with self-knowledge tools; (iv) emotional intelligence.

Therefore, from the discussion we agreed that *competence* is the capacity to mobilize different types of knowledge in different contexts.

Towards the development of intercultural competences

The development of intercultural competences benefits from specific attitudes:

- Shared management of the classroom, both with other professionals and with students;
- Capacity to search and identify relevant information and pedagogical tools;
- Capacity for self-reflection and self-analysis about prejudices and lack of intercultural awareness.

For leaders and school management, participants indicated the relevance of constructing a school culture towards interculturality that inspires schoolwork and relationships. On the scope of new government guidelines related to autonomy and curricular flexibility, it is now possible for schools to work on specific problems and specific themes in a more integrative way. With this national strategy, each school has more autonomy to work on specific educational pathways, specific projects to better serve the educational community and their public.

All participants agreed that the research contexts should be simultaneously intervention contexts. It was mentioned that academia may improve practices and provide another perspective of daily practices from educational contexts.

An important piece of feedback on the relevance and impact that this type of strategy (NRT) may have was a remark made by two participants who, after discussing the lack of training in intercultural competences and diversity, concluded that the NRT was in itself a training moment.

As concluding remarks, we highlight the fact that participants exchanged references of materials to be used in their contexts, and the healthy and positive discussion, which was always a balanced dialogue between practitioners and researchers.



Conclusions and way forward

This NRT revealed to be an important moment of discussion and confrontation between practitioners and researchers. Practical experience is important to inform academia about the needs and state, and research experience affords the contexts an opportunity to have an outside look regarding their day-to-day practices. In general, the questions related to migrant integration are worked on by schools on a daily basis and in an integrated way. However, some schools exhibited actions that we may not consider to be fully intercultural, if they do not allow the sharing of experiences between all students and merely present the cultures of the “other”, the “stranger”, the “foreigner”. Schools would improve inclusion levels if those activities were included in a multi/intercultural perspective, where sharing is the key to reduce prejudice, discrimination and exclusion. One of the relevant aspects raised during the NRT was to question the profiles of the professionals from the schools. Is there a specific professional profile in contexts where diversity is high, namely, a set of competences related to **relationship** (dialogue, empathy, closeness); **cultures and integration** (appreciation of ethnic and cultural identities, understanding the “other”) and **practice** (adequacy of practices to different publics, valuing different knowledge and cultures) (Silva & Silva, 2018).

We will develop, through participatory research-action, two pilot studies in the metropolitan area of Porto, involving two school clusters, one of which participated in the NRT. The main idea is to better understand, in super-diversity education contexts, how schools and their communities are addressing diversity, as well as to collaborate in processes of developing intercultural competences among school actors (students and staff). We expect to involve more participants of the NRT, organize dissemination events to involve other schools and share strategies. The final aim is to develop a reference, with guidelines to promote intercultural competences.

Follow up of the NRT

Since the creation of the CIIE, in 1988, Interculturality has been a main interest for research and intervention, and to this day, it remains a central concern and organiser of our work. Conducting research on topics related to diversity and interculturality, teacher training and cultural diversity, as well as the inclusion and participation of migrants and minorities, is part of the work done by the CIIE. We have several ongoing projects and PhD projects under those topics, providing us with a body of knowledge to understand new phenomena and challenges related to cultural diversity. Our relationship with the majority of the NRT participants is solid. The CIIE has the School Life Observatory (OBVIE), which works as an amplifier of our research and mobilises a substantial amount of school actors through a collaborative approach. Most importantly, the relationship between the CIIE and the HCM in SIRIUS has existed since 2013, establishing a cooperation that will enable us to co-organise activities and network at a national level. The HCM, a government level organisation, will open up the possibility to influence in another sense, providing all of us with a policy level perspective.



Regarding our aims and action plan, we consider that the expertise we gather in the roundtable, together with the expertise of the CIIE and its partners, is almost enough to accomplish our aims:

- **HEI** provide us with conceptual and theoretical grounds to reflect on good practices and prospects for new approaches. These are also the institutions responsible for in-service and pre-service teachers and the training of other school professionals. Therefore, we are interested in engaging with HEI to discuss courses, curricula and the possibilities and obstacles to changing the curricula.
- **Teachers and other school staff and principals** are the main actors to whom we must listen, and with whom we must share and collaborate;
- Research experts from different Universities to provide us with critical thinking, sustained arguments, as well as strong and quality data.
- **HCM and the Observatory of the Roma Community** (under the same Ministry), as representing policy makers, and, to some extent, the State have a relevant role in providing central knowledge and a bigger matrix to understand different concerns related to integration and inclusion.

Nonetheless, we consider that the less represented group is young people. However, the activities that will follow this roundtable will solve this gap, as it will be based on the participation of young people in the participatory research action activities.

Continuity with the NRT 2018

In 2018, the main topic was the role of digital tools and competences in contributing to the inclusion of migrants and minorities. As we wrote last year: “According to UNESCO, digital competences for employment and social inclusion are considered crucial to a fairer societyⁱ, as is also stated in the Digital Education Action Plan of the European Commissionⁱⁱ. (...) Furthermore, digital competences are seen as a complementary strategy to integrate populations such as migrants and refugees, therefore fighting the isolation these groups tend to suffer”. The NRT was an opportunity to raise awareness to the fact that society, as well as its institutions and services, are becoming increasingly digitised, and that all citizens need to have digital autonomy to benefit from advantages that the digital may bring. One aspect discussed was how technologies are produced and how, when programming, it is important to have intercultural sensitivity. This is a competence that may be integrated in companies and organisations with high impact in our society at large as those producing everyday tech. Technology and diversity need to be together, as some big companies have already realised. Therefore, the issue of intercultural competences was a topic last year, which we decided to bring to the forefront this year. In the present NRT, we start the discussion on the development of intercultural competences from the educational standpoint and mainly focus on the school context. However, we understand that this discussion is relevant to other institutions and organisations.

Moreover, the main organiser of the NRT series of the project, the CIIE, has a string field of research focused on vulnerable populations, such as minorities and migrants, and with a focus on educational contexts that are



relevant to understanding new social phenomena and to working for social change. Finally, SIRIUS 2.0 is theoretically grounded on inclusion and interculturality and, therefore, all topics will fall into these two main conceptual fields.

ⁱInfo at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/digital-skills-critical-jobs-and-social-inclusion>

ⁱⁱEuropean Commission (2018) Digital Education Action Plan. Brussels: European Commission



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Participants

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Folha de presenças NRT

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Instituição	Nomes	Assinatura
CIIE-FPCEUP	Sofia Marques da Silva	<i>Sofia Marques da Silva</i>
	Daniela Silva	<i>Daniela Silva</i>
	Preciosa Fernandes	<i>Preciosa Fernandes</i>
	Cosmin Nada	<i>Cosmin Nada</i>
Instituto Paulo Freire/FPCEUP	Luíza Cortesão	<i>Luíza Cortesão</i>
	Sara Pinheiro	<i>Sara Pinheiro</i>
Alto Comissariado para as Migrações	Sara Caetano	<i>Sara Caetano</i>
Centro de Estudos de Desenvolvimento Humano	Filipe Martins	<i>Filipe Martins</i>
Agrupamento de Escolas de Rio Tinto	Paula Costa (Diretora)	
Agrupamento de Escolas de Paredes	Cristina Santos (Adjunta da Direção)	
	Manuela Freitas (Psicóloga)	<i>Manuela Freitas</i>
	Sara Silva (Psicóloga)	<i>Sara Silva</i>
	Joana Aroso (Mediadora)	<i>Joana Aroso</i>
	Sandro Domingos (Mediador)	<i>Sandro Domingos</i>
	Ricardo Trigo (Mediador)	<i>Ricardo Trigo</i>
Agrupamento de Escolas Serafim Leite	Tavares Cristina Tavares (Adjunta de Direção)	<i>Cristina Tavares</i>
	Mariana Ferreira (Docente ETEC PLNM)	<i>Mariana Ferreira</i>
	Inês Picado (Docente PLNM)	<i>Inês Picado</i>
Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco	Teresa Borges (Coordenadora TEIP)	<i>Teresa Borges</i>
	Ruben Rocha (prof. 1º ciclo)	<i>Ruben Rocha</i>
Escola Secundária Dr. Joaquim Gomes Ferreira Alves	Álvaro Santos (Diretor)	
Universidade do Minho/ Observatório das Comunidades Ciganas	Maria Casa-Nova	<i>Maria Casa-Nova</i>