

Conferences

Teacher Education and Supervision: a new scope

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INTRODUCTION

Supervision is one of my favourite professional interests. After becoming a teacher myself, I became involved in teacher education and, within this area, my interests focused on supervision. Two years after completing the training internship, I became a supervisor, which triggered my interest in studying supervision on the one hand, and teacher education, namely Language Training, since my main educational background is in Germanics, on the other. Throughout my academic life as supervisor and researcher in this area, I have combined my professional experience with reflection on experience. What I bring you today are my own thoughts, stemming from this very combination.

I don't know exactly what the title of this presentation has aroused in you... When we talk about teacher supervision, it is mainly basic training that tends to come to mind. My contribution here, today, goes beyond basic training which is why I chose the title "Teacher Education and Supervision: a new scope"¹.

I should point out that, as a kind of advanced organiser, I have structured this presentation in two parts. In the first I will present a re-conceptualisation of the supervision concept which, in my opinion, bestows a far broader scope upon the activity of "supervising", since it also covers schooling. Nowadays, supervision also has the role of dynamizing and monitoring the development of schooling. It is no longer solely related to teachers in basic training, but rather to the entire concept of schooling and to all those who perform the task of teaching, studying or supporting education. So, this will be the first point, re-conceptualisation.

I then thought it would also be interesting to discuss the case of an innovative subject which was accompanied in a way I consider to be supervisory. Thus, the second part will consist of a presentation of this case, within the

context of an apprentice or reflective approach, which I will go on to define at a later stage. I will try to analyse the factors that favour the creation of a shared learning culture and the influence this had on the course innovation process which was, and I will say now so that false expectations are not fed, a higher education (and not basic or secondary) course innovation project. I accompanied the process myself.

A NEW SCOPE FOR SUPERVISION

In the case of Portuguese supervision (and I say Portuguese as it differs from Brazilian or American supervision), usually, whenever supervision is mentioned, it is the basic training of teachers that comes to mind and, indeed, the setting in which most of my supervisory work was carried out, first as a school supervisor and later as a university supervisor. In the early stages of my more theoretical reflections and empirical studies on supervision, basic training was the main focal point.

However, in a book I published with José Tavares in 1987 (a pioneer book in the field of supervision in Portugal, the first, I think, in Portugal where the word *supervision* appeared in the title, or the expression "supervision of pedagogical practice"), we said that within the framework of further training the supervision of teacher education "emerges as self and hetero-supervision, being both committed and collaborative, where teachers help each other to develop and improve their own teaching methods" (Alarcão & Tavares, 1987, p. 148).

So, in 1987 we already had this conviction which has gradually intensified over the years and today, I would like to draw your attention to the role of supervision in further training rather than in basic training. I believe that this aspect will be very important in the future, even though supervision in basic training should not be for-

gotten. Indeed, those of you who are attentive to recent legislation on teacher education courses will have noticed the weight given to this component, expressly set out as “practice of supervised teaching”; this is the expression used. Furthermore, it is clear that the opportunity (now that basic teacher education is no longer putting on pressure in terms of quantity) can not be missed to focus on the quality of internships and the possibility of developing and researching supervisory practices, thus, creating or furthering knowledge on this subject.

Acknowledgement of the importance of the role adopted by the school nowadays led me to think about the supervision of the institution, or of the school as an organisation, or even as a community, to use the words of Sergiovanni (1994). For whenever supervision is mentioned, in terms of basic training, we focus a lot on the teacher, whereas when supervision is referred to for further training, our attention is drawn to the collective body of teachers. However, it is the important role attributed to the school today that has led me to re-conceptualise the setting for supervision. So, fairly recently, in 2002, I wrote the following: “While still employed so as to ensure the quality of training and teaching practices, supervision should be regarded not only in the classroom context”, (and basic training generally focused on the classroom), “but in a far broader context of the school, such as a site and moment where all children and youths, teachers and nursery teachers, auxiliaries and employees might learn and, also for itself”, itself, the school, “as a qualifying organisation which also learns and develops” (Alarcão, 2002, p. 218).

The evolution of my line of thinking resulted in changes related to verbalising this concept of supervision. While in 1987 we defined supervision as “the process by which a teacher, by rule a more experienced and knowledgeable one, supervises another teacher or teacher applicant in his/her human and professional development” (Alarcão & Tavares, 1987, p. 18), in the second edition of this book, revised and published in 2003, we presented supervision as a process based on the “dynamization and monitoring of the school organisation’s qualitative development”, and also, “of those developing their studying, teaching or educational support therein, through individual and collective learning contexts, including those of the new agents” (Alarcão & Tavares, 2003, p. 154). If we take a closer look, the supervision of basic training is included, however, it is put into the context of the broader supervision of the school and the further training of teaching staff. All these dimensions are inter-connected.

To be concise and focus on the main ideas, I would say that whenever we look at the development and evolution of supervision, we notice its broader area of influence and greater association with professional development. When I say professional development, I’m not

only thinking about teacher candidates, but particularly the professional development of those who are already professionals in a further training work context; I am considering a more collaborative and less hierarchical orientation.

My opinion is corroborated by Sullivan and Glantz who, in 2000, referred to the supervision of the 21st century (and this is the century we are in now) as having two fundamental characteristics: one called “democraticity” and the other called leadership vision. Why democraticity? It is because democraticity is supervision based on collaboration among teachers in shared decisions and reflective practice, geared towards self-directed or, the more frequent term, autonomous professionals.

There is also leadership geared towards the future. In other words, leadership vision which promotes the values of democraticity and develops supervision programs with an impact... Indeed, supervision must impact improvement in teaching and learning. So, basically, when we work with the teachers we want them to act as a vehicle for getting through to the students. We want education and teaching to be better. This has to involve teachers, but one must always bear in mind that the ultimate aim is the quality of education.

One may ask, then, what is the role of international supervisors? I tend to say that the role of international supervisors is, fundamentally, to encourage teachers to work together as colleagues bearing an attitude characterised by questioning and being open to transformation. What exactly is at stake in this conception? The supervisor is not the one to act, nor does he/she order action; the supervisor is the person who creates the conditions for teachers to reflect and act in a collaborative manner, in a questioning and critical manner and with an investigative spirit, which is absolutely necessary nowadays. They do not have to be researchers in a truly academic sense, but must have an investigative spirit and must be able to carry out small scale research studies, since this is the only way towards attaining innovation and transformation.

You may notice something constant in my train of thought... something that has remained constant since the early definitions, since the definition of 1987: the most experienced teacher is the one who can help. The idea of help, support, attention to one’s neighbour, circumstances and needs still remains. I always associate this idea with a challenge. Indeed, I tend to say that supervision is basically a process of challenges accompanied by support so that people are able to respond to challenges. This conviction has remained steadfast throughout my entire thinking background.

I will now raise a question I have frequently asked myself, but for which I have not yet found an answer; these are my thoughts and the question: who, then, are the institutional supervisors? As far as I am concerned,

all those who are in the school are supervisors. Taking supervision to be the afore-mentioned self-supervisory and hetero-supervisory process, everyone has the obligation to help each other and contribute to a better school. However, some perform this role more actively than others. Why? Perhaps they have more suitable characteristics for such roles. They stand out as reflection leaders, as people who offer support and challenges. I even understand that in terms of entities at the highest levels, namely Executive Boards, someone generally has (or takes on) added responsibility in relation to the supervision of the school. So, when I say “everyone, but some more than others”, my idea is as follows: in principle everyone is a supervisor, and should have a self and hetero-supervisory spirit, however, there should also be people who feel more responsible for spreading the supervisory dynamics. In this context, we may recall Sergiovanni and Starrat, two Americans who have worked extensively on matters supervision-related matters. In 2002 they predicted that the future would show that the supervision of *Presidentes dos Conselhos Directivos* [School Directors] and directors of other management-related boards, in the quality of leading figures, would be less important than collegiate supervision involving peers, in other words, the afore-mentioned collaborative supervision and hetero-supervision.

A SUPERVISION CASE IN A REFLECTIVE SCHOOL

In the second part of this presentation, I will present you with my reflections on a supervision case. I thought it might be interesting. I have analysed it from a number of perspectives and will now look at it from a supervisory standpoint. I have called it “A Supervision Case in a Reflective School”.

REFLECTIVE SCHOOL

I have called it “A Supervision Case in a Reflective School” as I have come to regard the school as having the ability to think for itself. I have attributed the term “reflective school” to this thinking school. The concept is not original. It is basically the concept of the learning and qualifying school, which ties in with the idea of Senge. Original is, perhaps, the designation. I thought it interesting to call it a reflective school, since this is in keeping with my own train of thought. As some of those present today already know, I introduced Donald Schön’s idea regarding the reflective professional to Portugal, as a result of my sabbatical leave in 1989 in the United States. At that time the work of Schön was considered important and while I was there, I had the opportunity to read and study his works. The following year, in the context of the supervision subject I was lecturing

in the Masters degree in Supervision, I thought it would be interesting to present the thoughts of Donald Schön to my students. At the end of the course- and due to the fact that my students had shown interest in this theme- I decided to write an article on the thoughts of Donald Schön, which was published in the first edition of the *Cadernos CIDInE*, in 1992, and rapidly went out of stock owing to an overwhelming response to the ideas of the reflective teacher. Later on, in 1996, I used the same text for reproduction in a book I published with my students in the same Masters course since, when they arrived, they had said: “Professor, there is a lot of talk about reflective teachers and we want to know how supervision can be carried out in such a way that teachers are led to becoming reflective!” It is always the idea of “how”, usually everyone wants to know “how to do something”! So, they presented me with this challenge: “it is time to give more specific information on how to become a reflective teacher”. I returned the challenge to them, saying: “Well, we are just beginning the Masters course, we are starting this subject and you are going to have to work. Your work will be geared towards this theme and based on the study of reflective teacher education strategies”. So, the book stemmed from this period and is called *Formação Reflexiva de Professores: Estratégias de Supervisão* [The Reflective Training of Teachers: Supervision Strategies] (Alarcão, 1996).

But... let us go back to the case under study before I give you my definition of a reflective school. The designation and design go back to 2001, a year when a number of different books emerged, some published in Portugal, others in Brazil. I regard the reflective school as “an organisation that continuously thinks for itself in its social mission and organisation, and confronts the development of its activity in a simultaneously evaluative and educational heuristic process” (Alarcão, 2001, p. 35).

It is also worth highlighting an aspect related to my own life experience and its influence on my way of thinking. First of all, I worked on the reflective teacher issue on an individual level, in terms of the teacher, when I was involved in the supervision of basic training teachers, although at this stage I was already aware of the advantages of supervision in further training, as I have already mentioned. In the meantime, I went on to become the Vice-Dean of the University of Aveiro and began to adopt a different perspective, the perspective of the school, the organisation, the community. It was this perspective and need to become concerned with the University (which, although it is a university, is also a school, is it not?) as an organisation and community and to understand how all of these aspects inter-play and need to be monitored and how important it is that the school thinks and organises itself in accordance with what it wants to be... which led me to the designation and conceptualisation of the “reflective school”.

Two factors are part of this conceptualisation: on the one hand, my experience as head of a school and, on the other, the transference of the defining elements of a reflective teacher to a reflective school. Thus, the school emerges and thinks for itself (there is clearly a metaphor here) in terms of what it wants to be, its goal and how it is organised (or disorganised!) to accomplish such goals. The school has to have a monitoring process which includes a supervision process linked to the way it deals with what it wants to be and how it is organised to accomplish such a goal. It implies a confrontation with reality and activity. This confrontation involves a heuristic process which is developed not by the walls of the school but by the people therein. It is a process which is simultaneously evaluative of the school's functioning and educational for those (in theory everyone) involved in it.

As one may see, Senge's (1990) idea of a learning organisation is behind this conception, as has already been mentioned. I read a lot of work by this author at the time and was greatly influenced by him.

FINALLY THE CASE

Now, it is a case about what, as Shulman (1986) would ask?

It is about the introduction of a new course subject — “project-based learning”, which is basically a learning modality based on problems, more commonly known as PBL, but in which the problems are part of projects, since the courses in question are related to Engineering.

WHERE DID THE CASE TAKE PLACE?

It was in the ESTGA (*Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão de Águeda*) [School of Technology and Management of Águeda], in the University of Aveiro. Very briefly, the ESTGA is a polytechnic school which was established in 1997, and I would like to stress this fact as it is important for the case in question. The University of Aveiro currently integrates four polytechnic schools. The ESTGA was the first. The second was ISCA (*Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração*) [Higher Institute of Accounting and Administration]. The third, created from scratch, is the *Escola Superior de Saúde* (ESSUA) [Health School]. More recently, the School of Design, Management and Production Technologies in North Aveiro was created. As part of the University of Aveiro, these schools enjoy considerable autonomy. The ESTGA provides a number of courses in Engineering and some in Management, such as Directing, Trade Studies, etc., however, we will focus exclusively on the Engineering courses. So, the case I am about to present is related to Engineering courses.

THE GOAL OF ESTGA

The ESTGA was created in 1997. In its opening session, the former Dean, Júlio Pedrosa, underlined the kind

of training he envisaged for the ESTGA as a polytechnic education. A school integrated in a University will always slant towards a university education and, so, in its actual inauguration, the Dean, in his opening speech, stressed the fact that the School was, indeed, a polytechnic school. The type of training envisaged aimed to provide: a profound mastery of basic knowledge; elaborate technical training geared towards the profession and the development of the required competencies to accommodate local company needs. The implicit message in his words was no less important than the explicit message. The implicit message was as follows: Dear friends (the dear friends were school teachers, very few at the time) methodologies that are suitable for polytechnic education need to be explored and developed. He was saying that he believed that the teaching provided there should not be a replica of university teaching. It had to have different characteristics of its own and he presented a challenge... my dear friends, let's get down to work as it is your job to come up with the characteristics!

THE FIRST STUDENTS

The first students arrived in October. There were very few and they had the following characteristics: a very heterogeneous group; very low marks at secondary school, they were students who had not managed to enter university, most of them were used to low teacher expectations; de-motivated; lacking in study habits, using superficial learning strategies instead of profound learning strategies; very dependent on teachers. This was the characterisation presented to us by the teachers in a meeting when we (I say we because I was Vice-Dean to Júlio Pedrosa) went to the school in early December.

A PROBLEM

The teachers were very concerned but displayed a pro-active attitude. After presenting the above-mentioned characterisation, and being significantly challenged at the time by the Dean- the supervisory component comes in here- they reinforced the fact that they would have to abandon the traditional teaching method, the method they were using as they had also been taught this way. They now regarded it as unsuitable, not only in relation to the characteristics of the students, but also to the characteristics of the polytechnic itself in the area of Engineering. The *click* had been made. There was clearly a problem to be solved and the desire to find a solution.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION. A CHALLENGE

An initial solution emerged, or rather, a possible, hypothetical solution. The Dean had been in Denmark some time earlier and had had contact with the Dean of the University of Aalborg. He had heard about how all the courses at this university were structured: along the lines of project-based learning. He had thought the

idea interesting and had brought a small book back to Portugal based on this experience (Kjersdam and Enemark, 1994). He said: “Perhaps there is a solution to be found here!” We were confronted with a challenge. It seemed to be a solution, but was it really? What had to be done? First of all, it was necessary to get to know Aalborg’s model in depth and to understand what it meant. On this level, the Dean signed a dispatch making me responsible for creating the conditions “to explore whether the experience of Aalborg would make sense in the context of the ESTGA”. We had a hypothetical solution but we needed to find out if it was suitable.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

I accepted the challenge and began by organising a field trip. I took great care with the organisation. Six teachers were selected to accompany me on a week’s visit to Aalborg, not to take a holiday, but to immerse in the University from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m., in permanent contact with the heads, the teachers (even entering classes), students, talking to them when they were involved in group work, at meal times, etc. The visit was organised beforehand. Before leaving, we read the book the Dean had brought back and in which such innovation was described. So, effectively, our initial theoretical information was taken from the book. We had a meeting, before leaving Portugal, where we did a survey on the issues requiring solutions. In my opinion, the work I carried out at this stage may also be classified as supervision. In that first meeting, we drew up a list of issues. When we arrived, we already knew what we wanted to see. Obviously, we observed other aspects too, but our visit was based on pre-selected observation points. We already had our framework, albeit flexible..., but still a framework. During the visit we had a meeting every evening to discuss whether we had found answers to some of our questions, or if we needed to know something important and would take note of the answers obtained and the questions that had emerged in the meantime. In addition to the coordination of the group by the Vice-Dean and the research into a framework of understanding, I must stress that the visit was extremely well organised by our hosts. They organised everything with great care, providing plenty of information on a number of levels, offering us the possibility to observe, question and interact. During the visit, the initial scepticism of the teachers in my group gave way to enthusiasm. This enthusiasm increased so dramatically that I, who initially had shown the most enthusiasm, felt that I had to bring them back down to earth. So, from a certain point onwards, I was the one to say: “Be careful! This may not be as good as it seems! We need to think!” It was, however, very interesting to observe the transformation brought about in them by their convictions.

AFTER THE VISIT

And what happened after the visit? A report was written by the teachers on the visit. The report was very critical and detailed and pinpointed the model, presenting the advantages and disadvantages. I will not go into these advantages and disadvantages as I would need a separate presentation for such matters; in this context I am approaching the case from a supervisory standpoint. The report sensibly contained a warning to say that a straightforward transfer could never be carried out, in other words, the Aalborg model could not be introduced immediately in Águeda. I undersigned the report and gave my own personal opinion, in which I said: “I propose an experimental period in the ESTGA. The report should be made known to all the departments in the University of Aveiro”. Why was such an opinion given? Although the University was involved in a very profound process of curriculum revision that affected all the courses, (such process was under my coordination and became known as “Re-thinking curricula”), I believed that regardless of the challenge this new approach might present, it would be a huge risk to try, as suggested by some, to organise all the institution’s courses on this basis. I had no doubts that we should experiment in the ESTGA, in the Engineering courses, as it was still a small school that was facing a problem, a school that at that point in time had only engineering courses and a very motivated body of teachers. The ESTGA seemed to be an ideal setting for carrying out this experiment. On the other hand, as we were preparing to re-organise the university courses too, in a process that anticipated Bologna, the dissemination of the report seemed to be an extra factor that might lead to change, which was why I wanted it to be made known.

Was the experiment carried out in the ESTGA. How? Of course, you will want to know the answer.

INCUBATION PERIOD

There was a long incubation period. It was intentional as we, I myself particularly, were of the opinion that innovation does not occur as a result of hierarchical imposition, but is developed within the institutional culture. So, time was needed for the idea to mature in the school itself. This incubation period involved passing the message from the group that had participated in the visit to the rest of the school which, at that time, consisted of twenty teachers or so. We were fully aware that it would only be worth moving forward with a project of that nature, with such innovation — one that would demand a lot of the students and particularly the teachers- if the full twenty or so teachers, and not only the six, were to agree on it. We had to win over the teachers who had remained in Portugal and who had not witnessed the PBL in action. I had heard the conversations of the six teachers, but now the time had come for the six to convert the others. All the teachers needed to be involved

in the discussion of this idea so that the decision was adopted collectively and did not become a decision of six teachers and the School Director, or a decision from the Dean's Office, with the power to simply order and have it implemented.

THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN CONTEXT

Simultaneously, and even before the school teachers made the final decision to proceed with this curriculum innovation, we began to organise a number of workshops as, clearly, teachers needed to be trained to work in a different way. So, a number of workshops were held. In a very brief note, I would say that these workshops followed a "learn by doing" approach. This means that if it was the aim to implement a project or course subject based on "project-based learning", then the teachers, themselves, by the same token, also had to learn through projects. What project did they have at the time? It was precisely a new curriculum development project. Effectively, they learned how to work with a project-based approach and did their own curriculum development project. Thus, a learning community was created with a truly collaborative learning spirit among all the teachers.

At a certain point, we thought it would be interesting to get feedback from the other teachers on their training... I took what I considered to be the three most significant ideas, in terms of the quality of training, from a case study that was carried out (Gil *et al.*, 2004). There were several workshops, some presented by people from Aalborg and others by a Scottish professor who had helped the University of Aalborg to design and implement the courses and who, after coming here on one occasion, ended up being the main learning facilitator. His philosophy was as follows: "Don't think I'm going to make the decisions for you! I'm here to help you decide!" He clearly positioned himself as the main facilitator of learning. The second idea to be retained is the creation of a learning community that is focused on curriculum development. The teachers felt that the idea of taking the subject as a project to be developed had been an excellent training opportunity and had brought about activities full of meaning. In other words, what they were requested to do in the workshops — and outside the workshops, as they worked hard between them all — were things that made sense to them. Effectively, the teachers were very involved since, as I have already said, we felt that they had had to immerse in the activity. As, at the time, it had not yet been decided whether this was the path to follow or not, a way of getting involved in the activity was to construct a virtual curriculum, or rather, the teachers organised themselves so as to answer the following question: if we follow this project-based approach, what does it imply? What does it imply in curriculum terms, what subjects

should there be, how should these subjects be organised and linked to the project, how will the hours be distributed, what kind of projects are they, what kind of implications will this present for the distribution of teaching hours on timetables, calendars and what are the implications on the actual layout of the School (The school was in the process of being built, so it was still possible for decisions to be made and, on such basis, the architect of the University had joined the group that accompanied me on my visit to Aalborg)? The teachers were split into three groups with a view to studying the implications of the hypothetical innovation by means of simulating a virtual curriculum, even before the actual curriculum was designed, which they later went on to develop.

THE EMERGENCE OF A LEADER

Another very interesting factor, also related to the question of hetero-supervision, is the fact that a natural leader emerged in the process. From a certain point onwards, we began to think: "There must be someone to lead this process!" I was in charge, but I was leading from a distance. One of the group members had to be a leader, but none of us wanted to say: "He or she should be the one!". However, one of the teachers emerged as a natural leader owing to his enthusiasm, dedication, level of questioning in the workshops and initiative, which resulted in his colleagues looking to him as the leader, the institutional supervisor if you like. When we did the case study, he would say "I don't want my colleagues to look upon me as 'he's the one who's going to be in charge', as he feared that this might trigger an attitude of 'if he is in charge then let him tell us what to do!'"

TO SUM UP

Well, to sum up — before moving on to reflection on the supervisory aspects of this case, I would say that awareness of a problem (the low level of student motivation and knowledge and the nature of polytechnic education) led to an analysis of an alternative pedagogical setting: "project-based learning". This process was institutionally supported at the highest level: the Dean's Office. A setting was created that was explored in terms of its principles and implications, not just through the visit to Aalborg, but also in the construction of the virtual curriculum. It was created before the decision was taken and collectively adopted by the teaching staff in a school meeting where the teachers made it clear that they wanted to be involved in the experiment. Such innovation involved a collaborative project (curriculum development) in close connection with a professional teaching development program. Both dimensions, curriculum development and professional development, were always well articulated.

REFLECTING NOW ON THE INNOVATION PROCESS

I will pick up on the ideas expressed in one of my articles on the process of change (Alarcão, 2007). In this process a problem emerged and action was needed. We frequently construct problems, but then we lack the desire to act. In this case the teachers displayed a strong desire to act, the so-called pro-active attitude I have already mentioned. There was also vision. The Dean's idea that we would eventually have an alternative setting in PBL is a display of vision. Leadership was witnessed at the highest levels. Priority was given to the construction of a structured and structuring mental model. When they embarked on this project, people knew what they wanted, how they wanted to accomplish things, as they had fully understood what "project-based learning" effectively was. Ideas were shared and a common culture was developed. What I am about to say was stressed by the Scottish facilitator, an individual with a vast amount of experience in providing support to projects developed in a number of countries. He said something that forced us to think. He said that he had never seen such alignment among institutional strategy, curriculum development and the re-qualification of teacher resources. He said that re-qualification of teacher resources and curriculum development were frequently found but then institutional strategy was often lacking. In this process there was a triangle of cohesion and consolidation which, in his opinion, was decisive. Furthermore, the process was constantly monitored; we were always very attentive.

As far as I am concerned, there were several supervision sources. I have already mentioned some; I will go on to refer to, or shed light upon others, but I would like to underline that such supervision was always very discreet. A systematic reflective process was developed in an institutional setting that we can actually call a reflective school, if the afore-mentioned definition is taken into account.

WITH REGARD TO THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

I will now comment on the supervision process. I must confess that only now have I looked at this case from a supervisory perspective. This is the innovation that emerged from my preparation of this presentation. In this particular case, I regard supervision as a process of learning context creation, in keeping with what I said at the beginning of this presentation. It gave rise to direct contact with PBL in Aalborg. It made the creation of a learning community possible through the involvement of teachers in the curriculum design process. Furthermore, it also established articulation between action and training, since these processes were homologous and the training occurred in a professional context: curriculum development with a new approach.

TYPES OF SUPERVISION INVOLVED

If we take our reflection a step further, we may wonder about the types of supervision involved in this process. Three are quite evident: hierarchical supervision, hetero-supervision and self-supervision. Hierarchical supervision comes from the Dean's Office. Particular attention was given to the development of the process, SOS's were sent out, challenges were presented... but there was also support, the teachers knew they could count on us at any time. Hierarchical supervision was clearly felt, not, however, the type of supervision where one senses someone looking over one's shoulder, but a humanised hierarchical supervision. In addition, there was also a strong collaborative supervision within the groups of teachers, among teachers, the consultant and facilitator and a solid self-supervisory attitude was created. What is interesting is the fact that these three types of supervision were all articulated. There was an interlocking with coherent articulation among the various types; they were not displaced, as if each were independent of the other.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPERVISION

Let us observe the characteristics of the supervision put into practice. We may say that it gave rise to a climate of change. It encouraged a shared culture, created through interaction and dialogue. This supervision had very democratic characteristics. There was never an imposition, no one ever said "Do it this way!". Those involved were left to decide. However, now and again, the process had to be sped up since it was very lengthy and we could not afford to let it cool. The supervision was very contextualised and tied in with the words of the facilitator, the teacher trainer when he said: "Let's see what makes sense to you!" "Look at Aalborg, but look at Aalborg in terms of what makes sense to you!" We would often joke by saying it was the Águeda style Aalborg project, as the curriculum design has very different aspects. There is one aspect that is particularly different and with which neither the facilitator nor myself agreed. We allowed it to pass because we thought that the teachers at that time believed that it had to be done in that way, and we thought it better to let them do it as they saw fit, since they would eventually come to the conclusion that we were right, which, of course, they did. So, what was this difference? In Aalborg "project-based learning" starts immediately in the first semester of the first year and the ESTGA teachers thought that the students were not prepared for it and that it would cause a rift to start with a new approach right at the beginning of the first year. So, they only introduced "project-based learning" from the second year onwards. Although we did not regard this decision to be the most appropriate, we decided that we should not impose our vision and allowed them to act in

accordance with their convictions. They are now using the project from the second semester of the first year onwards and the idea is to bring it to the first semester of the first year.

The supervision carried out was also characterised by a process of challenges and support, which I have already referred to ... I would also add that another important factor was the confidence displayed in the teachers' potential to be innovative. They really felt that we had placed our trust in them and highly respected their decisions. All of this can be conveyed in what we generally refer to as "empowerment", which stresses the idea of bestowing power upon the teachers, does it not?

TO FINALISE

To finalise, I would like to bring you the vision of an Australian author, written twenty years ago, twenty two years ago to be precise. He wrote: "Supervision like 'empowerment' is far more personalised and contextualised'. Teacher and student support in the process of meaning attribution is on his agenda. On this basis, the only reason for having supervisors is to guarantee that the physical, intellectual and emotional resources the teachers need to give meaning to their teaching become available" (Smyth, 1984, reproduced in 1991, p. 74).

We are presented with the idea of the supervisor as facilitator, creator and dynamizer of learning contexts who trusts in the potential of teachers to learn, develop and further their qualifications, needing only favourable conditions, support and challenges to accomplish such tasks.

TO CONCLUDE

On the basis of everything I have just mentioned, in 2002 I designated the supervisor leader of learning communities.

ENDNOTES

1. This text was presented as an oral communication on 3 May 2007 at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon, as part of a Conference Cycle organised by the *Unidade de Investigação e Desenvolvimento de Ciências da Educação* [Educational Sciences R&D Unit of the University of Lisbon] for which I act as consultant.

In the discursive structure of its original form, a number of oral indicators may be identified, many of which I have not completely eliminated, so as to remain faithful to the context within which it was spoken.

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