

Educational Policies as an object of study and training in Educational Administration

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The current *Sísifo* dossier, under the theme “*Conhecimento, decisão política e ação pública em educação*” [Knowledge, policy-making and public action in education], is the result of a joint reflection stemming from the overlapping of a training program and research project.

With regard to the former, it was based on an advanced PhD program in Educational Sciences, in the specialised area of Educational Administration, at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Lisbon (FPCE-UL). This course, the first of which took place in the academic year 2005/2006¹, included 15 PhD students and was supervised by João Barroso, Luís Miguel Carvalho, Madalena Fontoura and Natércio Afonso, all teachers in the above-mentioned Faculty. The course was organised around the theme “*Conhecimento, decisão política e ação pública em educação*” [Knowledge, policy-making and public action in education] and was geared towards supporting the dissertation projects the PhD students would have to elaborate from the 2nd year onwards, some of which are presented in this dossier.

As regards the research, the project in question is a European research project, approved by the European Union under Priority 7 “*Citizens and governance in a knowledge based society*” and entitled “*The role of knowledge in the construction and the regulation of health and education policy in Europe: convergences and specificities among nations and sectors*” (*KNOW&POL*). The project was prepared during the academic year 2005/2006, launched in October 2006 and is expected to last five years. It covers

13 research teams from 8 countries (Germany, Belgium, France, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom and Romania), distributed throughout the two study sectors (health and education).² The Portuguese team is coordinated by João Barroso and includes teachers from the FPCE-UL who are participants in the supervision of the afore-mentioned PhD program, as well as the sporadic collaboration of other researchers, such as Professors Rui Canário and António Nóvoa. Since September 2007, a PhD scholarship holder, who is also enrolled in the above-mentioned program, has also been part of the team. It is a joint project between the *Unidade de I&D de Ciências da Educação* [Educational Sciences R&D Unit of the University of Lisbon], and the FPCE-UL.

ARTICULATION BETWEEN TRAINING AND RESEARCH

The practice of articulating post-graduate training and research is systematically developed by the group in charge of these courses, both in terms of Master and PhD courses, in the specialised Educational Administration area of the FPCE-UL. In the case of the former, the Master courses to be noted are those connected to the themes “school autonomy”, “school evaluation”, “memories of school managers”, “local education regulation”, and are all articulated with research projects in which the teachers related to this specialised area were involved. Such practice enables the operationalisation

of a more appropriate monitoring of Master student research projects (preventing their dispersion and integrating them in research collections) and, simultaneously, makes it possible to sustain training, with the actual research results of the literature review, methodology and accomplished results.

This current case, within the context of a PhD program, represents, nevertheless, a significant advance in this practice, both in terms of the nature of the course and number of participants, as well as the type of issue being addressed.

The creation of a “collective”³ advanced training course (launched in the specialised area of Educational Administration for the first time in October 2005) provides the opportunity to have a research group available, one which is relatively cohesive and motivated, for the production of reflection and research in a limited field of knowledge in the specialised area in question. The fact that the first and second editions of these courses accompanied the preparatory stage of the research project *KNOW&POL* (the first in 2005/2006) and its accomplishment (the second in 2007/2008) enabled students and teachers to share reflection, discussion and the texts elaborated by the research teams from the various countries involved. Some researchers who participate in the project were equally invited to supervise course seminars (Agnés van Zanten, Jenny Ozga, Martin Lawn). The idea was to integrate the PhD students in a large collective research group, which involves not only the sharing of information and knowledge that are common to the project, but also an exchange (*on line* or individual) between young researchers from the various teams involved⁴.

However, if the accomplishment of an advanced training course under these conditions is, evidently, an added bonus for the PhD program’s success and for development of the specialised Educational Administration area at the FPCE-UL, the choice of this field represents an important evolution in the direction these studies have taken.

THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICIES

Teaching and Research in Educational Administration began at the FPCE-UL in the late 80s and were marked, from the very beginning, by a political

and sociological approach to Educational Administration, with particular emphasis on the contributions of Organisational Sociology to the “study of school” and the work of the school manager (see Barroso, 2001 for information on this). As pointed out by Barroso (2002), the influence of “educational organisation sociology” on Educational Administration has proved to be important for a diversification of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives in the study of administrative phenomena, and also for the broadening of its empirical field towards cultural and micro-political dimensions, towards the strategies adopted by the agents and the dynamics of its organised action. Nevertheless, the evolution of the educational policy agenda mainly since the late 80s (to include de-centralisation, autonomy, alteration of the regulation processes, etc.), has come to favour the mobilisation of other disciplinary contributions, namely from Political Sociology and Political Science (Dutercq, 2000).

This more political slant in Administration studies was accentuated with the participation of the FPCE-UL team in the *Regulateducnetwork*⁵ project, whose main aim was to focus on the comparative analysis of new, emerging regulation forms of educational policy and action in the countries under study, on two levels: the combined effect resulting from the co-existence of the various entities and regulation modes within the same territory, as well as the variety and complexity of the processes through which the public authorities direct and coordinate policies and activities according to state regulation, market forces and social demand; the way public regulation on a central, intermediate and local level interacts with other regulatory, “quasi-market” modalities which are present in the external and internal regulation of schools (see Barroso, 2006a and Maroy, 2006).

In the specialised Educational Administration area at the FPCE-UL, this project marks the development of studies inspired by the study of *public policies* seen as a “social process”, which occurs within a specific time period, within an institutional framework which limits the type and level of resources available through interpretative schemes and choice of values defining the nature of the public issues raised and the orientation of the action” (Duran, quoted by van Zanten, 2004, p. 26). In this case,

the focus is primarily on the study of the governing instruments and their frames of reference, action systems present in the educational policy-making and accomplishment process, and how state action (present in these policies) is contextualised and diversified in the specific public action systems.

It is in this context that the initiative to create an advanced training course on “*Conhecimento, decisão política e ação pública em educação*” [Knowledge, policy-making and public action in education] has emerged, in close connection, as already mentioned, with the *KNOW&POL* project.

According to what is explained in the presentation of the respective program, the advanced training course is geared towards the study of articulation between knowledge and decision-making, in the field of educational policies in Portugal, thus, forming a theoretical and methodological framework for the development of research projects in search of answers to the following two questions:

— In a context marked by the diffusion of knowledge and the growing need for legitimising public policies, how are they characterised and what effects are produced by the interactions between the social agents which intervene in the production of scientific knowledge, policy-making and public action?

— Within the framework of alterations in educational ways of governing and regulating, where the acknowledgement and valorisation of local agent initiatives stand out, what type of knowledge is mobilised in the creation and management of such policies and in the action of these agents and how and with what effects is this accomplished?

The above-mentioned theoretical framework should serve to allow the development of research projects, which study the creation and management of specific, recently developed educational policies in Portugal, or those still in initial stages, and which may be recommended to specific research sectors or domains in the field of educational policy and administration. It may also cover research projects which focus on the study of the relationship between knowledge and public action in education in specific institutions or organisations (unions, foundations, universities, mass media).

THE KNOW&POL PROJECT

The project “*The role of knowledge in the construction and regulation of health and education policy in Europe: convergences and specificities among nations and sectors*” was created in order to study the role of knowledge in the construction and regulation of public policies, with a view to contributing to the clarification of issues such as the use of knowledge in the accomplishment of political choices and as a governing instrument. The investigation focuses on the two public policy sectors which have been the target of concerns, debates and sites for transformation in their forms of regulation, education and health.

On the basis of a central (and general) question — “What is the role of knowledge in the construction and regulation of policies?” — the project sets out to broaden existing knowledge on the active relationship between policy-makers and knowledge, in a social and cultural context characterised by an increase in the volume, plurality and circulation of knowledge in the various public policy sectors (AA. VV., 2006). Thus, the research program may test both the perception, according to which the current forms of administration (in the drawing up and management of policies) depend more and more on the use of specialised knowledge and the ability the other social agents display in mobilising knowledge in order to propose or oppose government guidelines and devices.

The study program follows the paths of comparison, which are manifested through three conceptual strands: the relationship between the policies defined for the education and health sectors; the relationship between the policies of the different countries; the relationship between the different levels of political action and decision-making. In the latter, and bearing in mind the argument defending the existence of multiple educational policy regulation sites (see Barroso, 2006b), research will take three levels or entities into consideration: the supra-national (site for international bodies, such as the European Union and the OCED), the national (site for entities and agents holding the status of public authority, and which coordinate and control the education or health system) and the sub-national (plurality of social agents involved in the education and health

sectors— from regional and local government to associations of interests or users; from school or health establishments to union and professional organisations; from the media to business associations).

The investigation monitors a broad acceptance of the public policy notion: they are not restricted to governmental intervention, indeed, they are constructed through the intervention of the (diverse) agents which participate in the definition and interpretation of activities occurring within the state education space and in the definition of public interest, around which such activities should occur and be coordinated (See van Zanten, 2004). So, the idea regarding public policies as “authority interventions holding ‘public power’ and governmental legitimacy over a specific field of society or the homeland” (Thoenig, 2004, p. 326) — is, as mentioned in the first pages of this report, part of a much broader notion: public action.

This shifting from policy analysis to the sphere of public action analysis imposes a two-fold alteration of perspective. On the one hand, it broadens the public policy scenario to include multiple agents, which are located and move around on a number of different levels (transnational, national, regional, local), thus, relativising (not minimising or eliminating) the role of the State. On the other hand, it introduces new rules for viewing this scenario, replacing the principles of verticality and linearity (decision at the top of the State organisation and its application on social territory, in which the policy wishes to intervene) for the horizontality and circularity of the multiple and inter-independent interactions of the agents which display the ability to intervene in the processes that construct the policy (see Commaille, 2004).

From this viewpoint, educational policies⁶ are not restricted to political measures or governmental decisions. Furthermore, they should be regarded as communicational and social sites, through which different conceptions and ways of relating to the educational world are expressed and may interact. Consequently, they have to be observed from multiple production and anchorage angles: in official and officious documents, such as legislation, in commission texts, in reports drawn up both before and after the formal establishment of a policy, in mediation locations, namely in the non-specialised periodical press, etc.

On the basis of this perspective, the project will consider the different social agents which hold authority in terms of public policies (in central, regional or local bodies, in local organisations and which make decisions and produce legislative or regulating material in the educational sector), as well as those within organised social contexts (e.g. media, professional associations, unions, etc.), which participate in public debates on educational policies and influence the way in which policies are developed.

Arising from a more general hypothesis, according to which “all significant changes in public action is associated with the change in the cognitive and normative elements that characterise a policy, problem or any given public intervention sector” (Surel, 2004, p. 83), the project conceives public policies as representations of reality, which establish the conditions for the treatment of certain “problems” through society. Hence, the project is affiliated to a constellation of works that may be grouped under the designation “cognitive approaches of public policies” and characterised by assuming the amount of “weight that should be given to knowledge, ideas, representations and social beliefs” in the drawing up of them (Surel, 2004, p. 78). Among this family of perspectives, for which the policies are not (or, at least, are not only) problem-solving sites, but rather construction sites for ways of understanding the world and acting towards it, by a given social group, the aims of the policies can not be separated from the “representation of the problem, its consequences and the solutions created for its resolution” (Muller, 2000, p. 7, 2004, p. 370).

It is, however, worth noting that the “ideas” are seen here under a double condition: (a) if, on the one hand, they are produced by social interaction, on the other hand, they acquire or have autonomy in relation to this specific relationship and impose themselves upon the social agents as legitimate categories to sustain their relationship with reality; (b) if the cognitive moulds are transformable through the games of the agents, they occur, nevertheless, in contexts or instances deriving from orders or specific rules (see Muller, 2000).

Therefore, on embracing the perspective of cognitive approaches (in which the “ideas” — the intellectual, standard and cognitive dimension of public policies — form the central explanation), the project

simultaneously establishes a dialogue with other orientations, namely those which focus their explanations on the interests of the agents or on the weight of the institutions. As some authors have noted, in order to provide for a broad understanding of public policies, the cognitive dimension, the struggle for interests on the part of the agents and their strategies and the institutional dynamics will all have to be kept on an equal footing (and under observation) (Palier & Surel, 2005). In order to work public policies as intellectual frameworks, they will have to be regarded, both empirically and analytically, as organisational interests and dynamics (intra and inter).

Viewing the policy construction process as a process of “struggle and negotiation of the legitimate way of reading and interpreting reality” (AA.VV., 2006, p. 6), the relationship between the decision-makers and knowledge is viewed as a simultaneously social and cognitive process. It is social since it involves relations among agents (knowledge producers and politicians) who occupy positions within structured contexts (through factors related to prestige, access to resources and rewards, authority); which circulate by means of mental frameworks, interests and a variety of aims; and which interact through a number of modalities (opposition, alliance, alienation, etc.). It is cognitive, because the relationship with knowledge involves reflectivity, allowing/imposing a distance on the part of the agents, from the initial positions and interests. The relationship with knowledge is, from this perspective, a site for uncertainties and consequences, which are nor necessarily (pre) determined, and also lack empirical proof.

From a conceptual point of view, and to finish this brief reflection on the project’s main theoretical strands, the novel aspect it holds is based on the condition of wanting to think and understand the relationship between knowledge and policy-making, considering its connection with the current changes in ways of governing and in education. Thus, the question of finding out how and to what extent the relationship between knowledge and policy-making is affected by new regulation dynamics is put on the agenda of the investigation. From those related to the plurality of levels, entities and agents involved in regulation, to those regarding the variety and nature of the instruments used in governing processes, possibly less dependent on the legislative solution and the

formulation of norms and more permeable to formulae based on the use of knowledge. The actions that were triggered following the launch of the *Método Aberto de Coordenação* [Open Method of Coordination] (in March 2000, in the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon) are an example of this change, since they highlight the existence of a policy for the dissemination of policy learning devices within the European Union, through the use of different instruments such as benchmarking, monitoring devices and comparative international studies of educational indicators (AA.VV., 2006, p. 2). If public action and politics can not be studied merely by looking at the action of national policy-makers, as already mentioned, it is also worth noting that they do not only manifest themselves in the texts which focus on the aims or political content, but also (and, incidentally, far more effectively) through the instruments which establish certain kinds of relations with the world.

The answer to the general research question, “what is the role of knowledge in the construction and regulation of policies?” will be sought on the basis of three analytical strands.

The first — *morphology of knowledge and mechanisms of political learning* — is based on mapping the cognitive and social world of knowledge (what scientific knowledge is available and which agents produce it) and finding out how policy-makers view this (these) world(s), how it is accessed in terms of learning. Looking closer at the position of the policy maker within the cognitive and social space of knowledge, this side of the project aims to find out “what knowledge is used by the policy-makers”, “what relationship they maintain with the various producers of knowledge” and “what the mechanisms are through which learning relationships are established”.

In the second strand — *knowledge and policy-making* — by prolonging the first, we set out to discover how the policy-maker mobilises knowledge and the producers of this knowledge in the policy-making and orientation process. In this case, the focus is on the origin of policy-making (based on recent policies) and these questions lead the research project to find out “what the role of knowledge is in the drawing up of political agendas and orientations” and “what the role of knowledge producers is in political agendas and orientations”.

Finally, the third strand — *knowledge as a regulation instrument* — aims to observe the use of knowledge within the context of the production and dissemination of public action regulation instruments, as well as to capture the ways they are appropriated by the afore-mentioned agents. The production, dissemination and reception of knowledge regarding comparative studies on the performance of educational systems (the PISA case), regarding good practices and benchmarking are the central aspects of this dimension of the study.

In the following pages, we will focus on the studies being carried out by the Portuguese team under the *KNOW&POL* project. In fact, we present the general hypothesis around which we structured our studies, the policies under analysis, the interveners and public action entities that deserve a more profound analysis and, finally, a set of analytical clues on the relations between knowledge and policy-making, extracted from the already accomplished empirical incursions.

PARTICIPATION OF THE PORTUGUESE TEAM IN THE KNOW&POL PROJECT

As already mentioned, the project is structured into three phases, corresponding to each one of the different research orientations. In Orientation 1, the aim is to determine the *morphology of knowledge and political learning mechanisms*. In Orientation 2, the aim is to find out how the *policy-maker mobilises knowledge and the producers of this knowledge, in the drawing up and orientation process of specific policies*. In Orientation 3, the aim is to observe the *use of knowledge in the production and diffusion of public action regulation instruments*, as well as capturing the ways they are appropriated by the afore-mentioned agents.

Bearing these aims in mind, we will now go on to present some of the elements which help to contextualise the research to be carried out by the Portuguese team within the scope of this project.

ORIENTATION 1

As already mentioned, the *KNOW&POL* project accompanies a broad acceptance of the notion regarding public education policies: they are not re-

stricted to governmental intervention, indeed, they are constructed through the intervention of the (diverse) agents which participate in the definition and interpretation of activities which occur within the state education space and in the definition of public interest, around which such activities should occur and be coordinated. The studies already carried out by the Portuguese team within the context of the first conceptual strand (focusing on the position of the policy-maker in the cognitive and social space of knowledge) are based on a provisional map of these agents (see Figure 1).

The research of the Portuguese team will give particular emphasis to the space of informal and “ad hoc” intervention in policy-making, namely the “specialist commissions”, formally nominated to develop studies and assessments in support of policy-making, so as to analyse the agents and processes which operate on the boundaries between formal policy-making and the knowledge produced. These “specialist commissions” (the way they are made up, the technical and scientific profile of its members, the work carried out, the connections they establish with political power and the government, the characteristics of the studies they carry out, the knowledge they incorporate, the use given to the reports they produce, the point when they are part of the policy-making process, etc.) are, in Portugal, one of the most relevant examples of the “new” ways of defining and regulating educational policies.

The agencies that operate on the borders between knowledge and policy-making (commissions, work groups, task-forces, consultants, assessors, evaluators) are, as far as we are concerned, (see Barroso, 2006b; Carvalho, 2007), unavoidable elements in the analysis of educational administration. Their relevance as study objects (and that which unites them) is the fact that they operate on the re-composition of sense/meaning and the convergence of a number of interests which sustain new forms of administration based on knowledge. However, we will not restrict our analysis to the agents and their organisational contexts. In order to get to know these agents and entities, they must get to know each other and analyse the specific products which materialise and operationalise their cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to become familiar with the instruments created by these agencies which have had an active impact on

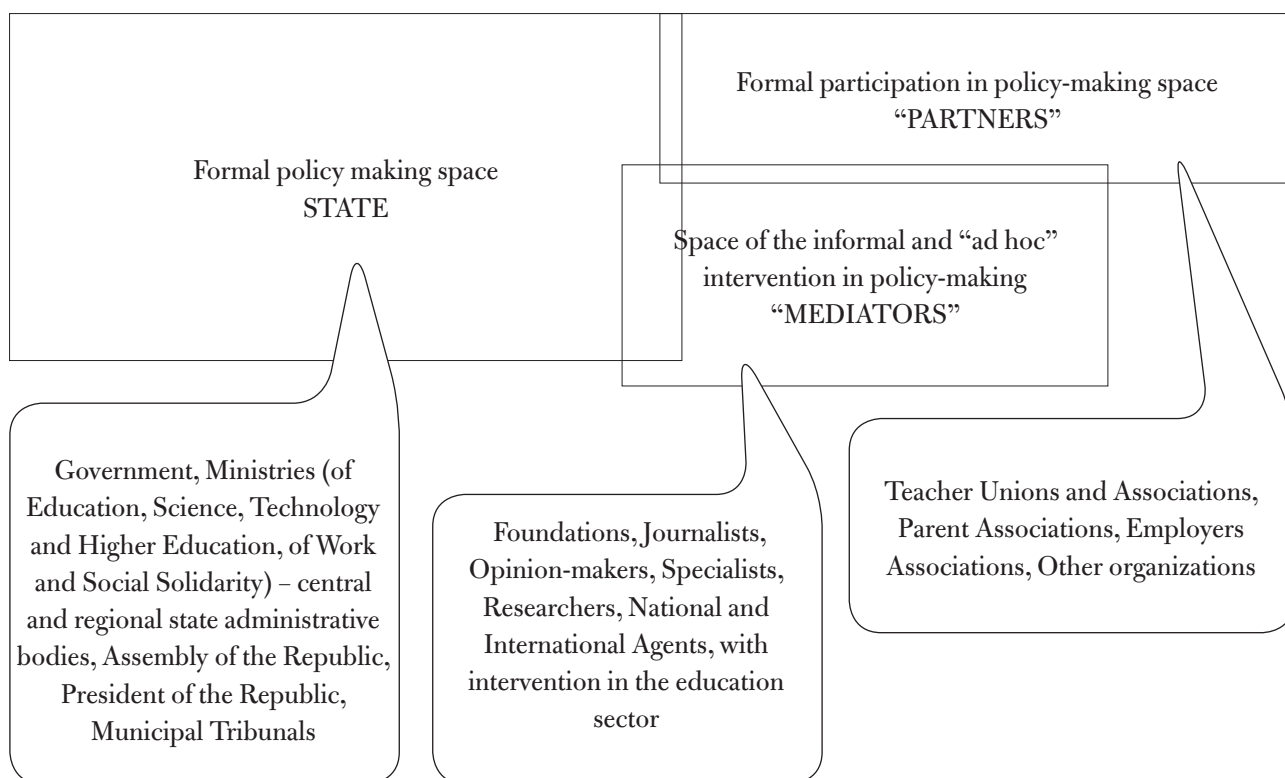


Figure 1 — For a classification of the Agents (organisations and individuals) that are part of the educational policy-making process in Portugal.

public action, in other words, which participate in the ordering, coordination and control of the agents and territories on (and with) which they operate.

Let us look very closely at the notion of *public action instruments* proposed by Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès (2004a p. 13): “technical and social devices which organise the specific social relations between ‘public power’ and its addressees, according to the representations and meanings of which they are carriers”. This acceptance makes it possible to steer the investigation towards the understanding of issues related to the elaboration, use and effect of these devices which, according to the authors themselves, *materialise and operationalise governmental action* and which, simultaneously “reveal a theorisation (more or less explicit) of the governing/governed relationship” (2004a, p. 27) and an interpretation of the social — “a specific representation of the *enjeu* which they handle by inducing a specific issue related to this *enjeu*, while variables are hierarchised and which may even contain an explanatory system” (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2004b, pp. 267-268).

ORIENTATION 2

In fact, over the last thirty years, Portugal has managed not only to recover from its huge underdevelopment, namely, in terms of the quantity and quality of its educational supply, but also, and in spite of shortcomings, to encourage a democratic approach to state school education. In order to appreciate the effort it was necessary to make in the field of education, one need only remember that it was right in the middle of the global crisis of the “Welfare State” that, in Portugal, the construction of the “Welfare State” began.

During this period, education underwent a process of “constant reform” (in which all the parties from the Portuguese political spectre, led either by the Socialist Party or by the Social Democratic Party) which was conveyed in measures and programs of a different conceptual nature, stimulated by strong financial investments from the European Union which led to a high rate of pupil, teacher (and qualified teachers) and school growth. It is in this context that the challenges facing the organisation and government of the Portuguese educational system must be

analysed. On the one hand, despite the quantitative progress already recorded, there is a severe deficit in the supply and overall frequency of schools, particularly secondary school, where high dropout rates continue to persist, on the other hand, the structural ambiguity, among the effects of a centralising heritage, which left its mark on the entire administration of education throughout the 20th century and the rhetorically daring, but timidly praised attempts to give back competences and resources both to the local authorities and to the schools.

It is in this scenario, since the end of the 80s in Portugal, that new educational government strategies have been introduced with an appeal for social participation, the autonomy of schools, decentralisation and, more recently, the promotion of choice and self-evaluation of schools. However, at the same time a number of mechanisms to frame the work of teachers have been introduced, reinforcing the traditional command and control mechanisms with new instruments. These orientations are not presented in the political sphere, nor are they understood in the public sphere as parts of an explicit political program, they are revealed and regarded as rather fragmented, discontinuous products of the changes in governmental teams and ministers.

Within the context of the *KNOW&POL* project, the Portuguese team structures its research around the hypothesis, according to which *it is possible to identify a central set of strategic strategies among this variety of specific measures and policies, related to a change in the role of the State in the administration of Education*. This change announces the transition from a State which, by means of governmental bureaucracy, plays the role of provider and direct administrator of education, to a State which now tends to play the role of aim definer and, more particularly, promoter and manager of evaluation mechanisms and account rendering in the educational sector. It is this “macro-policy” which reconfigures State functions and responsibilities and presents us with a project confrontation between an educating State and an evaluating State (Barroso, 2006b; Maroy, 2006) that forms the basis of the Portuguese team’s study.

In order to understand the changes which are now under way, we will analyse two public policies which we consider exemplary: (1) *the state school autonomy policy*, from its initial instigation, in the

mid 80s, to its most recent measures, such as those regarding the self-evaluation of schools and autonomy contracts; (2) *the reconfiguration of state school supply*, to include a wide range of measures from the reorganisation and curriculum enrichment of state schools to the creation of “school grouping” and the return of competences and responsibilities to the municipalities, in a clear demonstration of opting for the involvement of non-State agents in policy-making and/ or in the direct provision of state education⁷.

Let us give a little more attention to the first case. Our investigation is geared towards a set of principles, narratives, decisions, measures and actions which have developed in Portugal, especially since the end of the 80s, with a view to altering the “school” (individually speaking) on a number of levels: under the general “*school autonomy*” frame of reference, these measures have been conveyed through an effective or rhetorical transference of competences from higher governmental levels to the teaching establishment (*governmental level*); at certain points, these measures introduced changes to the “*school management*”, based on the explicit or implicit idea of “correcting”, on the one hand, “deviations” in “democratic management” and, on the other, improving the quality and effectiveness of school management and running (*management level*); such interventions, justified by the principle that the location had to be suitable, introduced “*the territorialisation of educational policy*” modalities, the most common of which are related to the “priority intervention educational territories” (*territorial level*); these measures regarded the school as a unit of the “educational system” and were mainly conveyed in the introduction of “*internal and external evaluation*” school processes, as a way of evaluating the “system” and introducing overall changes (*evaluation/educational level*); these interventions changed the type of “educational equipment”, bringing together educational levels and school constructions of which the “*grouping of schools*” (after the “integrated elementary schools” and “school area”) are the most significant recent example (*educational equipment level*); and measures which, under the principle of “*educational community*” promoted explicit and implicit forms of “partnership” in which the “parents” (but also the businesses, “local soci-

ety” in general) have emerged as privileged targets (*social space level*)⁸.

It is important to point out that the choice of this universe of policies is not only due to its illustrative or exemplary potential (*of the changes in the role of the State in the administration of education*). There is another strong reason which accompanies this choice: the set of policies that are part of this public action refer to concepts, ways of organising and managing, practices which have been the object of research, study, analysis and reflection, and most of which were mainly carried out within the scope of Educational Sciences (particularly Educational Sociology and Educational Administration) both in Portugal and other countries. It may be said that these policies were based on “intensive knowledge”. On the one hand, the Portuguese academic community participated actively at times, with different agents and perspectives, and this process influenced not only the way these policies were defined and carried out, but also the actual research agenda. On the other hand, the authorities themselves tried to legitimise these policies with nationally and internationally produced knowledge on the subject (*knowledge based decision-making*). Finally, due to the actual nature of the measures and the implications they had for the practices of the agents involved, they induced strong “experience-based learning”, the creator of very important “instrumental knowledge”.

ORIENTATION 3

Orientation 3 addresses the growing use of regulation instruments which include the production and dissemination of knowledge, while studying their production, as well as their reception and re-appropriation by the agents towards which they are directed.

As has been widely suggested and/or analysed, statistics are one of such powerful instruments in the political construction of education. In any case, nowadays, other specific devices are present such as rules associated with the idea of good practices, information and monitorisation devices regarding school establishments, international studies on the “performances” of autochthonous students in a variety of tests or even financial devices linked to the establishment of “partnerships”. It is relevant to assume that nowadays, most educational policy, as a

construction and establishment of a framework for interpreting the world, is played around this vast instrumentation, frequently supported by a certain type of knowledge or by certain types of “experts”.

Two types of study will be conducted: the production and dissemination of knowledge from a supranational level to national States will be analysed, as well as the production and dissemination of regulation instruments, based on national knowledge to de-centralised bodies and local agents; the reception and re-appropriation of the agents towards which such instrumentalisation is directed, will also be observed on both national and sub-national levels.

With particular emphasis on the use of specialised knowledge to support changes in State forms of intervention in the supply of education, the Portuguese team will study the regulation instruments produced and/or mobilised in the context of the two sets of policies discussed in Orientation 2. Devices, for example those used for the evaluation and monitorisation of schools or autonomy contracts will be closely examined. The studies will take into consideration both the production of these instruments by the government and their reception by the relevant agents on an infra-national level. The Portuguese team will also reflect upon international production and the national reception of the PISA — Programme for International Student Assessment, of the OCED.

THE CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE FOR DECISION-MAKING IN PORTUGAL — SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

To conclude, we will go on to present some of the preliminary results from the study carried out (in Orientation 1) on the social and cognitive map of the bodies studied by the Portuguese team (in Ministry of Education central services and unions).

According to the information collected, it is possible to identify three macro trends which have a decisive effect on the type and form of knowledge circulation which is mobilised in the policy-making process, through the categories of agents, the object of our study. These trends are: *the re-composition of the technostructure of the Ministry of Education; the decline in bureaucratic and professional regulation; the growing importance of expert intervention*⁹.

THE RE-COMPOSITION OF THE TECHNOSTRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AFFECTS THE ORGANISATION OF THE DIFFERENT SERVICES, THE PROFILE OF THEIR LEADERS, THE TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT IS PRODUCED AND THE MEANS BY WHICH IT IS CIRCULATED

In Portugal, the central departments of the Ministry of Education played a decisive role throughout the 20th century as the technostructure¹⁰ of the Ministry's bureaucratic organisation. Their job was to produce and apply the knowledge needed to make educational policies operational, namely with regard to the organisation and functioning of the educational system, plans of study and programmes, and the management and training of the teaching staff. The continued prevalence over the years of routine procedures led to the crystallisation of these structures and the reduction of the specific competences, making them, in most cases, inoperative in response to the changes that the political power tried to introduce, particularly as part of the cycle of large-scale reforms that first began in the 1970s. It is not therefore surprising that, on these occasions, the government's representatives sought to compensate for the deficit of competences existing in the administration itself by using experienced teachers (and/or ones on whom they could rely) who were entrusted with the task of designing the reforms, with greater or lesser degrees of involvement on the part of the services, whose role was normally limited to the process of their implementation. This progressive erasure of the influence of the central administration worsened, from the 1980s onwards, with the creation of the Regional Education Boards (as part of the process for the de-centralisation of government) which, in many cases, ended up taking responsibility for many of the functions that belonged to them as a central technostructure.

With the present government (since 2005), there has been an attempt to introduce "new public management", mainly resulting in a more technical (and less bureaucratic) profile on the part of the different leaders, who frequently come from outside the world of "education" and its specific areas of knowledge ("educational sciences"). As has already been said, this "modernisation" led to the emergence of forms of post-bureaucratic organisation (frequently in the form of a matrix), particularly in areas that were less involved in the "traditional" functions of government.

It is in this context that one should attempt to understand the coexistence, in the bodies that have been studied, of two types of knowledge: an "old" knowledge (tacit knowledge, generated by the organisational process) which is related to the executive dimension of the policy-making process; a "new" knowledge (explicit knowledge, generated internally by good practices and externally by the processes of transnational regulation), geared more towards providing the basis for the policy-making process. Although it is not very expressive, this "new" knowledge and the forms existing for its reception, production and circulation, suggest that the central services (at least those that are linked to the new methods of regulation) are gradually trying to occupy the space that previously belonged to the external experts in the policy-making process, thus contributing to the formation of a new social and cognitive identity on the part of the central administration and its professionals.

It should also be noted in this particular regard that new ways of dealing with this knowledge seem to have been developed in some of the bodies, such as the use of knowledge as a process for introducing the capacity for regulation into other spaces and into other actors involved in the administration of education and educational activities. These new forms of relationship with formal knowledge (and the use of knowledge) may signal a change in the way of thinking about the place and role of these bodies belonging to central government: less involved in thinking about (and determining) the work of others; more involved in the construction of mechanisms that, by guaranteeing remote coordination, may mean that, at other (regional and local) levels, other actors will think about (and determine) both their work and that of others.

THE DECLINE IN BUREAUCRATIC AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION ALTERS THE POSITION OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS AND CONTRIBUTES TO A GREATER VAGUENESS IN THE RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE THAT SHOULD DETERMINE THE MATRIX FOR TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

In Portugal (Barroso, 2000a), as in other European countries (Maroy, 2006), the regulation of the educational system was dominated throughout most of the 20th century (at least until the late 1980s), by a

bureaucratic-professional “model”. At the institutional and organisational level, this model resulted in a combination of the bureaucratic component (which tended to favour an administrative way of thinking, in line with State intervention) and the professional teaching component (which tended to favour a pedagogical way of thinking). It can therefore be said that, during this period, there coexisted, in Portugal, two types of regulation: a “bureaucratic and administrative state regulation” and a “corporative and pedagogical professional regulation” (Barroso, 2000a). This fact explains the important role that teachers played in the actual administration of education, through the positions that they held and the jobs that they performed, as well as the relevance that knowledge and professional teaching experience had in justifying and legitimising educational policies. It is also in this same context that one can understand the leading role played by teachers’ representative associations in the political process, intervening and negotiating with governments in matters that went far beyond their strictly professional concerns. In this sense, the bureaucratic-professional form of regulation frequently resulted in a tacit “alliance” between the State and the teachers’ unions, which was determined either by the relationship of forces or by the convergence of interests, or by mere institutional mimicry (which is good for teachers, good for the school and good for the educational system in general).

Now, as was highlighted in previous sections of this report, this model is clearly in a state of decline in Portugal. On the one hand, the emergence of new methods of regulation is associated with the development of post-bureaucratic forms of coordination. On the other hand, it is possible to detect, on the part of the present government itself, a deliberate strategy for reducing the role of the trade unions and their level of intervention in the general matters of educational policy. Finally, the media have given great prominence to the intervention of opinion makers who are characterised by a systematic and concerted discourse directed against teachers, pedagogical innovations and the educational sciences in general, calling into question the cognitive references that, according to them, formed the basis for the educational reforms that followed on from one another after the re-establishment of democracy in 1974.

It is in this context that one should attempt to understand a certain vagueness as regards the type and means of circulation of the relevant knowledge on which the representation that the trade unions make of the educational system is based, as well as the way in which they intervene in the policy-making process. Although, in some cases (such as FENPROF, for example) there continues to be a strong ideological component in its political intervention as a trade union, in other cases (such as the FNE, for example), this dimension tends to diminish, being progressively replaced by a technical and scientific discourse inspired upon the transnational circulation of knowledge (the guidelines issued by international organisations, “good practices”, “models of success” represented by the leading countries in the rankings, etc.). In any case, in a context in which the measures taken by the government are justified not by their being political “choices”, but by technical “imperatives”, this forces trade unions to seek to acquire competences in these areas, so that they can also argue in this same register whenever negotiations are taking place. Despite being still in its infancy, as shown by the data that have been collected, this is a phenomenon that seems to be occurring at this very moment in Portugal and one which has evident consequences in terms of the type of knowledge that is received, produced and disseminated by these representative associations of the teachers.

THE DIFFERENT ROLES AND FORMS OF INTERVENTION OF SPECIALISTS IN THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS TEND TO STRUCTURE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND POLICY (THE TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE, THE WAY IN WHICH IT IS PRODUCED, RECEIVED AND DISSEMINATED)

The importance and emphasis that has been given to the experts (as holders of technical and scientific knowledge) in the policy-making process in the field of education, is a phenomenon which, although not recent, has, in the last decade, acquired growing expression. It is in this context and with the specificity of the Portuguese reality in mind that it is possible to identify the main roles the expert plays in the educational policy-making process: *the reinforcement of the State’s technostructure; mediator for “politicians”, “administrators” and the social environment; rationalisation element of policy-making;*

source of “*compensatory legitimation*” of the action of the State¹¹.

As regards the first aspect (*technostructure*) it is important to underline that due to the type of duties with which these experts are entrusted, they often tend to behave more like “enlightened administrators” (with the function of saying what should be done and how), than “committed scientists” with the function of knowing what exists, identifying alternatives and supporting its accomplishment.

As for the second aspect (*rationalisation*), the use of the expert, with his/her scientific and technical knowledge is mainly to “rationally” ground the policy-making process. However, in addition to this instrumental function, it also has (and sometimes, mainly) a symbolic function. On the one hand, the use of experts (researchers, university professors, auditors, etc) is a sign of the sophistication of the policy-making process. The value of its use has nothing to do with the studies performed or the results obtained. On the other hand, the supposed “objectivity” of the sciences and the “neutrality” of the techniques enable the policy-maker to take shelter from controversy and debate, the latter an integral part of public action, thus, contributing, along the lines of what Habermas affirms (1986), to its de-politicisation. Finally, the intervention of the expert and belief in his “rationalising” action lead to the creation of a feeling of trust on the part of the citizen, in the ability and legitimacy of political power to interpret well that which is common and to choose suitable solutions for his/her satisfaction (see Giddens, 1992).

As for the third aspect (*compensatory legitimation*¹²), it is the result of a legitimacy crisis of the State in the field of education which is based, among other factors, on the loss of credibility and trust on the part of the citizens in an overburdened and inefficient government. In order to recover that trust and credibility, the State recognises its obligation to broaden the “policy-making nuclei” and to create

participation mechanisms. However, this expansion of the “policy-making nuclei” (through multiple advisory councils, monitoring commissions, negotiating boards) and the development of participation (through de-centralising and autonomous partnership processes) jeopardise the State’s control over feelings, methods and results of public policies. In order to remedy this paradox, calling in experts to collaborate in the definition of the policies helps create a legislated space for participation, replacing the democratic debate with a scientific one. As Rui Gomes says (1991, p. 191): “This is how typical participation mechanisms and political consensus are replaced by technical consensualisation, supposedly based on principles of untouchable scientific rationality. This stage consolidates the dominant justification model of the political agents: the latter do not justify themselves as wanting to do what they do, but as not being able to do anything else”.

As for the fourth aspect (*mediation*), expert intervention focuses on the measures that are geared towards “professionalising the preparation of policies”, in the hands, up to now, of “amateurs doués” (according to Michel Crozier, 1997, p. 28), and by also professionalising relations between the agents of administration and policies (see Finger et Ruchat, 1997 on this subject). This intervention often occurs in disputes between the “politician” and the “administrator”. On the one hand, the expert is summoned by the political power to compensate the “relative autonomy” of the administration and to work around its “resistance” to the desired changes of the government. On the other hand, he/she aims to compensate that which is considered to be a “lack of professionalism” on the part of the administration in the policy preparation process.

In our follow-up studies, we will further develop our studies on these macro trends which seem to have a decisive effect on the type and form of knowledge circulation, which is mobilised in the social processes of educational public policy production.

ENDNOTES

1. The second edition of this course, under the same theme, began in October 2007 and includes 15 PhD students.

2. Under the general coordination of a team from the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), the association is made up of research groups from the following organisations: Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München (Germany), Université de Liège (Belgium), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France), Établissement Public de Santé Mentale — Lille (France), Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem [Eötvös Lóránd University] (Hungary), Szociológiai Kutatóintézet — Magyar Tudományos Akadémia [Institute of Sociology — Hungarian Academy of Sciences] (Hungary), Høgskolen i Østfold — Oslo University College, Universitetet Bergen and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (Norway), Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon (Portugal), Sapientia [Hungarian University of Transilvania] (Romania), The University of Edinburgh (Scotland).

3. The *Regulamento de Estudos Pós-graduados da Universidade de Lisboa* [Regulations for Post-Graduate Studies of the University of Lisbon] (published in the *Diário da República*, no. 153 July 5th 2003, séries II) confirmed, for the first time, the existence of two advanced training course modalities: a course with “automatic” admission, by means of a dissertation theme proposal and choice of supervisor (accepted by the Commission of Post-Graduate Studies) and which is conducted through a tutorial regime; another course with admission by means of a call for tender, which is held in a group, based on a curriculum plan made up of a variety of theme-based seminars and tutorials. In both cases, the course has a duration of two semesters and when a “collective” course is under way, individual applications are not accepted.

4. The *KNOW&POL* project foresees the accomplishment and financing of specific training activities for young researchers who are integrated in teams from the different countries.

5. This project, entitled *Changes in regulation modes and social production of inequalities in educational systems: a European comparison*, and desig-

nated by the acronym *Reguleducnetwork*, took place between October 2001 and October 2004, covering five European countries: Belgium (only the French community), France, Hungary, Portugal and the United Kingdom (only England and Wales).

6. As the research conducted by the Portuguese team becomes solely centred on the education sector, the theoretical references made in this section refer, above all, to the education sector even though they are considered on the basis of public policy and action in general.

7. These tests will take place in connection with the studies regarding the “second strand” of *KNOW&POL* (the mobilisation of knowledge and producers of knowledge in public action on the basis of the drawing up and orientation of specific educational policies). Clearly, the “identification” of these public policies is a construction *a posteriori* on the part of the researcher. It is the result of attributing a sense of “coherence” to the coexistence or convergence of different, rather vague policies or measures, followed by different governments in different periods. This sense of “coherence” comes from the similarity in these policies’ frames of reference or instruments which are frequently not “politically” but “scientifically”, “technically” or “pragmatically” determined.

8. As will be understood, the various measures which configure this public action were developed at different times, with distinct processes and results, often contradictory. Some “remained on paper”, while others were applied with varying degrees of change. In some situations, they produced particular effects, in others they did not. However, these changes are varied, the results are not uniform and the effects are rather distant from the aims set out by the leading authorities through policy-making (and, sometimes, the more distant the “stated aims” become, the closer the “hidden aims” become). Nevertheless, it is possible to confirm a number of alterations in formal and legal terms, such as, for example: the definition of school; running and management forms; rights of the managing bodies; available resources; ways of controlling; roles and functions of the different governmental levels, etc. Many other alterations occurred, within a number of contexts and on different levels which will be brought to light in the “case studies” yet to be carried out.

9. These trends are referred to here in a preliminary and provisional manner. They will go on to be developed or altered in the final report (due to be published towards the end of 2007).

10. Used here in the acceptance that has been given to this word by Mintzberg (1990, p. 201): “a body of experts, not of the hierarchical line, whose main function is to analyse, plan and control the other members of the organisation.”

11. The foundations and characteristics of this classification are presented in Barroso (2000b).

12. See Weiller (1996).

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