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All-day schooling: improving social and educational Portuguese policies

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Abstract

Over the past decade, several European countries have implemented policies and programmes leading to the introduction of the concept of 'all-day schooling', thus acknowledging the need to guarantee the guard of all children and to enhance equal opportunities of success at school. The Portuguese Ministry of Education created and funded the Curricular Enrichment Activities Programme as a measure to support the generalisation of all-day schooling in Portuguese primary schools. Our study aimed at evaluating the reach of the political measures associated with all-day schooling, as was implemented in Portugal by the AEC programme, by focusing on two central dimensions: the political and the curricular. Two cases of different local decisions were studied. The results revealed a unanimous valorisation of the philosophy and the objectives underlying the AEC programme, which gives shape to a 'good measure' of social and educational public policies, consistent with the nuclear project of all-day schooling. They also showed, however, that the dimension of the curricular enrichment still needs to be improvedOver the past decade, several European countries have implemented policies and programmes leading to the introduction of the concept of 'all-day schooling', thus acknowledging the need to guarantee the guard of all children and to enhance equal opportunities of success at school. The Portuguese Ministry of Education created and funded the Curricular Enrichment Activities Programme as a measure to support the generalisation of all-day schooling in Portuguese primary schools. Our study aimed at evaluating the reach of the political measures associated with all-day schooling, as was implemented in Portugal by the AEC programme, by focusing on two central dimensions: the political and the curricular. Two cases of different local decisions were studied. The results revealed a unanimous valorisation of the philosophy and the objectives underlying the AEC programme, which gives shape to a 'good measure' of social and educational public policies, consistent with the nuclear project of all-day schooling. They also showed, however, that the dimension of the curricular enrichment still needs to be improved.

Keywords: Educational Policies; Educational equity; All-day schooling; Curricular enrichment activities.

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Introduction

Educational policies are in line with globalization and policy borrowing movement that crossed Europe in the last 20 years and aloud extensive reforms of education systems (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012) that accompany wider reforms of the welfare states. Welfare States should evolve from a social protection to a social promotion framework, in which Educational equity for all is essential (Bolívar, 2012). However, the idea of universal welfare has been increasingly affected by market-oriented and globalised economy's close connections with educational policy (Põder, Kerem, & Lauri, 2013). Therefore, given this changing educational landscape, this text, focused in a unique programme implemented in Portugal is to be seen as a paradigmatic case of the controversial uses and perceptions that "all day schooling programme" could cause in educational discourses, school everyday practices, and educational outcomes, within other educational contexts.

In contemporary societies, thousands of children and adolescents are left every day to their own devices after they leave school. As a result of a change of the patterns of employment, as well as of the family typology, many parents do not succeed in guaranteeing the care and supervision of their children after school (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2004). It is estimated that in 2008, in the USA, 7.5 million children were left without supervision after school.

In Europe, this situation has reached alarming dimensions, namely in Germany, a country which particularly penalises the children of divorced parents, of single parents, and resource-poor families, who have to work in order to guarantee the well-being of their children (Pfeifer & Holtappels, 2008).

After-school hours have thus become a problematic period, on the one hand, because children are more susceptible to being neglected, and on the other hand, due to the relationship that has been established, both in Germany and the United States of America, between that period of time and the academic difficulties experienced by the students. In the USA that time is still associated with the emotional and behavioural problems experienced by children and adolescents, as well as with delinquency and the use of drugs (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2004).

In the last decade, acknowledging the need to guarantee the guard of all children, as well as to ensure equal opportunities for academic success to the children and adolescents from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds, several European countries have implemented policies and programmes which led to the introduction of "all-day schooling", i.e., to the expansion of school time. Amongst these countries were Germany (Reh, Rabenstein, & Fritzche, 2011; Pfeifer & Holtappels, 2008; den Besten, 2010; Schnniter & Häselhorff, n.d.) and Portugal.

In the case of Germany, as stated by the above mentioned authors, the creation of "all-day schooling" programmes was a strategy to avoid the low levels of performance of the students that had been disclosed by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000. Those low levels were seen as a negative result of the fact that a remarkable number of children and adolescents were left to their own devices, i.e., were left without adult supervision in the period between the end of school and the end of their parent(s)' day at work. In this country, the all-day schooling programme, which was implemented over a decade ago, has won increasing importance. Still, it has not been extended to all the state schools yet (Reh et al., 2011; Pfeifer & Holtappels, 2008; den Besten, 2010; Schnniter & Häselhorff, n.d.).

Accordingly with Gepwert, Hofmann, and Hopmann (2012), the "current state of research shows that all-day schooling is seen as a necessary response to social and societal change, structural change in the family, social inequality and unequal education opportunities" (Gepwert, Hofmann, and Hopmann, 2012, 17). Furthermore, all-day schooling is seen by policies parties as an interesting measure that contributes to promote equity.

In Portugal, the all-day schooling programme has been generalised to the 1st cycle of all the state schools during the school year of 2006-2007, through the AEC (Curricular Enrichment Activities) programme1. This programme became a relevant political tool for the fulfilment of the PETI (All-Day Schooling Programme)2, a decentralised educational public service meant for social intervention with a double finality: 1) to provide, free of charge, a number of activities capable of enriching the curriculum of the 1st cycle of elementary education; 2) to provide social measures for family support. When compared to the above-mentioned German case, the Portuguese case reveals greater concern for the social dimension of the measure.

This study aimed to evaluate the scope of the political measures associated with all-day schooling as it was implemented in Portugal by the AEC programme and put into practice in 2009/2010. The two fundamental dimensions of its means of operating were identified: the political and the curricular. The study focuses on two cases of different local decision.

Political Dimensions of the Programme

The Curricular Enrichment Activities Programme is a powerful instrument for intervention and change in several domains of the educational field and in particular in the administration and management of the 1st cycle of elementary education. This programme has asserted itself as a relevant component of a decentralised educational public service, which is contracted and open to the laws of the educational market.

Designed at first by the Socialist Government (2005-2009) as a tool for the policy of "modernization" of the country, in line with the prevailing European policies, the programme aimed to promote the early teaching of the English language in the 1st cycle of elementary education. It thus aspired to pair the Portuguese educational system with the "European patterns" with respect to the "high level of training and qualification of the future generations", as well as to the "early development of competencies, in the framework of the increasing mobility of people in the space of the European Union" (Ordinance no. 16 795/2005). However, the Programme for the generalisation of the teaching of English in the 3rd and 4th years of the 1st cycle of elementary education was soon extended and converted, by the diverse dynamics of its decentralised development, into the AEC, a programme with strong social concerns that aimed to promote relative equality of educational opportunities.

Many were the changes the programme introduced in the curricular offer of basic education: (i) it put forward, right from the beginning, the concept of "enrichment" in the context of an "old" curriculum which had reached a critical point, (ii) it reformulated the finalities of the 1st cycle in the framework of the pedagogical continuity desired by the schools groups, (iii) it led to the recruitment of new professional profiles meant to work with children within the same class-space, (iv) it established new relationships with respect to the way schools and groups of schools were supposed to work, (v) and it forced the sharing of educational tasks between the central administration, the municipalities and the schools. However, the programme took root mainly in the social sphere. This happened not only because it provided answers to many problems families had with the management of their daily lives – when it was reconfigured as PETI –, but also because it democratised a number of educational advantages, which were within reach of certain social strata only. The programme also innovated as it provided ground for the compatibility of the promotion of those apparent

educational equal opportunities and the diverse curricular proposals made by different entities, having thus tried to respond to the interest evinced by local communities.

In spite of some criticism on the part of the ANMP – Associação Nacional de Municípios Portugueses (Portuguese Association of Municipalities), who put back on the agenda the discussion about the circumstances pertinent to the operating of that measure, the programme relies on a strong involvement on behalf of the municipalities. It was, in fact, mainly the gradual juridical recognition of the social importance of the autonomous educational intervention of the municipalities that led the Government to successively change the normative definition of the support activities offered by the municipalities to the 1st cycle of elementary education: being at first described as "extra-school activities for the occupation of leisure-time", they were subsequently named "support and complementary educational activities", then "complementary curricular activities", and finally "curricular enrichment activities".

For the first time, "subject areas" chosen by the promoting entities (municipalities, parent associations and groups of schools) among a number of areas considered by the Ministry of Education relevant for the promotion of success (thus being funded) were integrated into the curriculum of the 1st cycle. These "subjects" have "programming guidelines", support material, staff and schedules specially designed for them and defined by the promoting entities as if they were real curricular subjects. It is thus a form of educational decentralisation, which manifested itself in the first and most significant reconfiguration of the old relationship between the two powers that used to oversee the 1st cycle. In spite of a renewed "school-centrism" (Correia & Matos, 2001), the doors of a field that had so far been of the exclusive responsibility of the central administration were opened to local institutions and entities: they now define the curriculum – what 'enriches' –, as well as which classroom is going to be used for that purpose.

The support component for families that the programme works with is mainly characterised by an expansion of the time children are now spending in educational activities in the school environment (Table I). The implications of this extension of the opening hours of 1st cycle schools forced the adoption of new equipment and changes to physical and human resources.

Besides the characteristics mentioned in Table 1, it is necessary to clarify that the planning of the activities is carried out by coordinators of the AEC programme, while the pedagogical supervision is of the responsibility of the head teachers of each class. It is also worth noting that those in charge of schools may, when necessary, render the schedule of the curricular activities more flexible in order to provide the best conditions for the implementation of curricular and enrichment activities.

Curricular Issues

The AEC programme aims to achieve the double objective of guaranteeing, to all students of the 1st cycle, the offer – free of charge – of a variety of learning activities that may contribute to the enrichment of the curriculum, as well as the accomplishment of the Government's priority of promoting the articulation between the operational conditions of schools and the organisation of the social response to families' needs. The student's length of stay at school is thus extended, and all is done to render that period pedagogically enriching and complementary to the learning associated with the acquisition of key competencies.

Table 1. *Characterisation of the AEC Programme in the context of the PETI*

	AEC Programme Optional	**Formal Curriculum Compulsory**	**Family support component Optional**
Entity in charge	Local Authority: municipalities, parent associations, school groups	Central Administration Ministry of Education	Central Administration and Local Administration
Length of stay at school (40 hours per week)	7.5 hours	25 hours	Variable Up to 15 hours
Place	Classroom /other spaces around the school building / spaces outside the school facilities (swimming pools)	Classroom/School	Classroom / other spaces around the school building / spaces outside the school facilities
Compulsory offer	. English . Learning support	Formal Curriculum	Meals and surveillance
Optional offer			
	. Music . Physical and Sport activities . Artistic expression . Other		
Operational staff	AEC teachers of each specific area	Head Teacher	Non-teaching staff
Attendance control	Regulated by schools, but without any effect on the students	Regulated by the Ministry of Education, with effect on the students	Not applicable
Assessment of student learning	Without any effect on academic progression	With effect on academic progression	

This brief description of the intentionality behind the AEC programme, as well as of the way it has been put into action, entails two concepts, which are worth revisiting: the concept of all-day schooling and the concept of informal curriculum.

The concept of all-day schooling can be defined as the !full-time educational occupation of students over the course of school time and in the physical space of the school" (Pires, 2007, p. 78). As it corresponds to an important change of the learning time, as well as of the agents that are in charge of its definition, the concept defies what one usually understands as schooling.

All-day schooling is a response to the challenges – never before experienced – raised by mass schooling in Portugal, and has forced people to face new issues, such as the idea that social justice should be guaranteed above all. This new reality of having all children at school involves thinking about what should be taught, and how it would serve the goals (which goals?) of the education provided by the State (Leite, 2006). This worry is ever more relevant at a time such as the one we are currently living, when political speeches resort to the flag of

qualification as a way to reach the 2015 targets for Education and contribute to the Europe of knowledge defined by the Lisbon Strategy.

The concept of all-day schooling is often associated with an egalitarian intent, as it aims to ensure equal educational opportunities to all children (Dobert, Echard, & Sroka, 2004; OCDE, 2007). In this regard it is essential to guarantee that the "real and effective equality offers adequate and differentiated opportunities so that all students, no matter their starting points, their needs or circumstances, can go beyond the minimum knowledge and acquire basic school learning" (Muñoz, 2005, p. 17).

With the AEC programme, Portugal is following the political measures that have been implemented in other European countries for the past twenty years, with the same purpose of positive discrimination (Demeuse, Frandji, Greger, & Rochex, 2008). Such measures were conceived in order to resolve or minimise, in one go, some social inequality, thus contributing to improve the level of success of students, during their years of formal schooling, as prescribed by the tendencies identified by the OECD with regard to the forms of promoting equity in the field of education. "To strengthen the links between school and home to help disadvantaged parents help their children to learn; to provide strong education for all, giving priority to early childhood provision and basic schooling" (OECD, 2007, p. 9) are two of the ten steps to support social equity.

The concept of all-day schooling also incorporates the idea that some of the learning provided by the school, during that supplementary time, is more important and becomes socially more homogeneous over time than the activities that the families and the children themselves would be able to arrange. As argue by authors like Magalhães and Stoer (2002) this effort contributes also to a new commitment that middle class addresses to school system. An additional finality associated with all-day schooling concerns its capacity to prevent marginal behaviour on the part of the students that could occur if they were left alone without adult supervision. Furthermore, the national policy chose to value structured educational action, to be held, in most cases, at school, or to resort to a model of schooling, as happens with the AEC programme.

Finally, all-day schooling is associated with the idea that students, in their capacity as learners, are somehow unaccountable. In fact, although it is said that the intent is to promote the autonomy of students, it contributes instead to a more extended reliance on adults, who are taken as their reference.

It is precisely within the dimension of the offer that characterises all-day schooling that it makes sense to examine the concept of informal curriculum, as well as the links that the concept has established with other concepts, which may contribute to the understanding of its theoretical density, namely the concepts of territorialisation, of curricular coherence and curricular articulation.

The concept of informal curriculum is defined by the learning that the school intends to foster in its students, which results from the values that shape their educational projects or their identities in their role as educational organisations, but which are not an explicit target of a formal instruction and of an evaluation of the results evinced by the students (Pacheco, 1996). The underlying conviction, shared by many authors of the critical sociology of the curriculum (Forquin, 1993), is that the walls around schools are merely symbols of other social control walls, which the school conveys. Therefore, when an educational system does not just give shape and determine the formal curriculum, but chooses and funds a number of choices regarding the offer for the occupation of free time instead, it is formatting the school culture

twice, thus contradicting the idea of curricular territorialisation. In other words, it formats school culture as it chooses a formal curriculum, but also because, taking over the parents' role of conveying the values that are closer to their family experiences, it forgets the principle that all learning should be locally significant and that it should depend on local agencies, as vindicated by curricular territorialisation.

As mentioned by Leite (2005, p. 5), "the foundations that legitimise the curricular contextualisation, at a micro level, refer to the possibilities of local action in the process of curricular decisions, within the logic of territorialisation of education". This concept is founded upon the possibility offered to local territories, as well as to their agents, to decide matters concerning education in accordance with principles and interests that are locally relevant.

In Portugal, curricular territorialisation has been commonly used to justify a curricular offer of a compensatory nature, in the context of elementary education, as it has been primarily oriented to the formative offer aimed at students who have failed regular schooling. On the contrary, the rationale behind the AECs has been to enrich the formal curriculum or to provide a number of physical or artistic activities of a more universal nature. We believe it is legitimate to read in that difference evidence of a certain return to the movement Back to Basics. It certainly is what the practice (also preached in contemporary political speeches) of maintaining the pressure on the areas of learning considered more noble and more basic – thus making time available for the learning of those activities – indicates. Thus, as a result of the inscription of a set of findings associated with artistic expressions in an area of informal curriculum, it has made room for what is considered essential. That is why all-day schooling – and the AECs in particular – is seen today as a way of implementing the tendency of the back to basics, of the fundamental literacies (reading, writing, numeracy, communication). The dimensions of the curriculum that are more connoted with the achievement of projects or with a training of a more humanistic nature are thereby relegated to other periods of time. As a result, we would have two kinds of schools: in the morning, the school of the essential curriculum with the aim to ensure the basic literacies, and at the end of the day the school of the territorialised curriculum with a more informal and experiential nature.

Two objections can be made to this unfulfilled promise of articulating the formal with the informal curricula: 1) If the curricular coherence and significance is entrusted with the informal part of the curriculum, do we not risk a divide between the experiential and the official curricula? In fact, the experiential curriculum can very well transform experiences into learning, whereas the official curriculum is based on the idea of an external knowledge appropriated by a student who has in mind the final exam that will confirm that appropriation. 2) Should we not beware of the results of a relative inconsequential superficiality of the educational offers as they risk the temptation of trying to ensure a high range of educational experiences, which is very close to the exaggerated experientialism that characterises contemporary society? (Lipovetsky, 1989). From another point of view, the curricular coherence is not restricted in regard to the application of the knowledge which derives from the formal curriculum to the informal one, or vice-versa, to the continuity between knowing and acting, but rather to the transforming potential that the learned knowledge can have on the lives and the contexts of the learning individuals. Such is its potentiality, such is its frailty.

The concept of curricular articulation has acquired increasing importance in the curricular development, as it is discursively presented in the documents which shape the curricular decisions of the schools, and results both from the legal acts and the observation that the curriculum cannot just be a conglomerate of juxtaposed parts. Theoretically associated with the globalising dimension of the curriculum, the concept has been split into two vectors that

explain how that totality has been achieved, either from a diachronic or a synchronic perspective. This is what we call the vertical or the horizontal articulation.

1. The "vertical curricular articulation is present in the continuity of the levels/cycles/years, in the hierarchy of decisions and in the balance between the formative curricular components and their extension;

2. The horizontal curricular articulation can be observed in the correlation which exists inside each unity and each organ, in the transversal relationship between areas/subjects in the same year and in the coherence between the components that make the curriculum operational". (Leite & Pacheco, 2010, p. 6)

The curricular articulation reaches its full sustainability in three planes that correspond to three other relevant axes of the curricular work, namely: the development of the students; the work of teachers and curricular agents; the structure of the system where the articulation is politically shaped. These three axes define what is to be understood as a good practice of curricular articulation, i.e., an articulation able to identify and intervene in each school at the level of decision or curricular implementation where it seems to be most needed. A good practice of curricular articulation also ensures a work of curricular coherence, which is centred on the curricular alignment and made available to the collective subject responsible for its implementation – the teachers who, over time, work with the same student. As an extension of the former reason, a good practice of curricular articulation values the availability of teachers to work in a collaborative way with their peers.

Methodology

In order to evaluate the implementation of the AEC programme in the district of Porto, we decided for a "multi-case" qualitative study (Triviños, 1987), as it is the most adequate for the study of contemporary events (Yin, 2002). As it is customary in this methodology, the choice of two cases, in a total of four schools, was made in order to ensure the variability that is present in the universe of the promoting entities responsible for the AECs in that district. Case A, chosen among the universe of groups of schools of which the Porto Town Council was in charge, represents 16 cases (Stake, 2005), or groups of schools. Case B, on the other hand, stands for the exception to the rule: schools integrating an alternative offer promoted by a Parish Council. In all cases, we selected groups of schools that might contribute, on a voluntary basis, to a better understanding of the circumstances, as well as of the implications and the problems resulting from the implementation of the AEC programme.

The data collecting tools were: official documents, interviews, observation of the AEC activities, texts and drawings by the students.

The set of documents that have been examined is composed of:

- Legal documents by the Ministry of Education
- Programming Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education
- Educational Projects and Annual Activities Plans
- AEC Annual Planning
- AEC Evaluation Forms

The interviews, individual or in group, according to an open and complex model, were made to the representatives of the local promoting entities, to the people in charge of the administration and management of the AECs, to the directors of the groups of schools and the directors of the schools, to the head teachers and to the AEC schools, to the

representatives of the companies (hired as a result of the political option of the Town Council) and to the entities responsible for the provision of services, and also to the students' parents and guardians. The criterion of availability was used for the selection of all the participants, as well as for the phases of observation and gathering of the students' work.

The observations were both informal and formal. The latter were based on "observation protocols", whereas the former, made over the course of field visits, originated a number of research notes that were examined as well. A qualitative analysis of all the sources was implemented, and NVivo software was used. The referential analysis, initially oriented by the research questions, was subsequently enlarged by emerging categories.

Results

In this section, we present the results of the research carried out in order to meet the research questions. These were as follows:

1. What distinguishes the organisational model of the programme of the submitting entities?

2. What characterises the educational offer of the submitting entities?

3. What are the effects of the different offers on students' learning?

4. What are the effects of the different offers on personal and social development?

The text follows the axes: i) characterisation of the offer and working regulations; ii) impacts on the AEC programme.

Characterisation of the Offer and Work Regulations

With regard to the nature of the offer, we observed that, in both cases, it was composed of a pack of activities that would grant the highest funding on the part of the Ministry of Education (English, Music, Physical and Sport Activities and Other). Thus, although there were small variances regarding the selected optional activities and week workload of the activities, there were no significant differences.

In the first year, except for the optional activity, the offers were fairly homogeneous: Music, English, and Learning Support. In case B, the optional activity consisted of two weekly slots of Portuguese Learning Support. In case A, in two of the schools the optional activity consisted of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and in the third one of Math Learning Support. In the 2nd year, the coincidence was even bigger: besides Music, English and Learning Support, the optional activities consisted, in both cases, of Math Learning Support. In the 3rd and 4th years, the offer was exactly the same.

Although the promoting entities were different, we came to the conclusion that the offer was not very different (1st and 2nd years) or even quite the same (3rd and 4th years). Probably, this may have resulted from the situation created by the Ministry of Education when it defined the funding of the activities. On the other hand, in breach of what has been established by the founding text of the AEC programme, the definition of the offer counted, in both cases, with a modest participation of the school groups, which – it is important to emphasise – should have been more substantial.

As was happening at the national level, in the schools of Case A the activities were held in the classrooms or the school facilities. In case B, because of the high number of students and of the low number of rooms available, alternative places had to be found for the extra-curricular activities, and protocols with neighbouring entities were signed, as Bernet (1999) recommends, in order to make the best use of the educational resources of local institutions.

With regard to the working hours of the AECs, as stated above, there were big differences between the school in case B and the schools in case A. In the latter, the activities were held from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm, i.e., after the curricular activities. In case B, the activities were held in the morning when the students had their curricular activities in the afternoon, and vice-versa.

As a rule, AEC classes integrated students of the same year, and each group had no more than 20 students, in case A, and no more than 15, in case B. In both cases, however, there were some classes where children from the 1st and 2nd years, on the one hand, and from the 3rd and 4th years, on the other, were brought together. Also in both cases, the students' parents and guardians could decide whether they wanted their children to attend the activities, and in case they enrolled their children, the latter were bound to attend all the offered activities. Nonetheless, because of the situation described above, only in case B did that option involve the choice for the physical space of the institution where they wanted their children to attend the AECs.

Setup and Human Resources

In their quality as promoting entities of the AEC Programme, both the Town Council and the Parish Council felt they should create new structures to coordinate and accompany the implementation of the activities in the schools for which they were responsible.

In case A, a "technical team" was established, and they directly depended on the Office for Educational Policies, and were trusted with the accompaniment, coordination and evaluation of the programme. In case B, a team called 'technical device' was brought into being, and they depended on the Vice-President of the Parish Council. In both cases, the above-mentioned structures had forms of coordination of their own and very specific competencies.

As we can conclude from Table 2, part of the competencies of those teams were very similar, from the meetings with the representatives of the groups of schools to the method used for the evaluation of the activities and the AEC programme, as a whole. However, in case B the competencies of the coordinating team included a pedagogical dimension. On the other hand, both the team of case A and the companies – according to what had been established by law – left the pedagogical issues to be managed by the head teachers of each class.

The team in case A centred its action on the control and monitoring of the fulfilment of the contract documents signed with the companies hired for the implementation of the programme. The team in case B revealed a veritable preoccupation with the pedagogical dimension, and this resulted in the elaboration of a teaching pack – a portfolio – that aimed to provide support for the people involved in the implementation of the programme, as well as in the work of pedagogical guidance provided by the team coordinator to the AEC programme teachers, which included the articulation of the AECs with the schools' plans of activities and the curricular projects of each class. It should be further noted that the promoting entity, in case A, delegated to the companies which acted as service providers the hiring of the activities, whereas the promoting entity B took charge of that responsibility. In both cases, the teachers who were hired were graduates.

Table 2. *Devices created by the promoting entities*

	Parish Council	**Town Council**
Human Resources	Sport, Education and Youth Office	Technical Team
Dependency	Vice-President of the PC	Alderman in charge of Education
Composition	Coordinator	Coordinator of the Educational Services
	Area Coordinator	Head of Office
	School Coordinator	Companies
		Company Coordinator
		Area Coordinator
Mission	Management, Coordination and Evaluation of the implementation of the programme	Management, Coordination and Evaluation of the implementation of the programme
	Pedagogical Accompaniment of the AECs	
	Pedagogical Accompaniment of Family Support Activities	
Duties	Relationship with entities	Relationship with other entities, namely the coordinators of the hired companies (EDUTEC, Espalha Ideias, PortoLazer) and with the coordinators of the schools and of the groups of schools
	Elaboration of a Pedagogical Portfolio	
	Production of Pedagogical Documents	
	Curricular articulation with the structures of the schools and of the groups of schools	Production of Documents connected with the programme
	Evaluation of the AEC teachers	Elaboration and Management of the Questionnaires to be sent to schools
	Update of the evaluation methodologies of the AECs	Evaluation of the AEC teachers
		Annual meetings with representatives of the groups of schools

Impact of the AEC Programme

On the Schools

One of the most obvious impacts of the programme was the expansion of the school offer to eight daily hours, five for the formal curriculum and three for the enrichment activities. In most Portuguese schools, all the activities are held in the same physical space. This redefinition of the 'intra-scholar temporality' originated relevant changes in the organisation and management of the schools in case A, namely with regard to the need to monitor students during the extension periods and between the time when the curricular activities of the school end and the AECs begin, and to the need to provide lunch for the students.

This extension of time in the same physical space has fostered conflicts and has originated disciplinary problems. This idea has, in fact, been mentioned by the children, who have often referred to the existence of conflicts in their texts. The fact that there was not enough staff to ensure the supervision of the children, in most schools, also contributed to the situation.

In case B, for the aforementioned reasons, there was no need neither to resort to the flexibility of the timetables of the head teachers, nor to extend the period of supervision of

the students, so the school management was able to keep to its routine. The temporal impact was not thus felt in the same way.

Another sort of impact is the one connected with the changes produced by the integration of "Learning Support" activities into the head teachers' set of tasks and timetables. Although this activity is part of the AEC programme, as the school was responsible for its implementation, the effect was particularly felt in case B: in fact, it originated an increase of the head teachers' weekly workload and forced them to go to one or more physical spaces outside of the school facilities during the periods when they were not teaching curricular subjects.

Finally, it should be noted that, in order to achieve the aims that have been set for the programme, the curricular enrichment activities still call for a significant horizontal and vertical articulation with both the 1st and the 2nd cycle curricula. According to the testimonies, the conditions that would enable that articulation have not been met yet, either from the point of view of the formal conditions, or from the subjective point of view of the intervening people. In that sense, the curricula need to be redefined and the teachers' timetables need to be changed. Even the concept of having one teacher responsible for the teaching of all the curricular subjects in the 1st cycle would have to be altered in order to strengthen the co-operation.

On the Relationship between the Students and the School, as well as on the Learned Knowledge

In both cases, those in charge of the pedagogical and administrative managements of the schools, as well as the head teachers, acknowledged the pertinence of the social dimension of the programme and the role that the AECs can potentially play in the development of children. However, at the same time, they identified a number of adverse effects on the students, both with respect to their behaviour and attitudes, and to their relationship with the school and learned knowledge. Some of the worries and reservations concerning the AEC programme have been based on this idea, namely:

- the exhaustion provoked by an excess of school hours, i.e., the hyper scholarisation of children. According to the head teachers, this has negative consequences on the process of teaching and learning, such as student distraction, and loss of interest and demotivation with regard to the curricular learning, which is far more complex and non-ludic;
- the lack of interest conveyed by some students for most curricular activities;
- the anomie (according to several head teachers, the enrichment activities can favour indiscipline and loss of the sense of "rules", and have negative effects on the formal curricular activities);
- The reduction, almost annulment, of time for individual work and study and the consequent diminishment of academic achievement;
- The "pedagogisation of leisure" which significantly reduces the time children have to play and, as such, carries with it the risk of getting tired of school.

Until the current moment, a systematic evaluation of the effects of the AEC programme on the progression of the students' learning has not yet been carried out. In the absence of that process, the nonexistence of benefits, on the plane of the acquisition of knowledge and development of competencies, underlined by the majority of the PTTs, is based on an 'impressionistic' evaluation which cannot, and should not, be devaluated, but which calls for a better substantiation.

On The Relationship between the Parents and Guardians and the School

In both cases, the parents and guardians valued the All-day Schooling Programme and the free of charge offer of activities and lunch, as well as the prolongation of the period of supervision of the children. The degree of involvement of parents in the All-day Schooling and in the implementation of the programme was diverse. In school B, where the offer was locally promoted, parents played a relevant role in the establishment of cooperation protocols with partner institutions. In case A, parents did not play any sort of role in the implementation of the programme. That is perhaps why they kept themselves at a distance from the AEC programme, as well as from the school, and why they somehow devaluated the activities and showed no respect neither for the way the AEC programme was organised nor for the teachers' work. It should be noted that this devaluation has been reinforced by the lack of influence on the evaluation of the students.

On the other hand, and having the two cases in mind, we can say that the parents were confronted, in the process, with new fields of knowledge and new forms or methodologies of teaching and learning. Although this dimension still needs to be thoroughly studied, we admit that the introduction of the AECs has changed the way parents and guardians perceive the educational institution and the people who work there, namely the teaching work of the head teachers.

Final Reflections

The unanimous valorisation of the philosophy and objectives of the AEC Programme – stated in the introduction – on the part of all the involved subjects, and in particular on the part of the parents and guardians, gives clear evidence that this programme was a "good measure" of public educational policy, and was coherent with the nuclear project of "All-day Schooling".

The effectiveness of this socio-educational measure depends, however, on a set of factors that have not yet been consolidated, and thus call for a deep reflection. Among these, we should mention the weak articulation between 1st cycle teachers (and particularly AEC programme teachers) and the technical team responsible for the local implementation and evaluation of the activities. One of the conditioning aspects of that connection lies in the curricular articulation. Most of the head teachers, of the AEC programme teachers, as well as schools in general, discursively value the curricular articulation (one of its formal competencies) and believe that it should exist, but – as they themselves recognize – it has not been enough to change practices. This dimension is still evidencing low levels of satisfaction and is even one of the most acknowledged weaknesses.

Another critical factor stems from the overlapping of formal and non-formal education in the same educational space, which gave rise to some misunderstandings with regard to the aims of the activities. If we look at the terminology used by all the subjects involved in this programme (the recurrent use of words such as classes, students, teachers, textbooks, pedagogical material, evaluation...) we will come to the conclusion that for both parents and the children in general, and also for some head teachers and AEC programme teachers, the specificity of the AECs has not been identified yet. In spite of that, curiously enough, for a group of children from João de Deus Elementary School, the AECs do clearly belong to the field of Free Time Occupation. The absence of a thorough clarification of this issue has, meanwhile, led to the devaluation of the activities, either on the part of the parents and guardians or on the part of the head teachers.

One of the central reasons for their criticism lies on the weariness of the students as a result of their remaining in the same physical space (mainly in the classroom). This worry with

the consequences of physical space is present in the studies by Schnitter and Haselhoff (n.d.) and Reh et al. (2011), who underline the need for a diversification and flexibility in terms of physical spaces as a way to foster the socio-educational development of the students.

Incited by a similar worry, and with the aim to avoid the repetition of the model of the school and to minimise the weariness and/or the annoyance generated by the activities on the children, the parents and their representatives put forward a set of proposals. These, however, have not been as welcome as described in other European experiences (Schnitter & Haselhoff, n.d.; Reh et al., 2011).

Although they did not put it precisely in the same terms as Bernet (1998), underlying the proposals presented by the parents we can clearly see the idea of citizenship education. This is evident in the recommendation to make the most of the educational resources of the parish or of neighbouring parishes, of having the activities held in local studios or workshops, of organising visits to exhibitions, planning to attend concerts or participate in other cultural local events. These suggestions aim no doubt to overcome the "poverty" of the children's cultural world. According to den Besten (2010), this should in fact be a measure of public policy and one of the aims of the AECs, especially in culturally disfavoured and resource-poor families.

Another nonconsolidated factor relates to the "time and its use", as described by Roldão (2008). According to this researcher, the AECs cannot originate an unbearable and inadmissible pressure on children in case the municipalities and the children decide to invest in many areas, thus taking away the effective free time the children have. The promoters, be they the town councils, the parish councils or the groups of schools, have the possibility to put into practice curricular differentiation through the selection of part of the offer that best suits the local needs and meets the problems felt by the local community.

But instability was also caused by the fact that although the offer of activities was compulsory, the children's attendance was not obligatory – especially with regard to the teaching of English. This incongruence potentiates inequalities in the process of learning this foreign language and has negative consequences in the transition to the next cycle (Madureira, 2011). The solution to this problem lies in the decision to integrate – or not – this activity into the curriculum of the school.

Finally, the success of the AEC programme is compromised by the absence of an ample and rigorous system of evaluation, which allows for the identification, in a sustainable way, of the measures needed for its improvement.

The directions towards which the AEC programme seem to evolve oscillate among the social dimension of the programme, the concern with the curricular articulation and the curricular differentiation. The tendency to exaggerate one of these dimensions is a risk associated with some of the interveners. It is fundamental to balance these dimensions. The uncertainty with regard to the funding of the programme is no doubt another menace to this balance.

The AEC programme was created with the stated aim of promoting the improvement of the quality of the schools of the 1st cycle and consequently to contribute to the progress of the students in terms of learning, as well as to provide a social response in the field of the support to families, namely in the harmonisation between the professional and the family life. If it is true that the latter aim has been reasonably met, further improvements still have to be implemented in order to meet the former.

In a broad perspective, as AEC programme could be a part of educational policies conducting to equity, it could be an assessment of welfare state's measures. Educational equity for all is essential in a changing view of Welfare States from a social protection to a social promotion framework. This is relevant at the present as Europe is facing a financial crisis which puts this equity at risk as investment in Education has been regarded as expenditure.

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Notes
Note 1. AEC – in Portuguese, Atividades de Enriquecimento Curricular.
Note 2. In Portuguese, "Programa Escola a Tempo Inteiro".

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