

Author/Autora: Dias, Mariana (dias.mariana@netc.pt). Higher School of Education, Lisbon, Portugal
Title/Título: Market trends in the Portuguese school system and the dilemmas of parental participation in schools

Tendencias de mercado en los centros docentes del sistema educativo portugués y dilemas de la participación de los padres en los centros

Topic: Policies and actions to ensure effective and democratic co-operation and dialogue among social actors to promote home-school-community links

Políticas Educativas y Sociales que promueven una efectiva y democrática cooperación y diálogo entre los actores sociales para estimular las Relaciones entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

Presentation time/Día de presentación: Session in English. Thursday 15, 4:00-5:30 p.m. Room 5, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Jueves 15, 4:00-5:30 p.m. Sala 5, Tercer Piso

Abstract

This paper aims to describe and analyse the main policies and practices that have shaped the governance and management of Portuguese primary education in recent years. It attempts, specifically, to identify the models of parent participation in Portuguese primary schools during the period 1998-2003. This period corresponds to that of the defining and implementing of a new system of "school autonomy, administration and management" (Dec- Law n°115-A/1998), which establishes extremely diverse areas of potential autonomy for schools (in the strategic, curricular, organisational, pedagogic, financial and cultural domains) and extends the possibility of participation of parents in school governance. The institutionalisation of this system heralds a change in the bureaucratic and centralist structure of Portuguese school administration and suggests the existence of a "paradigmatic convergence" in relation to the devolution policies that, since the mid- eighties, have dominated the educational agenda of many western countries and international organisms (OCDE, World Bank). The study, which uses ethnographic methods, took place in six primary schools in the Lisbon area. The analysis took into consideration the main issues and controversies to which the reform in school governance has given rise in contemporary literature: emergence of new models for social regulation (market, neo-managerialism, changes in professional and organisational patterns); and, in particular, new relations between the school and the community (consumer power, "privatisation"). The research findings suggest that the impact of the new management models varies considerably according to whether schools are located in working- or middle-class catchment areas, although certain organisational factors may also come into play (attitudes towards school/family relations, local "market" position of the school, school "ethos", leadership patterns).