

Migrant children and adult challenges within the Portuguese school system.

September, 23-27, 2019

The Strategic Plan For Migration (2015)

in Portugal, the Strategic Plan for Migration (2015) includes interventions in the field of education – for example, strengthening the teaching of Portuguese as a second language; consolidating teaching programs for Portuguese as a second language, promoting intercultural education and awareness-raising of issues surrounding academic and professional recognition of qualifications.

Language Provision

In Portugal, language provision for migrant students is monitored, but not systematically. Based on the latest available data, it is estimated that in 2012/13 public schools in Portugal had 8 395 students attending classes in Portuguese as a non-native language, particularly in the Lisbon, Faro and Setúbal districts.

Policy Impact & review

Specific policies, which have been subject to impact assessment, include a national study in Portugal in the area of language provision for migrant students. It focused on the assessment of the impact of the teaching of Portuguese as non-native language (PLNM), and it was conducted between 2012 and 2014. The results are being taken into consideration in the preparation of new legislation.

Information support for migrants

In Portugal written or audio information is available on the education system for foreigners on the websites of top level authorities.

In Portugal, the High Commissioner for Migration has set up a telephone translation service in ten languages, which is also available to help migrants in contacting schools or other education institutions.

National and local information centers for immigrants may also provide information on education.

The assessment of prior learning is not used for determining school grade but it is in deciding what learning support is needed.

In Portugal, competences in the national language do not play a role in determining school grade, but top-level assessment criteria (CERF) are available for determining language support needs.

All first and second generation students whose Portuguese language skills are B2 or C1 are integrated into mainstream classes, for all lessons. Those whose competences are below this level attend mainstream classes, but instead of Portuguese classes (for native-born students) they participate in 'Portuguese for non-natives' lessons. The assessment of language skills is carried out at local level.

Migrant students as a specific target group

Portugal do not recognise newly arrived migrant students as a specific target group. The educational system rely on a comprehensive support intended to respond to the individual needs of all students. Therefore, in their criteria for student support they also consider students' additional support needs arising from their migration background – for example, social and emotional support.

Intercultural Initiative

Intercultural issues are at the centre of the Intercultural School Stamp Initiative set up by the High-Commissioner for Migration (Portugal), which has developed with other stakeholders an 'intercultural school kit' providing materials on intercultural issues.

From the 2018/19 school year, intercultural education is a compulsory theme in the curriculum of Citizenship and Development in all schools. It is a transversal topic in the first grades of primary level; a specific subject in the last grades of primary and at lower secondary level; and at upper secondary level, schools are free to decide how to teach it.

Training

Some training/support initiatives are specifically organised to help school heads to implement a particular action plan or project in relation to migrant student integration or, more generally, to improve student performance and reduce the risk of students leaving education early, including migrant students.

Courses for teachers on intercultural education are organised and supported by the education system. These courses are, however, optional. Beyond individual training courses, specific policy measures in Portugal are worth highlighting. In Portugal, in 2006, the High Commission for Migration established a network of 20 trainers. These trainers are available to schools wishing to organise training sessions on intercultural issues. These training sessions last for four to six hours.

Curriculum for Portuguese as a non-native language

In Portugal, the main purpose of the curriculum is to support teachers in providing individualised teaching to migrant students so that they can all rapidly be taught the standard curriculum for the language of instruction. Some of these curricula structure the learning objectives according to the purposes of language use, and distinguish at least two stages: using the language for everyday communication and using it for study purposes.

In Portugal, the curriculum for Portuguese as a non-native language, aims at developing Portuguese as a language of communication, as a language of instruction and finally as an instrument for integration in a plurilingual and pluricultural society.

Language, a transversal competence

Curricula in the education system make the language of instruction a transversal competence. However, the specific language dimensions defined as transversal vary across systems. In most of the education systems, the emphasis is put on the development of communicative competences. Students should develop their language skills and be taught how to use them in order to communicate effectively in different contexts and for different purposes.

Several other education systems include language awareness in their curriculum, not as a transversal theme or competence across the whole curriculum, but as a dimension present in some subject curricula. In Portugal, it mostly concerns the language of instruction.

The Portuguese education system does not have specific top-level policies on the provision of home language teaching. This does not, however, mean that home languages are completely absent in schools. On the contrary, in all three education systems, teachers are expected to make room for migrant students' languages in the classroom in different ways. However, home language teaching is mostly instrumental in helping migrant students achieve proficiency in the language of instruction.

In Portugal, top-level education authorities recommend that teachers develop glossaries which can cover several curriculum subject areas. These glossaries should primarily facilitate students' learning of curriculum subjects.

Students' competences in their home language aren't assessed when they start school

Intercultural education is mainly promoted through specific initiatives or actions taken in the wider context of migration policies, but developed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education. However, since 2018/19, intercultural education has become part of the curriculum of citizenship and development.

The 'Intercultural School Kit', prepared by the High Commission for Migration in cooperation with other partners, aims to provide schools and education staff, families and children, with a range of materials on intercultural issues – toolkits, books, leaflets, posters, games. As part of the national education strategy for citizenship, the subject Citizenship and Development has been taught in 235 public and private schools in the school year 2017/18. From the school year 2018/19 this subject is to be taught in every school. It addresses topics such as interculturality and human rights.

Students' competences in their home language aren't assessed when they start school

Portugal doesn't have top-level education policies on the provision of home language teaching. Its purpose should be provided mainly to help migrant students preserve their home language and culture and improve their literacy.

learning support measures

Official documents promote group-based learning support strategies for all students with learning difficulties. Students from migrant backgrounds follow the Portuguese as a non-native language curriculum within the context of an individual work plan and additional language classes. Moreover, school clusters with large migrant student populations provide learning support measures that are supported through the Priority Intervention Educational Areas programme (TEIP) and the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE). The learning support measures are diverse, according to each school's needs, but they often include support from multidisciplinary teams comprising psychologists, social workers, intercultural mediators and other specialised staff.

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Obrigado, Thank you

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