GROUPING PORTUGUESE SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

AGRUPAMENTO DE ESCOLAS PORTUGUESAS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

AGRUPACIÓN DE ESCUELAS PORTUGUESAS: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the process of grouping Portuguese schools after the Decree 75/2008, of April 22nd. A case study that helped us identify and reflect on the challenges of school administration after a measure imposed by the Decree without significant participation of school members in the process. It also helped us understand how the relationships between institutions and school actors occurred after the Decree was instituted. Before being part of the grouping schools in this case study, each school used to have a specific way of organizing itself. However, after the legislation, each one of them was obligated to reorganize itself, many times, without the option of maintaining its own identity. So, they had to face many conflicts. The conclusion is that between the process of grouping schools and their integration into a common educational project – which means all the schools with the same objectives – there is a long way to go. Therefore, it is far from being overcome.


RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva analisar o processo de constituição de um agrupamento de escolas portuguesas, a partir do Decreto n.º 75/2008, de 22 de abril. O estudo de caso nos ajudou a identificar e refletir sobre desafios da administração escolar, a partir de uma medida imposta pela tutela, sem participação significativa dos atores escolares no processo, bem como compreender como as relações entre estabelecimentos e atores escolares ocorriam e, ainda ocorrem, depois da obrigatoriedade do Decreto. Entende-se que antes de fazer parte do agrupamento pesquisado, cada escola possuía uma dinâmica organizacional, mas depois da legislação foi obrigada a se reorganizar, muitas vezes, sem opção de manter sua própria identidade, tendo que enfrentar vários conflitos. Concluiu-se que, entre a agregação das escolas (constituição do agrupamento) e a sua integração em um projeto educativo comum (todas as escolas envolvidas com um único objetivo) existe uma distância a percorrer e, portanto, está longe de estar superada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Agrupamento de Escolas. Desconcentração Educativa; Gestão Democrática.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar el proceso de constitución de un grupo de escuelas portuguesas, a partir del Decreto 75/2008, de 22 de abril. Un estudio de caso, que nos ayudó a identificar y reflexionar sobre los desafíos de la administración escolar, a partir de una medida impuesta por la tutela, sin participación significativa de los actores escolares en el proceso, así como a comprender cómo ocurrieron y, aún ocurren, las relaciones entre los establecimientos y los actores escolares después de la obligación del Decreto. Se entiende que antes de formar parte de la agrupación investigada, cada escuela tenía una dinámica organizativa, pero después de que la legislación se vio obligada a reorganizarse, muchas veces sin opción de mantener su propia identidad, teniendo que enfrentar varios conflictos. Se concluyó que, entre la agregación de las escuelas (constitución de la agrupación) y su integración en un proyecto educativo común (todas las escuelas involucradas con un único objetivo) hay una distancia por recorrer y, por lo tanto, está lejos de ser superada.

Introduction

It is possible to state that the way Portuguese school network was reconfigured, in less than 20 years, after two Decrees, the 115-A/98 of May (Portugal, 1998) and the 75/2008³, of April 22nd (Portugal, 2008) with a National Public Policy for Vertical Grouping of Schools, meant a major change in school organization.

Those Decrees, imposed in a hierarchical way by the Ministry of Education – from top to bottom -, brought to Portugal an institutional and political discourse of a new school organization, as well as new challenges and obstacles, which is something that needs more studies and research. So, we consider that this investigation is defined more like an exploratory type, supported by a still small number of studies on this reality in Portugal. We bring up the vision of many school members on this actuality.

In this context, this article aims to analyze the constitutional process of grouping Portuguese schools after Decree 75/2008, of April 22nd, in the northern region of Portugal. A case study that helped us identify and reflect on the challenges of school administration after a measure imposed by the Decree without significant participation of school members in the process. It also helped us understand how the relationships between institutions and school actors occurred after the Decree was instituted.

Before being part of the grouping schools in this case study, each school used to have a specific way of organizing itself. But after the legislation, each one of them was obligated to reorganize itself, many times, without the option of maintaining its own identity.

So, we take as study object the grouping schools and, as a hypothesis, a setback in Portuguese democratic policies, considering that this constitution of grouping schools was imposed and it has caused changes, such as: mischaracterization of school units and unification of the management in one director – which is responsible for the grouping with strong centralizing characteristics, which means the grouping schools do not have autonomy neither democratic management practices -; the difficulty on the maintenance of a grouping identity - decrease in the feeling of belonging to an organization with a common educational project shared by all.

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3 Decree-Law No. 75/2008 Official Gazette, 1st series — No. 79 — Abril 22, 2008 … Article 7.º Aggregation of groupings For specific purposes, namely for the purposes of organizing curriculum and program management, learning assessment, student guidance and monitoring, assessment, training and professional development of teaching staff. The education administration may, by itself or by grouped and non-grouped schools’s proposals, constitute larger administrative units by aggregating groups of schools and non-grouped schools.
From a possibility of choice to obligatoriness

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic enacts, in Article 75, the concept of a “network of public educational establishments that cover the needs of the entire population” (Portugal, 1976; cf. Lima, 2004), bestowing to the State the responsibility for their creation and maintenance. Also, in 1986, was promulgated the Law of Educational System Bases (LBSE), and its Article 40 designates many types of education and teaching establishments, as well as groupings, - or, as Article 45 states, “establishment groups” - with one direction, certificated by specialized organs.

This process of change is not new. It started in 1976, because of the promulgation of many legal instruments that highlight the issue of reordering the 1st cycle schools network, and it had come up with the emergence of the Decree-Law No. 35/88 of 02/04/1988, which states: “every time a school does not have frequency superior to 10 students, its operation will be suspended, except in some cases, reasoned on dispatch of the school director” (Portugal, 1988). As the time went by, exceptions started to be the rule, and this problem was prolonged without any apparent solution.

From 2002, still with the same legal instruments, the Special Program to Reorder the 1st Cycle Basic Teaching (PER.EB1) Schools Network took place, with a series of measurements that requalified the establishments, determining them to be responsible for welcome students that came from closed schools. It was important to have measurements that would make possible the best environments for those students, with: libraries, cafeterias, teachers rooms, as well as incentives to the construction of new school centers. At the same time, some measurements were taken with the objective of accelerate the creation of grouping schools.

The legislation of 1997 and 1998 made this reality possible, since the process of aggregation of schools started to become evident. With the Normative Dispatch No. 27/97 (Portugal, 1997), aggregation of schools were installed, with the goal of providing to the establishments of basic and secondary education some supposed autonomy, with possibilities and conditions of taking on new responsibilities; increased community engagement, observing the LBSE principles; and creation of a sequential and articulated journey on the development of educative projects, with some favors to the model of integrated basic schools and experiences of school areas and educative territories of priority intervention.

In the Decree-Law No. 115-A/98, the constitution of grouping schools is designated, and the horizontal association of schools comes up as mandatory (between pre-school education
and 1st cycle of basic education establishments).

In the following years, there was an appreciable movement of aggregations. The result was an imposing and coercive movement of the government, in which the Ministry of Education was involved, dynamizing the aggregations. Thereby, the Order No. 13 313/2003, July 8, 2003 (Portugal, 2003) is published, and it defines that the groupings should have a vertical typology, being left aside – from the legal point of view – the horizontal typology. So, the vertical typology is prioritized from pre-school education to 3rd cycle of basic education.

Decree 75/2008 brings up more autonomy to schools and external evaluation procedures. Regarding grouping schools, 3 principles are highlighted: the first one, is intensifying family and community participation in the school’s strategic direction – an organ called General Council, represented by teachers and non-teachers, parents and education guardians (and also students, in the case of the adults and the secondary education), the municipalities and the local community.

The second principle is to reinforce the leadership in schools, which means taking reorganization measurements for school administration, with the creation of a school principal, with “a face”, the first responsible for developing the school’s educational project. In addition to this professional, it emerges as a deputy principal and assistant, but it is a single-person body and not a collegiate body. Also, the principal is the president of the Pedagogic Council, and his function is to lead, but also to assume all the responsibility for grouping schools.

The 3rd and last principle is that the principal has more autonomy, and this articulates with the improvement of public education service, a regulation from Ministry of Education. Beyond the articulation between the grouping process and one of the reordering schools, another instrument took place: the municipal educational letter, which gave the power of mediating and school planning to the Chambers at the local region. An initiative of associations, autarchies, and local communities was involved in school boards.

This action from the government ended up privileging the vertical groupings over the horizontal ones and, inside of those, the aggregations of groupings. The justification was that the pedagogical management would propitiate more integration between the different education cycles – from pre-school through secondary – and would allow the collaboration between teachers of different cycles and aggregated establishments, with the possibility of aggregating coherent tools of pedagogical and curricular self-regulation, as one single educative project or internal rules of the grouping. By promoting the verticalization of grouping schools, the legislation imposed this process on the management of resources,
obtaining a reduction in financial expenses. Subsequently, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 44/2010⁴, 14th of June, (Portugal, 2010), imposed vertical groupings and stated that such ones should include, whenever possible, all levels of education, that is, from preschool education through secondary one.

Research Development

The possibility of developing this research is due to the endorsement of the school principal and all participants who completed and signed the Term of Free and Informed Consent – TCLE⁵. Also, it had been big data collection, which is why, in this text, only a part will be analyzed. Without the intention of generalizing, it addresses the process of constituting a particular grouping school. The universe which composes this research is a grouping that includes establishments of all levels, since preschool through secondary, in a city in the north of Portugal, which will be called, from now on, fictitiously, of “Salvador”.

The grouping “Salvador” includes 7 schools, with different cycles and modalities: Preschool Education; Basic Education 1st Cycle – Regular Education; Basic Education 2nd and 3rd Cycles – Regular Education; Secondary Education – Regular Education; Scientific-Humanistic Courses Sciences and Technologies Languages and Humanities; Professional Courses Technical Management and Programming of Computer Systems; Adult Education and Training – Modular Training. It is noteworthy that this grouping is a reference for treating blind and low-vision students.

A grouping included in a school government program that is oriented to schools located in disadvantaged contexts (Educative Territory of Priority Intervention - TEIP2, and nowadays TEIP3), with a diversity of identities in schools that are part of it.

Until 2021, in all groupings, an average of 1,500 students were enrolled; with almost 200 teachers – a faculty that was mostly stable –; employing around 70 non-teachers’ workers, that is, people of the county which are distributed in 3 categories: specialized senior technicians, technical assistants and operational assistants. In order to better understand how the grouping

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⁴ Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 44/2010 (Portugal, 2010) Republic Diary, 1st series - No 113 – June 14, 2010 … the Council of Ministers decides: 1 — Establishing orientations to the reordering of school network, in the sense of: a) … b) Suit the dimension and conditions of schools to promote school success and fight abandonment; c) Rationalize groupings schools, so it promotes development of a common educative project, articulating different levels and cycles from different teaching cycles.

⁵ We thank the fact that it was possible to make our investigation in the particular grouping, specially to the school principal and its staff, as well as the members of the other management organs in which we watched meetings, and also a special thanks to all direct participants, specially who gave us interviews and participated in focus groups.
“Salvador” was composed, or, at least, how it has been constituted after its obligatoriness, it is justified a qualitative research, carrying out a case study (Yin, 2005) with an exploratory perspective, using a bibliographic survey in the area, and also an empirical part with methodological instruments, such as: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and field observations.

This article was analyzed, especially the focus groups, which is a technique that aims to work with the interaction between people from a small group. Fern (2001) states that the exploratory focus group brings up significant information that allows not only interaction and familiarization with the theme but also the construction of new ideas. Identifying the common aspects of a target group; substantiate a hypothesis or verifying tendencies etc. and also a semi-structured interview with the president of General Council.

Five focus groups were carried out with representations of different categories of school members, being 3 of the groups in online format, because of the difficulty in getting all participants together in person. The other 2 groups, despite their presence in person, had their interviews recorded in audio, with their authorization to do so. Thereby, 5 focus groups were carried out, with the following members:

- A focus group with the director's support team (one deputy director; three assistants; one technical-pedagogical advisor);
- A focus group with members of the general council (a representative of the teachers; a representative of the parents; and a representative of the local government);
- A focus group with the school coordinators (all six coordinators participated, except one who was absent due to illness);
- Two separate focus groups with members of the pedagogical council: one with teacher representatives from preschool, 1st grade, and the Special Education coordinator; and the other with teacher representatives from 2nd and 3rd grades and the representative of the class directors' coordinators.

The participants of 2 focus groups, from the school’s principal support team and the establishments’ coordinators, were composed by all of them, without any selection criterion. In

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6 The work of Lima (2004) was the first one to problematize this new way of organizing school network in Portugal. With this objective, the author focused his analysis on a set of case studies on grouping schools, so he identified and problematized the process of constitution of the groupings, being a common denominator the protagonist of the custody on this process.
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the focus groups of the members of the General and Pedagogical Council, they were chosen randomly, as people accepted the invitation, considering the representative of each member, taken in each council.

While analyzing what people that compose grouping “Salvador” – which aggregates 7 schools - said, the objective was to understand the phenomenon that happens in the interactions and in what they say during the focus groups, with similar and divergent positions. The analyses became important and clarifying, in the sense of hearing the schools’ members more closely.

Presentation of results and discussion

One of the most common and generalized reviews in the process of the constitution of groupings is in its dimension, especially when associated with the geographic dispersion of schools that constitute the grouping. That was noticed in the interaction of the focus group of the establishments’ coordinators, in which they claim:

There are some huge groupings, and it has become impossible for them to operate because of the distance between schools. How is it possible to articulate, when you have to walk, I don’t know how many kilometers to meet people? How can we have a fast space to meet an administrative sector, even if we have internet? What about the human contact? That makes it difficult. (Focus group of establishments’ coordinators of Salvador grouping).

As establishments’ coordinators, who are also teachers, say, this perverse change has made human relations difficult. Thinking about the number of schools, or the number of students, this critical view is very pertinent, since the preoccupation of the government was in not making the number of students increase in each grouping – due to the incorporation of secondary schools -, or in defining a medium dimension to groupings, for them to be in expected sizes. But, beyond those questions, the first processes of constitution of groupings, in general, were made randomly, dividing schools of the same localities, without any previous contact, auscultation, and even decision about this measure:

Eventually, it would be justified to establish isolated groupings schools, here or there, and in interior zones, maybe there the schools would be more supported and stable and have more help. In the city, I don’t think this is necessary, I think the disappearance of the school principal in the center of the city… I don’t see any advantage, even because there are many divisions which were made that I cannot understand. There is no need to do that in a whole country (Focus group of the members of pedagogical council from the 2nd and 3rd cycles, from Salvador grouping).
As heard in the focus groups, the problems range from the size to dimension of groupings and also to dispersion and geographic distance from the headquarters school to the other establishments, which results in a lack of direct and close contacts. The participants even claimed that people from the same grouping sometimes do not know each other.

The participants claim to be very unsatisfied because the school principal is not near schools, especially because the intervention area is wider, there are more problems, and the load is heavier, which makes it impossible for the principal or someone in his support team to be present. As said by the members of the pedagogical council of the 2nd and 3rd cycles, in the focus group:

Attacking the fire with the firemen close to you is different from calling them if they are kilometers away from you. The schools are getting bigger and bigger and, when the problems come, the person who has the right to address them takes much longer to get to know it and try to solve it. A principal or someone in his support team cannot be in all schools, it is impossible… There is a lack of speed to solve problems. (Say of the focus group of members of the pedagogical council from 2nd and 3rd cycles, from Salvador grouping).

As the participants say, dialogue, which is very important to the interactions between schools and principal, occurs disjointedly. It is believed that a close relationship between members is necessary for them to feel comfortable to get up, discuss and think about issues according to reality and existing need.

Those who defend groupings, in general, believe that this kind of organization would improve articulation between different cycles, but that was not what was heard from the participants of the research:

The articulation has improved, especially the preschool with the 1st cycle was important, but it is little. It is little because the rest is negative. We still have established the weight of the past when the teachers were closed in their own cycles and did not talk to each other. The blaming still exists, a certain tendency of throwing to teachers of the 1st cycles the blame of what does not work. It has been created a distance between cycles and that still goes on, that is why it does not make sense [they refer to the grouping] (Focus group of establishments’ coordinators of Salvador grouping).

What is realized in the process of constitution of the grouping “Salvador” is that the price that schools paid for the aggregation did not compensate with the articulation of the teaching cycles. This grouping, as well as the other ones, had to get many schools together and
compose something in an imposing way and even an artificial one. The grouping “Salvador” was one of the 1st ones to be established in its city, and it inherits the problems of 2 schools that nowadays are aggregated. This is due to the contribution of the grouping itself, as told by one of the teachers’ representatives in the general council:

The secondary school (A) before 2008 had no students and a lot of teachers. The school of 2nd and 3rd cycles (B) was full of students and teachers. In the 1st election to principal, after instituted the grouping “Salvador”, the candidate of school (B), that had more teachers, did not win and that caused a big impact. The teachers voted as their pairs wanted them to do, but there were a lot of external people [in the general council] that did not know the school and its social context, therefore, voted as “they were told” to. (Focus group of members of the general council of “Salvador” grouping).

The tension constituted in this process ended up establishing conflict situations, something that potentiated resistant behaviors, dissimulations, and simply denial of official orientations.

It is possible to listen, with details, according to the memories and interactions of all focus groups, that the first principal of the grouping, “Salvador,” won the election by just one vote from his opponent in an unfair way, since the conquer was manipulated and controlled by him.

There are divisions of “chapels”, parochialism and that makes people look to each other like Russia and Ukraine… Until today there is this preoccupation of schools being represented. People have resistances (teachers’ representatives, Focus group of the members of the general council of Salvador grouping).

Representative of Education Officers also states that he has felt a certain uneasiness between schools, because, at that time,

(...) the management policy was forced by the school principal (A), in which there were less students. He wanted to impose some ideas that were not taken (Representative of Education Officers, Focus group of the members of the general council of Salvador grouping).

It is highlighted that, nowadays, the current principal of the grouping is not the same,

7 Leite and Fernandes (S/D) study in the External Assessment Report of Porto Grouping Schools presents not very favorable results of this new way of organizing the school network. Respondents to a questionnaire survey, in a percentage of 45,76% considered that the grouping schools didn’t bring any changes, while 27,58% considered that it brought advantages, 7,31% that it brought some drawbacks, and 19,34% did not answer.
and the election occurred due to the conflicts that were initiated and prolonged because of this 1st election of grouping schools.

It can be seen in the speeches with the focus groups that the grouping schools many times doesn’t feel represented by only one principal. Those conflicts are one the factors that makes the desired articulation between the cycles so difficult. In the case of the grouping “Salvador”, the way out was to have another election with candidates from inside and outside the schools, to try to have a more impartial leader.

Some testimonies were heard indicating that, beyond the grouping “Salvador”, many other did not have a management that was driven as it was before, since there was not a collegiate elected by the school as it was before (directive council). That became even more worrisome when the principal that was elected did not compose the staff of the school, something that was frustrating for the educators, making a common educative project in the grouping hard to exist.

For a candidate to be a principal after Decree 75/2008, there are many conditions and indications. The aspirants need to participate in a contest (more technical part) and in an election (more democratic part) to occupy the position. In the case of grouping “Salvador”, due to the shocks, the candidates that competed knew the schools but did not make part of the teams of teachers.

We are living in a time where neoliberal policies are taking hold in the parameters of social life, and the school principal has taken on a different role from the models established by the 25th of April. A position that is now more regulated by mechanisms of control, inspection, and evaluation, therefore, faces various political and technical pressures, with the aim of achieving positive results in external assessments.

A contradiction is perceived, where the principal is democratically elected by a general council, but at the same time, is regulated by the very condition of being a technocrat in service of neoliberal values, namely, competitiveness. Simultaneously, they are controlled by a decentralized, centralized administration. Reconciling these two expectations is “(...) to confront the values of democracy and participation with the values of efficiency and productivity (...)” (Torres, Palhares, 2009, p. 97), a utopia.

In general, what was heard in the interactions of the focus groups was people’s astonishment with the events, as it is difficult to have closeness, let alone the perspective of democratic management. Even with the composition and functioning of the pedagogical and general councils, the individuals who make them up do not always know the schools (especially
the external members who participate in the general council); and sometimes they make unilateral decisions, and in certain matters, these bodies have little significant competence in the context of the grouping schools.

According to the legislation, the principal is a personified figure and is fully responsible for the grouping of schools. This ends up promoting less democratic management, as he has the power to decide alone. At times, there is neither time nor space to involve all the schools in the grouping in consultations or debates. There is no shared identity within the grouping school to consider everyday matters and decision-making.

Each school ceased to be itself and became a conglomerate of aggregated schools. Suddenly, they were forced to have common goals, actions to carry out together, modifications that would take a long time to materialize, and many conflicts to mediate.

In addition to the lack of decision-sharing, another negative aspect that hinders this democratic management is the control imposed on schools through bureaucracy, as reported by the participants:

Bureaucracy scares us and bothers us in our daily lives. How a school grouping operates is different from how an individual school operates, which is why there is a need for control... with countless forms and grids that we have to fill out, everything turns into paperwork... (Focus group of coordinators of establishments of “Salvador” grouping).

When considering the bureaucratic model in the study of schools, one reflects on the characteristics established by the rigidity of laws and regulations within the formal organization. The importance of "abstract norms and formal structures, planning and decision-making processes, consistency of objectives and technologies, stability, consensus, and the predictive nature of organizational actions" is emphasized (Lima, 1998, p. 73).

The absence of democratic perspectives also does not allow for autonomy within the grouped schools, an idea that was indicated in Decree 75/2008 but did not occur. According to Lima (2004), if school autonomy did happen, it was only of an instrumental nature, meaning it had characteristics of execution rather than decision-making.

Considering a technical-instrumental concept of autonomy, the very legal figure of "autonomy contracts" can easily be converted into the business logic of "management contracts" or the managerialist orientation of "results-based management," advocated by the theses of "business public administration" and "new public management" (Lima, 2004, p. 19-20).
Even with the claim that an educational policy was initiated to reinforce school autonomy, with strong tendencies to affirm the positivity of territorialization logic, one cannot fail to consider that this contractualized autonomy has taken on a zero-degree form. In fact, this idea of autonomy seems increasingly distant, as members seem to associate the grouping more with the image of the school-as-business. As expressed by the coordinators of the establishments:

I prefer the differences in each place, each location, and it bothers me to see schools as an organization of a large company; they function almost like a business (Focus group of coordinators from the Salvador grouping).

Several statements were made in the focus groups that highlighted the loss of the school's identity when it was grouped with other schools, a measure justified by economic reasons, as we can see in the following testimonies:

We are the school with the most students, and we don't even have a secretary. It's shameful... I can only understand that it's an economistic measure, reducing the staff of schools, increasing conflicts, and people don't identify themselves... (Focus group of members of the pedagogical council of cycles II and III, Salvador grouping).

There is a veiled, unacknowledged intention of reducing administrative and personnel expenses (Focus group of coordinators from the Salvador grouping).

The seven schools often feel unable to bring about changes in their environment, being at the mercy of rules and principles promulgated by legislation and/or educational public policies. Educators, in general, perceive that there is a cost-saving policy in education when a reorganization of the Portuguese network is implemented at this level throughout the country.

Some considerations

The intention of this article was to analyze the process of establishing the "Salvador" grouping school, based on Decree 75/2008, in Portugal. A case study aimed at highlighting the procedural aspect of this new measure, specifically the opinions of the actors involved in this process and in the specific case of the grouping to which they belong.

The conclusion is that there is still a long way to go between the aggregation of schools (formation of the grouping) and their integration into a common educational project (all schools involved with a single objective), and therefore, it is far from being overcome.
It was understood that there is an unfinished reform, as the mere promulgation of legislative Decree 75/2008, imposing the implementation of groupings schools, was not sufficient, given that the regulatory framework in question, as mentioned before, brought significant complexity and processes of change in the organization of Portuguese schools.

It is said that it is still ongoing because it is an organizational change on paper that, however, still lacks improvements in the teaching and learning conditions of students. It is necessary to assess the results of Portuguese students in international tests, as well as national research that examines to what extent grouping schools has contributed to the reduction of dropout rates or academic underachievement since its implementation. Furthermore, it is important to question whether the management within this new organization meets minimum democratic standards, as some studies suggest, as well as the indications from our still exploratory analysis of a specific grouping school.

To conclude, it is important to mention the limitation of this analysis in not including the participation of students in the focus group of the general council, the main stakeholders in education improvement.

There are several data points that were not addressed due to the limited space in this article, but in the end, it can be affirmed that there are several schools in Portugal that have lost their identities in favor of educational policies that did not fulfill their promises, a reflection on expectations and reality that should be further explored.

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