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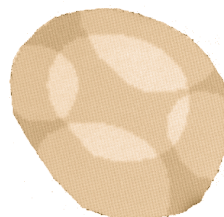
**B**eginning teachers  
and diversity in school:  
A European  
Study



86

Hugh Gash (editor)

# Beginning teachers and diversity in school: A European Study



Project coordinator:  
Claudie Rault

SÉRIE

*Estudos*

EDIÇÃO DO INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DE BRAGANÇA

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Title: Beginning teachers and diversity in school: A European Study  
Editor: Hugh Gash  
Edition: Instituto Politécnico de Bragança · 2006  
Apartado 1138 · 5301-854 Bragança · Portugal  
Tel. 273 331 570 · 273 303 200 · Fax 273 325 405 · <http://www.ipb.pt>  
Execução: Serviços de Imagem do Instituto Politécnico de Bragança  
(grafismo, Atilano Suarez; paginação, Luís Ribeiro; impressão,  
António Cruz; acabamento, Escola Tipográfica)  
Tiragem: 600 exemplares  
Depósito legal nº 238849/06  
ISBN 972-745-086-5  
Aceite para publicação em 2005

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# Acknowledgements

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This volume is due to work from colleagues from the following institutions:

Escola Superior de Educação de Bragança,  
Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres de Versailles,  
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul,  
St. Patrick's College, Dublin,  
Università degli Studi di Bari,  
and the Universidad de Zaragoza.

The research described was undertaken within Comenius Project 94158-CP-1-2001-FR and the support of the European Commission is gratefully acknowledged. The opinions expressed herein are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

We would like to express our thanks also to the teachers and school principals who took part in the study.

# Institutional support

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This book is about research undertaken within a Comenius 2.1 project supported by the European Commission designed to improve the systems in place to educate beginning teachers to help children who are in some difficulty in primary and secondary schools. Earlier publications have examined ways teachers think about children's difficulties in "Learning difficulties: What types of help in and out of class?" (2001), and the legal and institutional ways of providing for these difficulties in "Diversités des besoins éducatifs; des réponses en Europe et ailleurs." (2004). This final volume in the series on the project is about the ways beginning teachers perceive the varieties of problems children have in the classrooms and our collective reflections on how to improve the preparation of these teachers to help the children in difficulty. A variety of research methods were used including research action, and we were joined by colleagues from Brazil. Our approach is systemic in the sense that the work with teachers allows teacher education institutions to reflect on these findings so as to improve their teacher education processes for children.

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# Special educational needs: An experiment in teacher education in Portugal<sup>29</sup>

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## **1 · Context, objectives and methodology**

### **1.1 · Characterization and context**

The research we are describing took place in three different schools: the Graduate School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, basic education (BE) 1 “Estação” school and the former BE 2&3 “Paulo Quintela” school, all of them in the town of Bragança.

Globally considered, the project was divided into three stages:

- a) the institutional characterisation of the Special Education system and educational support in each participant country;
- b) the analysis of the characteristics and nature of education given in each partner institution confronting the needs felt by beginning teachers, considering problems in the instruction of pupils with SEN;
- c) the action-research, with one or more groups of beginning teachers, during part of their first year of professional

experience, was developed in order to help them to integrate and to solve problems in educational work with SEN pupils, these being totally or partially integrated in their classes.

### **1.2 · Research objectives**

The general goals of the project were the same for every participating institution and the research concerning the second and third stages had the following objectives:

- a) to characterise the nature and contents of the initial education of the teachers-to-be, particularly their preparation for the development of a teaching-learning process with pupils with SEN who are integrated in the so-called regular education system;
- b) to follow those beginning teachers who in their first year of professional practice have children with SEN, trying to help them to overcome their difficulties from the theoretical and practical points of view;
- c) to establish a working protocol with these beginning teachers so as to:
  - I. identify the difficulties of pupils with SEN;
  - II. establish a pedagogical programme based on those difficulties;
  - III. compare the results of the evolution of the pupils with SEN in two different moments: at the end of the second term and at the end of the school year;
- d) to evaluate the effect of the work carried out during the action-research process of teacher education;
- e) to diagnose education needs and to consider ways of recycling and intervening.

### **1.3 · Methodologies used**

Following the decision to work with beginning teachers, it was necessary to focus on a very specific methodological problem which could arise. We are referring to the possibility that many teachers-to-be, still in their last year as graduate students, would not be able to find work in the following year and if they did, it could be far away from the location of their original education institution.

Despite this, we decided to take the risk and integrate a group of some final year's students into the task of constructing the education questionnaire.

So, for accomplishing of the first objective, the curricula of the initial graduate programme of the beginning teachers were analysed. Then, a questionnaire with five open questions concerning their period of practice teaching was specified. Both are analysed in section 2 of this report.

Concerning the second goal, our worry about the possibility of a rupture in the initial education of the beginning teachers and their entrance into the profession in fact turned out to be real. So, we were only able to follow the situation of three former-students who graduated from the Graduate Education School of Bragança, specifically related to their education for the 1st cycle of basic education: these former students are AGN, CAC and SCR.

Similarly, the 3rd cycle of basic education could only be examined with four beginning teachers, graduated from the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro University. These teachers were working at the BE 2&3 “Paulo de Quintela” school in Bragança. According to their answers to the questionnaires, during their graduate program at University, they had never contacted pupils with special educational needs (SEN). These Mathematics and Natural Sciences teachers are: AIMSáG, FMLT, NHPFF and AMCM.

Regarding procedures for the accomplishment of the third objective, our intervention strategy consisted of fortnightly meetings with the teachers, from the beginning of October 2002, and the active observation of ten lessons. In the first two meetings, the difficulties of pupils with SEN were analysed and strategies were established. In the following meetings, results of the strategies used were examined. Afterwards new working procedures were formulated. This pattern continued in all the following meetings.

Finally, as for the fourth stage, the final reports on the progress of students were written. The student teachers were requested to answer a questionnaire with a set of questions based on their professional development, the importance of this research and their opinion about the researchers.

## **2 · The action-research process**

### **2.1 · Description of working processes**

According to what was previously mentioned, we worked with teachers from two levels of education: the lower primary and upper primary level.

We met every two weeks in order to evaluate the difficulties found by teachers and pupils and to take into account new methods of work and evaluation. These meetings started in October 2002 and our primary concern was to characterise pupils' difficulties. Then, each pupil had the chance to choose among one of the three types of specific support: simple pedagogical differentiation, an adapted curriculum, or an alternative curriculum.

When these two stages were accomplished, each meeting became a reflective time with the intention of improving the suggested strategies and supplying new education for the teachers, while bearing in mind the difficulties they faced, which were sometimes emotional ones. Quite frequently, they would speak freely as if they were in

therapy, like they were transferring difficulties, and this helped them recover their self-confidence.

Two moments of global evaluation took place, either based on the working processes of the teachers' group, or on the pupils' performance during the Carnival holidays and at the end of the school year. Finally, we also tried to analyse the effects of this research on beginning teachers and their education.

## 2.2 · Awareness of pupils' needs

A local team of Educational Support Coordinators decide which teachers will give pedagogical support to each school. Every year in May, the assignment of these teachers to schools is suggested for the following school year to the Regional Board of Education. Different bodies at the schools decide on the integration of SEN pupils in the classes and also decide which teacher will teach which set of pupils. The three primary school teachers worked with pupil A, who was part of a full-time regular class and received daily support in the classroom from a Special Education teacher. On Mondays and Tuesdays also, a Special Education teacher in the library supervised this pupil, along with another pupil who had not such serious problems.

Beginning teachers became acquainted with the pupils' difficulties because these were mostly linked to medical or pedagogical conditions (Special Education pupils) or to the latter only (pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties). Medical conditions were included on the clinical report on which the special learning proposals were based and often led to a specific school curriculum: either an adapted curriculum (in less problematic cases) or an alternative curriculum (in cases of permanent school failure).

This sort of distinction and characterisation of pupils does unfortunately constitute a dangerous *label* for them because teachers and other pupils tend to identify them with other sorts of disabilities (physical or mental). They also tend to deny the pupils' suppression, even if the pupils were able to overcome their problems.

Pedagogical problems were based on pupils' diagnoses and evaluation in learning situations, by groups of teachers, therefore requiring specific support procedures. Most of the time, this only led to differentiated pedagogical practices increasing the number of classes, with very few changes when it came to learning orientation strategies. Nevertheless, this pedagogical characterisation can lead to inducing specific school curricula, which also occurred in our research.

Normally, teachers, especially less experienced ones, detect pupils' specific needs at a late moment, so a school structure is essential to help this detection and characterisation.

As far as the "Estação" school is concerned, its organisation is common to Portuguese Basic Education. The education system is a mono-teaching one (general teacher) and each group of regular pupils

numbers about 25 pupils, reduced to 20 in the case of integration of pupils with SEN. In this case there are at least two teachers in the classroom: the regular teacher and another one specifically for children with SEN. Working with parents, these teachers have the responsibility to coordinate the diagnosis of pupils' learning difficulties and to propose the specific individual learning programme.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles of Basic Education, the education system consists of different subjects, and each teacher is in charge of one, two or three different subjects. Moreover, some teachers are from interdisciplinary fields, as happens with Visual and Technological Education in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, Social and Human Sciences (History plus Portuguese Geography) or Physical and Natural Sciences (Natural Sciences plus Physics and Chemistry), for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles.

Each group of pupils (25 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, and 28 in the 3<sup>rd</sup>) has an average of eight teachers, one of which is the Group Director with a pupils' group. This person must coordinate the institutional procedures of educational guidance and of curriculum coordination. This director must also mobilise the available human resources in order to assist the pupils. When these groups of pupils include integrated pupils with SEN, they cannot be in groups of more than twenty (16 regular pupils and 4 with SEN). Moreover, a single group should not include pupils with distinct etiologies.

The BE 2&3 "Paulo de Quintela" school has two specialised teachers which answer pupils' needs according to the classification done for the national application process, requiring teachers for support and/or Special Education teachers. Those specialised teachers diagnose the needs, guide the elaboration of educational plans of pedagogical and curriculum differentiation, give pedagogical support to regular school teachers, and can, when necessary, work with pupils in areas concerned with deeper needs.

The responsibility of evaluating the pupils' educational needs is shared by the next set of educational partners: each teacher individually, the Group Director, the Group Council and the educational support teachers with specialised training, parents and other people in charge, all shall be heard. The same responsibility is given to them when the construction of the specific instruments of pedagogical and curriculum differentiation is required. Educational partners can specify activities for individualised pedagogical support, while activities in relation to Special Education require a medical or paramedical diagnosis (psychological, psychiatric, logopaedical, among others).

However, the distance between the theoretical models and the real models in daily practice can be huge. Thus, teachers deal with differentiated experiences, making inadequate use of informal relationships to build their professional relationships:

- "In the first term, I found myself floating along" because "I wasn't given clear documentation but a single document that gave information on the special pupils and some rather

- inaccurate and uninformative considerations of them” (NF);
- “I was only given the diagnosis already available for each pupil (...) through a report that was purely clinical. Thus, teachers implied in the project and my on-the-job education supervisor were the ones who helped me most, as well as the education support teachers”;
  - “I took notice, through the agenda-book and later in a Group Council meeting, of a set of general clinical appreciations, not so helpful in terms of pedagogy” (FT and AG).

Bearing in mind the subsequent deepening of the social relationships in an educational environment, which “reveals that pupils are deeply human and merely deprived of friendly consolation, which is what they are sometimes looking for” (AN, CC and SR), teachers expose the inadequacy of the labels used (mentally disabled, motor unskilled, behavioural and emotional problems, deaf, amblyopic, blind, multi-disabled, and the like). In addition, they show the way in which the strategies suggested by other teachers, or even by special-ists, “turn out to be unsuitable during the development of a relationship, for facilitating motivation and self-confidence in pupils, particularly those whose skills are more developed than the expectations raised inside the institution” (NF).

### **2.3 · Analysis of pupils’ needs by the teachers**

Despite the classification done by the educational partners concerning pupils’ needs, the creativity and the theoretical background of all participating teachers were manifested, highlighting their individuality and autonomy both in facilitating the construction of the pupils’ sociability, and in their representations of pupils with SEN.

In this process, the teachers noticed the following: the social and school discrimination of the pupils with SEN; and regular pupils’ and teachers’ anxiety concerning social and school expectations towards pupils with SEN. They also confirmed that the official and formal representation of a need did not correspond to pupils’ performance levels and real capacities. On the other hand, the inadaptability of representations, of school procedures and actions is clear in relation to the terminology, needs and cultures of any school’s intended public, which is diversified and incompatible with the stereotype of the perfect pupil.

Thus, concerning pupils with SEN, the most detected stereotypes which were pointed out by the teachers were “what a poor little thing” and “he/she needs compassion”, and in this way pupils must follow the failure prophecies imposed by teachers; but even if they don’t achieve the minimum goals, they must be moved up, “in order to leave school as soon as possible” and “the school can decline any responsibility”.

However, the status of the pupil’s needs analysis show it is an important moment in the determination of curriculum options and

educational support. Its thoroughness differs according to the interest, education and organisational culture of the professionals involved. Therefore, we understand the difficulties of the inexperienced professionals, and their anguish when dealing with situations they cannot resolve.

Concerning our investigation, the evaluation of the pupils' difficulties involved not only previous medical (when needed), pedagogical and family diagnoses, but also an assessment of the relation between the pupils' real behaviour and performance, during the months of September and October 2002, when pupils were observed and their difficulties analysed and tabulated.

Therefore, the pupils' description is generally based on the three levels mentioned above, which we shall exemplify with three case studies:

**Case Study 1:** In the school year 2001/02, pupil A belonged to a class with cases of profound behavioural deficiency. Six of the pupils showed these characteristics, making the classroom very unpleasant and hindering the teaching-learning process. Pupil A tried to imitate the behaviour of his colleagues, becoming aggressive and losing concentration capacities<sup>30</sup>. Pupil A lived in an apartment shared by nine people (his mother, grandmother, three sisters and three uncles). His father had died when he was very young. He used to sleep in a bunk bed with his youngest uncle, who was 23 and his role model. However, this uncle was a drug addict and had had several problems with the police. The other uncles were between 25 and 30, the oldest having got divorced recently. They only worked in part-time jobs. His mother was unemployed and had to become a prostitute to support her children. She has a very rigid relationship with two of her children, one of them pupil A. However, she is very tender with her other children. She was concerned only in sending pupil A clean and well dressed to school. Due to these aspects, the pupil was not used to following any rules and he has not got any notion of the difference between good and evil. At home, his role models were problematic and did not offer him any emotional or social stability.

Concerning cognitive aspects, the pupil did not show any specific problems. His main problems were related to disruptive behaviour which led to lack of concentration, and that was why he was unable to keep up with the subjects, and explained his difficulties in reading and writing.

"We think that pupil A's behaviour is due mainly to serious lack of affection, but also to his father's death, to the chaotic environment at home and to the class he belonged to". (Teachers A, C and S)

**Case Study 2:** Pupil B was presented as having many problems and as a person with moderate mental disturbances. His family is of a low social and economic level that seems to have had a great influence on his below average physical and cognitive development. In fact, the pupil appears to suffer from malnutrition and to be younger than he really is. Pupil B is receiving a food supplement at school.

We were informed by teacher LC, responsible for the pupils with an alternative curriculum that, due to a protocol established between the school and a private company, pupil B had been doing some motivating activities, like painting buildings. These activities might help him acquire a profession. According to the same teacher, the company administrators are quite pleased with pupil B's work.

In short, these were the main difficulties detected during classes by the pupils' teachers: lack of studying habits and methods; lack of concentration in the classroom; generalised disinterest; lack of motivation to study; high absenteeism; and difficulties in interpretation and application.

Apart from the obvious difficulties that pupil B shows, he also misses a lot of classes and has very poor behaviour. He was frequently impertinent with the teacher, making the classroom uncomfortable to be in. He often used blackmail to achieve what he desired: sentences like "I won't deliver my test", "I won't behave", "If this happens, I will go away" or "I don't feel like it" were very frequent. In terms of discipline, his behaviour was highly inconsistent, at times acting normally and at other times in an unacceptable way.

He was very lazy too, and this inertia was very difficult to overcome because the pupil had no motivation to attend classes, to study and to go to school. This was probably the result of his wish to leave school to work, namely to paint buildings like his father did. According to the pupil, his father gives him a little money which he nevertheless considers good compensation.

"We fear that this might lead, in the future, to the exploitation of his work" (Teachers AM and NF).

**Case Study 3:** Pupil C, 16 years old, attends the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and a moderate mental disturbance was detected by a paedopsychiatrist. She is attending an Alternative Curriculum, according to the law by decree no. 319/91 of 23 August, since the school year 2001/2002. It is necessary to say that the pupil has had curriculum adaptations since the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of Basic Education.

According to her individual plan, determined by the current school year, she attends the following subjects: Portuguese Language, Natural Sciences, Visual and Technological Arts, Religious Education, Physical Education, Guided Study and Civic Education. Besides these subjects and because of her interest in cooking, the pupil helps the school canteen employees in order to promote her autonomy and develop some professional abilities. In order to complete her timetable, she has 7 hours of tuition, 2 hours of Computing and 1 hour in the library, all with the respective teachers of these subjects.

In the classroom, the pupil likes to be alone at the back of the classroom, with no one around her. We can conclude that she likes to be alone, despite talking a lot to her colleagues during the class breaks, including the ones from her class.

During classes, we noticed that this pupil is in urgent need

of affection as she is always trying to attract the teachers' attention. During class breaks, she also approaches teachers to speak about her life and what she enjoys. The lack of affection, demonstrated by this continuous search for attention, is due to several personal and family problems that she experienced, especially a possible rape at the age of 6, and having been taken from her parents' custody and living since then in a public institution<sup>31</sup>. Despite these problems, the pupil shows much affection for her family. The pupil shows an enormous sexual desire, "demonstrating it in an uncontrolled way" (Teachers AG and FT).

#### **2.4 · Answers or strategies induced by teachers**

As we suggested before, the work strategies used with different SEN pupils were put into one of three possible contexts: (1) pedagogical differentiation and proper school curriculum, the latter being subdivided into (2) adapted and (3) alternative curriculum.

Pedagogical differentiation was used with pupils whose difficulties were represented as susceptible of being helped with continuous support given to the group of peers. This approach consisted of a combination of measures including adaptation of teaching-learning methods, of school materials and of school time. This would bring about more interaction time between the teacher and the pupil, an appropriate orientation of behaviour, study, research and action and adaptation of the pupil's evaluation. Teachers evaluated their performance in this process as positive, especially when the teacher takes an interest in and accommodates to pupils.

The adapted curriculum approach was used with pupils considered able to reintegrate the normal process of learning, which implied their dependence on institutional expectations. Apart from this, these pupils should be integrated into the appropriate class for their age, in other words, they could only have a delay of two years behind their age group.

Adapting the school curriculum to the pupils implied the following: implementing pedagogical differentiation strategies, limiting contents to the minimum thought indispensable for school success which could be compatible with the follow-up of their studies beyond compulsory education, and regular withdrawal from the group of peers for short term experiences with specific individual activities.

The alternative school curriculum adapted to pupils was used for the remaining pupils, whose difficulties were represented as impeding a normal continuation of education beyond the compulsory level. Such a curriculum consisted of, besides pedagogical curriculum differentiation and adaptation strategies, exemption from school attendance for some subjects, substantial reduction of attendance for some other subjects, and practice of specific activities in an occupational education workshop.

We observed that a main point in beginning teachers' performance consisted of their relation to pupils with difficulties. The teachers' beliefs are based on the possibility of pupils' recovery and the empathy that results from these relationships. These empathies combined with the strategies gave rise to important changes in pupils' attitudes related to school and school performance.

The institutions connected with the education system (school social assessment, at both school and city levels, social security, professional training, and health system) did not always work efficiently. However, we did also witness a lack of procedural coordination and absence of a social project on the conception of the educational process as a result of a synergetic network interaction among the different institutions. These institutions still live closed in on themselves, and emphasize their objectives to themselves, instead of emphasizing their objectives for society.

As the participating teachers in this project report, the beginning teachers never gave up active and interested behaviour when facing pupils' problems and requests for help. It is therefore fair to emphasize the positive actions of the Curriculum Department coordinators, of Special Education and Support Teachers and the activity and involvement of the school governing body.

According to teacher AM, the main question is that, "all of us are confronted with education gaps, with difficulties with know-how that imply we seek recourse to instructors or research. Our education influenced, but did not allow us to have the necessary quality in SEN intervention at all. And, when we turned to specialists for help, we encountered the same difficulties. Theoretically speaking, everything seems to have a solution, but, in practice, each case requires the construction of a new theory".

As for teacher NF, the idea we have about this process is that, "it is easy to recognize that a majority of teachers and instructors give their best, but they don't possess appropriate education or essential resources. This way, the human dimension is the most important one. Ability, art, devoted relationships, empathy and specificity of didactics are essential tools for teachers".

## **2.5 · Teacher education needs**

In this section we shall discuss the importance of assessing participant teachers involved in this survey (2.5.1) and then the investigation process (2.5.2).

### **2.5.1 · The initial education of participant teachers**

The initial education of participant teachers finished in the school year 2001/02 in the Graduate School of Education of Bragança (teachers for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles of Basic Education) and in the Educational Department of the Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro University (the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of Basic Education).

In this university, the beginning teachers said that their initial and formal education was not related to pupils with SEN (one of them admitted having done an essay on SEN within the subject of Educational Psychology), and they were able to verify this during their first working year.

In the Graduate School of Education of Bragança, the initial education of the beginning teachers who worked with children with SEN was:

- a one-semester subject (Introduction to Special Educational Needs) comprising 45 contact hours, and
- working directly with children with SEN, on a supervised on-the-job training, which consisted of dealing with two or three children for four months.

During the on-the-job-training, we can confirm that the situations were different and not synchronized, so pupils were confronted with different contexts of integration.

In order to analyse their education, they had to answer a questionnaire (see Annex). The results were based on 101 replies: 28 by pre-school educators, 38 by the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of Basic Education teachers, and 35 by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles of Basic Education teachers.

After the analysis of the results of the three beginning teachers groups, we can draw the following conclusions:

- 50% or more of the opinions were associated with the characteristics of these three groups of teachers;
- the three groups had similar answers: the pre-school beginning teachers were the group with less contact with children with SEN, because this level of education does not require compulsory attendance, which is harmful for children at the age of pre-school education;
- initial education is unsatisfactory, especially when related to theoretical needs, but practical experience is also insufficient;
- the number of non-answers reached 25% and 33% in questions 2 and 3 (see Annex);
- the analysis of the first question concluded that the experience acquired during the on-the-job education with pupils with SEN was diverse, owing to the fact that these pupils presented nineteen different types of needs and they were divided into groups of four elements. Two or three beginning teachers in each group of the on-the-job education faced only one or two of these types of needs;
- related to this question, the answers of the pre-school beginning teachers were focussed on Trisomy 21 and on language difficulties, while the other groups demonstrated a large number of mental disturbances, learning difficulties, dyslexia and hearing problems;

- as far as the second question is concerned, “Can you describe a situation in which you diagnosed one of these needs?”, there are a diversity of answers. The diagnosis of the difficulties was established by direct observation or by indication from supervisors and other peers about the pedagogical practice. The beginning teachers had to do specific work in order to succeed in their dialogue with the pupils. To thoroughly examine their knowledge, the beginning teachers had to create intervention strategies, such as paying more attention to pedagogy, adapting didactic materials and individual teaching.
- when it comes to the third question, “When making this diagnosis did you feel the need for complementary education?”, all the pupils showed the need for complementary education; the most common answer was “the need for specific education related with each case”. This need can be solved by one of these three ways: by research, by seeking counselling with a teacher specialised in SEN, by using teachers with more experience or experts in this area;
- there was no difference between the groups of beginning teachers in their initial education;
- in the fourth question about the training provided by the institution in relation to this need, the majority of answers (51%) valued the contents learned in the subject Introduction to Special Educational Needs, though this was not connected with professional practice. The Pedagogical Practice of Interdisciplinary Seminars, which were held three hours per week, were also considered to be helpful (in 28%), as well as the reflection, analysis and evaluation during the on-the-job training;
- the most significant conclusion is that the topic SEN should be one of the most important in the education program, and should be adapted to a two-semester subject and have more interaction with the professional experience;
- finally, concerning the fifth question about the methodologies that were given in teacher education, the answers confirmed the previous conclusion: they felt their education was theoretical, unsatisfactory and disconnected with professional practice, though the students thought that teacher education was very important to solve the problems of pupils with SEN;
- nonetheless, if the education still had its flaws, they should be solved through close interaction with the professional situations.

### **2.5.2 · Representation of education resulting from the research process**

It was possible to distinguish two different attitudes in the two groups of teachers in their first approach to pupils with SEN. The

1<sup>st</sup> cycle of Basic Education teachers with sensitisation to SEN who were used to working with children with SEN turn out to be more receptive and capable of researching bibliographical, human, social and institutional resources by themselves. The four teachers graduated in UTAD (Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro University) were initially apprehensive and dependent on the specialised teachers and leaders of the project, and demonstrated scientific and conceptual agility to solve their problems.

The information given to these teachers was provided as situations and problems appeared, ranging from simple questions concerned with didactic and technical structure to theoretical and conceptual formulations about the different kinds of needs. We noticed a great receptivity in the two groups of teachers to both education and professional development, which has been very helpful to the project.

In the questionnaire we provided to the seven teachers at the end of the research, we noticed great satisfaction with regard to the work fulfilled, and professional enrichment that has opened doors to new development and improvement. We also noticed the limitation of the theoretical and professional perspective of this education-research, because each teacher only worked with a very restricted number of pupils with SEN, which can be illustrated by the following opinions: "I feel more aware and sensitive to an immense path I could go through," said NF; "It was very important to me to see how happy these pupils were when they were evaluated within the range of their powers and not by their colleagues' standard," reported AM.

A better understanding and acceptance of integration were also achieved, as ways to improve not only the democratisation of teaching, but also of society itself. However, AM points out that the lack of training, supervision and resources can lead some teachers to reject pupils with SEN.

As for education needs, teachers coming from UTAD agreed that initial education in SEN is essential. Consequently, they referred particularly to diagnosis methods and techniques, the teaching-learning process, individualised teaching, creation of curriculum adaptations and alternative curricula, as well as the need for education in the different areas of SEN. Therefore, one of their concerns was the need for individual education in SEN, or that the schools should have more specialised resources that could provide the necessary guidance for the work of non-specialised teachers.

It becomes clear that there is the need for all institutions with initial education to revise their curricula, in order to provide good theoretical and practical education in SEN to teachers-to-be, along with the need for continuous education to be organised and structured in such a way that all teachers could achieve minimum education in all SEN areas, overcoming difficulties in the continuous education process.

## **2.6 · The needs for education of instructors**

It seems appropriate to conclude that there is an interaction between theoretical and practical education, both in initial and in-service education. The results reached throughout this project show that the “banking training” (Freire, 1975: 81-107), a concept updated by José Alberto Correia as “passive education at school”, according to a project methodology, must be replaced by education in and for action.

Accordingly and bearing in mind the diversity of the current school population, education in all SEN areas is relevant. However, as far as regular teachers are concerned, we point out the following aspects that should be included in teacher education:

- learning difficulties;
- emotional and behavioural problems;
- mental disability;
- communication techniques and technologies;
- symbolic representation, signification and multiculturalism;
- different curricula;
- teaching methods and techniques;
- educational relationships.

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