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External School Evaluation: Teachers' perspectives – two case studies from Northern Portugal

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The external evaluation of non-higher education schools in Portugal has been developed by the General Inspectorate of Education since 2006. A first cycle of evaluation was completed, covering all educational units in continental Portugal up to 2011. The model of evaluation has since been subject to alterations, and a second cycle of evaluation is now coming to an end. The current model of evaluation is based on documental analysis, analysis of students' results, and panel interviews with a variety of representatives of the school community, and addresses three domains: results, provision of educational service and management.

This paper is part of an ongoing research project, developed by 6 universities and supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/CPE-CED/116674/2010) which intends to analyse the impacts and effects this process of external evaluation has had on Portuguese schools. This project includes a variety of perspectives and methodologies.

In particular, we will focus on two case studies undertaken in two schools from the northern region of Portugal, and more specifically on the perspectives expressed by the teachers of those schools. These particular schools were chosen because they have been evaluated twice and represent different educational levels (basic and secondary), contexts and results. These case studies included the analysis of documental data, interviews to key informants and a questionnaire directed to teachers (n = 141) – the latter will be the main focus of this paper.

Teachers are essential elements of the school community when considering the impacts of external evaluation, as any changes directed at teaching practices, student evaluation, among others are only possible through their direct action and implication. Therefore, their perceptions on the process and its impacts are crucial to the understanding of what does and does not change in schools as a consequence of external evaluation.

Although teachers' opinions are not homogenous and each school reveals a number of differences when it comes to teachers' perceptions of School Evaluation, it was possible to stress some areas as the most and as the least consensual. Teachers in both schools agree External School Evaluation (ESE) is useful for the identification of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, values students' external evaluation results, imposes a model for schools internal evaluation (and in fact contributes to the very existence of internal evaluation practices), and contributes to schools improvement. However teachers in both schools do not believe ESE contributes to teachers' autonomy produces changes in how curriculum is managed, or leads to innovative teaching practices.

These results point to a greater emphasis on change at the levels of school management, self-evaluation and particularly internal evaluation, but little impact on the teaching practices. We believe the classroom is at the core of school practices and teaching processes are essential to any measure of school quality and to their impacts on student learning.

Introduction

The External Evaluation of non-Higher Education Schools (ESE) in Portugal has been developed by the General Inspectorate of Education since 2006. Its first cycle was concluded in 2011 and encompassed all the educational units (schools and school clusters) of mainland Portugal. The evaluation model that underlies this process has undergone some changes, and currently the second cycle of ESE is approaching its end.

The current ESE model is based on documental analysis, analysis of the students' academic achievement, and panel interviews with representatives of the school community. It focuses on three domains: results, provision of the educational service and educational management.

This chapter is a part of a recently concluded research project, which was developed by six Portuguese universities and was supported by the National Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/CPE-CED 116674/2010). This project analyzed the impacts and effects brought about by the ESE process in Portuguese schools, and to that effect a variety of perspectives and methodologies were used.

This chapter is centered on two case studies that took place in two very different schools from Northern Portugal, and in particular on the perspectives of the teachers who work at those schools. These particular schools were chosen because they has been subject to ESE twice, because they were schools of different levels (basic and secondary), because they were situated in different contexts and taking into consideration the results obtained when subject to ESE. The case studies included the analysis of documental data, interviews with key informants and a questionnaire aimed at the schools' teachers (n=141) – the latter will be the focus of our present analysis.

1. External School Evaluation in Portugal

In most contemporary, complex plural societies, with a variety of institutions, evaluation and assessment have been recognized as essential mechanisms both internally – allowing the structures to self-assess, look into themselves and become aware of their modes of functioning – and externally – contributing, in this case to scrutinize the internal evaluation and assess the impact and effects those organizations produce in the context they are part of.

This acknowledgement of the potentials of evaluation has been reinforced by the fact that many countries are experiencing processes of democratic consolidation which lead to the questioning of the functions and performances of public organizations and workers, associated with accountability. This has become an inevitable practice and is common in many countries (Pais, 2002). This may help to justify the great emphasis on evaluation which is currently taking place and is present in discourses which repeatedly state the need for the development of evaluation and self-evaluation cultures. This may be a positive aspiration, if it leads to the production of insights which help people and organizations become more aware of their potentials and their deficits, stimulate people's personal and professional development, (re)contextualize work processes and improve the services or products which are offered.

In Portugal, ESE can be framed in the perspective which we described. After a period during which school autonomy was given a lot of importance, school accountability and responsibilization before society have gained momentum. ESE was designed in order to answer those goals.

Yet, along with these potentials, ESE presupposes risks which were framed largely in what was described by Ball (2004) as a performativity culture, in which the control logic is more prevalent than intentions for change and to the construction of autonomy. In this sense, the educational actors' concerns tend to become focused on external behaviors which can be measured and are subject to evaluation, rather than on less visible procedures which are as important, or even more so, to the school's mission.

The OECD adds a different perspective to add complexity to this analysis when stating the effects of ESE are not homogenous, instead, they have "differing impact on schools and that certain conditions are associated with schools accepting and acting on feedback from external school evaluation" (OECD, 2013, p. 288; Pacheco, Seabra & Morgado, 2014). Paying attention to the different ways in which schools respond to this process, several potential effects can be described, including: i) discursive or procedural effect; ii) partial or structural effect; iii) exogenous or endogenous effect; iv) positive or negative effect; v) intended or collateral effect (Ehren, Altrichter, McNamara & O´Hara, 2012; Pacheco, Seabra & Morgado, 2014). This perspective cautions against simplistic interpretations of the effects of ESE.

As we mentioned earlier, ESE in its current form began in 2006 (CNE, 2010), and the Ministry of Education (ME, later Ministry of Education and Science, MES), through the General Inspectorate of Education (GIE, later General Inspectorate of Education and Science, GIES) have managed and conducted the process. The ME justified this decision stressing aspects related to the quality of practices and academic achievement, the need to stimulate and evaluate the schools' self-evaluation culture, the schools' capacity to assume their autonomy, the need to regulate the functioning of the educational system, accountability before society and the participation of the educational community in school matters. Thus, ESE assumed as main goals:

- To promote in schools a systematic questioning on the quality of their practices and results;

- To articulate the contributions of external evaluation with the schools' self-evaluation culture and practices;

- To reinforce the schools' capacity to develop their autonomy;

- To concur to the regulation of the educational system's functioning;

- To contribute to a better knowledge of schools and the public educational service, contributing to increase the social participation in the lives of schools (GIE, 2009:7).

Nine years after the beginning of this process, which is now approaching the end of the 2nd cycle, a great deal of its goals seem to have been fulfilled, creating a number of changes within schools as some of the studies under this project have revealed. Those changes were most notable at the levels of school self-evaluation, educational service and elaboration of plans for improvement. We now intend to look into the teachers' perspectives on the process and the changes it has promoted. Teachers are privileged interpreters for any change and improvement to take place in the schools, as they are directly involved in some of the most crucial processes.

It was based on these purposes that the research team undertook a number of case studies, two of which we will present. Besides helping to cross-validate some data previously gathered from other sources and methods at a wider scale, they allow us to listen to voices of teachers and to question to what extent the ESE process has contributed to consolidate their autonomy, or if by the contrary, it has led to processes of control and performativity. These studies also helped us to understand which changes teachers perceive as most relevant at the curricular,

pedagogical and organizational levels as a consequence of their schools' external evaluation and to look at those impacts within specific contexts.

2. Methodology

The results presented were obtained through a questionnaire answered by teachers from both case studies. As we have mentioned earlier, teachers are a privileged group of agents in any school as they are key elements in evaluative processes, in which they take part both as subjects and as objects.

The questionnaire includes 5 blocks of questions, comprising 6 items each, and answers were expressed in a 5 levels Likert scale. The blocks of items focused on different areas which might be affected by ESE, namely changes at the school, changes in curriculum, changes in the classroom, changes in self-evaluation, and changes in the community. A final question was included, allowing teachers to express their opinion on the current model of ESE as a whole (Morgado & Seabra, 2015).

Data were gathered anonymously, in order to preserve the rights of participants. Ethical procedures were taken into account, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymity. Data were statistically treated and are only presented in aggregated form (Lima, 2006; SPCE, 2014).

2.1. Participants

In the first school (Case Study 1/ CS 1) 55 teachers answered the questionnaire. A significant majority were female (76%), about half were between the 41 and 50 years old (46%) and had between 20 and 30 years teaching experience (45%), which allows us to conclude this school has a stable teaching body.

Most participants have an undergraduate degree (68%), although a significant number have a master's degree or another postgraduate degree (30%). Only 2% have bachelor's degrees.

Most the respondents are currently or were once in charge of offices at the school, most frequently offices as class director, curricular department coordinator, and member of the general council. Most teachers were interviewed during the ESE visits, in the first (54%7%) and second (56,8%) cycles of evaluation.

In the second school (Case Study 2/CS 2), 86 teachers answered the questionnaire, a slight majority of whom of the female gender (56%). The majority of the respondents were between ages 41 and 50 (56,5%) and had between 20 and 30 years teaching experience (66,7%), revealing a very stable teaching board.

The majority of participants hold undergraduate degrees (66,3%), and 32,5% hold post-graduate degrees.

All the respondents teach secondary level classes (grades 10th through 12th) as this is a secondary school. The vast majority of participants hold or have held offices at the school between 2006 and 2014 (98,9%). Also, a majority were part of the interviews that took place during the first (54,7%) and second (56,8%) cycles of ESE.

2.2 Contexts

CS1 is a cluster of schools situated in the district of Viana do Castelo, in the North coastal region of Portugal. It has a broad educational offer, ranging from preschool education (age 3) to the term of basic education (age 15 and plus). The cluster includes 4 preschools (ages 3 to 6), 4 1st cycle schools (ages 6 to 10) and one basic school of the 2nd and 3rd cycles (ages 10 to 15 and plus).

Considering the social context of this school, only 2% of parents had higher education degrees and 9% secondary or higher education. Over 50% of the students are beneficiaries of social support.

The school has about 1000 students, approximately 100 teachers, 30 technical assistants, and 50 operational assistants.

In the 1st cycle of ESE the school was appraised at the levels of sufficient in 4 domains (Results, Educational Service, School Management and Organization and Capacity for Self-regulation and Improvement) and good in one domain (Leadership). They presented a contradictory report, disagreeing with opinions expressed in the ESE report.

In the 2nd cycle of ESE, it was accredited with the mentions of Good in 2 domains (Educational Service and Results) and Very Good in one domain (Leadership and Management). The cluster presented a contradictory, as they disagreed with the mention attributed to the domain of Results (Rodrigues, et al, 2015).

CS2 is a secondary level school, located in the district of Braga, Northern Portugal. It has an autonomy contract and its educational offer is at the secondary level, including scientific-humanistic courses (the majority of the school's students), professional courses and adult education courses.

Considering the social context, 3% have higher education and 15% secondary or higher education. Slightly less than half of the students benefit from social supports.

The school had over 1200 students, 130 teachers, and 30 operational and technical assistants at the moment of the later evaluation.

In the 1st cycle of ESE the school was appraised as Good in 4 domains (Results, Educational Service, School Management and Organization and Leadership) and Very Good in one domain (Capacity for Self-regulation and Improvement). They presented a contradictory report, not based on substantial divergences but rather suggestions of improvement.

In the 2nd cycle of ESE they were given the classification of Very Good in all three domains (Results, Educational Service and Leadership and Management), and presented a contradictory report focusing on the time constraints of the ESE process and disagreeing with specific facts (*Idem*).


3. Teachers' perspectives on the impacts of ESE

The participants' responses were organized according to the structuring dimensions defined when constructing the data gathering instrument: changes at the school level, changes in curriculum, changes in the classroom, changes in self-evaluation, changes in the relation with the community, and agreement with the ESE model.

3.1. Changes at the school level

Data concerning this dimension and CS 1 are presented in graphic 1. The analysis of those results allows us to conclude that, when inquired on the changes produced by ESE at the school level, the majority of the respondents (63%) agreed it has allowed the school to acknowledge its strengths and weaknesses. This may eventually be a first step towards improvement of the school's quality (53,7% of respondents agree with ESE's impact, at this level).
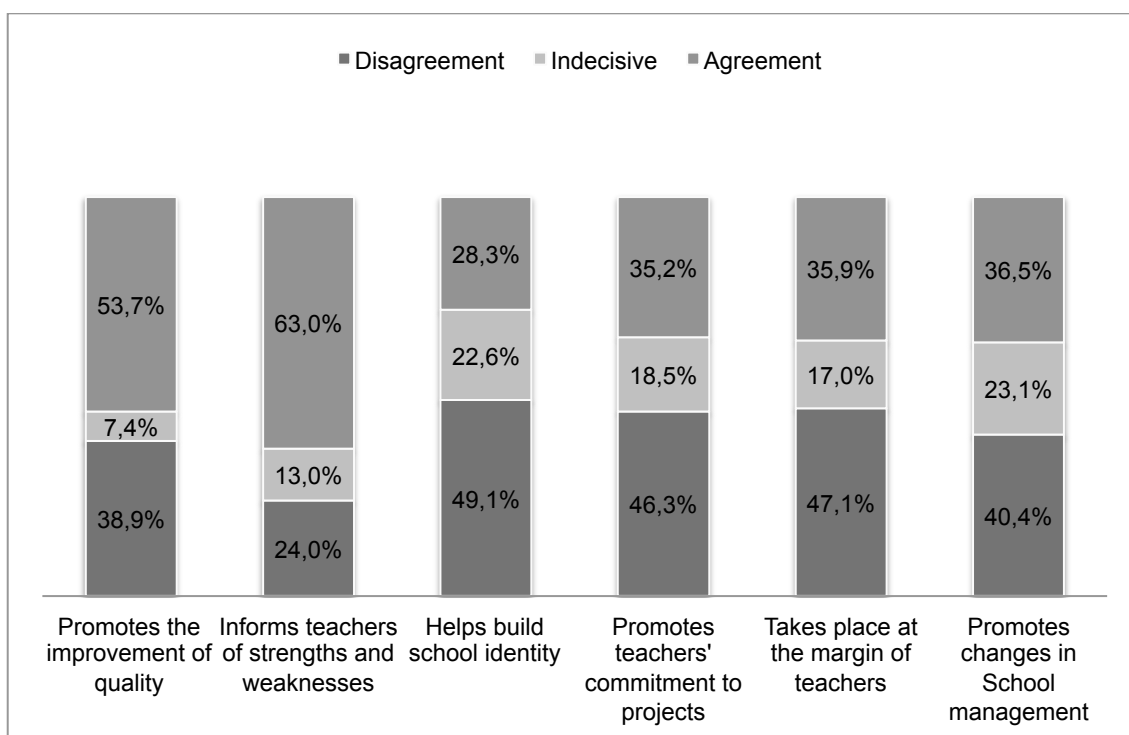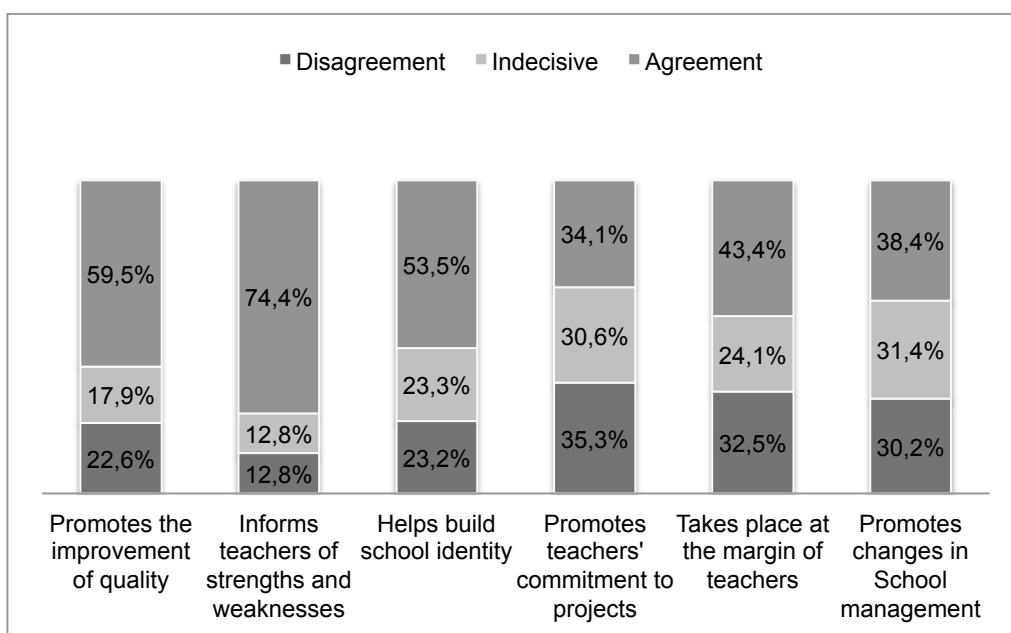

Graphic 1 – CS 1 teachers' opinions concerning changes in the school brought about by ESE

However, their opinions are not as positive when addressing ESE's impact on the construction of the school's identity (49,1% disagree), or the promotion of teachers' involvement with the school's projects (49,1% disagree). There is a rather divided opinion concerning ESE's impacts on the way in which the school is managed, since a large percentage of teachers disagree (40,4%) but a still considerable percentage (35,6%) agree.

In short, data reveal a certain ambiguity in the positions assumed by the teachers and we can infer that at the school level, the changes teachers recognize more clearly as effects of ESE concerned the acknowledgment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Contributions to the consolidation of the school's identity, teacher involvement and changes in the way the school is managed were not clearly recognized.

Data expressing the changes perceived to be a result of the ESE process at the school level, by teachers of CS 2 are presented in graphic 2.

Graphic 2 – CS 2 teachers' opinions concerning changes in the school brought about by ESE

The analysis of the graphic allows us to verify there are positive perceptions concerning ESE's impact on the identification of strengths and weaknesses (74,4%), the improvement of quality (59,5%) and the construction of the school's identity (53,5%).

However opinions were very divided in relation to ESE's impact on the promotion of teachers' involvement in school projects, the involvement of teachers in the process and the promotion of changes in terms of school management. In fact, a considerable percentage of teachers consider ESE did not involve teachers (43,4%) which may negatively influence teachers' perceptions of the process's impact on the work of teachers and managers.
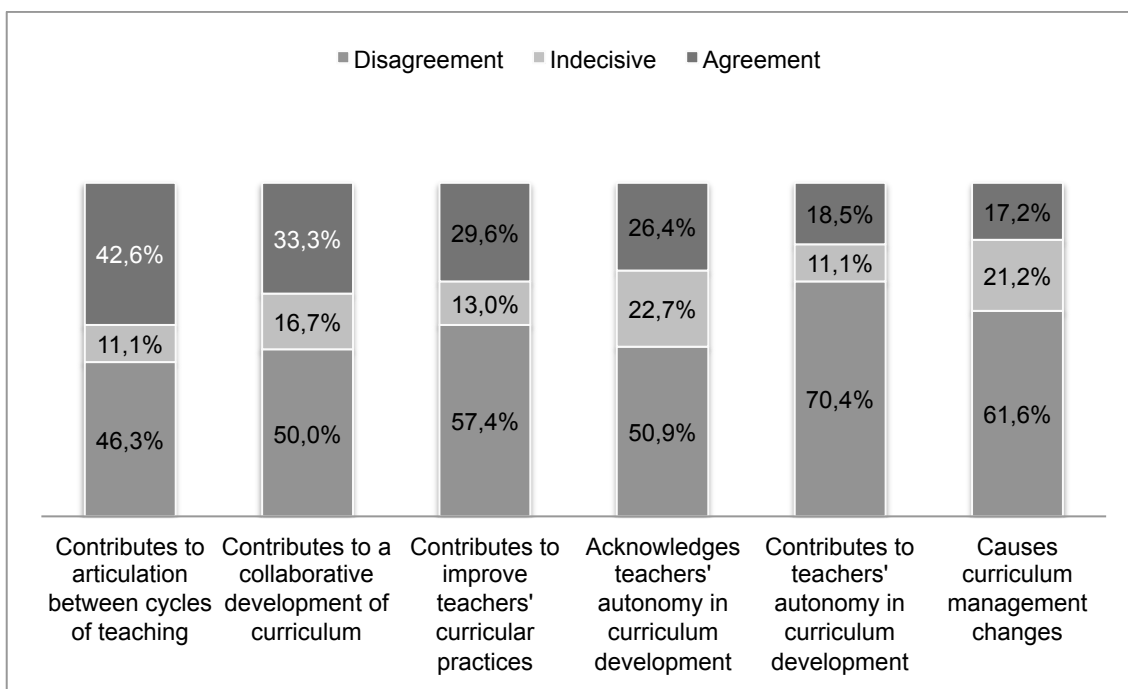

3. 2. Curriculum Changes

The teachers' positions are stronger, and more negative, when asked about the changes ESE brought about at the curricular level.

Data gathered in CS1 (as shown on graphic 3) reveals most teachers consider ESE did not contribute to stimulate collaborative work among teachers, improve their teaching practices, including planning and evaluation and assessment. They also don't recognize an impact on how the curriculum is managed within the school.

The same is the case for curricular autonomy, since a wide majority of respondents consider ESE did not take into account the autonomy they possess (or should possess) concerning curriculum development, and didn't contribute to the widening of such an autonomy.

Curriculum articulation is the only aspect which escapes this negative view on the impacts of ESE on curriculum, although opinions are divided among those who consider ESE has contributed to improve articulation between teaching levels and cycles (42,6%) and those who disagree (46,3%).
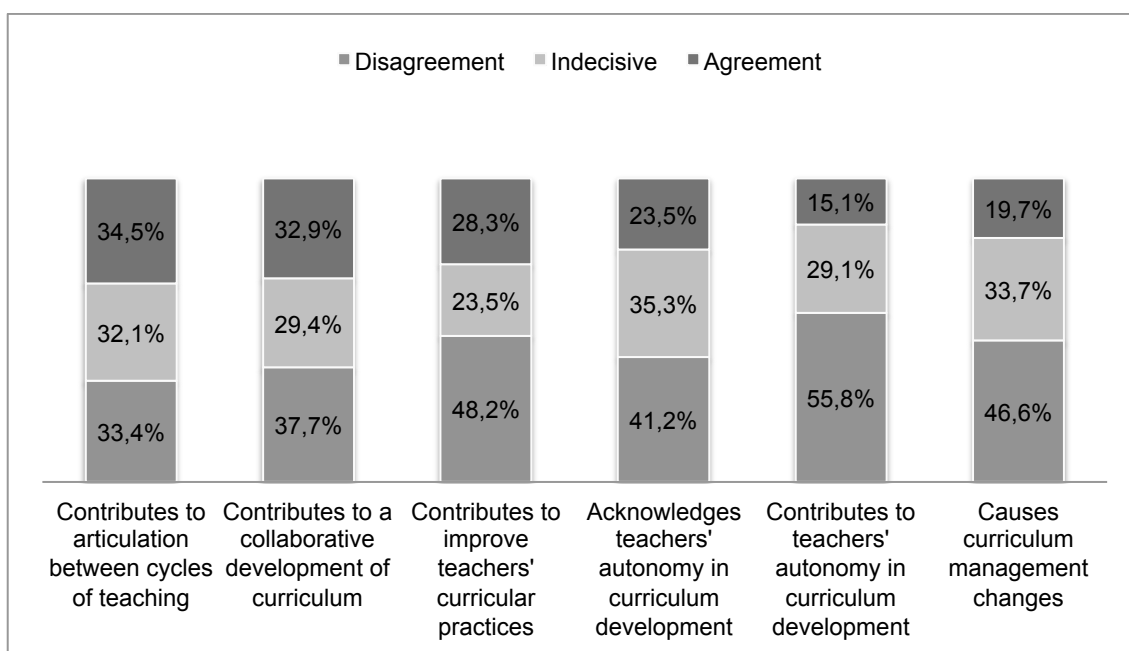
Graphic 3 – CS 1 teachers' opinions concerning changes in curriculum brought about by ESE

CS2 teachers (Graphic 4) also manifest a degree of disagreement with the assertions which constitute this category. However, besides impacts on the articulation between levels/cycles (37,7% disagree and 32,9% agree), some impacts at the level of collaborative curricular practices are recognized (33,4% disagree, while 34,5% agree), as teachers' opinions are clearly divided on these two subjects.

Nevertheless, similarly to what was noted in CS1, the majority of teachers disagree that ESE has contributed to teachers' curricular autonomy (55,8%) or indeed recognized it (41,2% disagree and only 23,5% agree); relevant percentages also disagree ESE has had an impact on curriculum management (46,6%), or teachers' curricular practices (48,2%).

CS2 teachers also expressed a lot of indecision when assessing these issues, with percentages of indecision ranging from 23,5% to 35,3%.
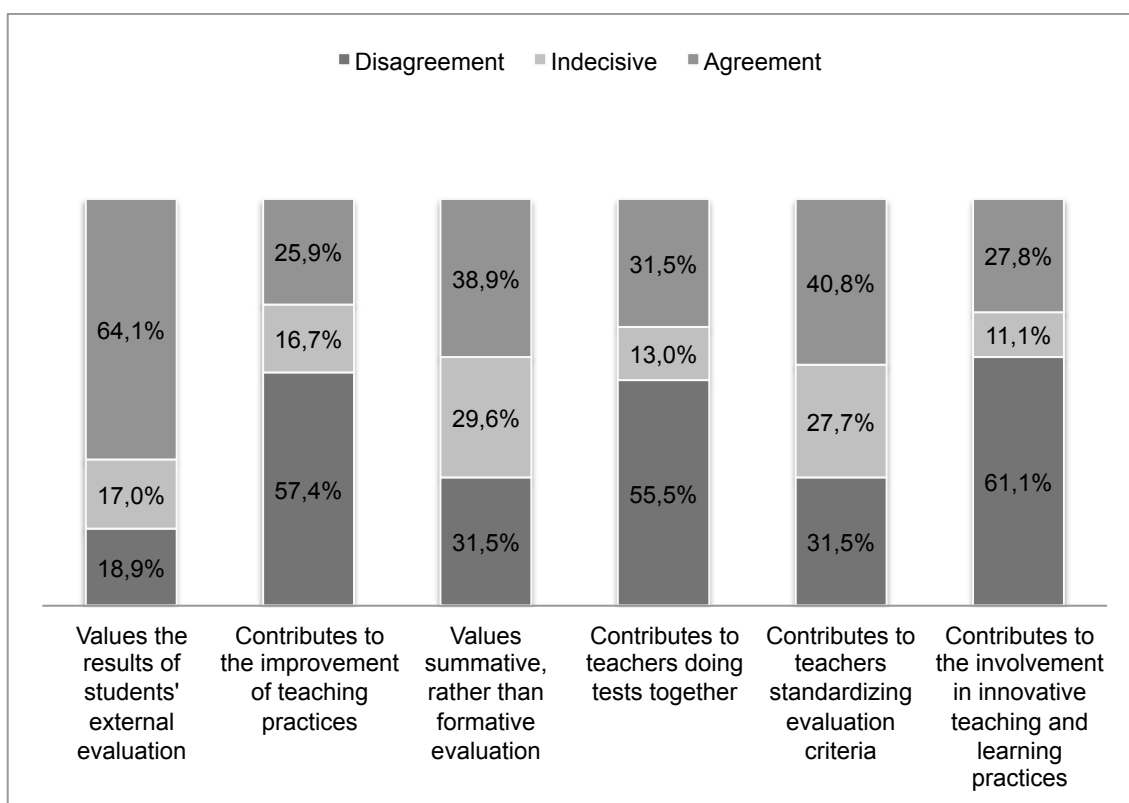
Graphic 4 – CS 2 teachers' opinions concerning changes in curriculum brought about by ESE

In general, teachers are rather pessimistic when considering the impacts of ESE on curriculum matters, although there are notable exceptions, focused mainly on articulation practices.

3.3. Pedagogical changes

The third category concerned changes in the classroom practices as a consequence of ESE.

In CS1 (Graphic 5), the majority of teachers agreed ESE contributed to placing greater value on external evaluation of students' learning (64,1%). Other aspects concerning evaluation caused a division of opinions, namely placing greater value on summative rather that formative evaluation (38,9% agree, and 31,5% disagree), and the standardizing (40,8% agree and 31,5% disagree). These levels of agreement were not mirrored in any other of the items: teachers disagree ESE has contributed to the improvement of teacher practices (57,4%), to the collaborative elaboration of tests (55,5%), or to the implementation of innovative teaching and learning processes (61,1%).

Graphic 5 – CS1 teachers' opinions concerning changes in pedagogical practices brought about by ESE

CS2 teachers (Graphic 6), like their CS1 counterparts, agree expressively (69,8%) that ESE has impacted the valuing of students' external evaluation. A relevant percentage (44,2%) also agreed it contributed to the valuing of summative rather than formative evaluation of students' learning. Once again, teachers consider that the emphasis on students' evaluation, mainly summative and external, has been the main change brought about by ESE at the pedagogical level.

The focus on external evaluation of students' learning, rather than teaching practices may be a clue to teachers' perception that ESE places greater value on accountability than change and improvement. Despite political and ideological motivations which may be related to an overvaluing of students' results, Quintas and Vitorino (2013, p. 13) consider this tendency stems mostly from the fact that the seconds cycle of ESE is oriented towards "the analysis of academic achievement and of the factors which, depending on the school, contribute to that achievement". In fact, whereas in the first cycle of ESE there was an attempt to enable schools to know themselves "in a logic of reinforcement of self-evaluation practices that were to be consolidated" (Quintas & Vitorino, 2013, p. 13), the second cycle (re)centered the process on students' learning, sometimes relegating to a second plane crucial aspects for the schools' improvement and change.
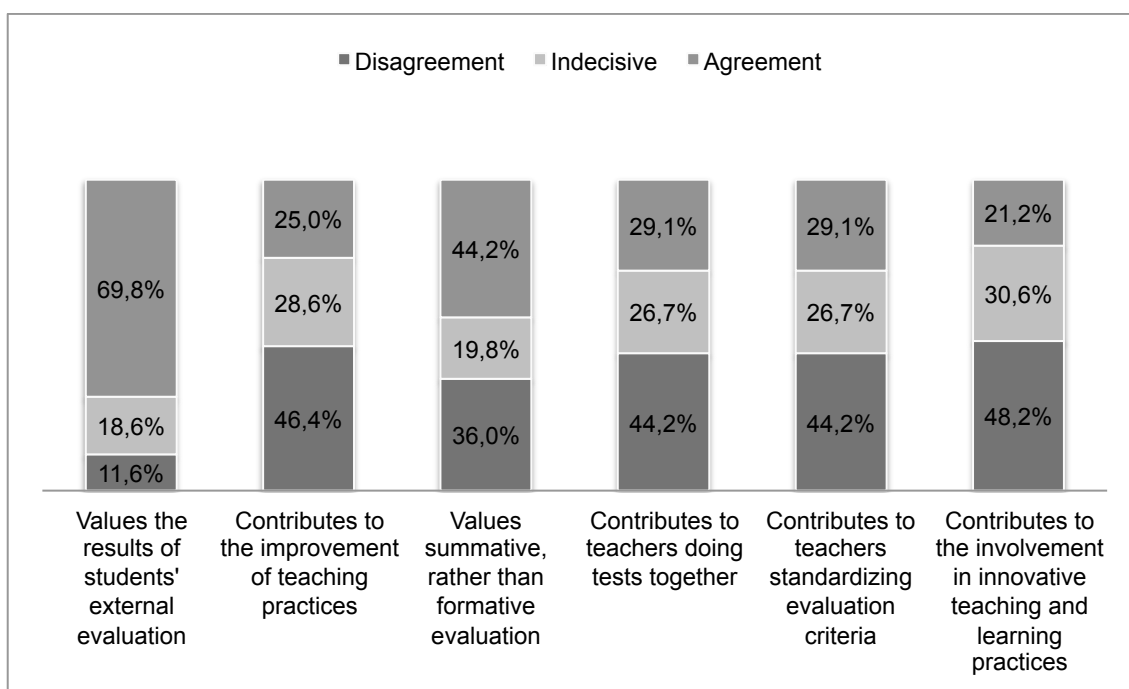
Graphic 6 – CS2 teachers' opinions concerning changes in pedagogical practices brought about by ESE

Teachers have also drawn a negative picture concerning the impacts of ESE on other aspects of pedagogical practice, such as implementing innovative teaching practices (48,2% disagree and 21,2% agree), the improvement of teaching practices in general (46,4% disagree and 25,0% agree); doing tests with colleagues (44,2% disagree and 29,1% agree) or the joint definition of criteria for assessment (44,2% disagree and 29,1% agree).

We may summarize the results, concluding the aspects of teachers' practice more closely related to teaching and learning as well as improvement were the ones where teachers recognized less of an impact from ESE. Considering one of ESE's main objectives is precisely to contribute to the improvement of schools' work, and considering pedagogical practices are at the heart of such work, this is an aspect which calls for particular reflection.

These results may lead us to pose a controversial question: is the relative immutability of teaching practices a reflex of the lack of teaching practice observation? Aspects related to the accompaniment of in-class teaching practices have been identified as a weakness or area for improvement in many schools, on ESE reports.

3.4. Changes in Self-Evaluation

A global analysis of CS1's teachers' perspectives allows us to conclude that school self-evaluation is the one area where the impact of ESE is more strongly recognized (Graphic 4). In fact, most teachers consider ESE has contributes to the very existence of the school's self-evaluation (62,3%), having even "imposed" a given model of self-evaluation (66,1%).
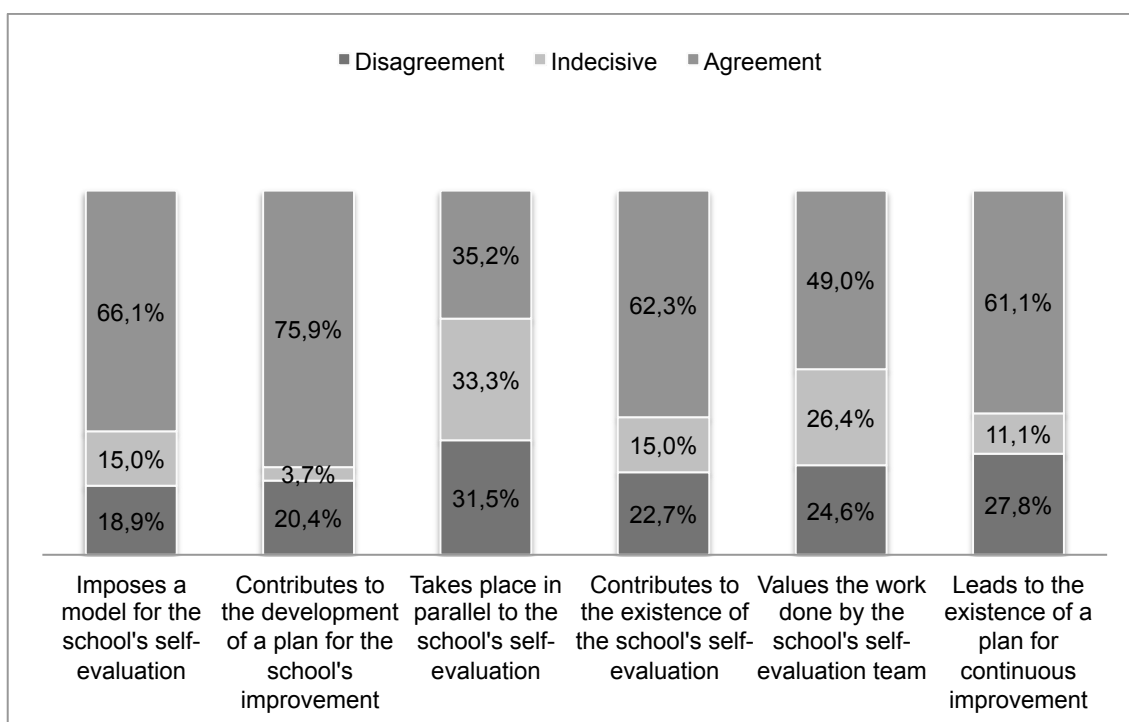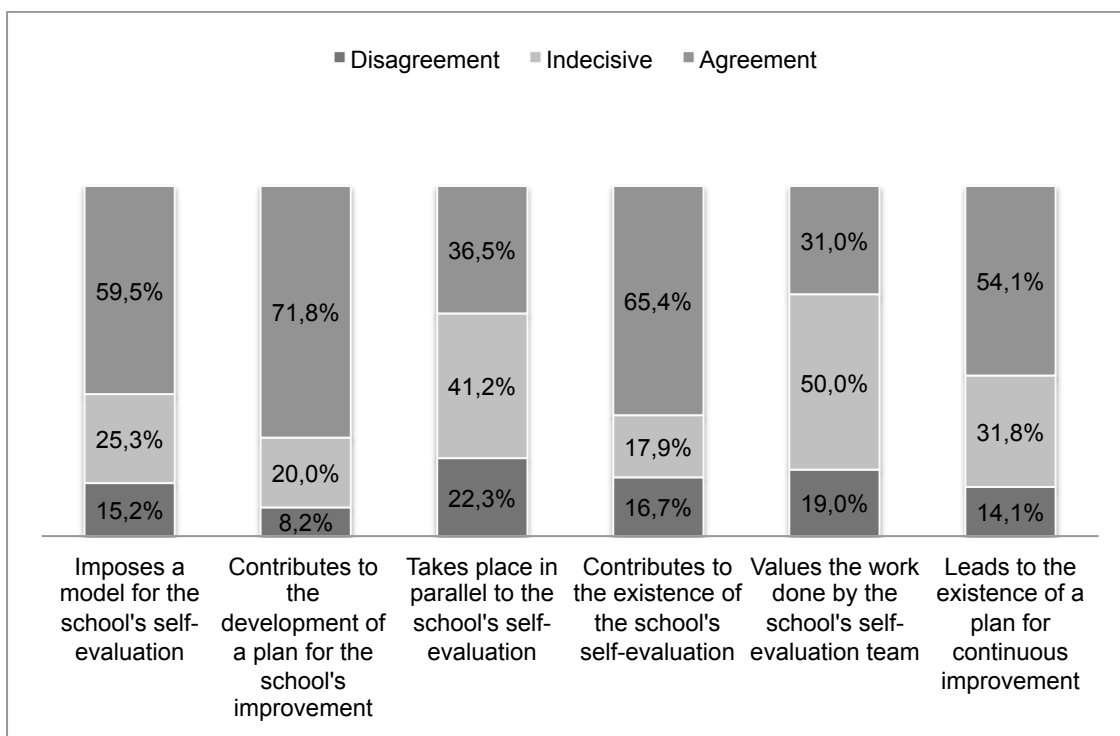
Graphic 7 – CS1 teachers' opinions concerning changes in self-evaluation brought about by ESE

Teachers also consider that, in addition to valuing the work of the school's self-evaluation team (49%), ESE contributed to the elaboration of a plan for school improvement (75,9%) and to continuously implement such a plan (61,1%).

Only one item included in this bock of questions was met with divergent opinions – the one concerning parallel relation between self-evaluation and external evaluation (35,2% agree and 31,5% disagree).

CS2 teachers express similar tendencies, although there are much higher levels of indecisiveness, reaching 50% of all answers.

Nevertheless, some effects of ESE on self-evaluation are expressively recognized, including the elaboration of a plan for improvement (71,8%), and the very existence of a self-evaluation process in the school (65,4%). Most teachers also agree ESE has imposed a particular model of self-evaluation on the school (59,5%) and that it contributes to the continuous nature of the school's improvement plan (54,1%).

Graphic 8 – CS2 teachers' opinions concerning changes in self-evaluation brought about by ESE

However, and similarly to what was expressed by CS1 teachers, they were very divided concerning the parallel relation between ESE and the school's self-evaluation process (41,2% indecisive and 36,5% agree) . Unlike their CS1 counterparts, they were also unsure of how much ESE valued the work of the self-evaluation team (50% indecisive and 31,0% agree).

Taking into account the systematization proposed by Alvik (1997, In. Quintas & Vitorino, 2013)[18] concerning the different formats that the relation between self-evaluation and ESE may assume, we believe in the present case self-evaluation was mostly parallel to ESE, as both processes concur to the schools' improvement plans.

To summarize, in the teachers' opinions ESE seems to have had a clear influence on the existence of a self-evaluation process in both schools, as well as for the model which was implemented, and the existence and continuity of a plan for improvement.

3.5. Changes in the relation with the community

The fifth group of questions asked teachers to position themselves about potential changes in the relation between the school and the community it is part of, in consequence of the ESE process (Graphic 9).

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[18] The author identifies three formats for this relation: 1) parallel relation – when both the external entity and the school conduct their respective evaluations, and may later share and compare their conclusions; b) sequential relation – when the school produces its self-evaluation and external evaluation happens afterword and is based on it (this may lead the external entity to give the school feedback and conclusions upon which it may elaborate); 3) cooperative relation – when both parties discuss and negotiate the process, taking into account different interests and points of view.
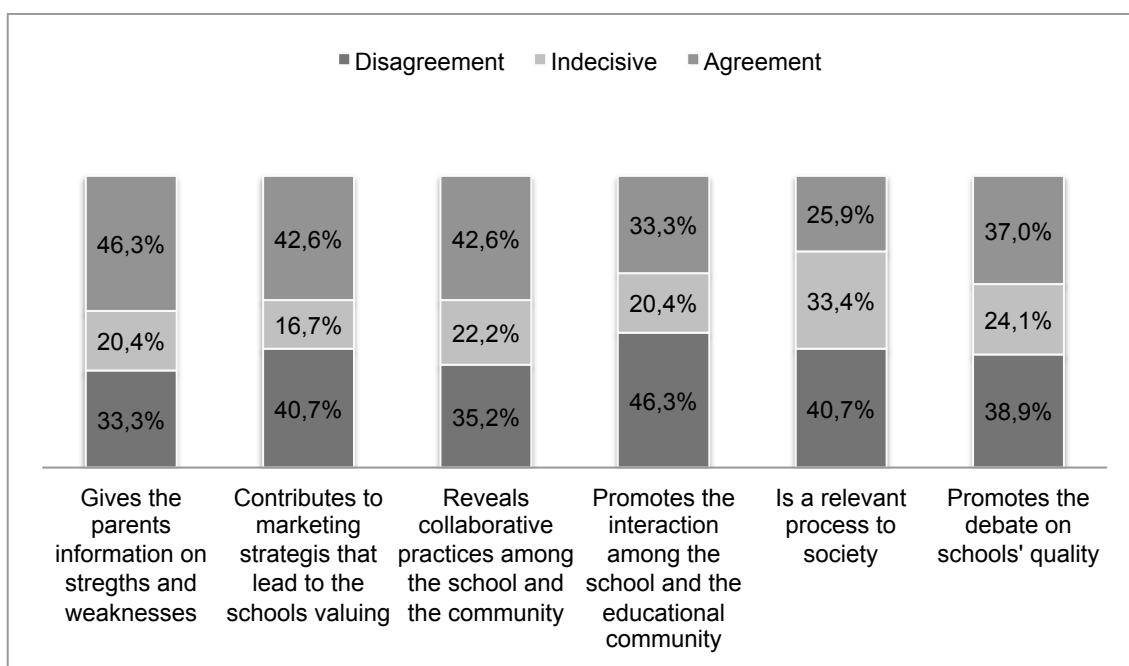
Graphic 9 – CS1 teachers' opinions concerning changes in the relation between the school and the community brought about by ESE

Data reveals some changes have been recognized in the relation between CS1 and the surrounding community.

Teachers consider ESE has made information available to parents about the strengths and weaknesses of the school (46,3%) and has contributed to reveal some collaboration practices with the community (42,6%).

Results also show that teachers recognize that within their institution marketing strategies were developed aiming to promote the school in the context that surrounds it (42,6%), although a considerable number consider ESE has not promoted an effective relation between the school and the community (46,3%). This may be explained, when considering other data from the case studies (Rodrigues *et al*., 2015) that this interaction preceded ESE and was not an effect thereof, as some of the interviewees expressed. That may also help to explain why a considerable number of teachers (38,9%) consider ESE has not brought about a debate on the quality of schools (38,9%) and don't consider ESE to be a relevant process to society (40,7%).

We should also note that CS1 teachers' perspectives concerning this topic were substantially divided – no position obtained 50% or more of the answers.

CS 2 teachers expressed a more optimistic perspective on this matter. In particular, they consider ESE has made information available to parents on the strengths and weaknesses of the school (62,8%), it has contributed to the development of marketing strategies to increase the school's reputation (54,7%) and to promote the debate on the quality of schools (55,8%) (Graphic 10).
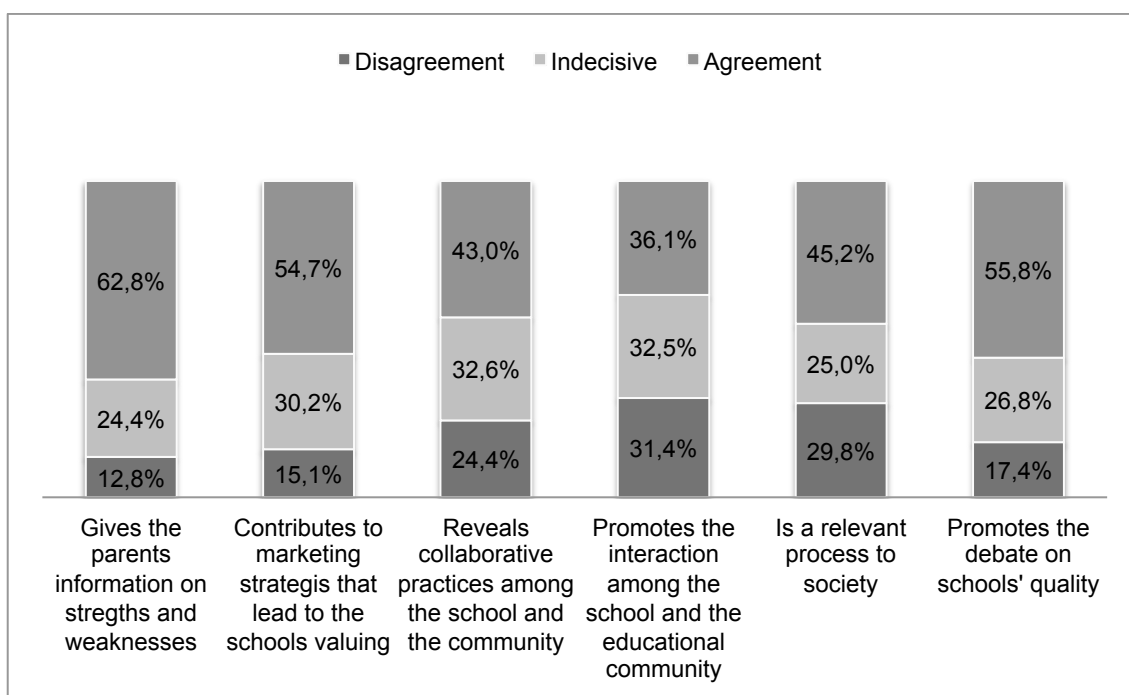
Graphic 10 – CS2 teachers' opinions concerning changes in the relation between the school and the community brought about by ESE

Teachers are however more divided when it comes to the revealing of collaborative practices (43,0%) or their promotion (36,1%). A large amount of teachers also consider ESE is a socially relevant process (45,2%).

In this school seems to have had recognizable impacts on the image the school projects, both by the information made available to parents and the implementation of marketing strategies. An impact on the debate around the concept of quality is also recognized. However, ESE is not clearly recognized as having had impacts on the actual promotion or recognition of collaborative practices involving the school's surroundings.

This subject was clearly felt quite differently in each of the case studies, which underlines the variety of responses from particular schools to the same process.

3.6. Agreement with the current ESE model

At the end of the questionnaire, a single question was introduced asking teachers to express their level of agreement with the current ESE model. The results from both schools are presented in graphic 11.
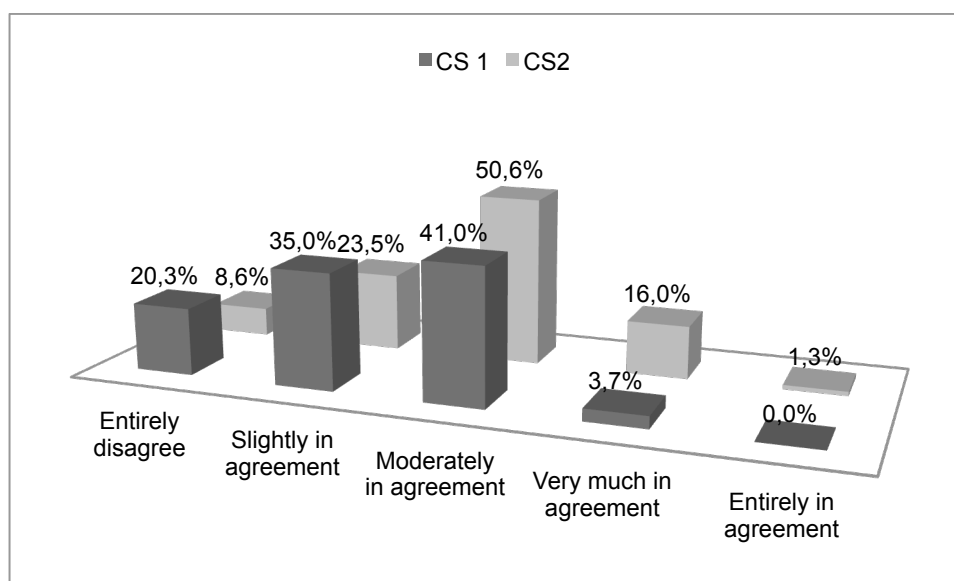
Graphic 11 – teachers' opinions on the current model of ESE

Once again data from CS1 and CS2 differ considerably.

The majority of CS1 teachers don't agree or are only slightly in agreement with the model of ESSE which is currently being implemented (55,3%). 41% moderately agree with the model. The higher levels of agreement were clearly not very represented among this school's teachers. To summarize, agreement with the model among CS1 teachers is low to moderate.

The majority of CS2 teachers agree moderately with the model, and a considerable percentage (17,3%) were even very much or entirely in agreement with it. Despite a more positive outlook on the process in this school, there were still 32,1% of teachers whose positions tended toward disagreement. This is in contrast with some reservations manifested by the interviewees (Rodrigues *et al*., 2015) which leads us to believe teachers who were perhaps less directly involved with the process were less critical of the model.

In general, the results of the survey seem to indicate that the process of ESE has been felt as more of a bureaucratic process, than as one aiming to promote change and the improvement particularly when concerning the pedagogical and curricular practices which take place in the schools.

It is therefore urgent to be able to increment the positive movements ESE has been able to promote within the schools – mainly at the level of self-evaluation, the elaboration and continuity of plans for improvement and the institution's visibility to the educational community – to try to mobilize the educational agents towards common goals. The curricular and pedagogical practices, including teaching and learning processes and innovation, which are at the heart of the schools' work, seem to be relatively unaffected by the process, even in CS2, where the process was experience more positively as a whole.

Final Considerations

When analyzing the results in a global perspective, the difference of effects registered in each of the cases under analysis is underlined. Although ESE follows a model which imposes uniform norms with the tendency to lead to the uniformization of practices, the ways in which this process was interpreted and the effects which are recognized by the teachers in these two schools differed substantially. This underlines the importance of context, and even of the school culture and of keeping a contextual analysis, paired with a more global outlook.

Regardless of any number of factors which may have influenced the positions assumed by the teachers of either school, some transversal readings were still possible. The centrality of academic achievement in the ESE process may be at the base of some of the changes that were recognized in the two schools, namely in curricular and organizational terms. In fact, the effects at the level of students' evaluation, including the centrality given to students' external evaluation, were clearly stated. This emphasis on evaluation – both of the schools and of the students' achievement has the danger of leading teachers to performativity practices, with all the dangers that entails.

Nevertheless, a moderately positive perspective on the effects of ESE was also recognized in both schools, even if the views on the model itself were not consensual. This corroborates the effects of ESE at the levels of self-evaluation, and the development of plans for improvement. The pedagogical and curricular levels, however, seem to have had been less impacted, except for the aspects related do students' evaluation which were already mentioned.

Any analysis on this process should remain alert to a variety of different reactions and effects which may arise in each context and take into account the lens of teachers' autonomy and professionality.

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