Literacy Policy Development
The recent case of Portugal

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Contexts of education regulation

Ministry of Education

EU
OECD

Conservative voices
More grammar
More literature
More national assessment

Media

Higher Education Institutions
Initial and in-service training

Publishing houses
Basal readers
School textbooks

National Curriculum

Prescriptive content
Pedagogy

National assessment

Parents

Schools

Teachers

Choose textbooks!

Recontextualize
Ministry of Education

To reduce the number of weak readers to 15.5% by 2010 (Stockholm Convention, 2001)

Teachers have to teach better! (*teachers do not teach well...*)

- Controlled Training
- More reading
- Certified textbooks

- Strong regulation of ITEd
- National Program for the Teaching of Portuguese (PNEP [2007])

Since 2009, publishers have to submit books for official approval
National Program for the Teaching of Portuguese

- To improve the **teaching** of reading, writing and orality (= to raise reading levels)

- Ministry of Education
  - Coordination Committee
    - National Coordination Team

  ➢ **Mission:**
    - To design the training program;
    - To define contents and methodologies for the training sessions;
    - To articulate the trainers
    - To PRODUCE and distribute brochures for training;
    - To provide useful bibliography
    - To PRODUCE pedagogical materials

  ➢ **Training:** Use and discussion of systematic strategies for language teaching

**What teachers need to know about:**
- Phonological awareness;
- Linguistic awareness;
- Decoding;
- Reading comprehension;
- Writing (textual dimension)
Beliefs and aims:

“A systematic and integrated approach of lexical and sub-lexical strategies, sustained by the use of books (and not small pieces of texts) that will motivate children for the pleasure of reading and learning. The use of real books is recommended not only to promote interest on reading but also to give the child the opportunity to increase vocabulary and to contact with all kinds of texts. It is important that decoding occurs in a real reading context”.
Does this training program ‘work’?

Some evidences:

- More “real” reading and writing practices
- Parents are being involved
- Teachers in the training programme are deeply engaged:
  - hundreds of teachers’ blogs with lesson plans, examples of activities, classes portfolios
Concerns

- Emphasis on daily “activities” and on “doing”
- Activities equal for all contexts
- The routinization of strategies and procedures
- Teachers dependency of such materials
- The myths of the quick fix
- Weak awareness and self-reflection about the practices; no preparation for gathering and interpreting evidence
Final (borrowed) thoughts

“[the] point here is that it is not that some literacy teaching methods work and others do not. They all work to shape and construct different literate repertoires in classrooms. They all have outcomes visible in practices and motivation […]
What do particular combinations and blends of families of practices work to produce? In which combinations and emphases do they work with specific communities of students? For what practices, places, times, and occasions do they prepare students? And for what political and ideological configurations?

What better way to assist teachers' work and pedagogy in these new times than with complex and critical questions rather than simple answers” (Luke & Freebody, 1999).