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266 - Understanding Teachers' Work and Cultures: An Organizational Analysis of the Changes Occurred in a "Cluster of Schools" in the Context of the Recent Portuguese Educational Reforms

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Abstract: This paper presents a research developed in the ambit of a Master in Education, in the area of School Administration and Organization. This research was completed in 2009 and it was carried out in a Portuguese "Agrupamento de Escolas" (a "cluster of schools which includes students from 3 to 15 years of age) aiming at analyzing the political and socio-organizational processes of its creation and development in order to understand the main changes occurred in teachers' work and professional cultures, especially in the ambit of the pre and primary schools which belong to the referred to "cluster of schools".

The theoretical approach focused on the cultural perspectives of organizational analysis, exploring the concepts of school organizational cultures and teacher professional cultures.

The empirical research was supported in a qualitative methodology and developed trough a case study. It was developed both in a synchronic and diachronic perspective, allowing unveil a set of multiple forms of work and teacher cultures that were metamorphosing over more than a decade. Findings show that these processes were traversed by conflicts and negotiations.

Keywords: Teachers' work, organizational and professional cultures; educational reforms

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents some results of an empirical research carried out in a Portuguese "Agrupamento de Escolas" (a cluster of schools which includes students from 3 to 15 years of age), which show deep changes both in organizational structures and in teachers' work and professional cultures. The theoretical component discuss the tendencies of the contemporary educational policies, especially those that led to the creation of the "clusters of schools" as well as the concepts of organizational and professional school cultures, considering the importance of the relationships and the interactions between the members of the organization, not only in which concerns to a single school but to the whole cluster of schools. In methodological terms the research consisted in a case study linked to an interpretive paradigm and carried out through a qualitative perspective.

In Portugal, the "Agrupamentos de Escolas" (clusters of schools) were created under a national legislation, in a generalized and compulsory way, in 1998. Until then pre and primary schools (pupils from 3 to 10 years of age) were separated from the low secondary school (pupils from 10 to 15 years of age). The Decree-Law no. 115-A/98 initiated the generalized process of grouping schools, based on the obligation of each "cluster of schools" prepare a common educational project. As a consequence, a greater influence of the traditional low secondary schools culture occurred, based on a subject/discipline-orientation, as well as a strong tendency towards bureaucratic and standardized processes. These phenomena provoked some turbulence in which concerns several aspects, mainly in the relationships between teachers and their work. For instance, pre and primary teachers' work became more uniform and compartmented, in contrast to their previous cultures and practices which were more flexible and integrated, in curricular and pedagogical terms.

The main changes show the differences of conceptions concerning teachers' work and their professional cultures, either in terms of organizational and pedagogical work or in the administration and management of the "cluster of schools". These changes happened in two phases. The first phase corresponded to the creation of a "horizontal cluster of schools", comprised only of pre and primary schools, which resulted in profound organizational administrative or pedagogical changes, but in a more local-based perspective. Before the formation of this "cluster of schools", pre and primary school teachers worked alone and isolated because schools were small and dispersed, particularly in rural areas like the region where this research was

developed. The creation of the "horizontal cluster of schools" evolves into a situation of a more collaborative work between pre and primary school teachers. The second phase led to the creation of a "vertical cluster of schools", covering schools and teachers from pre-school to the 9th grade, but it was imposed by legal norms and did not correspond to a "desired marriage" between pre and primary school teachers and the low secondary school teachers.

The empirical research was based on ten teachers' semi-structured interviews with two different formats of interview protocols: one specifically aimed at pre and primary school teachers, who accompanied the entire process of forming the "horizontal cluster of schools" and their subsequent transition to "vertical cluster of schools". Another one was oriented towards low secondary school teachers who participated only in the "vertical cluster of schools" formation. The interview protocol addressed to pre and primary school teachers was temporality structured in three parts relating to professional and organizational dynamics: before and during the "horizontal cluster of schools" formation, and later the "vertical cluster of schools" creation. The interview protocol for low secondary school teachers was organized only in two phases: the organizational and professional dynamics before the formation of the "vertical cluster of schools" and the period when it was formed.

In order to protect the respondents' anonymity, fictitious names were invented under the inspiration of the local fauna: These names were used on the vignettes that reproduced the extracts drawn from the interviews. Thus, Butterfly, Dragonfly and Ephemeral were used to identify the three pre-school teachers; Ladybug, Damselfly and Kingfisher were the names used for primary teachers (the last one was the school principal); Barbo, Jay, Hydra and Hoopoe were the names used for the low secondary school teachers who participate in the "vertical cluster of schools" formation.

Findings reveal the specific local context idiosyncrasies and show changes in teachers' work and more deeply in their professional cultures and in the school organizational culture based on the new reality of the "cluster of schools" organization. It should be noted, however, that the process of the construction of vertical cluster school has been also providing relationships and learning situations between teachers of different levels: pre, primary and low secondary school.

These research findings have encouraged the continuation of the research, now through a doctorate dissertation, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the changes in teachers´ work and professional cultures taking into consideration the period of the three decades of successive educational reforms.

THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF THE "CLUSTER OF SCHOOLS" ORGANIZATION

As a way of promoting the schools' autonomy policies and implementing better coordination and continuity in the nine years of the compulsory education (organized in three cycles) envisaged in the Portuguese Education Act, the creation "cluster of schools" was legally imposed constituting a new organizational matrix. However, previous initiatives had already formed part of these political and organizational perspectives.

To address specific and contextualized problems in certain geographical areas, different political programmes and initiatives had already been developed trough diverse forms of schools' association, some of them with a local-based orientation and other on a centralized way, based on national wide measures.

In a case study conducted by Flores (2005) about the creation of a "vertical cluster of schools", the author asks to what extent the compulsory way of creating the "vertical cluster of schools", considered as "management units", doesn't contradicts the Decree Law no. 115 -A/98, May 4 recommendations, which allows the creation of "cluster of schools" both in an "horizontal" and "vertical" way, it means, clusters of schools attending students from 3 to 10 years of age and cluster of schools attending students from 3 to 15 years of age. According to this author, the political priorities demonstrate an orientation to centralization and uniformity rather than effective school autonomy and diversity. As Flores states, "Although the rhetoric autonomy in the clusters' formation process, it stands the more centralist government logic, seeking to regulate the socio-educational school practice, which is overlaid with features to enhance their influence and authority over the schools" (Flores, 2004, p. 125).

Concerning this type of contradictions between a centralized process of control and the discourse of "school autonomy", the Order no. 13313/2003, June 8 sets out the planning of the education network in 2003-2004, stating in its preamble, which is fundamental to the achievement of the "cluster of schools" process, "a process that is envisaged, follows from Decree-Law no. 115-A/98, May 4, certain key objectives, such as favoring a sequential students' course [...] the rational utilization of resources, ensure the implementation of autonomy, administration and management scheme."

Simões (2005) argues that the "cluster of schools" constitution reveals an "aggressive re-centralization" plan with compulsory and authoritarian indications to form "vertical clusters", against the procedures and wishes of local actors connected implicitly with the structurally different clusters formation.

In brief, apparently, educational policies are moving forward on decentralization and autonomy, however, the educational system has remained quite centralized and bureaucratic. As Afonso (1994) states, "continuing the long country tradition, the key issues as the curricula design, course content, human resources, equipment and budget management remain in the central government hands" (p. 118). This centralized and bureaucratic education governance continues with a strong mark in the "cluster of schools" organizational processes, including school and professional cultures.

THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION BASED ON INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ITS MEMBERS

Organizational culture is a multidimensional and multi focused concept. As regards Duarte Gomes (2000), addressing the culture as a univocal concept would present as like misleading formulation because "they are multiple and controversial concepts of culture" (Smircich, quoted by Gomes, 2000, p. 65). Sharing the view that "the organization shall be understood as a social construct, that is symbolically constituted and interactively reproduced, whose maintenance is dependent on the activity of the organizational actors' communication" (Gomes, 2000, p.165), the concept of organizational culture takes up a heuristic function for presenting the complex reality of the interpersonal relationships of the organization members, including the formal and informal structure.

In the ambit of the companies and business areas, the concept or organizational culture have been uses in an instrumental way, focusing the relations between the members of the organization for being a benchmark for belonging and identification with the values commonly accepted by the group within the organization. However, transposing uncritically this perspectives to the specific school context, adding a modeled image, is not adequate because "not only the organizations are different, not only the school is different from other organizations, but every school is different from any other school" (Costa, 2003, p. 109). The school as an organization has its own peculiarities in its political, ideological, social, cultural and organizational action. Although the "normative and cultural walling", by the national centralized legislation, the schools present themselves as straight-organizations assuming approaches with a "multiple facets"(Lima, 2006, p. 7), revealing a great complexity, which "allow us to identify distinct logical directions, goals and rationalities" (Torres, 1997, p. 55).

This multifaceted view of the school as an organization has become more appropriate for the development of the empirical study which are presented in this paper, given the singular "cluster of schools" context, both in its physical, distinct and diverse location as the fact that they provide for different levels and stages of education, with teachers who have diverse professional identities and cultures. Thus, the concept of organizational culture in the school context can be understood through several different perspectives and approaches. In this research, a conception based on the idea of organization culture as a social construction based on the interactions between members of the organization was adopted, because neither the culture of the school organization results of the social structure, nor the organizational structure, but the actions, interactions and negotiations between various actors in a school organizational context. Therefore, it seems pertinent to note that in terms of epistemological orientation, the privilege does not focus on an analysis of the culture of the school organization but on an analysis of culture in school organizations, where the groups comprising the school organization begin to play an essential role. Summing up, the school organizational culture is conceived as a social and cultural construction of the actors that "live" in its degree of consensus and the actors' intention to change, both internal and externally. Actions, relationships, interactions, conceptions and practices are fundamental for the construction and reconstruction of organizational cultures. Following this train of thought "the genesis and construction of a school organizational culture seem to be, once again, confined within the school physical boundaries developed by interactions and negotiations between actors, who are now analyzed as the protagonists of the cultural creation and recreation." (Torres, 1997, p. 83)

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CULTURES

The "clusters of schools" comprise different levels and stages of education, just different professional groups: pre, primary and low secondary school teachers. These groups belong to very different realities, with singular cultures and identities, not only derived from structural factors that contributed to their separation, but also due to the other factors connected with different worlds of socialization and identity (Ferreira, 1994, 2003). Similarities between pre and primary school teachers' are a consequence of their own cultures,

influenced by the physical conditions, such as the smaller school buildings and fewer number of students; the kind of pre and in-service teacher training; the more integrated or compartmented curricular and pedagogical organization, and also as a result of historical factors which have originated structural and cultural differences between teachers of different school levels. In other terms, differences concerning organizational and professional cultures are linked to: different views about the profession; belonging senses to schools; individual and collective autonomy conceptions; diverse strategies for the recognition of teachers; different orientations towards students' learning, in a more global or more subject-compartmented way, among other factors. It means that teachers do not have a professional identity but diverse professional identities connected to different diachronic and synchronic aspects.

According to Ferreira (1994), teachers of different school levels have several representations of their profession, not necessarily in the sense of a "divided identity", but rather as a "multiplied identity." As Ferreira contends (2003), "the teaching profession can't be seen in a unifying and homogenizing` perspective" (p. 44), whereas there isn`t a professional identity in a general sense, but in the plural sense, i.e., teachers identify themselves primarily with their peers in the same level of education and even more narrowly within their own discipline/subject group. This form of identity is very visible at the post-primary education level, where teachers identify themselves more with the discipline/subject they teach, which is reflected in mechanisms of a mono-disciplinary socialization. The level of school teaching, the discipline/subject they teach, the academic and professional qualifications, the situation of stability or mobility, among others, are several factors that, according Ferreira, contend and compete for that heterogeneity of identity. The concepts of cultures and subcultures have been associated and "often used to account for exactly this diversity and heterogeneity that characterizes the teaching profession" (Ferreira, 2003, p. 44), providing an open and plural approach to the investigation of diversity and different "ways of being professional" (Gomes, 1993, p. 98). Therefore perspective brings into the confrontation, one vision of "unifying professional identity" and a vision "inextricably fragmented"(Ferreira, 2003, p. 46).

On the base of Claude Dubar, Ferreira (1994) argues that the professional identity is a biographical and contextual construction, which is born, grows and matures from the moments that starts and "cultivates" the working relationships between pairs, in their actors' games, with the participation in collective activities and projects developed at the workplace. The greater or lesser degree of the deepening of the above mentioned processes, at different levels and stages of education, prospects for a non-homogeneity image in the social group constituted by the teachers. Remember the "absolutist and centralist" historical way that pre and primary school organization had a trend of teachers' conformity and passivity (Formosinho, 1997), which are related to the Portuguese dictatorship; the traditional centralized and bureaucratic educational system; the small schools with a great percentage with only a teacher which led to the teachers' isolation and hence the tendency towards an individualistic culture.

With the creation of the "cluster of schools", significant changes in teachers' professional cultures were operated. For a better understanding of these traditions and changes, in the next section the typology of professional cultures produced by Andy Hargreaves (1998) will be presented. According to this author, "the culture passed down to his inexperienced new members the solutions historically generated and collectively shared of one community" (p. 185).

Teachers' professional cultures, according the Andy Hargreaves typology
Andy Hargreaves (1998) identifies four broad types of teachers' professional cultures: individualism, collaboration, collegiality and artificial balkanization.

For this author, individualism, isolation and "exclusive" are the peculiar components of teaching culture. Although a variety of aspects can influence teachers' work and culture, individualism continues prevailing. The author reported that the classroom isolation promotes privacy and protection from outside interference, thus, individualism is associated with the defensive of behaviors, mistrust and the possible and "natural" teachers' flaws and failures, as a result of teacher' "uncertainty of work". The individualism as a workplace condition is not perceived as a "personal weakness", but as a result of an "economy of effort and a rational organization of priorities carried out on a desktop hard pressed and embarrassing" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 191), as a result of the adaptation of a strategy to the desktop.

In brief, in this perspective, not all individualism is "perverse" and constitutes limited professional behavior, because the individuality can support and enhance a creative talent, that otherwise has not got any possibility to manifest itself.

Collaboration and collegiality have been targeted at the rhetoric educational level, as new fundamental paradigms to promote the change of schools, a teachers' professional growth and schools' development from internal initiatives. According to Hargreaves (1998), collaboration and collegiality promote improvement "in

addition to personal reflection and idiosyncratic, or dependence on outside experts, so that teachers learn from each other" (p. 209). They contribute also to the better development and implementation of educational changes externally initiated and introduced. In addition, collaboration and collegiality develop power relationships which, according to Blaise (quoted in Hargreaves, 1998, pp. 213-214), may fall within the micro politics perspectives. This perspective focuses on issues related to power and control and "the use of power to achieve preferred outcomes" emphasizes more the issues with the "differences between groups within an organization than with their similarities" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 214).

Reflecting on these developments, Fullan and Hargreaves (2000) argue that collaboration at schools presents a fairly limited. The planning of teaching units and lesson preparation can be held together, but after then, there is not, among peers, a mutual involvement in the work accomplished observation in the classroom.

In the "artificial collegiality", as argued by Hargreaves (1998), "collaborative professional relationships between teachers aren't spontaneous, voluntary, to development oriented, and extended in time and space unpredictable" (p. 219); arise, instead, from the administrative rules. According this train of thought the degree of predictability has sometimes perverse and not guaranteed outcomes. The artificial collegiality is a secure administrative simulation to boast the cooperation of teachers. This type of collaboration is "compulsory, not voluntary, limited and fixed in time and space; oriented to the implementation, rather than for development, and designed to be predictable - rather than the unpredictable - in their results" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 234), i.e., everything is administratively controlled and imposed. Teacher's creativity and initiative are disregarded and, at the contingency moments, the situations that unexpectedly arise tend to be ignored. These authors believe that the main results of artificial collegiality are the "inflexibility" and "inefficiency": teachers are obliged to meet, there is no reason to do so, they do not meet when they need and the partnership work not always joins the colleagues adequately.

Finally, regarding the "balkanization" as a type of teachers' work and culture, the work and organizational relationships established between teachers, namely, cooperation and collegiality, shape cultural typologies of the teacher' profession, both can unite or divide the teachers, within the educational establishment, in isolated groups or subgroups, presenting sometimes adversaries of each other (Hargreaves, 1998). He called this specific type of teachers' work interaction as a *balkanized culture*. Hargreaves notes the following factors to describe this type: teachers do either not work alone, nor with most of their school colleagues, they share smaller subgroups (the subject departments, the pre or primary departments, special education), they behave sometimes as adversaries. In the same sense, Lima (2002: 29) refers that "departments intensified the competition among teachers in schools, leading to loss of an interdisciplinary perspective". Siskin (quoted by Lima, 2002, p. 31) states that "the school's social world has expanded so much that finally ended up, or splintered, to the point of the department, more than the school, which effectively marks the most teachers' main interactions ties." The department "creates borders within the schools and present barriers to possible interaction patterns at the educational establishment level" (Lima, 2002, p. 31).

Although the Andy Hargreaves typology has been performed in the secondary school context, it seems pertinent to use it in the "cluster of school" context. The underlying policies which support this new organizational and administrative unit (a cluster of schools), which comprise different school buildings belonging to a specific geographical area, intends to improve the continuity between different school levels and link the teachers articulation, concerning their organizational and curricular work, based on the assumption that the development of joint planning work fosters a more collaborative actions and collegiality among teachers, questioning the isolation and individualism. Thus, some issues arose, such as exploratory research hypotheses.

- Has the "cluster of Schools" formation involved the local dynamics of teacher's work?
- Have the interactions between teachers of different educational levels promoted the isolation and decrease the individualism?
- Have collaboration and collegiality begun with the "clusters of schools" formation developed spontaneously and voluntarily or were administratively imposed?

Answering to these main questions was the objective of the empirical research carried out in the ambit of a master dissertation which is currently in progress in the ambit of a doctorate at the University of Minho.

THE DYNAMICS OF THE CREATION OF THE "HORIZONTAL CLUSTER OF SCHOOLS": A LOCAL INITIATIVE

This section analyzes the origins of the process, which consisted on the creation of a "horizontal" cluster of schools. The presentation of data includes the quotations of the interviewees.

For a long time a school principal "dreamed" of a new organization for the pre and primary schools of his county. "There arose the possibility, of their own volition and own nomination, constitute the cluster", refers Kingfisher (the fictional name given to the school principal, as above mentioned). He states as well that "it also exists on the Regional Administration, including the Director, some willingness to experiment, to get this experience." As reported Kingfisher, "the teachers were then consulted. We had a general meeting, where pre and primary teachers were stakeholders." Kingfisher recalled with smile, what happened on that day.

> "At this meeting I am reminded of a phrase that a teacher stood up (pause), there has been a stalemate there ... When you go for something new there's always some reluctance, not completely at ease, it seems to me that it's human. I remember one teacher stood up and said – to worse it will not go, certainly, so let's try it." (Interview, Kingfisher)

The first stone was laid for the "cluster of schools" formation, encompassing the pre and primary schools. It has long been known, that lived almost back to back, but with the possibility of understanding, a gentle nudge was enough to "trigger the process."

> "We launched this challenge to ourselves. We made the writing proposal to the Regional Director. He approved. It triggered the process: the selection of the Executive Group to launch after the whole organization. "(Interview, Kingfisher)

Then also some other occurred questions, as reported by the Ladybug teacher: "I was one of those who came with a bit expecting and put some doubt if it would work, because possibly it could be a project with a political feature, of local policy ...." This doubt was related to the Mayor's interest and presence meetings. Ladybug's fears were linked to the fact that the Cluster "was not in the real school, students and community interests." Such fears have dissipated later with the teachers' work developed in the terrain.

> "After, this show us who we're completely wrong, because greater responsibilities have been given to us. Monthly meetings, on the teachers' councils, we specifically talk about pedagogical issues. At the time we didn't make much lesson plans, but carried out projects, we analyzed documents, at the time we were outside, entirely out from the legislative part, because this paper was made by the Delegation School. Now we're building our project and we have been given new responsibilities."(Interview, Ladybug)

The "horizontal cluster of school" formation was not a simple task, despite the motivation, however, revealed. There was no legislative backing to provide the organizational structures array for the pre and primary "cluster of schools". It was a bit difficult because it was something new, similar cases not abound in the country where they could seek suggestions. But among teachers, there was awareness that was necessary change, work and organizes themselves in different way.

> "We ended up going into the wave, because it was something new and we also had some curiosity in change, because all that innovation is also interested in [...] everyone was aware we needed to change ... in our view it would be for the better. (Interview, Dragonfly)

Kingfisher notes that they departed "even from scratch. But it was a funny experience because deep down we had a better effort, but I think it paid off. Roll up our sleeves and started working differently. "Despite initial uncertainties, the teachers were involved in "cluster of school" organizing, created new structures. They were hopeful in finding other work forms that would lead to a better situation. They created the Poles / Councils of Teachers, the teaching group, by nature, where the joint work between the pre and primary schools were started to develop.

> "In the beginning [...] it began to print a dynamic work [...] already thinking in the teaching and how much work had to do [...] the meetings of the School Council [...] were Poles now." (Interview, Ladybug)

This change from the old structure - the School Council - for the new set up structure - Polo / Council of Teachers - wasn't easy to achieve. It was recommended a geographical restructuring, embracing schools of

two or more parishes. Likewise, shaped in the same Pole / Council of Teachers the pre and primary schools of the same parish, whether they worked in the building attached or separately.

> *"We thought it was a funny experience, the pedagogical link, essentially pedagogical, between pre-school and primary. There're two different realities, back to back, and so there was a culture of some isolation from, each do for him. So we have proposed …, and were accepted. "(Interview, Kingfisher)*
>
> *"It began to exist some experience exchange, […] more extensive between the two levels. They're programmed some joint activities at the teachers' council, instead of being in separate form. It began to be a greater sharing and interaction among teachers. "(Interview, Dragonfly)*

The Teachers Councils have been trained according to the geographical identification zone, consisting of the pre-school and primary. Gathered together and monthly.

> *"At first, it was funny. Some colleagues at the preschool said: "this is difficult because at primary school talk too much of legislation...." At the time we commented "well that's great. They are two completely different realities. We must find some balance here because the two things are necessary" and began to work better and successfully. We could end up with the barrier between the preschool and primary school. "(Interview, Kingfisher)*

The creation of this educational structure has emerged to greater coordination, collaboration and participation in the pedagogical activity. For teachers was important the "horizontal cluster of schools" constitution, especially in the pedagogical work organization, in the whole cluster.

> *"There was a greater sharing of professional knowledge and greater disclosure of what each level of education did. Some establishments more isolates have to be more in touch with others. The new ideas and projects were valued that were presented and developed. They made up more joint projects, involving more primary schools and kindergartens. (Interview, Butterfly)*

If before the "horizontal cluster of schools" formation the work way in preschool, resulting from the achievement of an annual work project created and participated by the all county kindergarten teachers, not 'contagious' the primary school teachers. The "horizontal cluster of schools" formation changed the teachers' behaviors. The kindergarten teachers "influenced and motivated" the primary school teachers to change their practices and to develop council projects with the participation of all schools.

> *"Ephemeral said that the primary teachers have enough gained with the formation of Teachers Councils because they went to witness the way they prepared the preschool activities and what was taught there. Then, they also began to develop their teaching supported in the work project. It began to see a greater coordination and sharing between them. "(Note from the field, 21 November 2007)*
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> *"The Teachers Councils staged a union of teachers and educators. There were changes from the moment they have got Poles. But, it was not easy in the beginning because we did not have the same interests and work with children was different. We adapted a lot of things and we adjusted the work form to create a certain joint. "(Interview, Dragonfly)*

This view is shared by Butterfly:

> *"The changes that occurred more frequently were linked with a substantially improved interaction and coordination between the two levels of education. The educational part was fairly valued because the teachers could share their experiences, their beliefs and anxieties. There was a greater sharing of professional knowledge and greater disclosure of what each level of education made. "(Interview, Butterfly)*

In the first two years of the horizontal cluster, the executive director empowered to appoint the representatives of the main organs of senior and middle management that would create from scratch, such as: the Executive Council, the School Assembly, the Pedagogical Council and the various Poles / Teachers Councils.

"We had lots of training abroad, [...] we worked a lot with decrees and laws, [...] now we have a broader vision, [...] later became necessary to form the School Assembly, I were responsible [...] I contacted some colleagues, who I knew and I saw that they were dynamic people and could contribute better, [...] on one side was an invitation, but willing of all to participate."(Interview, Ladybug)

The Teachers Councils emerged from the need for joint and collaborative work between the kindergarten and primary teachers. Kingfisher opted to create a structure where teachers and educators were included, and this was quite innovative. He recalls that, at first meetings, the minutes reflect the teachers' attitude of passivity, postulated by the proposals absence made by them, which indicated also a no participation culture; they were accustomed to mere compliance with the guidelines set by superiors. Gradually they have developed greater involvement culture in the organizational structures of the cluster, which contributed to give visibility to some autonomy built.

This section ends with Ladybug teacher statement, reflecting the teachers' professional evolution and "growth".

"Many teachers seemed passive people (...) they proved to be great professionals, in terms of dynamics and the suggestions that appeared, projects which we started to develop together (...). Later, the people recognized that teachers were more open with each other, we had not so many fears, we exchanged many ideas and work dynamics. "(Interview, Ladybug)

In brief, the "horizontal cluster schools" formation supported a great transformation of the organizational and professional culture. With the creation of the new structure emerged a greater coordination, collaboration and participation in educational activities of the "cluster of schools" management by educators and primary school teachers. While in the initial training of Poles / Teachers Councils could encourage a collegial artificial, driven by the Executive Director, the teachers quickly found favor in working collaboratively, following the methodology previously developed by the educators.

THE "VERTICAL CLUSTER OF SCHOOLS" FORMATION: AN UNDESIRABLE MARRIAGE
The formation of the "Vertical Cluster of Schools" resulted by a national normative regulation, i.e., it has not made from any desired local stakeholders.

"The Regional Direction (DR) imposed compulsorily the formation of the "vertical cluster of schools". At this time we did not understand the goal purpose of its creation, because was not very logical itself. People in both sides did not identify very much with it. However, as it was mandatory, it had to be built. "(Interview, Kingfisher)

The passage to the "vertical cluster of schools" took on a forced marriage character, for convenience of Education Ministry (ME), without the main stakeholders' agreement.

"It was wrought by DR, with guidance issued by the ME, in a time that nationwide intended to create clusters of schools. As our county is small [...] the decision did not become from the bases, but top down, enjoying the ME toward DR created "vertical cluster of schools" immediate." (Interview, Jay)

Indeed, organizational change, with the passage to the Vertical Cluster, did not reveal either a substantive change nor modified the *modus operandi* of the two progenitor organizations. The separation between the teachers was obvious.

"Have you checked how the teachers organized themselves in Pedagogical Council? You enter and see on the left side the pre and primary schools representatives, on the right side the low secondary school teachers and to separate both the President of the Pedagogical Council. "(Field Notes, November 21, 2007)
"Apart from aspects of collaboration informal gathering is almost nonexistent."(Interview, Barbo)
"The collaboration was rarely before, very rarely, but there are not many now." (Interview, Hydra)

Given this reality, and in order to dilute this "unwanted marriage" there were aimed some actions that stimulated a broader integration of all teachers.

> *"I think this school is privileged over other in this respect. I hear comment from my colleagues of other schools where I also worked. It is not easy to find a school where people give as well as this ... It notes by the participation in lunches and dinners, especially the pre and primary school teachers. They are a very assiduous presence. "(Interview, Hoopoe)*

Informal means of integration, including lunches and other recreation, formation of joint working teams, seemed to please the teachers and facilitated among all a better interaction and integration.

CONCLUSION

Before the formation of the "horizontal cluster of schools", the pre and primary school teachers were separated by an 'imaginary boundary' supported in the educational level difference. There was an isolation culture, "keeping to himself" the good teaching practices, sharing no experiences. The work was only carried out within the closed-classroom, without the educational community involvement.

With the construction of the "cluster of schools", in order to increase a participative and collaborative culture, sharing, joint work and promotion of the Teachers' Councils activities, Kingfisher made a point of be present at meetings where aid and abet this culture, among teachers. If the Teachers' Councils adding educators and primary school teachers, promoted greater joint planning and greater pedagogical link, the existence of several and different Teachers' Councils, also consubstantiates a balkanized culture, contributing to micro political development, small conflict manifestation and "struggles" for better conditions of participation and financial support to submitted projects. The collaborative work in the Teachers' Councils, because administratively imposed, by the need of joint planning and pedagogical link, can configure also an artificial collegiality, co-opted with guidelines and superiors hierarchical.

With the "vertical cluster of schools" formation, the Curriculum Departments / Teachers' Councils continued working separately with the same organization which they had already before.

In summary, the imposed creation of the "vertical cluster of schools", despite the attempts of successive Vertical Group executive bodies, to encourage greater interaction and network among the different levels of education teachers, they did not yet see themselves, in this organizational form. There is, in practice, a balkanized culture, with each education cycle working alone, disjointed, did not quite knowing what projects are developed by each one. In general, teachers' contacts and relationships come informally, occurring during the gatherings that are implemented usually throughout the year.

Some questions left open in this research concern to the pre and primary students and teachers' concentration in "Schools' Centers", i. e., new larger school building were recently created for pre and primary levels and the more rural and small schools were closed. Therefore, new research questions emerged, such as: does the teaching in the same school bulging and environment, educators and primary school teachers, foster greater interaction and collaborative work, opening their traditional closed classrooms? Does the teachers' work balkanization, in which concerns to the different teachers' school levels, will dilute and lead to a more coordinated and collaborative work and culture? Will these new organizational changes promote sequential work between the three cycles of "basic education" (until the 9th grade)? What kind of collaborative work will be developed in the new circumstances, if the administrative organization maintains a departmental-based perspective instead of a more flexible curricular and pedagogical organization in order to overcome the centralized and bureaucratic organizational and professional cultures?

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