

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ADULTS IN ALENTEJO / PORTUGAL: PAST AND PRESENT OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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1. The starting point

The History of Education and Training of Adults in Alentejo / Portugal, is not recent. We can go back to the 70's, even before the Revolution of April 25, 1974. At the time, approximately 30% of the Portuguese population could neither read nor write. After 1974 the new political regime created a government office (Directorate General of Permanent Education / DGEP) with the responsibility of defining and implementing actions of adult education. Some universities, at the time, understood the importance of this area and followed this movement: as was the case with the University of Évora and the University of Minho. In Alentejo the University of Évora, imbued by the role of community service, decided in 1979, to promote the *Awareness and Start Adult Education and Training Course*, organized in the Division of Education and Pedagogy. At the time, the Évora's Academy Adult Education Project was coordinated by Prof. Manuel Ferreira Patrício. The main objective of this project, was to contribute to the implementation of measures in the area of literacy and basic education of adults, following what was defined in the law 3/79 of January 10, statute that gave the government of this time the responsibility of implementing the National Plan for Literacy and Base Education of Adults.

After the work of DGEP, other agencies with responsibility in the area of adult education (and training) followed. However, only in 1999 was to be created the institution that took the rising skill levels of the adult portuguese population, as a true plan for the country. This body was the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA), established in 1999. It is from this historical landmark that starts our reflective journey around the education and training of adults in Alentejo / Portugal.

2. The creation of the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA, 1999-2002)

Particularly from the end of the 90s decade of the twentieth century in Portugal there has been a number of changes and actions, to introduce in the field of Adult Education, new concerns, attitudes, methodologies, strategies and challenges. The measures taken at the national level and reflected in the different regions, are from a "appreciation movement" in the field of adult education, with a clear affirmation in the countries of Europe, examples of which are the Nordic countries, such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, among others.

In 1997 Portugal participated in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, promoted by UNESCO in Hamburg through a National Delegation which was composed by Ana Benavente (Secretary of State) and Alberto Melo, among others (Melo, 2000). Three months after this conference, the Ministry of Education appointed a Working Group for the Development of Adult Education (Order no. ° 10534/97 of 16 October). This group was composed by 6 elements coordinated by Alberto Melo (Lima, Afonso & Stephens, 1999:13).

The Working Group for the Development of Adult Education had as its mission the defining of a strategy for the implementation of Adult Education in Portugal. Besides the Ministry of Education, this initiative would be approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (MTSS), resulting in the expression "Education and Training of Adults" in an articulation between the education and labor something hitherto relatively uncommon in Portugal.

In 1998, was instituted the Group of Mission for the Development of Education and Training of Adults (GMEFA) by resolution no. ° 92/98 of the Council of Ministers of June 25, empowered and instructed to initiate the process leading to the establishment of the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA).

This group then formed under the two ministries, commissions from the University of Minho (Adult Education Unit) "a study alluding to the establishment and organization of a national framework for the development and coordination of the Education and Training of Adults" (Lima, Afonso & Stephen, 1999:9). The study was completed on January 31, 1999. From the referred document, the Group of Mission intend to:

- (i) Build a system of education and training of adults, autonomous and decentralized;
- (ii) Create an independent institution;
- (iii) Introduce a device for the recognition and validation of acquired skills. Thus was created ANEFA (National Agency for Education and Training of Adults), on September 28, 1999, through Decree-Law n. ° 387/99.

In 1999, to ANEFA was assigned multiple functions, including the construction of "a system of recognition and validation of informal learning of adults, aimed at academic and professional certification" (e) of art. 4. Decree-Law n. 387/99). In this legal rule that underlies the genesis of ANEFA, the definition of Adult Education is as contained in the Hamburg Declaration, as mentioned by Melo, Lima & Almeida (2002:19):

"In this regard, the strategy for education and training of adults should combine a public service logic and a program logic, which results in stimulation and support for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and groups."

The ANEFA (which worked between 1999 and 2002) arose, in a period when adult education in Portugal, knew dual problems: low formal certification (low levels of basic skills) and low informal certification (no devices that recognized and validated the learning acquired through experience), which strongly compromised social and economic development when compared with other European countries (Nico, 2009; Nico, B. Nico, L., et al, 2013).

The ANEFA within innovative measures, contributed to the development of three important devices to the qualification of adults:

- 1) the first Adult Education and Training Courses;
- 2) Actions S@Ber +;
- 3) the national system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC).

In 2000/2001 were started 13 courses in Adult Education and Training, of basic level by trial basis, most of the courses were promoted by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In Alentejo, the two pilot entities were ESDIME (Agency for Local Development in Southwest Alentejo) and the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (Training Centre of Santiago do Cacém). The ESDIME was later

also pilot body under the RVCC Centres in 2001. One of the selection criteria was the experience gained under these EFA Courses (ESDIME, 2007).

The offer of Actions S@ber +, another of ANEFA innovations, constituted as short duration actions promoted by various public and private institutions, whose objective was the promotion of educational and professional qualifications of the adults. Therefore, there also appeared the Clubs S@bER+ (Leitão & Gonçalves, 2002) that were spaces for information and advice for adults. Later, these actions would be renamed the actions of short duration, and are now called Certified Modular Training.

The third innovation brought by ANEFA, specifically through the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences System was based on three elements (Nico, L., 2011:82; Nico, B. & Nico, L., 2011:13):

- (i) the formal and scholastic certification of experiential learning;
- (ii) the use of biographical approaches in the recognition of skills of individuals;
- (iii) the operationalization of a framework of key competences.

Before the creation of the National System of RVCC there were some experiences within the (attempted) implementation of recognition responses and accreditation of knowledge acquired. The first reference is to the work done in 1976 by the already mentioned Directorate-General of Continuing Education in the area of adult education, which was based on work by integrated themes starting with the experiences and contexts of adults (contextualized and meaningful learning for adults). The second reference comes from experience of Recurrent Education that referred legally "*The life experience gained and the level of knowledge demonstrated by its recipients.*". Although, in practice, it had not occurred. The third reference are the entrance exams to higher education (Ad-Hoc) which assessed knowledge gained experientially, that later (2006), was replaced by tests designed to assess the capacity to attend higher education for individuals older than 23 years.

To coordinate the structures and resources allocated to Recurrent Education and Extra-School Education in Alentejo and Portugal, there was the Area Education Centers (CAE), created under the Regional Directorates of Education (DRE). "The CAE cover, areas with very different size, complexity and characteristics" (Decree n. ° 79-B/94, 4

February). It were also created the coordination boroughs (at each municipal territory) that depended directly from the Regional Education Directorate of Alentejo, to which competed specific functions. These local coordinations were abolished in 2007. The Extra-School Education, was, however, repealed in 2010. Final and most recently, the Regional Directorates of Education were also terminated in December 2012.

3. The initial network of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences Centers (RVCC)

The RVCC Centres and the National System RVCC form part of the European Employment Strategy (EEE) and the National Employment Plan (PNE). It is important to note another event which contributed decisively to consolidate the idea of new needs of approaches in education and training of adults. This event was the Lisbon Summit (or Estrategy of Lisbon), where was released the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000). Social, economic and technological changes demanded the redefining and rethinking of the approach to education and training. So, the European Commission wanted, with the drafting of the Memorandum, to build a guiding document for a debate at European level. The ultimate goal was to implement a set of measures and actions conducive to learning throughout life, throughout Europe. The following year (2001), it was created in Portugal, a National Network for Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC Centres), from which was promoted the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. This network was established in an experimental phase by 6 pilot centers (centers in observation) in any national context (Table 1). In Alentejo, ESDIME was one of the pilot entities within the RVCC Centres in 2000. One of the selection criteria was the experience gained under these EFA Courses (ESDIME, 2007).

Table 1 - RVCC Centres "under observation" in Portugal in 2000

Region	Designation (s) RVCC Centres
North	Associação Industrial do Minho (AIMinho) <i>Minho Industrial Association (AIMinho)</i>
	Associação Comercial de Braga (ACB) <i>Braga Commercial Association (ACB)</i>

	Associação Nacional de Oficinas de Projecto (ANOP) <i>National Association of Workshops Project (ANOP)</i>
Lisbon and Vale do Tejo	Escola Nacional de Bombeiros (ENB) <i>National School of Firemen (ENB)</i>
	Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP) – Centro de Formação Profissional do Seixal <i>Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) - Vocational Training Centre Seixal</i>
Alentejo	Agência para o Desenvolvimento Local no Alentejo Sudoeste (ESDIME) <i>Agency for Local Development in Southwest Alentejo (ESDIME)</i>

Source: NICO, L. (2009:187)

Between 2001 and 2005, there were in Portugal, 98 RVCC Centres, 6 of which in the Alentejo region, guardianshiped by ANEFA, according to the chronology that is presented in the following Table.

Table 2 - Network initial RVCC Centres in the Alentejo Region (2000-2005)

Designation Center	Locality	Year of Establishment	Type of Entity
ESDIME – <i>Agency for Local Development in Southwest Alentejo, Lda</i>	Messejana (Aljustrel)*	2000	Private
Fundação Alentejo	Évora	2001	Private
Centro de Formação Profissional de Portalegre <i>Portalegre Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)</i>	Portalegre	2001	public (IEFP direct management)
ADL – <i>Association for Local Development in Southwest Alentejo</i>	Santiago do Cacém **	2003	Private
Rota do Guadiana – <i>Association for Integrated Development</i>	Serpa	2004	Private
Terras Dentro – <i>Association for Integrated Development</i>	Alcáçovas (Viana do Alentejo)	2005	Private

Source: NICO, L. (2009:264)

Note: In 2005, it was also created the center of the School of Education of Portalegre. This year, it did not certify adults.

* The RVCC Centre was located in the county of Ferreira do Alentejo (Casa do S@ber +)

** Center that ended its activity in 2005 and was abolished in 2007 (Order no. 1073/2007, DR 15, Series II, of 22-01-2007).

The six RVCC Centres in Alentejo, between 2001 and 2005 certified a total of 2969 adults, which in there performed their RVCC process.

The RVCC process developed in the RVCC Centres, made from the process of Skills Balance implied, by the adult, the construction of the Personal Dossier (later, at the secondary level, designated Learning Reflective Portfolio) thus assuming similarities with devices of recognition and validation of acquired competences first developed in other countries such as France (Bilán de Compétences).

4. From the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA) to the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (ANQEP)

Following the new Organic Law of the Ministry of Education, in the last quarter of 2002, the extinction of ANEFA occurs, leading to the Directorate-General for Vocational Training (DGFV), through Decree-Law n. 208/2002 of 17 October.

The DGFV was a central service of the Ministry of Education (ceasing to exist the dual tutelage which was the basis of the creation of ANEFA) with powers and responsibilities in the areas of Training and Qualification of Young, Adult Training and Qualification, Certification of Skills and Information and Vocational Guidance. Within the RVCC Center, in particular, it began to establish itself as the body responsible for regulating, monitoring and evaluation of the National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences.

Following the extinction of the Directorate-General for Vocational Training, in October 2006, came the National Agency for Qualification, I.P., whose creation and approval of its organic structure occurs through the publication of Decree-Law No. 276-C / 2007 of 31 July.

The National Agency for Qualification (ANQ) was established as a public institute of dual command, by the Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education, with administrative, financial and educational independence, and its mission is to "coordinate the implementation of policies on education and vocational training for youth and adults and to ensure the development and management of the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. "(No. 1, art. 3. Decree-Law No. 276-C/2007 , 31 July).

To consolidate this mission it was necessary to create key instruments around which develops the whole strategy and implementation of their objectives, on the one hand, continuing the work begun with the RVCC Centres and on the other, the National Qualifications Catalogue.

Changes from 2005-2006

In 2005, we witnessed a shift in policy direction in the area of education and training for adults and young people, with a sharp political involvement at the heart of this concern. Under a government measure, and to tackle the situation of academic and professional qualifications of the Portuguese population, it was created the New Opportunities Initiative (INO), which was **based on two pillars**¹: the axis of the young and adults. The INO was based around **three core principles**:

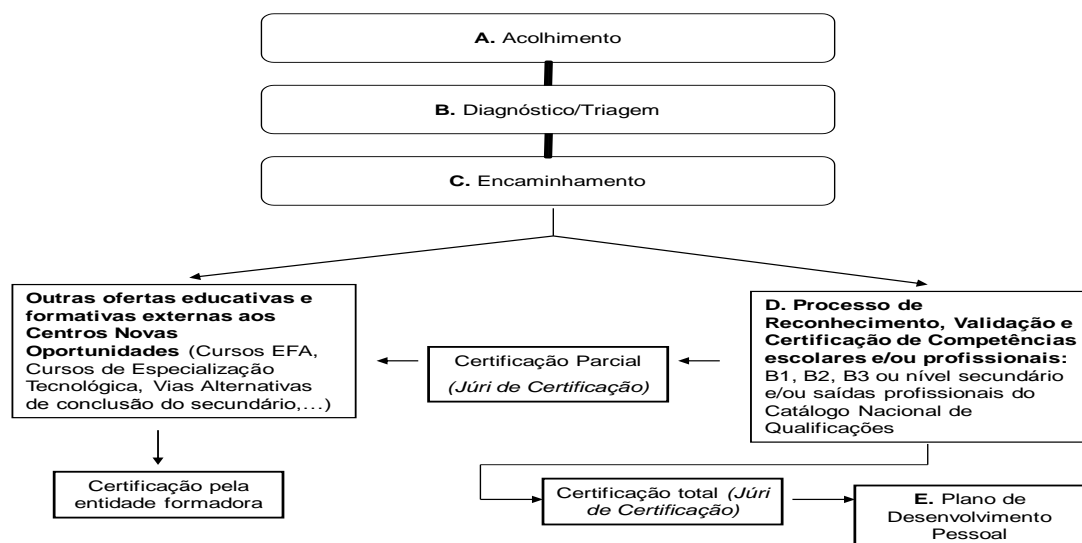
- (i) integration of education and training offerings,
- (ii) enhancement of pathways for dual certification
- (iii) promoting the provision of vocational training to adults with little schooling.

It was in this social and educational context that the RVCC Centres, once again gained a new logic of organization and functions to the adult population, changing its name to New Opportunities Centres and widening them, in 2005, to the public school network of the Ministry of Education.

After 2006, the New Opportunities Centres are to be understood as a gateway for adults to the qualifying networks, developing their work in two dimensions: the routing and purveyoring. (Figure 1).

¹ Source: www.novasoportunidades.gov.pt, accessed March 2013.

Figure 1 - Stages of Intervention of New Opportunities Centres



Source: Gomes & Simões (2007:21).

The **dimension of routing** aimed to give the best answer to adult training, depending on their qualifications, expectations, interests and availability, contributing to the emergence of a new figure on the teaching team, in 2008, designated Technician of Diagnosis and Routing.

The **dimension of purveyor** was translated by the CNO, in helping adults, particularly in the post-certification period. This support is concretized through the preparation of a document called a Personal Development Plan (PDP), in view of a concern with the continuing process of education and training throughout life, after the RVCC process, as had been played in 1997, in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg) and in 2000, through a Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.

In late 2006, occurs the extension, under the New Opportunities Initiative, of the Bench marks for Key Skills at the secondary level of education (12th grade). From that moment, it becomes clear every effort that occurs at the level of offer organization, the legal framework and the mobilization of people (Ordinance No. 370/2008 of 21 May). It should be said, that besides the use of posters, flyers and / or Internet, it was organized also a strong media campaign to disseminate the initiative among the media. The balance of two years of implementation of the New Opportunities Initiative was published in 2007 (ME & MTSS: 2007).

5. The evolution of the network of centers and the main results

If the initial RVCC Centres network was essentially a network of institutions from civil society - through initiatives for local development associations and private entities (from 6 centers in Alentejo, between 2000 and 2005, only 1 was promoted by a public institute) - the network of New Opportunities Centres was characterized by its extension to public schools, primary and secondary.

The monitoring and evaluation of centers was made through a Reference Indicators System for the Quality of New Opportunities Centres appearing on the document Quality Letter of New Opportunities Centres (Gomes & Simões, 2007) and through the self-assessment model CAF .

In 2010, the National System RVCC was implemented on a network of 454 New Opportunities Centres spread across the country², 40 of them in the Alentejo³ region. Let us observe the main results regarding the New Opportunities Initiative (Table 3).

Table 3 - Registration and certification on the New Opportunities Initiative Adult Axis

	Inscriptions	Certifications		
		Total	2000/2005	2006/2010
New Opportunities Centres	1 088 316	372 455	44 192	328 263
Courses of Education and Training of Adults	132 537	60 757	15 305	45 452
Certified Modular Training	131 242	440	0	440
The process of completion of the secondary instruction	3 066	1403	0	1403

Source: <http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>, accessed in 23.06.2013

In the Alentejo region, it were certified in New Opportunities Centres, through the process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences, a total of 26 703 adults⁴. Currently, the institute, that has the task of coordinating the network of New Opportunities Centres and the System National RVCC and the education and training of adults, in general, is the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational

² National Agency for Qualification, I.P., August 31, 2010.

³ Assumed, in this context, as the area of jurisdiction of the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development of the Alentejo (CCDRA). This have 47 counties, distributed by the districts of Évora, Beja, Portalegre and a part of the district of Setúbal (in the latter, only the counties of Sines, Santiago do Setúbal, Sines and Alcacer do Sal).

⁴ DREAlentejo/SIGO Platform in 16.03.2012.

Education (ANQEP, IP)⁵, overseen by the Ministries of Education and Science and the Economy and Employment.

The New Opportunities Centres network, however, was terminated on 31 March 2013, being created through Decree n. ° 135-A/2013 of 28 May, the Centers for Qualification and Vocational Education (CQEP).

Portugal is thus in a third phase of development of the National System of RVCC - embodied in a network of centers, distributed nationwide - and the Education and Training of Adults, in general (Table 4).

Table 4 - Phases of development of the National System of RVCC

	Period	Centre designation	Body responsible for network centers management
1.st Phase	2000-2005	RVCC Centers	National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA)
			Directorate-General for Vocational Training (DGFV)
2.nd phase	2006-2011	New Opportunities Centres	National Agency for Qualification (ANQ, I.P.)
3.nd Phase	2012 – (...)	Centers for Qualification and Vocational Education	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (ANQEP, I.P.)

Source: Own elaboration (2013).

The future

The evolution of the whole system of qualification of adults in Alentejo, will, necessarily, involve, diverse approaches, in order to qualify people and territories (Nico, B. & Nico, L., 2011; Nico, B. et al, 2013), namely:

i) **promoting and dynamizing answers to the qualification of adult population**, organizing a training offer that meets the needs and expectations of the adults and the needs of the economy of the region and country (*territorial and socio-economic approach*);

ii) **enhance the universe of learning achieved by adults**, visible in Portfolios built in the home of the RVCC process. The account of the life stories, as a process of self-training, is evidence of the wealth of contexts and non-formal learning achieved throughout life. These schools outside the school, carry with them a diversity

⁵ The Decree-Law n. ° 36/2012, of February 15 creates and approves the organization of the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education I. P. (ANQEP, I. P.).

and richness, anchored in certain individual and territorial specificities, which cannot be ignored, nor devalued, in the trajectory of each individual's life (*systemic and humanistic approach*);

iii) **understand that the RVCC device is but one of the possible responses of adult qualification** based on the recognition of knowledge acquired throughout life, through their experience of life (**biographical approach**);

iv) current CQEP should promote **routing, but also the provider / monitoring post-certification** because this step (albeit expected, in the mission of the previous centers) was, to some extent, unappreciated, being necessary to define monitoring and supporting actions to the construction of achievable concrete future projects (**approach to monitoring / orientation of individual educational projects and lifelong**).

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Legislation referred

Lei n.º 3/79, de 10 de Janeiro	Assigns responsibility to the Government, within six months, to prepare the National Plan for Literacy and Adult Basic Education (PNAEBA).
Portaria n.º 79-B/1994, de 4 de Fevereiro	Creates, within each Regional Directorate of Education, the Centers for Educational Area (CAE).
Despacho n.º 10534/97, de 16 de Outubro	Appointment of a Mission Group for the Development of Adult Education.
Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 92/98, de 25 de Junho	Creates the Task Force for the Development of Education and Training of Adults (GMEFA) responsible, therefore, to trigger the process leading to the establishment of the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA).
Decreto-Lei n.º 387/1999, de 28 de Setembro	Creates the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults, designed ANEFA
Decreto-Lei n.º 208/2002, de 17 de Outubro de 2002	Approves the organic of the Ministry of Education. The DGFV is created.
Decreto-Lei n.º 276-C/2007, de 31 de Julho	Approves the Organic of the National Agency for Qualification, I. P.
Portaria n.º 370/2008, de 21 de Maio	Regulates the establishment and operation of the New Opportunities Centres.
Decreto-Lei n.º 36/2012, de 15 de Fevereiro	Creates and approves the organization of the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education, I. P. (ANQEP, I. P.).
Portaria n.º 135-A/2013, de 28 de	Regulates the creation and the organization system and operation of the Centers for Qualification and

Maio

Vocational Education, designated by CQEP.
