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SEEKING INCLUSION AND AVERTING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

AN ACCOUNT OF TWO ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING EXPERIENCES

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years the adult education field has gone through various changes in Portugal, some of which connected with popular education and local development. Bearing this in mind, the Popularly Initiated Adult Education research project was regarded by the Unit for Adult Education of the University of Minho (Portugal) as an important challenge and as a means of getting to know the problems and the educational needs felt by adults. This research was aimed to identify innovative forms of experiencing and carrying out training as well as examine the contexts in which such initiatives were developed. As part of the research four case studies were made at institutions that implemented adult education initiatives which they regarded as innovative. In this paper two of them will be examined, as it is my belief that they included some dimensions that were aimed at averting social and educational exclusion. The first one, the *Course on Painting and Decoration on Glass, Wood, Ceramics and Fabric* (Sancho, 2000), was designed for women and its aim was to promote self-esteem and self-confidence in order to diminish isolation and make the adults feel more motivated to participate in other adult education and training initiatives thereby averting the risks of cultural exclusion. The second one, the *Training Project "On the inside of the margins"* (Silva, 2000) sought the inclusion of adults at risk of social exclusion as a result of long-term unemployment.

In this paper we will look at each of the abovementioned cases, describing them individually at first and afterwards, whenever it is deemed important, compare them and/or highlight the differences. The first one will be referred to as the Painting and Decoration Course and the second as the Training Project.

The first part of this paper which has been called “Contexts and Dimensions of an Institutional Nature” comprises, albeit succinctly, the geographical, cultural, social and human contexts that surround the institutions that promoted the aforementioned initiatives. Next, some of the dimensions of these associations are looked at as well as their integration into projects of a wider scope<sup>1</sup>, with particular emphasis on the various partnerships<sup>2</sup> that had to be set up and implicated in the development of the training projects.

The second part refers to the “Education/Training Processes”, which covers trainees, trainers, pedagogical methods, assessment and funding. Throughout the paper similarities are sought for but it is mainly the differences between the two cases that are highlighted. It is a question of two distinct education/training processes in which the differences lie in the characteristics of the trainees, the trainers, the pedagogical methods used, the assessment and the amount of funding involved. In one case, the initiative resembles popular education and leisure, bearing in mind the characteristics of the trainees and the aims of the Painting and Decoration Course. In the Training Project “On the Inside of the Margins”, the central dimension seeks to articulate education/training with the acquiring of job skills while the degree of formality presented in this project can be further highlighted by the restraints brought about by the funding programme which supported it (the European Social Fund).

In the third part I shall seek to interpret “The Inclusion/Exclusion Processes”. Although it is accepted that in principle all education/training initiatives are concerned with inclusion, it is often the case that these concerns are not very explicit. In the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Fighting Poverty Project, The Municipal Project of Esposende, The Esposende City Hall Project and the Local Development Association Project.

<sup>2</sup> One can highlight the partnerships that were carried out between the institutions that promoted the initiatives being studied and the Ministry of Education by the Municipal Committee for Recurrent Education and Out-of-School-Education, City Halls, Parish Councils, the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity, the Employment and Vocational Training Institute, and the Vocational Training Centre of the Building Industry and Public Works of the North.

Painting and Decoration Course as the dimensions present were related with support to the socially and culturally underprivileged, the inclusion focussed mostly on socialization and pedagogical dimensions. Increasing the socio-economic level of the group by promoting self-employment, for instance, or by supplementing the family income was not a central dimension in this course. Instead, it turned out to be a space that fostered socialization and conviviality between adults and young people through respect and personal advancement. The mastering of decoration techniques and styles for home utensils constituted both a key facilitating and driving element in the whole process.

In contrast, The Training Project “On the Inside of the Margins”, from the outset involved adults that were affected by social and professional exclusion and its main purpose was the economic and socio-professional integration of these individuals. In this case, the trainees were very homogeneous in that they all had low schooling levels, were long-term unemployed and aged between 25 and 55, most being between 36 and 55 years old. They were individuals that either belonged to risk groups or were going through a particularly difficult period in their lives. The organisational dimension in this initiative was heavier, involving more people, more resources (human, material and financial) and was primarily concerned with placing the trainees in the job market.

Both the purpose of this project and the high number of people involved in it meant that it had technical and professional concerns that could not be left to amateurs, resulting in the participation of various qualified professionals, which was not the case in the painting and decoration activity.

After this brief description, I will now move on to the analysis of the previously mentioned cases, looking at the institutional, training and pedagogic contexts as well as the social and educational inclusion and exclusion features present.

### **A. Context(s) and dimensions of an institutional nature**

The first training activity being examined in this paper, the *Course on Painting and Decoration on Glass, Wood, Ceramics and Fabric* was carried out by an association located in a coastal parish in the municipality of Esposende, Northern Portugal, where, alongside agriculture, one of the main economic activities is the extraction of granite. This rural parish has a population of approximately 1300. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building sector and the textile industry drew considerable numbers of both male and female workers away from agricultural activities. As women systematically took on various professional occupations and worked daily and permanently outside their homes as paid employees, they left behind the more traditional occupations of housewives and farmhands to contribute to the family income. As a result, they were no longer able to raise their children as they had done previously, giving rise to new social needs.

Seeking to address these problems, the aforementioned association, which had initially been set up by a group of young people who used to meet in a local café to “kill time” and had up until then organized sports and cultural activities (mainly football, volleyball, music and plays), with collaboration of the Parish Council<sup>3</sup> set off the process of creation of a nursery which eventually opened on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1976 with 30 children enrolled<sup>4</sup>. This collaboration was maintained and the association

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<sup>3</sup> Parish Councils are local administration bodies that are closest to the communities and are more familiar with the problems and needs of the population.

<sup>4</sup> On July 4<sup>th</sup> 1980 its statutes became official through publication in the Official Journal (nr. 182, III Issue, 8 August 1980).

continued to develop the social component with the opening of the kindergarten and the provision of support services to the elderly and the community in general. Initiatives in areas such as vocational training, information, sports, culture and leisure were also carried out.

In the early 1980s, Johan Norbeck stated that this association had “[...] the personal and communitarian advancement of its members and of the community by means of cultural, sporting, recreational and social activities” (1983: 47) as its objectives. In order to adapt its statutes to its new social concerns and to be able to access resources from various financial sources, the association was converted into a Private Charitable Institution<sup>5</sup> in 1982.

October 1986 witnesses the materialization of the “big dream” with the inauguration of the social premises comprising 1200 square meters of covered area. At the same time, the association newspaper, founded in 1976, started being published more regularly, being regarded as an important information resource of the parish. The association resorts to a strategy that involves constant institutional dialogue with various services, such as religious, sports and professional institutions with which it exchanges support and collaboration. Among these one can mention the close collaboration with the Municipal Committee for Recurrent Education and Out-of-School-Education<sup>6</sup>, the Parish Council, the City Hall and the Vocational Training Centre of the Building Industry and Public Works of the North.

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<sup>5</sup> This association is registered in the General Directorate of Social Security, in the Charitable Associations register, with the number 19/82, on pages 116 and 117 and dated 14 February 1981 and is a public administrative body, as set out in Decree Law nr. 9/85.

<sup>6</sup> This is the service of the Ministry of Education that, at a local level, identifies adults' educational needs and puts forwards proposals for actions, in particular those involving recurrent education and the completion of compulsory schooling. Out-of-School Education usually refers to forms of education that take place outside the regular school system and cover literacy, adult basic education, professional retraining and improvement as well as cultural activities (Basic Law of the Education System, nr. 46/86, 14 October, article 23). For further details, see Lima *et al.*, 1988.

Of all the work done by the association, one should highlight the fact that the activities carried out were based on the real needs of the different age groups that make up the local community and were primarily concerned with finding wholesome ways for the children, young people and the elderly to spend their leisure time. As a result, a large number of sports are available and played: table tennis, skating, swimming, volleyball, football and female handball. In the latter case, there are classes for various age groups beginning with “bambis” (9/10 year-olds) up to senior level.

The *Painting and Decoration Course* follows on from a series of other initiatives the association has developed since it was set up, with the aim of engaging the local population, particularly women, who in such environments are often in a situation of some isolation and consequently culturally defavoured. The initiative sought to reduce the negative effect of such isolation and was presented as a way of socializing and sharing life experiences .

The training project entitled “On the Inside of the Margins” materialized in a different context and with diverse concerns. It was promoted by an association that, according to its statutes, takes on the role of a local development agency (providing information, training, social animation and promoting and valorising endogenous resources to achieve progressive transformation). Set up in February 1994, it became a Private Charitable Institution in order to be able to access resources from various sources of funding. In 1995, an application the association had made to the European Social Fund was approved marking the beginning of an important phase in its development, which has involved various applications to European Union funding programmes. It is located in the S. Torcato parish of the Guimarães Municipality in the Braga District in Northern Portugal, on the periphery of the urban centre of the

Ave Valley. Industry tends to be the main economic activity but factories exist alongside farms which are fragmented in nature and are mainly for subsistence purposes. Small scale agriculture is not, however, the only strategy to guarantee survival. Paid jobs and moonlighting are frequently resorted to. In this particular socio-economic context, the association deals with individuals that are experiencing long-term unemployment and reveal evident signs of poverty and are often part of conflict-prone and unstructured families.

The project in question involved both the local level , that of the association itself, and the central level (the European Union INTEGRAR programme), with the participation of a wide range of local actors, both public and private. The partnerships are an almost inevitable result of the associative action and nobody considered acting in an isolated manner when issues of this dimension were at stake. There was therefore a need to unite solidarities, join wills, maximise resources and overcome resistance since not only was it necessary to deal with people but also to operate within the social and institutional contexts. Amongst the most active partners one can mention the different structures of the Ministry of Education, with special emphasis on the Municipal Committee of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education, the Agricultural Training Centre, whose premises were used for most of the training, the companies, the Local Commission for the Monitoring of the Minimum Guaranteed Income<sup>7</sup> and the Fighting Poverty Programme, from which it obtained funding.

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<sup>7</sup> Law nr. 19-A/96 of 26 June created the Minimum Guaranteed Income as a means to ensure that individuals and their families are provided with resources to meet their minimum needs and to favour social and professional integration. It consists of an amount of money that varies according to the situation and is provided temporarily. In order to qualify, individuals have to "be actively available for work or for training actions professional integration programmes." The minimum guaranteed income is calculated with reference to the national minimum wage, which in 2003 was of 356,60 Euros/month.

Now that the associations that promoted these two initiatives have been summarily presented, I would like to mention some common points that seem quite significant. In both cases, there is a strong link between the training projects and the structures of the Ministry of Education, namely the Municipal Committee of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education, as the two municipal coordinators played a relevant role in the carrying out of these training actions. It should also be highlighted that there was an articulation between these projects and others that had a wider scope. In the first case, the course was part of the municipal solidarity programme entitled “Project for the Integrated Development of the Esposende Municipality”, which involved church parishes, associations and other bodies. Besides the support of the municipal services of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education, the second case also had the collaboration of the Agricultural Training Centre, companies and charitable institutions where the vocational training and traineeships took place.

Another aspect which is common to both cases, is the fact that the two associations took on the status of Private Charitable Institutions at a certain stage in their existence. This situation is, in fact, common to many other associations and is regarded by those in charge of them as the best way to access resources from various sources of funding, including the European Social Fund. This is a feature which is connected with the admittance of Portugal to the European Economic Community in 1986, which provided these associations with the possibility of institutional inclusion within the framework of the different existing programmes and networks. These new economic possibilities have enabled the involvement of more bodies in the promotion of many initiatives and have also allowed for the hiring of professionally qualified staff to work in organisational contexts which for many years had essentially relied on volunteering.

## **B. Educational/training processes**

### The trainees

The Painting and Decoration Course consisted of a non-formal<sup>8</sup> initiative, for although it did have a structure and organisation set out in its training project, it did not in fact establish fixed locations and timeframes, and its schedule was negotiated with the trainees.

This initiative was attended by sixteen women aged between 15 and 52. The over-41 age group had the highest number of participants with 6 elements (aged between 41 and 52), followed by the 15-20 age group, with 4 participants. As far as academic qualifications are concerned, the group was also heterogeneous: there were three participants who had completed the first cycle of basic education<sup>9</sup>, the first level in the schooling hierarchy, while there were four with a Bachelor's degree. Of the remaining nine participants, eight had completed either the second or third cycle of basic education and one had completed secondary education<sup>10</sup>. In terms of professional situation of the trainees, four were basic education teachers, four were students, four were unemployed and the remaining participants had a variety of occupations such as office clerk, cook, housewife and civil servant. So, in all of the sixteen trainees only four were jobless, which contrasted clearly with the second case being studied, whose training action was aimed at the long-term unemployed.

As I was able to ascertain, the participants in this initiative did not reveal marked signs of poverty. Most of them worked and the four who were unemployed did

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<sup>8</sup> Almerindo J. Afonso distinguishes between formal education, in which the traditional school is the most important means of education and non-formal education, where the democratic development associations take on a fundamental role in the promotion of socialisation, solidarity and development (Afonso, 1989: 82).

<sup>9</sup> In Portugal, Basic Education comprises three cycles: The first cycle consists of 4 years schooling; the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle is made up of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years while the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle includes the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> years. The 9 years together correspond to compulsory schooling.

<sup>10</sup> Secondary education is optional and comprises a three-year-cycle (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> years). There are courses which are geared towards higher education and others towards the job market, but they are permeable.

possess some economic stability ensured by another member of the family, usually the spouse. Besides this feature, it should also be noted that none of them were illiterate. Although the illiteracy rate figures in Portugal are still significant, the figures for the Esposende municipality are relatively lower<sup>11</sup>. This situation may be explained by the fact for over twenty years there has been a close relationship between the association and the Municipal Committee of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education, which has promoted various literacy and recurrent education courses.

In the Training Project, the group consisted of both men and women, aged between 25 and 55, with most of the trainees being between 36 and 55 years old, the age group where unemployment is particularly high. The trainees' level of schooling was below the second cycle of basic education, as most of them had only completed the first cycle, which was clearly insufficient to meet the demands of a society that values information and knowledge highly (Silva, 2000: 9). Most of them had been unemployed for more than three years and in some cases it went up to 5 years. They had had intermittent and unstable professional careers characterised mainly by activities requiring low or no qualifications at all carried out both in the service and industrial sectors.

As Olivia Santos Silva states: "Being long-term unemployed and with low schooling levels, the people this course was aimed at possessed distinctive characteristics. They were individuals who belonged to groups either at risk or socially and professionally excluded" (Silva, 2000: 13). Some of them benefited from the Minimum Guaranteed Income as a result of their unemployed status and were cut off from the working world, which led to both personal and social fractures and ensuing debasement of themselves and of others. Their behaviour and attitudes were

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<sup>11</sup> According to the National Statistics Institute (2001 Census, Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2002: 3), in 2001 the illiteracy rate stood at 9%, although in the Braga district it varied between 5,3% and 7,7%. In Northern Portugal, the illiteracy rate stood at 8,3%.

characterized by conflict, rejection, aggressiveness, loss of autonomy and inability to take personal initiatives.

In contrast with the group that attended the Painting and Decoration Course, these trainees lived in peripheral areas or in housing estates many of which in precarious or very precarious conditions and the place of residence and living conditions became factors of inequality and of social stigmatisation .

Still on the issue of living conditions, the two groups were also distinct as in the first case the participants lived in a rural area and their houses possessed reasonable or even good conditions. Besides the physical characteristics of the dwellings, the community itself was smaller and there were strong neighbourly relationships and very often people were connected by family ties. Therefore, situations of poverty and social exclusion were rare. The disparities were felt essentially at a social and cultural level.

### The trainers

In the Painting and Decoration Course, the selection of the trainers was based on criteria that were connected with the ability to establish good personal relationships with preference being given to people who were motivated to work with adults, rather than on objective criteria defined beforehand. As the association was located in a small community where everybody knew each other, sometimes people who were going through a temporary difficult situation, be it emotionally or financially, were recruited as trainers. The fees they got as trainers, low as they were, did supplement their family income. When selecting the trainers, special value was placed on their ability to engage people as well as their organizing and facilitating skills. This course had three trainers, two of which were university graduates, one belonging to the

board of the association and the other was the coordinator of the Municipal Committee of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education. Between them they were responsible for the cultural and civic component of the training. The third trainer, who played central role in this case, was an experienced craftswoman with a renowned background in adult education. She was in charge of the artistic component of the training and was given a training grant <sup>12</sup>. She was the sole trainer on this training action to be paid for her work.

In the Training Project, the team of trainers consisted of individuals with a professional qualification, tutors and teachers. The latter, who were placed through the Ministry of Education's general teacher placement system, did not have any experience in working with adults and did not get any special training. They, therefore, found it difficult to interpret the adults, understand their reasoning, their "language" and decipher their codes. Unlike the teachers, the other trainers were workers or owners of small businesses, who very often had similar backgrounds to the trainees. They shared the same cultural matrix, used the same language, had similar values and even lifestyles (Silva, 2000:13).

In this case, there was, therefore, a big difference between the group of trainers. The teachers were scientifically and pedagogically better prepared, but were socially and culturally distant from their trainees. The remaining elements did not have such a good command of didactics and pedagogy, but possessed a better understanding of and ability to interpret the trainees and "The fruitfulness of the project was, probably, in large measure achieved by means of the dialogue and the relationship between such diverse trainers" (Silva, 2000: 31). These two cases reveal not only how important the diversity of adult trainers is but also how it is not absolutely essential

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<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that this grant was no more than 150 Euros /month, an amount which has not changed since then.

that they be exclusively teachers. In fact, what this Training Project shows is that without specific training to work with adults, the teachers were not very sensitive to the difficulties that poorly qualified adults have, both from an academic and professional point of view.

### Contents and pedagogical methods

The Painting and Decoration Course was held on the premises of the association over a period of five months totalling 120 training hours. It was held in the evening and was flexible both in terms of time and space. All participants enrolled voluntarily. Emphasis was placed on the dimensions of learning-to-be even though most of the session focused on the development of manual skills — “learning-to-do”.

This activity was not created artificially, since various trainees had already shown an interest in this training area. It possessed a significant practical dimension, as trainees were requested to carry out assignments involving painting and decorating on glass, wood, fabric, etc. It included technical and logistical dimensions, but also had social and pedagogical concerns. Each trainee was monitored closely and small groups were set up, in some cases with members of the same family as was the case of two groups where mother and daughter worked together.

As far as the training content is concerned, themes connected with health and safety were discussed as well as general and civic education. As regards the latter, group debates and study trips were often the preferred strategies. The aims of this course involved “discovering artistic gifts and enabling self-employment as well as having access to different techniques and styles of decorating home utensils”. Consequently, paintings, mirrors, curtains, bedspreads, vases and cloths decorated with Christmas motifs were made and later used by the trainees to decorate their

homes. In this case, the pedagogical methods revolved mainly around practical work with demonstration playing a pivotal role. There was some concern for theoretical knowledge to support the actual designing and creation of the different works and the trainees were encouraged to aim for craftsmanship and to be creative. As a result of such guidance the trainees were able to produce tangible work and developed their practical skills. Each participant's pace was respected and feelings of mutual assistance and sharing were valued and developed. Bearing this in mind, the course turned out to be a place that fostered socialization and conviviality among the participants through respect and personal advancement and by enhancing mutual knowledge, increasing friendship ties and by developing feelings of solidarity.

As far as issues regarding the management and organisation of the training are concerned, flexibility was once again the keyword. Management was neither rigid nor formal and consisted very often of trying to solve problems as they appeared both by the trainers and the trainees. There was a very incipient hierarchy, which made the training rather informal in nature. As the training took place in an association, the out-of-school education model was mostly present, seeking to achieve a pleasant environment that promoted socialisation, solidarity and individual development.

The needs analysis was carried out by the trainees themselves and they were concerned with meeting and addressing the local needs and problems. An option was made to have a small group as the training concerns were mainly of a practical nature. It was carried out with enthusiasm and a strong belief in the trainees and the training itself. Various members of the same family participated in the course. It was an attempt to get different people of the same family to get organised and produce handicrafts which they could sell in order to supplement the family income. It is

understood, however, that there was no clear orientation towards the carrying out of vocational training as it had only a lateral impact on the work dynamics.

In the second case, The Training Project, the training contents were organised according to two main themes. “Personal and Social Development” and “Raising Professional Awareness”. The former comprised 60 hours training and sessions were held once a week. It was the first moment in the training relationship in which “one seeks to uncover existing knowledge and skills, eliminate resistance and win the trainees over to the training process by promoting their self-confidence and the confidence they have in others [...]” (Silva, 2000: 22).

The second theme “Raising Professional Awareness” was broken down into three topics: assessing skills and analysing the job market; approaching the job market (*curriculum vitae*, letters of introduction, letters of application); the job interview (how to prepare for and behave in a job interview) (Silva, 2000: 21). The professional guidance of the trainees was one of the central concerns, if not the primary one, in this activity. It revolved predominantly around issues of professional orientation and most of the training team consisted of psychologists.

The methodology adopted involved some of the following strategies; group dynamics activities, presentations, field trips, sessions to reflect on and discuss issues such as family, social life, health, sexuality, the environment, consumerism, the world of work. Therefore, the pedagogical methods used in the cases in question were different: in the Painting and Decoration Course, the demonstration method was almost exclusively used, while in the Training Project there was a wider variety of methods. This was due to the goals set out for each initiative. In the first case, the training environment was geared to develop feelings of mutual help, sharing and respect for each participants pace of progress. In the second case, however, the concerns

focused on the acquisition of specific knowledge, so as to prepare the trainees to look for work and to find a place in the job market.

### Assessment

In the Painting and Training Course, the assessment carried out was based on personal achievements and the individual pieces of work (assignments) rather than on objective criteria which could be translated into a figure. In this sense, assessment was regarded as formative, based on the practical assignments and whether they had been accomplished as well as on the personal satisfaction trainees derived from them. This led some of the trainees to comment that the course did not involve assessment. As a participant referred: "I don't think there was assessment, we were there just to learn and among friends. Assessment could have lead to competition. The assessment was done by each one of us by bringing the pieces of work we liked the most to the final exhibition" (Sancho, 2000: 24).

As the pieces of work were displayed at various exhibitions, this initiative got quite visible publicity and was praised and acknowledged both by the creators themselves and by external observers, which constituted an important motivation strategy. It is our belief, therefore, that these actions are important especially if they are used as means to engage, involve people and get them interested in future training activities.

In the second case, the Training Project, the assessment was also more qualitative in nature, in that it focused on the change in attitudes and the acquiring of skills. The extent of both the changes and the personal gains were grouped into three categories and were called "perceived improvements": a) personal; b) relational; c) professional. The first category referred to the development of feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as to demeanour. The second to the increase in skills in

areas such as communication, group work and tension and conflict management. The third was concerned with a more active approach to job seeking and a better understanding of labour relations and the demands of the job market.

One might consider that the Training Project had a higher degree of formality, as it had to face two great challenges that have to do with social exclusion. It covered the whole Guimarães Municipality and sought to respond to the multidimensional nature of the problems that afflicted this group.

The unemployment issue has a multidimensional feature, which is associated to economic, professional and social changes, to the fragility of academic qualifications, the shortfalls of citizenship and democracy and to poverty and social exclusion. Bearing this in mind, this training project had as main purpose to favour the economic and socio-professional integration of long-term unemployed individuals and provide “qualifying vocational training”, which in itself imposed certain rules that had to be followed.

Once again one can identify some differences between the two initiatives. Less formality and more flexibility as regards time, locations and contents in the first case. Although in the second case the assessment did have qualitative concerns, it possessed a higher degree of formality which sought to identify effective changes.

### Funding

The Painting and Decoration Course had various sources of funding, namely the association itself, which provided all the logistic support (providing a room with desks and chairs, electricity and water, storage space for the pieces of work and the exhibition space). The municipality and the trainees arranged the materials, in some cases they were able to get companies to donate the materials or sell them at cut-

rate prices. The Municipal Committee of Recurrent and Out-of-School Education provided the grant to the trainer<sup>13</sup>. As can be seen, there were various source of funding, which allowed the association to carry out the action and avoid a unilateral financial dependence. On the other hand, the association premises were put to good use, which meant that the amount spent on this initiative was not very high.

In the second case, the organisational structure as well as the human and material resources involved were considerable, which required substantial financial resources. Besides the usual expenses connected with planning, managing and running the course, funding had to be available to pay for transportation, meals and training grants for the trainees. This financial support resulted in high attendance rates (when trainees reached a certain percentage of absences, each absence entailed a deduction from their training grant). The management and coordination of the activities had to follow clearly defined rules which did not allow for amateur/domestic management but rather required precise organisational rules and conditions to be able to select suitable training locations, set up a transportation network and keep to the schedule and plan. It was a rather complex and arduous training project model and therefore possessed a high degree of formality. A training group was set up which had to operate by means of institutional cooperation and it very often had to face rather inflexible public bodies possessing ingrained hierarchies with rules and perceptions that were not very compatible with intervention in such problematic social contexts as those covered by the project.

As regards funding, the two initiatives are also quite different, in terms of the amounts involved, the number of people concerned, the variety and size of the physical structures used and so on. They are therefore, two distinct education/training

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<sup>13</sup> One should be reminded that the amount paid to the trainer was not at all significant, which may discourage the collaboration of more qualified trainers. On the other hand it is only for a certain period of time, and thus does not encourage continuing intervention.

processes. The differences lie in the characteristics of the trainees and trainers, the pedagogical methods used, the assessment and the financial resources involved. In one case, that of the Painting and Decoration Course, the initiative can be regarded as similar to popular education and leisure, bearing in mind the characteristics of the trainees and the objectives of the course. The other case, the Training Project, seeks to articulate education/training with the acquisition of job skills that will enable the trainees to access the job market. These differences may also be connected with the degree of formality, which may have been intensified by restraints derived from the funding programme that supports the initiative.

### **C. Inclusion/Exclusion processes: contradictions in adult education/training initiatives**

Although all education initiatives possess inclusion concerns, the truth is that sometimes many contradictions surface. As a result, both inclusion and exclusion strategies are developed in parallel and it is not quite clear where one begins and the other ends.

As far as the context in which the Painting and Decoration Course was carried out is concerned, it should be said that over the more than two decades since the association was set up, it has been concerned with inclusion and has developed strategies to promote it, which are consistent with both the goals of the training action and the activities of the association itself. On the whole, the adult education/training initiatives carried out by the association where the Training and Decoration Course took place, had as goals local development, conservation of local heritage and training. In terms of areas covered by the educational activities, they reveal a

concern with preserving and promoting the environment, arts and crafts, traditions, pilgrimages as well as the new information technologies. The selection of these topic areas was made in accordance with the wishes of the population or was a result of local dynamics. According to an interview given by the president of the association, there has always been an interest in listening to the population to find out their needs and in involving the community in seeking the adequate solutions. As he stated: “[...] Everybody comes here and we know what people need and like for education/training. Many of our collaborators and university graduates were at one point students here in our institution [...]”<sup>14</sup>. “This only works if it meets the needs of the local community; we do not create activities artificially, we can’t make things up — what is made up dies” he added. As far as the trainees are concerned, the strategy consisted of supporting those socially and culturally underprivileged. In order to meet those needs, actions were carried out to enable individuals to complete compulsory schooling and socio-educational courses were held<sup>15</sup>.

The concerns for inclusion were also present in the socialising and pedagogic dimensions and in the techniques and logistics (locations, human, material and financial resources, etc:): “We want to help minimize or eradicate pockets of cultural poverty, for they very often give rise to the social and economic poverty of the municipal communities.”<sup>16</sup>

As far as the rationale of this initiative is concerned, it favoured a closer monitoring of each trainee as well as the setting up of small groups. Members of the same family were allowed to participate in the course. In general, the purposes of the course were

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<sup>14</sup> Information provided by the President of the Association in an interview held on 13 October 1999.

<sup>15</sup> The Municipal Committee of Adult Education and the Association in question have had a working relationship for over twenty years, having organised on the premises of the latter various literacy courses (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle courses.

<sup>16</sup> Extract from the Esposende Municipality Project (1994), drawn up by the municipal co-ordinator of the Recurrent and Out-of-School Education.

to learn how to make decoration objects, to raise the socio-economic level of the group either by generating self-employment or supplementing family income, and to diversify knowledge, skills and manual abilities. The aims of the course (defined in the Municipal Project) clearly revealed the dimensions of the practical skills, with emphasis being placed on the discovery of artistic gifts as well as on the possibility of generating self-employment enabling the access to decoration techniques and styles for home utensils<sup>17</sup>. However, these concerns with inclusion had some limits.

One's attention can be drawn to the fact that there were no illiterate individuals among the participants, who in an initial analysis could be regarded as culturally excluded, and if one compares the academic qualifications with the professional activities carried out one can ascertain that six of the participants were engaged in activities that involved reading, writing and calculus (four were basic education teachers, one an office clerk and the other a civil servant), while four other participants were students (aged between 15 and 20). Of the sixteen trainees only four were unemployed, but their economic situation was not considered to be serious. One should be reminded that the environment was a rural one with reasonable dwellings that usually had a yard where fruit and vegetables were grown and animals (chickens, ducks and rabbits) reared, which provided many families with some of their own food resources. In these environments, neighbourly ties are usually strong and family ties close. What may sometimes happen, albeit in exceptional cases, is that some people may live more isolated and with behavioural problems brought about by psychiatric or other disorders, which often lead to unstructured lifestyles and situations of poverty. In rural parishes with similar dimensions and features to this one and where there is an association that carries

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<sup>17</sup> The trainees produced paintings, mirrors, painted bedspreads and cloths, decorated vases etc, which they later used to decorate their homes (replacing objects they had at home by the ones they had themselves drawn, painted, made or decorated).

out social work of the dimension that this one does, it will be difficult to find situations of effective social exclusion or extreme poverty<sup>18</sup>.

The course turned out to be a place that fostered socialization and conviviality between the adults and young people through respect and personal advancement and by enhancing mutual knowledge, increasing friendship ties and by developing feelings of solidarity. When there are great social inequalities, one cannot speak of solidarity, for as Boaventura Sousa Santos put it “[...] the only possible solidarity is solidarity among equals [...]” (Santos, 1998: 9).

In the second case, adults affected by various social and professional problems were involved. Bearing this in mind, the project’s main purpose was the economic and socio-professional integration of long-term unemployed individuals, many of which, as has been mentioned before, benefited from the Minimum Guaranteed Income. These trainees lived in peripheral areas or in housing estates where accommodation was often rundown and unhygienic. They sometimes lived with relatives, in other cases completely alone without any company or neighbours.

Many trainees were aged between 36 and 55, an age group that is seriously affected by unemployment. This feature together with low schooling levels (none of the trainees had gone beyond the second cycle of basic education, with twenty seven having only completed the first cycle), heightened the risk of exclusion.

Another factor of inequality, which also merits concern and was already referred in this paper, was unemployment. Twenty seven trainees had been unemployed for over three years and for some the period reached five years. From this point of view, the group was a fragile one. Very often in such cases, there is no regular income at

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<sup>18</sup> Boaventura Sousa Santos defines “welfare-society” as “[...] the relationship networks that foster interpersonal knowledge, mutual understanding and help based on family and neighbourly ties, through which small social groups exchange goods and services on a non-mercantile basis and with a reciprocity logic similar to that of the gift studied by Marcel Mauss [...]” (Santos, 1993: 46).

all which makes the situation all the more worrying. There are sometimes survival strategies that surface, such as getting underage children to work, subtle forms of prostitution, illegal business and so on. Bearing this in mind, Olívia Santos Silva states that “Being long-term unemployed and with low schooling levels, the people this course was aimed at possessed distinctive characteristics. They were individuals who belonged to groups either at risk or socially and professionally excluded” (Silva, 2000: 13).

In order to ensure the usefulness and effectiveness of this process the team responsible for the training identified the opportunities for professional integration and for access to existing support mechanisms within the municipality and defined the following general and specific aims: the reestablishment of interpersonal, social and professional interpersonal relationship networks, the restoration of self-esteem and self-confidence, the raising of awareness to labour and social rights and the setting up of personal and professional projects.

However, and despite the concerns with inclusion in this educational process, the fact is that of the thirty six trainees, eleven dropped out, exposing some of the fragilities of this project. Of the twenty five that remained, ten (who had the highest level of schooling) were placed in the job market within the framework of occupational programmes, seven (all of whom benefited from the Minimum Guaranteed Income) moved on to the next phase of the project, while the remaining eight left without a clearly defined route to follow, but according to the team, “with some prospects and a more active attitude towards finding their own way” (Silva, 2000: 24).

The seven who moved on to the next phase started “Basic Training Level 1”<sup>19</sup>, which comprised 2226 hours. This action covered three professional areas (electricity and electronics, provision of services to children and the elderly, cooking and confectionery) and was organised into four components: socio-cultural training, work-related simulations, training in a real work context and a traineeship (expected to last six months). This new training cycle sought to combine the acquisition of professional knowledge and work oriented activities with an effective placement in the job market. In order to carry out the training various organisational measures had to be taken: the choice of training locations (training centre, vocational training centre, companies and institutions), the setting up of a transportation network (to ensure that the trainees could be taken to the different training locations) and the selection of trainers and tutors within the institutions, etc.

As this project was funded by the European Social Fund, it had an important social inclusion strategy as its main concern. The funding programme in question followed the rules that governed it and so the trainees were given an amount of money of transport and meals as well as a training grant. This financial support ensured high attendance rates as well as the physical well-being of the trainees thereby improving their daily life<sup>20</sup>.

In all training actions of such a dimension there are bound to be difficulties that may cause some trainees to drop out. They may be connected with the main actors or with organisational issues. The former may have to do with the individualistic attitude

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<sup>19</sup> Basic Training Level 1, which comprises a double certification (schooling and professional qualification), is aimed at filling the gaps in terms of schooling and professional qualifications that still affect the Portuguese population, namely those individuals whose schooling level is lower than the Second Cycle of Basic Education (6 years of schooling). This modality favours conditions that allow for personal, social and relational development, while also ensuring a formal equivalence to the First or Second Cycle of Basic Education which results from the acquisition of technical skills that correspond to level 1 of professional qualification. Decree Law nr 27, February 1<sup>st</sup> 2001.

<sup>20</sup> This grant was on par with the national minimum wage (in 2003 it amounts to 356,60 Euros/month), which allowed for a significant improvement in the quality of life of both the trainees and their families.

of some teachers, the unfamiliarity with the conventions of group work or the unavailability to take part in meetings for reflection. These teachers, in spite of being scientifically and pedagogically able, they did not have any previous experience in adult training schemes and did not get any training to carry it out and were culturally and socially far apart from the trainees. The other trainers who were not teachers but workers, social animators or owners of small businesses, lived and in some cases worked in environments which were similar to those of the trainees, and often sought new form of social and cultural inclusion of the trainees. This clear distinction between the trainers was enriching for the development of the project.

Once this double certification training (schooling and professional qualification) was over, the trainees would have to undergo a six month paid traineeship in a company. These paid traineeships could be regarded as a form of inclusion of these individuals in the professional world. However, some of the problems encountered cause some discredit to the training process. More than two hundred companies were contacted for the traineeships but only three agreed to take part, which led to a serious crisis at the end of the project. Such a situation gave rise to feelings of discord, mistrust and anxiety. In this case, and for many trainees, the anxiety was over subsistence or even survival. Thus, the cohesion that had apparently been built over the thirteen-month training period was put in question and a different social context from the one that had been prevalent until then materialised. Former solidarities were forgotten, giving rise to new alliances among the trainees, between these and the teachers and between training staff and those in charge. These alliance were in some cases

tactical and defensive, in other cases they were protectionist, corporate and institutional<sup>21</sup>.

Against this backdrop of concerns for inclusion and the difficulties that gave rise to some cultural, social and professional exclusion, one can state that “it would be absurd to think that a group that underwent a prolonged and systematic training process such as this one, would reach its conclusion without having benefited from its results and without contributing to the changes in people’s lives and outlooks on life” (Silva, 2000: 39).

One can state that there was an improvement in both the trainees’ and their families’ daily lives achieved by means of the training grant. The adults that underwent training revealed an increase in knowledge, developed communication and interpersonal communication skills, acquired working techniques and habits and changed behaviours and attitudes<sup>22</sup>.

Changes in demeanour, self-esteem and self-confidence and in the ability to solve problems in various areas of daily life were equally evident. The trainees, however, were not the only one to gain from the experience. The teachers themselves admitted that they had gained important professional experience. It helped them perceive adult students in a different way, become aware of the need to humanise the education process and establish a closer pedagogical relationship with the trainees to better understand their personal universe and problems, which entails being willing to listen and open to dialogue.

There were, thus, different inclusion strategies in the two cases in question. In the first case, the training model seems to us a means to the development of feelings of

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<sup>21</sup> This situation was overcome albeit with great difficulty and persistence played a key role. One by one all the cases were solved and traineeships were found for the participants except for two of the older trainees (46 and 57 years old) despite the various efforts and initiatives taken.

<sup>22</sup> Some of them actually mentioned that they were lucky in the traineeship as they were then hired to work there.

self-esteem, solidarity and to get people willing to engage in future activities. In contrast, in the second case the training is an end in itself, with ambitious purposes that had to be achieved: fostering the economic and socio-professional integration of a group of trainees by expanding and improving the access to vocational training and the job market.

By way of conclusion, one can state that in the Painting and Decoration Course and in all those similar to it one attempts to “avert cultural and social exclusion” whilst in The Training Project one is really “seeking inclusion”.

Although the two cases that have been presented are not paradigmatic, they are two initiatives that mirror the adult education and training situation in Portugal in the last few years. Loosely structured actions, which are organised with few financial resources and are not very formal in nature coexist with complex and ambitious projects that involve substantial material, human and financial resources. It is within this balance that one seeks to engage adults in training and education processes where there are concerns for inclusion, but where on occasion fractures occur and translate into cultural , social or economic exclusion.

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