

# New Trends in Widening Participation to Learning in Portugal

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## Introduction

During forty-eight years of authoritarian regime Portugal was condemned to cultural apathy. This period didn't allow the creation and development of an adult education system capable of promoting the participation of everyone without exception, in lifelong education and training.

The intense legislation and the strong popular movement that emerged during the First Republic (1910-1926) were followed by several restrictions settled by the authoritarian regime (1926-1974) upon voluntary associations' initiatives and popular education. At that time, the political power was sceptical about the importance of adult literacy. The schooling system was based on generalized primary education of short duration, and was indirectly meant to dissuade students to attend higher levels than elementary education. As Silva (1990:18) states such policy was *"an instrument of integration in the existing social order, conforming each person to his/her own condition"*. The imposed constraints *"in a society where it was forbidden to be an adult"* (Melo, 1981:368) hindered the active participation of citizens in choosing and organising their educational paths.

After the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974 and under the splendour of the new democratic dawn, *"the fearless plunge into popular education activities"* (Silva, 1990:18) led to the emergence of adult education as a specific field of social action. At this time, the road to adults' participation in their learning process seemed definitely open. However this way was hard and tortuous to follow. Depending almost exclusively on activities achieved by the civil society, adult education needed a public policy that could frame and promote an answer to the problems and expectations of those who were already working on the field. Therefore, the need for the establishment of an institute that would define such a policy was clear, an organisation that would organise and implement a public supply allowing the widening of people's participation in adult education activities (cf. Ministério da Educação/Direcção Geral de Educação Permanente, 1979).

In 1979 the report of the National Plan for Literacy and Adult Basic Education (in Portuguese: Plano Nacional de Alfabetização e de Educação da Base dos Adultos –

PNAEBA) was published. This document stated that “*literacy and adult education should be understood in two ways, as the increase of adults’ personal value and their progressive participation in cultural, social and political life, in order to settle a democratic and independent society*” (ME/DGEP, 1979:10). To achieve these aims, the mentioned plan pointed out some operational principles to be followed. This document also referred to the need to establish a national institute of adult education with financial and administrative autonomy. This organisation would have to be based on a flexible and decentralised structure to ensure the State’s intervention to satisfy the adults’ claims.

The National Plan for Literacy and Adult Basic Education (PNAEBA) sought the consolidation of the adult education sub-system in Portugal. Drawn for a period of ten years divided in two different phases of five years each, it was abandoned at the end of the first phase. Several aims, such as the establishment of the National Institute for Adults’ Education, were not attained.

However, in the 80’s, within the Reform Committee of the Educational System, an important study was accomplished – Preparatory Documents III – Reorganisation of Adults Education Subsystem (Lima *et al.*, 1988) (Documentos Preparatórios III – Reorganização do Subsistema de Educação de Adultos). In this document a conceptual framework was drawn as well as a strategy to develop adult education field in our country. Once again the establishment of an institute capable of fulfilling clearly identified needs was suggested.

The course taken was in fact contrary to the one previously recommended and, as a result, a public policy for adults’ education was still inexistent. The decisions made emphasised the schooling processes and the increases of value of formal education. However, these proposals were insufficient and inadequate. Curricula were not suitable to adults’ problems and real needs. On the other hand, the main use of non-active teaching methods was a reproduction of the traditional teaching approach. These facts didn’t promote adults’ participation. People with a simple will to learn, didn’t find their wishes fulfilled by these initiatives.

As a consequence of the results of the research on *Literacy in Portugal* (cf. Benavente *et al.*, 1996) and of the Portuguese participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Adult Education held by UNESCO (in Hamburg, July 1997) a Task Force for the Development of Adult Education was formed (Order n<sup>o</sup> 10534/97 of October 16 by the Secretary of State for Education and Innovation). Aiming to revitalize

adult education in our country the report elaborated by the mentioned Task Force acknowledged that it was *“necessary and urgent not only to prepare the future but also, and simultaneously, to correct the past. (...)This will require the promotion of adult education as a real political priority for the Government of the Nation”* (Melo et al., 1998:13).

In order to develop the outlined strategy a specific program was put forward (in portuguese: *S@ber+: Programa para o Desenvolvimento e Expansão da Educação e Formação de Adultos*) (cf. Melo et al., 2001). For the first time, an independent structure for adults' education and training was finally settled in Portugal: National Agency for Adult Education and Training (ANEFA). In this paper we intend to analyse this agency's priorities as well as one of its main projects since this program seems to be an alternative and valid proposal to the promotion of adults' participation in learning processes.

### **Widening participation in adult education activities: ANEFA's programmes**

The National Agency for Adult Education and Training (ANEFA) was created as a means to develop *“an adult education policy which would at the same time aim to correct the past characterised by a lack of educational development and to prepare the future”*. This institution should ensure effective and appropriate answers to Portuguese educational problems, seek for equality of opportunities, fight against social exclusion and face the shift to knowledge-based society (Decree nº 387/99, September 28). As a public institute, it was superintended both by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. In legal terms, it had scientific, technical and administrative autonomy.

Among ANEFA's functions, we would like to emphasise the following:

- the development and the diffusion of specific pedagogical and socio-educational approaches, as well as methods and materials for adult education and training;
- the promotion of programmes and projects in the field of adult education and training (these activities could be developed by ANEFA as well as by other governmental or private organisations through specific contracts);
- the support of innovative adult education and training projects and activities in articulation with the priorities previously drawn;

- the gradual definition and practice of a system responsible for assessing personal skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, and to validate them, aiming at educational and professional certification;
- the adults' motivation, information and counselling about the possibilities and opportunities of lifelong learning.

In order to face the various challenges of adult education and training, ANEFA's programmes intended to divulge strategies of personal, professional, civic and cultural empowerment, in terms of employability, creativity, adaptation and active citizenship (*in* ANEFA's leaflets).

To achieve such goals, three programmes were settled:

- 1) Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification through the creation of the National System of Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification; the National Network of Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification centres; the National Registration of Institutions promoting such Adult Education and Training centres.
- 2) Promotion of Adult Education and Training Schemes (namely, adult education and training courses; "Knowing More Activities" [in Portuguese *Acções S@ber+*]; "Knowing More Clubs"; National Registration of Institutions promoting Adult Education and Training.
- 3) Production and management of information and knowledge, namely: the establishment of the Resource Centre of Knowledge in Adult Education and Training; journal 'Knowing More' (in Portuguese *Revista S@ber+*); the Adult Education and Training Editions.

The creation of ANEFA, the consolidation of a legal framework and the definition of projects and priorities led to the rise of new hopes on the development of adult education and training activities. However, some doubts remained about the real political involvement and the widening of adults' participation in this field in Portugal.

In 2002, due to a shift in governmental policies<sup>1</sup>, ANEFA was extinguished, despite its short existence. By the Decree nº 208, October 17, the Ministry of Education was reorganised and new goals were set in order to start an educational reform. The General Directorate of Vocational Training was established and ANEFA's programmes are nowadays under this General Directorate supervision.

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<sup>1</sup> From 1995 to 2002 the Socialist Party (centre and left wing) ruled the country. At the election of 2002 the Social-Democratic Party (right wing) and Popular Party (ultra right wing) formed a right wing coalition which is now ruling.

In Article 31° of the Decree the installation regime of the General Directorate of Vocational Training, the guiding lines and priority fields are articulated both by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. Articles 6° and 7° also mention the functions of the General Directorate which coincide with the ones attributed to ANEFA, now extinguished.

In spite of this important shift, the three main programmes of ANEFA (mentioned previously) are still being implemented. In this paper we would like to briefly describe adult education and training courses and to analyse the pedagogical approach, understood as a strategy of widening adults' participation in learning processes.

### **Adult education and training courses**

We live in a constant changing world - technological evolution, globalisation of markets and economy, the building up and enlargement of the European space through the admission of Eastern countries are relevant matter. We know that changes create new dynamics and new challenges. On the one hand, challenges show gains; on the other hand, challenges bring out vulnerability, weakness and the deficits of our country.

Owing to historical reasons and the lack of adult education and training, Portugal presents low levels in the accomplishment of basic education and low professional qualifications when compared with other European Union countries (cf. Benavente *et al.*, 1996). This situation may be a prediction of *“deep and imminent crises in employment and competitiveness rates as well as a threat to social and economical cohesion or active citizenship”* (Melo *et al.*, 1998: 12).

The establishment of ANEFA was then a sign of the priority given to the rise of qualification and certification of the Portuguese population. The role of this institution was to make laws and build up flexible paths of training for those who quit school without completing minimum education. These laws could allow a large number of institutions to ensure to those adults educational and professional certification.

The Order n° 1083, on November 20, 2000 settled adult education and training courses with educational and professional certification. The aims of these courses are:

- “1) to provide educational and professional certification to people aged 18 or more with low qualifications;*
- 1) to promote employability through the reduction of the insufficient educational and professional qualification of Portuguese population;*
- 2) to build up a local network of adult education and training courses;*

3) *to form a basis for the application of an innovative model of adult education and training, endowed with the following mechanisms:*

- *the key-skills referential system for adult education and training;*
- *the process of Recognition and Validation of Skills acquired in non-formal and formal learning situations;*
- *the personalised, flexible and integrated courses based on different modules” (ANEFA, 2001a: 8).*

## **General characterisation of adult education and training courses**

### ***Organisation and working method***

The adult education and training courses are aimed at citizens aged 18 or more and who have not accomplished compulsory education (4, 6 or 9 years), people without qualifications or presenting low professional qualifications. Priority is given to unemployed adults registered in Employment and Vocational Institutes or pointed out by specific institutions or projects, namely those implementing the Minimum Income Programme, as well as workers with few years of education or low professional qualifications.

Institutions are responsible for creating and organising these courses as long as they have been accredited by the Training Innovation Institute. These entities may be town halls, enterprises, trade unions, voluntary associations, organisations having an entrepreneurial basis linked to specific economic areas, local development projects, schools or vocational training centres. As a result, there is a strong diversity in the institutions developing adult education and training activities.

Yet, this diversity contrasts with the lack of funding sources. The development of adult education and training courses depends on the agreement granted by ANEFA (which is now the General Directorate of Vocational Training). They can have their own funding but they also can apply to specific programmes, namely European Union programmes (for instance, the Employment, Training and Social Development Programme – Axes 1, 2 and 5).

The training approach of these courses is based on four guidelines:

1) the previous Recognition and Validation of Skills acquired by adults throughout life in formal and informal contexts;

2) the attendance of modules in which adults acquire skills and may build up flexible training courses according to the needs and characteristics of each group of adults;

3) the combination of general training and vocational training contents in which key-skills are developed – the attendance of such modules helps adults achieve the final education and professional certificate;

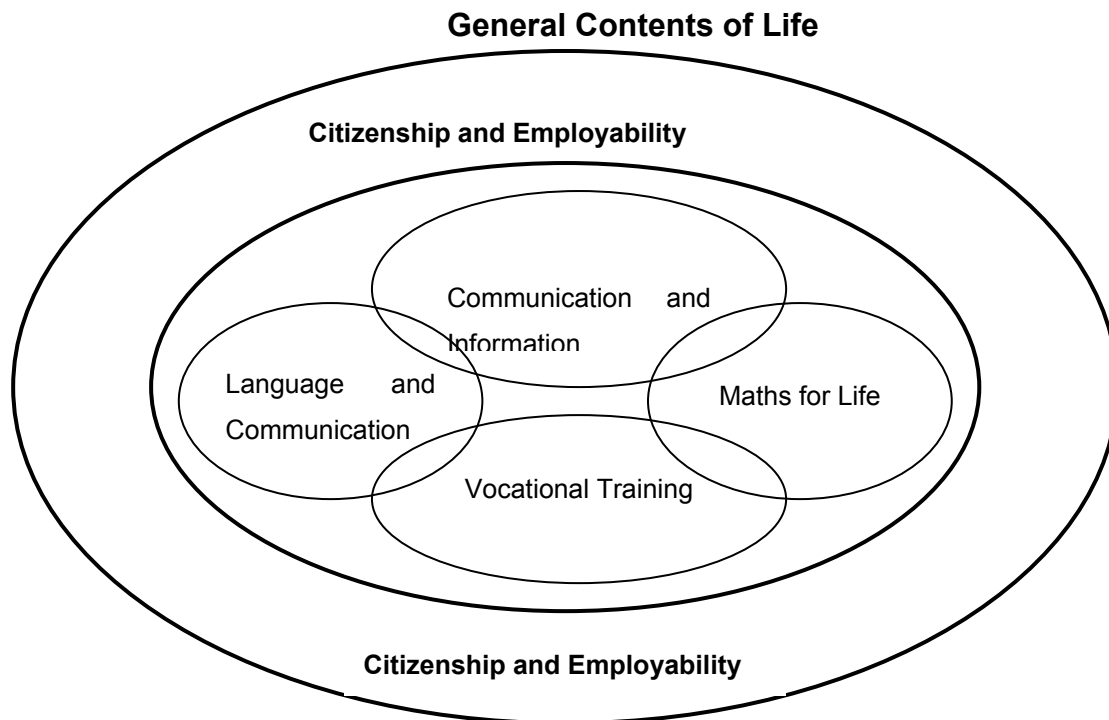
4) the compulsory attendance of the module “To learn with Autonomy”, a specific space of a pedagogical approach based on self-directed learning and reflection on action. The goal of this module is to help adults to participate actively in the design of their personal and training projects and courses.

The Adult Education and Training Courses have a flexible curriculum, based on a set of independent modules in which specific skills are acquired. These modules are divided in internally coherent training units which are evaluated and accredited. Each course’s curriculum must be drawn up after the identification of skills previously acquired, professional and personal former experience of the trainees as well as their social and living contexts.

These courses have to combine two main training contents:

1) general training subjects that may be significant for adults’ lives according these contents “Language and Communication”, “Maths for Life”, “Communication and Information Technologies” and “Citizenship and Employability”;

2) vocational training subjects according to adults’ needs and the Employment and Vocational Training orientations. These subjects are also organised as a set of units.



Source: ANEFA/ General Directorate of Vocational Training

The design of a training path starts by the Recognition and Validation of Skills previously acquired; in this first moment adults are invited to reflect upon their past according to the key-skills referential. The report of this first step is a Personal Skills Account that is given to each trainee at the end of his/her training path.

The mediator is responsible for this skills account after having worked with adults, individually and/or in groups. The trainers of the different key-skills contents are also called upon to recognise and validate adults' skills. The skills validation is performed by a jury made of trainers, staff from the training institution and the mediator.

According to the recognition and validation of skills and the report of the key-skills referential, each adult has to attend adult education and training classes, depending on the number of training hours mentioned in the courses' curriculum.

**Table 1 - Curriculum of adult education and training courses**

Training paths	Recognition and validation of skills previously acquired	General training (a)		Vocational training (b)	Total number of hours
		“To learn with autonomy”	Key-skills subjects		
Basic 1 (4 years)	Between 25 e 40hours	40 hours	Between 100 e 400 hours	Between 220 e 360hours	Between 385 e 840 hours
Basic 2 (6 years)	Between 25 e 40hours	40 hours	Between 100 e 400 hours	Between 220 e 360hours	Between 385 e 840 hours
Basic 1+2 (4+2 years)	Between 25 e 40hours	40 hours	Between 100 e 800 hours (c)	Between 220 e 360hours	Between 385 e 1240 hours
Basic 3 (9 years)	Between 25 e 40hours	40 hours	Between 100 e 800 hours (c)	Between 940 e 1200 hours (d)	Between 1105 e 2080 hours
Basic 2+3 (6+3 years)	Between 25 e 40hours	40 hours	Between 100 e 1200h hours (c)	Between 940 e 1200 hours (d)	Between 1105 e 2480 hours
General contents of life Contents related to the interaction between the local and global world; the basis for the key-skills subjects					

- a) The general training has a minimum duration of 100 hours and the decision upon the number of training hours that has to be attended by adults doesn't depend on the formal accreditation of prior learning.
- b) Vocational training should include training in the workplace.
- c) Learning another language is suggested.
- d) One hundred and twenty hours of training in the workplace are compulsory.

Source: ANEFA/ General Directorate of Vocational Training

The module “To learn with autonomy” starts the general training and it is held by the personal and social mediator. This module is 40 hours long and it includes three subjects: “Integration”, “Interpersonal relations” and “Learning how to learn”. This part of the training may begin just after the conclusion of the formal accreditation of prior learning by the attendance of “Integration” and “Interpersonal relations” subjects. The “Learning how to learn” is developed during the training path.

In spite of this apparent uniformity (this schedule must be followed independently of the total number of training foreseen), it is in this module that adults may participate more in the design and the appropriation of his/her training path. This module aims to:

- 1) teach trainees self-directed methods of learning;
- 2) to lessen difficulties of group integration, to develop working habits as well as to settle obligations and norms.

### ***Evaluation and Certification***

Evaluation is considered an important part of the training course. Consequently,

- it is based on continuous observation of the learning process;
- it orientates adult training because it controls the teaching and the learning process and it is considered that adults should assess their own progression;
- it is mostly qualitative and descriptive and it enables people to decide in terms of learning.

Therefore, the evaluation process includes different moments, such as:

- the formal accreditation of prior learning, knowledge and skills previously acquired. This will allow a general characterisation of the situation and it will direct the decisions on curriculum establishment;
- the evaluation of the training process which is not based exclusively on results but rather on what is being learnt and how adults have been learning. It helps to (re)define strategies to retrieve or to deepen learning;
- self-evaluation as a way to assess adults' progression (What have I learnt? What do I want to learn? What do I need to learn?).
- final evaluation of the mentioned moments. The final decision upon formal accreditation is then taken, showing the level of knowledge acquired by each adults at the end of his/her training path.

All records are noted on the Trainee Personal Book as well as the results of the formal accreditation of prior learning and the skills developed during the training path. At the end, each trainee is given a certificate - Personal Skills Account – that includes skills which were validated and certified and other ones that may be acquired later in formal and informal situations. If the adult evaluation was positive, the certificate of adult education and training course can be equivalent to:

- B1 - the 1<sup>st</sup> level of basic education/1<sup>st</sup> level of professional qualification;
- B2 - the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of basic education/the 1<sup>st</sup> level of professional qualification;

- B3 - the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of basic education/2<sup>nd</sup> level of professional qualification.

## **Discussion on the supply of adult education and training courses in 2002, 2003 and 2004**

Adult education and training courses were made available in 2000/01, based on two complementary and articulated networks: the observation network and the national network. For the observation network 15 courses were scheduled (Order n. 1083/2000, November 20); though, in 2000/01 13 courses were held. Data collected would help to conceive appropriate curricula or to reformulate curricula. The national network had to combine two different perspectives: the public supply perspective and the programme perspective, characterised by specific rules. Both private and public institutions were responsible for the launch of the nation-wide supply of adult education and training courses.

In the observation network, five of these institutions were located in the North of Portugal, three in the Centre, three in Lisbon and Tagus Valley region, two in Alentejo and two others in Algarve<sup>2</sup>. From this launch there were differences in the distribution of such courses – a larger number in the North and centre, a smaller number in the South. Those differences, which can be justified, are clearer if we look at courses under current development.

As we mentioned before, the General Directorate of Vocational Training (previously ANEFA) has to agree upon the development of adult education and training courses. This agreement is followed by the decision on funding (institutions can have their own funding or apply to specific programmes, mostly European Union programme for Employment, Training and Social Development). What happens nowadays is that most institutions have been applying to the referred European Union programmes. To develop these courses, institutions have to wait for the funding agreements. In this situation the General Directorate of Vocational Training doesn't know if courses are being held or not and offices of the European Union programmes don't inform which applications were successful. Only institutions funded may confirm if such courses are or were developed.

A general characterisation of the existing network can be done based on data available at the General Directorate of Vocational Training, though this description may

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<sup>2</sup> As we have said only 13 courses were effectively held in 2000/01: 5 in the North, 2 in the Centre, 3 in Lisbon and Tagus Valley, 2 in Alentejo and 1 in Algarve.

not be very accurate. As we have mentioned, the agreement from the General Directorate of Vocational Training doesn't mean that activities were funded and were held or that courses in development have the aims, pedagogical methods, etc., initially drawn. We will then discuss data from 2002/03 and 2003/04.

**Table 2 – Total number of adult education and training courses in 2002, 2003 and 2004**

<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>
379	230

As we can observe, there will be less courses in 2003/04 than in 2002/03. This reduction may be explained by the fact that at this moment there aren't courses scheduled in 2003/04 in Lisbon and in the Tagus Valley region. However, even if some courses may be held in this region, one can stress a general decrease in adult education and training supply in 2003/04 as we can see in table 3.

**Table 3 – Adult education and training courses according to the different regions**

<b>Region</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>		<b>2003/2004</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
North	186	49,1	165	71,7
Centre	50	13,2	49	21,3
Lisbon and Tagus Valley	46	12,1	No data available	
Alentejo	84	22,2	11	4,8
Algarve	13	3,4	5	2,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

As we can see, it is in the North that we can find the largest number of courses in 2002/03 and 2003/04 and even if there is a decrease in 2003/04. Several hypotheses can be pointed out to explain this fact: this region is one of the most populated ones in Portugal and a large number of enterprises are settled there. There is also a rise in care provision and local development projects. This region has also impoverished areas in which people have low schooling and professional qualifications as well as other areas affected by child's work and school abandonment.

The Centre shows almost the same numbers in both periods and now it is the second one in terms of total number of courses developed in 2003/04 (21,3%). In this region troubles in school attendance and adults' low professional qualifications have been a concern for many institutions dealing with care provision and for local development associations.

Surprisingly, in 2003/04 Alentejo shows a relevant decrease (84 courses in 2002/03 and 11 in 2003/04). This region presents the highest average of people aged 60 or more in Portugal; it is characterised by a vast extend of country and a low density of population. The combination of these facts raises difficulties in launching adult education and training supply, also due to troubles in enlisting trainers. On the other hand, the lack of involvement of public institutions in the development of adult education and training is another reason for this decrease<sup>3</sup>.

Data available for Lisbon and Tagus Valley show that in 2002/2003 there were 12,1% of adult education and training courses (this region was the fourth when compared with another). In spite of its high density of population (it is formed by large urban areas), it hasn't many institutions involved in care provision and these organisations are responsible for important dynamics in adult education activities and other initiatives that may solve adults' needs and problems. Yet, the lack of courses in this region remains a surprise if we bear in mind that many immigrants live there, searching for better living conditions, people who in many cases present low schooling and professional qualifications.

In both periods Algarve shows few adult education and training courses (3,4% in 2002/03 and 2,2% in 2003/04). Two facts can explain this situation: this is a small region and it has the lowest number of inhabitants. Nevertheless, we think that these facts don't express the real reasons for the lack of involvement in these courses.

The institutions holding adult education and training are the following:

**Table 4 - Institutions holding adult education and training courses**

Institutions	2002/ 2003		2003/ 2004	
	N	%	N	%
Private	271	71,5	228	99,1
Public (from the network of the Ministries of Education and Labour & Solidarity)	105	27,7	2	0,9
Public - others	3	0,8	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>3</sup> From the 84 courses fixed for 2002/03, 29 are being (or will be) held by private institutions and 55 by public ones (Ministries of Education and Labour and Solidarity's network). The whole 11 courses foreseen for 2003/04 will be developed by private institutions.

As long as public or private institutions are accredited by the Institute for Innovation in Training, they can create and organise adult education and training courses. According to the General Directorate of Vocational Training, private institutions are organisations seeking for profit but they can also be trade unions, associations of enterprises, of specific sectors or promoting cultural activities, local development and private charitable organisations as well as schools and vocational centres. As we can see in table 4, most institutions holding adult education and training courses are private – in 2002/03 they were 71,5% and 27,7% were public ones. This difference can be understood as a sign of the lack of involvement of public authorities in adult education and training but it also expresses the importance of the private sector in the creation and organisation of this supply. In 2003/04 this difference is clearer as private institutions hold 99,1% of these activities. From the 230 courses, public institutions belonging to the network of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour & Solidarity are developing two. Therefore, public authorities (namely Ministries of Education and Labour & Solidarity) regulate the field but avoid being involved in the creation and organisation of adult education and training activities.

Due to the fact that Portugal has low educational and professional qualification levels, in 2002/03 and 2003/04 the B3 certification (equivalent to nine years of compulsory school attendance and 2<sup>nd</sup> level of professional qualification) is the most significant. In fact the numbers related to this level of certification have been rising since 2002; the other figures show a decrease, except for the B2+B3 level as we can see in table 5.

**Table 5 – Levels of certification in adult education and training courses**

Level of certification	2002/ 2003		2003/ 2004	
	N	%	N	%
B1 (equivalent to four years of school attendance)	23	6,1	3	1,3
B2 (equivalent to six years of school attendance)	140	36,9	72	31,3
B3 (equivalent to nine years of school attendance)	198	52,2	147	63,9
B1+B2	13	3,4	5	2,2
B2+B3	5	1,3	3	1,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

Having as a starting point the recognition and validation of skills acquired throughout life and the fact that adults are not required to have any previous school

diploma, we can understand the high numbers related to the B3 certification as it represents a strong contribution to the schooling and professional certification of the Portuguese population. However, we have some doubts about this option in terms of widening adults' participation in learning processes. For many people the B1 and B2 certifications may be more appropriate because these levels can help adults to participate.

Adult education and training courses include 19 possible vocational training contents. Yet, data collected shows that 14 of these contents were chosen in 2002/03 and 11 in 2003/04.

**Table 6 – Vocational training contents in adult education and training courses**

Vocational training contents	2002/ 2003		2003/ 2004	
	N	%	N	%
Administration and management	33	8,7	33	14,3
Agriculture and fishery	47	12,4	32	13,9
Industries in agriculture	2	0,5	-	-
Arts and artistic technologies	10	2,6	4	1,7
Human sciences, Maths/sciences and sciences of life	-	-	-	-
Commerce	17	4,5	8	3,5
Civil and public buildings construction	15	4	4	1,7
Electricity, electronics and telecommunications	11	2,9	3	1,3
Energy, comfort air-conditioning	3	0,8	1	0,4
Tourism (hotels and restaurants services)	69	18,2	21	9,1
Paper and graphic industries	-	-	-	-
Information, communication and documentation	-	-	-	-
Informatics	45	11,9	32	13,9
Wood, cork and furniture	6	1,6	-	-
Mechanics and maintenance	-	-	-	-
Metallurgy and mechanics	3	0,8	-	-
Quality	-	-	-	-
Care provision (individual and communitarian)	107	28,2	80	34,8
Textile industry and clothing	11	2,9	12	5,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

As we can see “Care provision” is the content that may be found in the largest number of courses (28,2% in 2002/03 and 34,8% in 2003/04). This fact is probably related to the kind of institutions developing these courses; these are private charitable institutions providing children and elderly care. Interestingly, these contents can be found in many courses being held in the North and Centre of Portugal where we can find many of Private Institutions of Social Solidarity willing to qualify their staff<sup>4</sup>.

“Tourism (hotels and restaurants services)” (18,2%), “Agriculture and Fishery” (12,4%) and “Informatics” (11,9%) are important vocational training contents in 2002/03 as well as “Administration and Management” (14,3%), “Agriculture and Fishery” and “Informatics”, both 13,9%, in 2003/04.

The importance of “Tourism (hotels and restaurants services)” content seems to be an indicator of the need to qualify human resources in our country, as Portugal is a significant destination both for foreigners and Portuguese. This is one of the contents which is approached in all regions, showing a balance in terms of geographical distribution and of certification level<sup>5</sup>.

When we look at the high number of B3 courses that were or are being held, we may think that this is the most significant certification in the whole vocational training contents. However, such judgement is not true for “Agriculture and Fishery” and “Textile Industry and clothing” contents with which the most frequent certification level is B2, while attending “Administration and Management” as well as “Informatics” the certification level is mainly B3<sup>6</sup>.

### **Some concluding remarks**

After this discussion, we would like to emphasise some facts that seem to widen adults’ participation in learning processes and others that seem to constrain it.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2002/03, 107 “Care provision” adult education and training courses were held; 86 were developed by private institutions and 21 by public ones, those linked to the network of the Ministries of Education and Labour & Solidarity, From these 107 courses, 54 were implemented in the North and 13 in the Centre. In 2003/04, private institutions are holding 80 of these courses, 53 in the North and 21 in the Centre.

<sup>5</sup> In 2002/03 there were 69 “Tourism (hotels and restaurants services)” contents in Adult Education and Training courses: 24 in the North, 12 in the Centre, 12 in Lisbon and Tagus Valley, 18 in Alentejo and 3 in Algarve. From these, 9 were certificated with B1 level, 28 with B2 level, 30 with B3, one with B1+B2 and one with B2+B3.

<sup>6</sup> In 2002/03, 33 “Administration and Management” adult education and training courses were held (4 were B2 level, 28 were B3 and one was B2+B3). In 2003/04, 33 courses are scheduled (3 are B2, 29 B3 and one will be B2+B3),

In 2002/03, there were 45 “Informatics” adult education and training courses (10 were B2, 33 were B3 and 2 were B1+B2). In 2003/04 there are 32 courses scheduled (4 are B2 level and 28 are B3).

The creation of an institution devoted to adult education and training was a significant step to overcome low schooling and professional qualification levels of the Portuguese population. Therefore, ANEFA's priorities were different and showed the need to develop quite the opposite of the formal and second chance education approach. As an innovative and effective alternative, the model of adult education and training courses fosters to raise adults' participation in learning processes. Its attendance isn't as long as going to evening classes and these courses combine schooling and a professional qualification. As a result, these courses are more interesting for adults as they may participate in the building up of training paths according to their needs.

Moreover, the involvement of other institutions than schools in adult education and training activities is more appropriate for people who in many cases have had unpleasant experiences as students and may resist to a traditional teaching approach. Owing mostly to previous work, these institutions know adults' problems and are able to supply a more suitable training. Adults' participation is widened; people are more motivated to join learning processes and other institutions than schools are involved in such activities.

Moreover, adult education and training courses are attended after the recognition and validation of skills acquired throughout life. This process focuses on adults, it is supposed to be adapted to their needs – it is a kind of “training tailored to each adult's needs”. Based on what was prior adults' learning, these courses represent an effort to raise their self-esteem and to involve people in the drawing of their training paths. It is also a way to foster the participation of those who were excluded from a formal education they didn't feel related to.

The combination of general and vocational training makes these courses more attractive and deserves a more significant involvement from adults. The curriculum as well as the pedagogical methods and techniques in use foster active participation in drawing adults' training paths and to become an agent in educational processes.

However, participation may be in danger when the supply of these courses is seen as a specific and urgent measure to overcome the lack of school attendance and low qualifications of the Portuguese population. To insist on this strategy is to favour markets and to harm active participation in the building up of a democratic citizenship. For instance, to point out people involved in the Minimum Income Programme to join adult education and training courses may not help adults to participate but it may

encourage them to be resistant to training. If people are motivated to join courses because of the grants they will get, they won't be interested in the drawing of their training path and for instance trainers will have to do something that adults have the right to do. These adults are no longer agents in their training processes but become subjects.

On the other hand, if the pedagogical team doesn't follow principles of the adult education and training model, adults' participation may not happen. According to these principles, the pedagogical team must co-ordinate and help adults to draw their training paths, avoiding the imposition of ways trainers consider the best ones.

Besides, joining classes may not be an appropriate strategy to make people participate; they can identify these courses with formal, rigid and inflexible education and become frustrated.

In addition, if we bear in mind that our country presents a high percentage of illiteracy (9% in 2001), adult education and training courses don't represent a strong enough effort to widen adults' participation in learning processes. In spite of being innovative and giving validation to knowledge and skills formerly acquired, these courses don't solve Portuguese problems. For people who didn't attend 4 years of school, don't read or write and wish to have this certification, they will not be allowed to join these courses. This adult education and training approach doesn't include adult literacy; people can improve their skills but can't acquire some reading and writing skills. We believe that it would be important to reformulate adult education and training models to make them more interesting and help people to participate.

Finally, we must emphasise that these courses are insufficient in terms of a diversified and nation-wide adult education and training supply. This fact can be linked to the lack of a global and integrated public policy in this field in Portugal (Melo *et al.*, 2002:122.128). However, even if we have some doubts about these courses, we must agree that they are an effective bet to widen adults' participation in learning. Some adjustments have to be made, specific points have to be reformulated; yet, we can not deny this was a good decision in terms of adult education and training practices in Portugal, namely due to adults' widening participation.

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