



**La leadership educativa nei paesi dell'Europa latina: autonomie, identità, responsabilità**  
**Educational leadership in Latin Europe: autonomy, identity, responsibilities**  
**Le leadership éducatif dans les pays de l'Europe latine: autonomie, identités, responsabilités**

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**The direction and management of state schools in Portugal: policies, perspectives and practices (1998-2012)**

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The administration, direction and management of schools have undergone major alterations in recent years in Portugal. Signs of this change are the falling from grace of the category “democratic school management” in favour of a version of the managerial and instrumental model of “school autonomy”; the political advocacy of strong leaderships; the widening of possibilities for parental involvement and choice; and the institutionalization of regulation patterns typical of the post-bureaucratic models. These processes would seem to signal the end of the specificity of the school management model instituted in Portugal during the period following the democratic transition, salient features of which were a “collegiate and representative direction” and a collective influence by the teachers on school life (Barroso, 2011, Dias, 2008). The changes point to a global convergence of the new forms of school governance, to the detriment of perspectives that highlight the importance of national contexts and traditions in the way in which schools are run or in the specific configuration of the “new power technologies” (Barganò, 2009, Ball, 2008). However, this reading of the Portuguese situation seems to us to be too clear-cut. Therefore, throughout this communication I shall focus my analysis of this issue, with particular emphasis on the redefinition of the role of school managers in Portugal during the period from 1998 to the present. Reflection will be guided by an analysis of the main legal guidelines in this field, the content analysis of 30 interviews conducted with head teachers who have been in charge of schools during the past decade, namely in the period before and after the institutionalization of “new headship” in Portugal (personal and individual “leadership”, imposed by law 2008). This information will be “triangulated” with the results of the questionnaires applied to teachers in two school consortium. The information gathered shows that, despite the legislative changes made, there are still important signs of the collegiate management tradition in force in Portugal during the final quarter of the XX century, namely in the head teachers (discursive) refusal to legitimate the shift from collegiate to individual decision-making forced by law, in the continuity of non-interference in classroom practices and in the denial of *rankings* and other forms open competition between schools. In the meantime, processes of “acculturation” are clearly visible in other areas: motivations to apply to the head teacher post, replacement of forms of “critical participation” with political co-option and consultation, increasing subordination of professional culture to organizational directives and structures, minimalist perception of the differences between state and private schools.

It is important, however, to stress that while Portuguese head teachers take on an increasingly important role in the internal dynamics of the schools, the lack of school autonomy allows that they may be seen as the final stage in a still quite centralized educational administration (Dias, 2008, Lima, 2011).

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