

## BETWEEN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES: THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS TRAINING IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGAL

### ENTRE LÍNGUAS E CULTURAS: O PAPEL DA FORMAÇÃO CONTÍNUA NO DESENVOLVIMENTO PROFISSIONAL DOCENTE EM PORTUGAL

### ENTRE LENGUAS Y CULTURAS: EL PAPEL DE LA FORMACIÓN CONTINUA EN EL DESARROLLO PROFESIONAL DEL PROFESORADO EM PORTUGAL

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this study is to map out the trends in continuing teacher training courses in Portugal, accredited by the Scientific-Pedagogical Council for Continuing Training (CCPFC), particularly orientated towards issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity. The analysis methodology adopted consisted of a documentary review of the titles of the training courses available on the CCPFC website, seeking to identify aspects such as the topics covered, the target audience and the training methods proposed. The results indicate that although there are significant efforts to promote diversity training, there are still areas that need to be strengthened. Firstly, there is an urgent need to increase the supply of training courses that address specific challenges, particularly about inclusion strategies for pupils who do not speak Portuguese. In addition, there is a need to promote a better balance in the distribution of training between the different centers, encouraging partnerships between educational institutions and other relevant bodies. Another critical point concerns the adaptation of programs, which should be adjusted to the specificities of each school and subject area. In conclusion, it is argued that the diversification of content, target audiences and training modalities is crucial to creating more inclusive educational environments in line with the needs of an increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse education system.

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**Keywords:** Cultural and linguistic diversity. Continuous teacher training. Teacher professional development.

**RESUMO:** O presente estudo tem como objetivo mapear as tendências nos cursos de formação contínua de professores em Portugal, acreditados pelo Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua (CCPFC), particularmente orientadas para as questões relacionadas com a diversidade linguística e cultural. A metodologia de análise adotada consistiu numa revisão documental dos títulos das ações de formação disponíveis no site do CCPFC, procurando identificar aspetos como os temas abordados, o público-alvo e as modalidades formativas propostas. Os resultados indicam que, embora existam esforços significativos para promover a formação em torno da diversidade, subsistem áreas que necessitam de ser potenciadas. Em primeiro lugar, é urgente aumentar a oferta de ações de formação que se debrucem sobre desafios concretos, nomeadamente no que respeita a estratégias de inclusão para alunos que não dominam a língua portuguesa. Para além disso, sublinha-se a necessidade de promover um maior equilíbrio na distribuição das formações entre os diferentes centros, incentivando parcerias entre as instituições de ensino e outras entidades relevantes. Outro ponto crítico prende-se com a adaptação dos programas, que devem ser ajustados às especificidades de cada valência escolar e área disciplinar. Em conclusão, defende-se que a diversificação dos conteúdos, dos públicos-alvo e das modalidades formativas é crucial para criar ambientes educativos mais inclusivos e alinhados com as necessidades de um sistema educativo cada vez mais diverso do ponto de vista linguístico e cultural.

**Palavras-chave:** Diversidade linguística e cultural. Formação contínua de professores. Desenvolvimento profissional docente

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**RESUMEN:** El objetivo de este estudio es mapear las tendencias en los cursos de formación continua de docentes en Portugal, acreditados por el Consejo Científico-Pedagógico para la Formación Continua (CCPFC), particularmente orientados a cuestiones relacionadas con la diversidad lingüística y cultural. La metodología de análisis adoptada consistió en una revisión documental de los títulos de los cursos de capacitación disponibles en el sitio web del CCPFC, buscando identificar aspectos como los temas tratados, el público objetivo y los métodos de capacitación propuestos. Los resultados indican que si bien existen esfuerzos importantes para promover la formación en diversidad, aún quedan áreas que necesitan ser fortalecidas. En primer lugar, existe una necesidad urgente de aumentar la oferta de cursos de formación que aborden desafíos específicos, en particular sobre estrategias de inclusión para los alumnos que no hablan portugués. Además, es necesario promover un mejor equilibrio en la distribución de la formación entre los diferentes centros, fomentando asociaciones entre instituciones educativas y otros organismos relevantes. Otro punto crítico se refiere a la adaptación de los programas, que deben ajustarse a las especificidades de cada escuela y materia. En conclusión, se sostiene que la diversificación de contenidos, públicos destinatarios y modalidades de formación es crucial para crear entornos educativos más inclusivos y acordes con las necesidades de un sistema educativo cada vez más diverso lingüística y culturalmente.

**Palabras clave:** Diversidade lingüística y cultural. Formación continua de professores. Desenvolvimento docente profesional.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical challenges faced in the contemporary context, accentuated by an increasingly globalized world, marked by growing inequities, demographic change and climate change (UNESCO, 2019), impose highly complex demands on educational practice (NIETO S, 2014; RODRIGUES P, 2013). If we consider various ethnographic studies, some schools are becoming true arenas of cultural “battles” over language, religion, clothing, ethnicity, social class, race, attitude, and behavior (GRANT & GRANT, 2007). Therefore, in the school field, the issues associated with mass migration, motivated both by war scenarios and by the search for better living conditions, not only generate a multitude of difficulties, but also represent opportunities for educational contexts marked by linguistic and cultural superdiversity, offering fertile ground for the construction of new pedagogical practices (VERVAET R et al., 2018). Indeed, Flores M A and Ferreira F I (2016) underlines the pivotal role of teachers as “agents of change and workers of knowledge” in promoting the social and cultural dimension of children and their families (p.412).

In the Portuguese context, the most recent data provided by the Migration Observatory (OLIVEIRA C, 2023) shows that in the 2021/2022 school year, public primary and secondary schools registered 86,435 students of foreign nationality. This number translates into a substantial increase of 14,784 students (+20.6 per cent) compared to the previous school year, when the number of foreign students was 71,652.

The results of the PISA study (CERNA L, et al., 2019) show that immigrant students tend to perform less well at school than their native peers in host countries, a disparity that can be explained by several factors, most notably socio-economic conditions and, particularly significantly, language barriers. In fact, limited proficiency in the language of the host country is an additional obstacle, since, in addition to making it difficult to follow the school curriculum, it compromises students' full integration into the educational community, thus resulting in a lower sense of belonging and participation in school life (CERNA L, et al., 2019; LUCIAK M, 2010; WISSINK I and HAAN MD, 2013).

In the specific context of Portugal, authors such as Casa-Nova M and Palmeira P (2008) and Monteiro S (2024) highlight the imperative need for the school, as an institution and social organization, to be able to deal effectively with cultural diversity, regardless of whether it has an endogenous origin – for example, gypsy culture – or an exogenous one, as in the case of immigrants or Portuguese with Cape Verdean or Indian ancestry, among others. In this way, the school should be conceived as an inclusive space, where harmonious coexistence between different cultures is fostered and intersubjective experiences between students from different cultural backgrounds are enhanced.

Several studies, both nationally and internationally, attest to the fact that teachers face numerous difficulties and insecurities in their pedagogical practice when immersed in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity. These challenges stem from multiple factors, including a superficial and often reductive understanding of diversity education and inconsistency between teachers' personal beliefs and pedagogical practices (AGIRDAG O, et al., 2016; CIVITILLO S, et al., 2019; HAUKAS A, 2016). In addition, there is insufficient preparation for the development of plurilingual and intercultural pedagogies (ARAÚJO e SÁ MH, et al., 2016; PINHO AS and MOREIRA G, 2012), as well as a lack of pedagogical leadership that is truly attentive to issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in schools (HÉLOT C and Ó LOIRE M, 2011; VERVAET R, et al., 2018).

In this scenario, Salgado A, et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of teacher training that focuses on the development of complex linguistic pedagogical practices adapted to diverse social contexts. According to the authors, it is essential that teachers are properly prepared to work with linguistic and cultural diversity, creating enriching and transformative pedagogical experiences in the classroom.

## 1.1 CONTINUING TEACHER TRAINING IN PORTUGAL

Over the last few years, a policy has been (re)constructed in Portugal that seeks to support teachers in terms of their ongoing training - namely in various areas of their pedagogical work (Reis P, et al., 2018; VIEGAS H, 2018).

Against this backdrop, according to Viegas H (2018), the policies behind continuing training for teachers have undergone some changes over the last few decades. According to the author, in the 1970s, continuing training was seen mainly as a form of recurrent education, focused on filling the gaps in workers' qualifications or adjusting professional knowledge to rapid technological changes. Thus, this training was strongly aligned with a more traditional model of teaching, where participants had no say in determining objectives or content, and trainers were seen mainly as information providers (VIEGAS H, 2018).

Years later, during the 1980s, training approaches emerged that focused more on the needs of organizations, seeking to disseminate professional knowledge and promote greater openness in the workplace. In this way, the previous perspective, which saw organizations only as functional entities, began to be replaced by a recognition of the value of individuals and their ability to learn, thus paving the way for new training methods and models. In this sense, within this new paradigm, training began to be seen as a beneficial investment, integrated into companies' corporate strategies (VIEGAS H, 2018).

In this context, this perspective resulted in the foundation of regional Pedagogical Support Centers, although their existence was short-lived. This was followed by the Pedagogical Support Centers, which saw teachers as driving the development of a society. These centers promoted collaborative work and the connection between schools and communities, giving rise to the concept of teacher collaboration (VIEGAS H, 2018).

Also in the 1980s, with the foundation of the Higher Education Schools, the Teacher Training Support Centers associated with each school institution emerged. Although they were short-lived, Viegas H (2018) notes that these centers permanently influenced the structure of some of these schools.

Later, in 1986, the Basic Laws of the Education System (Law 46/86) established continuous training as a right for all education professionals, focusing on updating knowledge and developing skills for career progression. Later, in 1989, training came to be seen as an essential duty for advancement in the teaching career and was highlighted as a catalyst for educational innovation and improving the quality of teaching (Decree-Law 344/89).

Years later, with Decree-Law 249/92, a national teacher training system was established, leading to the creation of the School Association Training Centers, reinforcing the idea that teachers are active agents in their training and empowered to analyze and determine what they need to learn to carry out their profession with excellence. Nevertheless, in-service teacher training, initially designed to be aligned with educational needs, has encountered challenges in its implementation, resulting in training that is often misaligned with teachers' real needs, jeopardizing the goal of improving the quality of teaching (VIEGAS H, 2018).

In 2014, Decree-Law n. 22/2014 of 11 February established the legal framework for continuous teacher training and defined the respective coordination, administration and support system.

In this context, by defining a series of objectives and principles governing this Decree-Law, the following training areas were established: (i) teaching area, i.e. areas of knowledge, which constitute curricular subjects at the various levels of education; (ii) pedagogical practice and didactics in teaching, namely training in the field of classroom organization and management; (iii) general educational training and educational organizations; (iv) school administration and educational administration; (v) leadership, coordination and pedagogical supervision; (vi) ethical and deontological training; (vii) information and communication technologies applied to specific didactics or school management (Ministry of Education and Science).

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This Decree-Law also defines that continuous training actions are based on the modalities of training courses, training workshops, study circles and short-term actions and, for the purposes of the Career Statute for Childhood Educators and Primary and Secondary School Teachers, they must be accredited by the Scientific-Pedagogical Council for Continuous Training (CCPFC) or recognized and certified by the training entities.

According to the CCPFC regulations, in-service training courses aim to update and deepen teachers' scientific and pedagogical knowledge and professional skills. These courses must last at least 12 hours and there is no fixed number of participants, although it is not advisable to exceed 30 people. In addition to traditional formats, activities such as colloquia and congresses are also included in this category. Methodologically, the courses can be theoretical or practical, and can be held in person, in e-learning or b-learning format.

Training workshops, on the other hand, aim to develop methodologies, techniques and pedagogical resources to address specific problems identified in schools or classrooms. This

modality is practical in nature and requires reflection on the methods applied. The workshops last between 12 and 50 hours in person, complemented by an equivalent number of hours of autonomous work. They are aimed at groups of 5 to 20 participants and include theoretical sessions, practical work and discussion of the results in in person meetings.

Study circles focus on critically analyzing the educational context, seeking to identify and explore issues relevant to teacher performance. This modality uses methodologies such as case studies and project development, promoting debate and research. Lasting a minimum of 12 hours and a maximum of one academic year, the study circles are aimed at small groups of between 5 and 20 participants and combine face-to-face work with autonomous research.

Lastly, short-term actions include seminars, conferences, themed days and other events of a scientific-pedagogical nature, lasting between 3 and 6 hours.

In line with this perspective, Reis P, et al. (2018) point out that, in recent decades, in-service teacher training in Portugal has progressively given greater emphasis to the contextualization of training proposals, with a growing focus on the specific needs of each teacher and the educational contexts in which they operate. Nevertheless, several authors argue that there is still a long way to go in the field of (in-service) teacher training for linguistic and cultural diversity issues, particularly in the Portuguese context (HÉLOT C and Ó LOIRE M, 2011; MONTEIRO S, 2024).

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Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is to map, through documentary analysis, the training courses currently accredited by the CCPFC in the field of linguistic and cultural diversity in the Portuguese context.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

With the aim of mapping, through documentary analysis, the training courses currently accredited by the CCPFC in the field of continuing teacher training for issues of linguistic and cultural diversity in the Portuguese context, the following guiding question was established at the outset:

i) What are the main trends in continuing teacher training courses in Portugal, accredited by the CCPFC, and particularly orientated towards pedagogical action in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity?

Within this framework, research was carried out on the CCPFC website, focusing on the documentary analysis of the titles of the training courses and the rest of the information on this open access website. This research sought to understand:

- a) The nature of the training centers involved in these courses.
- b) The number of training sessions per center.
- c) The target teachers for each training course.
- d) The number of hours per training course.
- e) The types of training programs.

A search was therefore carried out on the website in 2024 using the following keywords: *diversity*, *multiculturalism*, *interculturalism*, *plurilingualism* and *multilingualism*. The results obtained are shown in the following table (**Table 1**) and the data was analyzed (namely absolute frequencies and relative frequencies) using the Microsoft Excel software program.

**Table 1** – Search words in title

Search words in title	
Diversity	43 results
Multiculturalism	2 results
Interculturalism	22 results
Plurilingualism	1 results
Multilingualism	0 results
Total	68 results

Source:

MONTEIRO S and REIS A, 2025.

It should be noted that these 68 results relate to training activities available on the website between 2020 and 2024. After eliminating duplicate results and removing a specific training action on gender diversity, we obtained a total of 65 results.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering the results of this brief survey, it is worth mentioning, firstly, that we have seen a small number of training actions in respect of diversity (65 training courses out of a total of 10812 courses - which corresponds to a percentage of approximately 10% of the total number of training courses).

Nevertheless, after a first analysis of the 65 training courses presented, it was possible to see those 37 courses (corresponding to 56% of the total) specifically address issues related to linguistic and/or cultural diversity and 28 courses (corresponding to 43%) address diversity in its general sense. In fact, although this data shows a significant concern with the inclusion of



relevant themes in the educational context, it also shows a division that may suggest a lack of specificity in a considerable part of the actions.

In view of these findings, we also wanted to understand the nature of the training centers involved, so we analyzed the information on the 65 courses available on the CCPFC website. The following table (**Table 2**) illustrates the results.

**Table 2** – Nature of the training centers involved

		Absolute frequency	Relative frequency (%)
Total number of training activities		65	
Total number of training centers involved		37	
Nature of training centres	School Association Training Centres	31	48%
	Professional Association Training Centres	19	29%
	Higher Education Institutions	8	12%
	Other organisations	7	11%

**Source:** MONTEIRO S and REIS A, 2025.

We thus found a total number of training centers involved, with 48% of the courses being delivered by School Association Training Centers, 29% by Professional Association Training Centers, 12% by Higher Education Institutions and only 11% by other entities (among which trade union training centers stand out, for example).

Against this backdrop, it's important to note that although the Training Centers of School Associations play a central role in training provision, the relatively limited participation of Higher Education Institutions deserves attention. In fact, these institutions have the potential to contribute more investigative and innovative approaches, enriching the content and methodology of the training activities. On the other hand, the presence of other organizations - such as trade unions - demonstrates the diversity of players in the training system, which could be used to expand the range of training courses with different perspectives. We therefore sought to understand the number of training courses provided by each center (considering the 37 centers), as well as the area of expertise of the teachers who received each course.

Thus, with regard to the number of training courses provided per training center, it was possible to ascertain that 24 centers (approximately 74% of the total) provide only 1 training



course, 7 centers (approximately 19 of the total) provide 2 training courses, 3 centers (approximately 8% of the total) provide 3 training courses, 2 centers (corresponding to 5% of the total) provide 4 training courses and only 1 center (3% of the total) provides 10 training courses.

This uneven distribution suggests a disparity in the capacity of training centers to respond to the needs of educational contexts. We therefore reiterate the need to develop strategies that promote a better balance between the training provided by the different training centers, strengthening the centers with less capacity to offer training and promoting collaboration between different training providers.

About the working group of the teachers targeted by each training course, it was possible to ascertain that most of the training courses (43 per cent) are of a general nature, since they are designed for professionals working in the areas of pre-school education, primary and secondary school teachers and special education teachers.

Undoubtedly, although this approach makes it possible to reach a wider audience, it can result in a lack of more specific adaptation to the needs of each group of teachers. Adapting training programs to focus on specific contexts and challenges, such as plurilingual pedagogies and/or managing cultural diversity in the classroom, is an area that deserves more attention.

Finally, regarding the types of training, we can see that most of the courses are training courses (82 per cent), of which 52 per cent are face-to-face, 12 per cent are e-learning and 18 per cent are b-learning.

The latter modalities, which allow for greater flexibility and accessibility, are still modestly represented. In addition, other modalities, such as workshops (11 per cent) and short-term actions (5 per cent), are less popular, despite their potential to promote practical and collaborative approaches. The data is shown in the following table (Table 3).

**Table 3** - Types of training

Types of training			
Course	In person	33 (51%)	53 (82%)
	E-learning	8 (12%)	
	B-Learning	12 (18%)	
Oficina	In person	7 (11%)	7 (11%)
Study circle			2 (3%)
Short-term actions (conferences, congresses, etc.)			3 (5%)

**Source:** MONTEIRO S and REIS A, 2025.

We therefore reiterate that the diversification of training modalities is therefore a critical aspect of reaching wider and more diverse audiences, especially in regions with less access to face-to-face training.

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Even bearing in mind the limitations of this survey of training actions, i.e. the fact that we only analyzed the titles of the training actions, as well as the information on the CCPFC website, we cannot fail to mention that these results corroborate other results of studies carried out in the area (REIS P, et al., 2018; SZELEI N, et al., 2019). Indeed, given the limited range of training available in Portugal focusing on issues of pedagogical practice in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the prevalence of training based mainly on training courses, we can corroborate Reis P, et al., (2018) when they point out that teachers often end up ‘attending training courses based on traditional models which, although of little relevance to their professional practice, require less dedication and provide the formal certification necessary for career progression’ (p.257).

Nevertheless, in view of the conclusions presented, it is possible to identify several areas for improvement that could contribute to the further improvement and effectiveness of training actions, namely:

(i) Delineation and scope of training topics: increase the proportion of training courses that address specific issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity, as training courses aimed at concrete challenges (such as inclusion strategies for students who do not master Portuguese as a language of schooling) can have a significant influence on pedagogical practices.

(ii) Balance and collaboration between training entities: it is essential to promote a balance in the distribution of training actions between the centers involved. To this end, it is advisable to strengthen the training capacities of the less active centers and foster partnerships between School Associations, Higher Education Institutions and other entities, promoting a greater exchange of experiences and resources.

(iii) Focus on the target audience and personalization: reduce the emphasis on general training and invest in designing programs tailored to the specific needs of different levels of education and subject areas.

(iv) Innovation in training modalities: increasing the supply of innovative modalities, such as e-learning and b-learning, is essential to reach a more diverse audience and facilitate access to continuous training, especially for teachers in remote areas or with complex schedules. In addition, investment in practical workshops and study circles can promote the development of applied skills and more interactive learning.

(v) Promoting interdisciplinary approaches: encouraging training that combines different areas of knowledge, promoting interdisciplinary approaches to dealing with diversity in the classroom.

In conclusion, the analysis shows a significant effort to promote ongoing training in linguistic and cultural diversity issues, but also identifies important challenges. Diversification of content, modalities and target audiences, coupled with a greater balance in the participation of training centers, is crucial to ensuring that training meets the growing demands of contemporary education.

In fact, although there is still a long way to go in the field of teacher training for linguistic and cultural diversity issues, particularly in the Portuguese context, these efforts will contribute to the creation of more inclusive educational environments, prepared to deal with diversity in all its dimensions (HÉLOT C and Ó LOIRE M, 2011; MONTEIRO S, 2024).

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