Conclusions and recommendations

Education system context

There has been significant progress in educational attainment but challenges remain

A major handicap for Portugal has been the very low starting point in terms of educational attainment and literacy of its population. A fifth of all 15- to 64-year-olds were illiterate in the mid-1970s and less than 5% had completed upper secondary education. Nevertheless, efforts to ensure access to education for all Portuguese resulted in a rapid expansion of enrolment. The proportion of the population that has attained at least upper secondary education grew from 14% for the generation aged 55-64 in 2009 to 48% for the generation aged 25-34 in the same year. Despite the expansion of the education system, educational attainment remains a challenge. It is the lowest in the OECD area for the working-age population, with 30% of 25- to 64-year-olds having attained at least upper secondary education in 2009 (against an OECD average of 73%). Moreover, the high share of students leaving the education system too early with low skills remains a major problem.

Student learning outcomes show some progress

Student learning outcomes in Portugal are around or slightly below the OECD average following some progress in the last decade, depending on the skills assessed. In 2009, achievement levels of Portuguese students in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) were not statistically significantly different from the OECD average in reading literacy and were just below the OECD average with statistical significance in mathematics and science. Trend analyses of PISA results have shown some encouraging improvement in student learning outcomes.

A range of education reforms which reinforce the role of evaluation and assessment

A range of reforms have been introduced in education in recent years. New arrangements for school leadership and administration were introduced in 2008. These reflect a profound reform whereby leadership moved from *primus inter pares* arrangements to the figure of school director with well identified authority and responsibilities. The Learning Goals project, launched in 2009, defines learning standards that students are expected to meet at key stages of their learning (by school year). Also, as of the 2010/11 school year, Portugal established targets for school education through the Education Programme 2015, focussing on two main areas, deemed as the most challenging ones in school education: improving the basic competencies of students, and ensuring that all young people aged 18 and younger remain in the education system.

In this context, the role of evaluation and assessment as key tools to achieve quality and equity in education was reinforced.

Austerity measures to respond to the financial crisis affect education

The current financial crisis is severely affecting Portugal, with a significant impact on the resources available to education. While public spending on education reached 5% of GDP in 2010, it is estimated that such proportion decreased to 4.7% in 2011, and the 2012 State budget plans a further reduction to 3.8% of GDP. Austerity measures include salary cuts for all personnel working in public education, the freezing of career progression in the public service (including for teachers), posts in school management reduced, regional administration for education downsized, and a major rationalisation of Ministry services which led to a restructuring of its organisation.

Strengths and challenges

There is strong political will to strengthen the evaluation and assessment framework but it needs to be completed and made more coherent

In the last decade, Portugal has come far in developing the foundations of a framework for evaluation and assessment. National monitoring educational progress tests were launched in 2001, a first cycle of external school evaluations was completed in the period 2006-11, a national system of teacher performance appraisal was launched in 2007 and the availability of national indicators on education has considerably expanded. These developments clearly communicate that evaluation and assessment are priorities in the school system and reveal a coherent and comprehensive agenda to develop an evaluation culture among school agents. The objective has been to get away from a tradition of unexamined classroom practice, limited accountability for student outcomes, and narrow feedback practices. There is growing support among the school agents for consolidating evaluation and assessment practices at the different levels of the system. However, at the present time, there is no integrated evaluation and assessment framework. As in other OECD countries, the different components of evaluation and assessment have developed independently of each other over time and there is currently no policy document on the overall framework for evaluation and assessment in Portugal. At the national level, there are provisions for student assessment, school evaluation, teacher appraisal and system evaluation, but these are not explicitly integrated or aligned. The existing framework is not perceived as a coherent whole and it does not visibly connect all the different components.

There is room to strengthen the improvement function of evaluation and assessment

An important challenge is to find the right balance between the accountability and the improvement functions of evaluation and assessment. It is apparent that the policy initiatives in evaluation and assessment of the last few years have emphasised accountability over improvement. For instance, the teacher appraisal model currently places greater focus on career progression than professional development, the assessment of students is oriented towards summative scores, and the publication of examination

results introduces important stakes for schools. While transparency of information, high quality data, and the accountability of school agents are essential for a well-functioning evaluation and assessment system, it is important to ensure that the existing data and information are actually used for improvement. This requires securing effective links to classroom practice without which the evaluation and assessment framework is not likely to lead to the improvement of teaching practices and student learning. The review team formed the view that there has been comparatively less reflection on designing mechanisms to ensure that the results of evaluation and assessment activities feed back into classroom practice.

It is unclear that the students are at the centre of the evaluation and assessment framework

An important challenge is that it is unclear that students are at the centre of the evaluation and assessment framework. Teaching, learning and assessment still take place in a somewhat "traditional" setting with the teacher leading his/her classroom, the students typically not involved in the planning and organisation of lessons and assessment concentrating on summative scores. The opportunity given to parents and students to influence student learning is more limited than in other OECD countries. The review team formed the perception that relatively little emphasis is given to the development of students' own capacity to regulate their learning through self- and peer-assessment. Other practices which are developing in Portuguese classrooms but require further strengthening are the communication of learning expectations to students, the opportunities for performance feedback and mechanisms for individualised support. An obvious case of not placing the student at the centre of the learning concerns the high levels of grade repetition in the country, considerably above the OECD average. This raises important concerns. First, it is not compatible with a student centred educational system as it extensively involves branding students a failure at different stages of schooling, including in the very early stages of learning. Second, it runs counter to the need for teachers to have the highest possible expectations of what children can achieve if they always have the possibility of retention in the back of their minds for children who do not respond well to their teaching.

There is a need to strengthen competencies for evaluation and assessment

The effectiveness of evaluation and assessment relies to a great extent on ensuring that both those who design and undertake evaluation activities as well as those who use their results are in possession of the proper skills and competencies. While there have been considerable national efforts to stimulate an evaluation culture by strengthening assessment and evaluation activities, developing guidelines and materials, as well as providing competency-building learning opportunities in some cases, the review team assesses that there are still limited evaluation and assessment competencies throughout the education system. For instance, there is a need to improve the competencies of school leaders in evaluation and assessment, in particular with regard to ensuring a meaningful school self-evaluation process, and providing pedagogical guidance and coaching to individual teachers. Another case in point concerns the gaps in the development of competencies for teacher appraisal. One of the major obstacles to the implementation of teacher appraisal when it was launched in 2007 was the insufficient expertise developed for teacher appraisal, particularly that of the evaluators whose legitimacy was not

recognised by the teachers being evaluated. Other areas in which building capacity is a considerable challenge include: the competencies of teachers for student formative assessment; insufficient focus on skills for student assessment in initial teacher education; the data handling skills of school agents; and analytical capacity for educational planning and policy development at the system level.

Assessment is seen as part of the professional role of teachers but approaches to learning and assessment remain markedly traditional

From the beginning to the end of schooling, assessment of students is seen as integral to the work of teachers. This is not just the view of the teachers themselves – the review team was struck by how widely this conviction is shared by students, school leaders, and parents. While external assessment is available in the form of end of cycle educational progress tests, intermediate tests and national examinations, only in the examinations used for progression to higher education is this external assessment given equal weighting to the assessment of teachers. Schools have considerable autonomy in the decisions about student progress and certification. The centrality of teachers in the assessment process, and the support for this teacher agency from inside and outside schools are particular strengths of the Portuguese assessment system. However, generally there is a traditional approach to the organisation of classrooms in Portugal. Assessment for learning is not systematically used in Portuguese schools. There is little emphasis in assessment practices on providing student feedback and developing teacher-student interactions about student learning. In classroom and schools, the formative seems to be increasingly displaced by the summative and a focus on the generation of summative scores. While the attention to results and data is a positive feature of the system in Portugal, an over-emphasis on these may be having a negative impact, and undermining the formative role of teachers and assessment so highly valued in policy goals. The review team heard about an obsessive attention to results, the drive for results skewing the education system, media hype around examination results, classroom practice dominated by examination and test preparation, non-compulsory tests gaining the status of compulsory tests, and the quality of teaching being equated to the quality of results.

Assessment innovations are proposed by the New Opportunities initiative

There have been a number of recent initiatives, under the umbrella of the New Opportunities programme, to extend the educational provision in schools to students who may have left school, or may be at risk of leaving school, and to adults who might not have completed compulsory education. These new programmes have been accompanied by the development of approaches to assessment focused on motivating students, giving high quality feedback, and including the active participation of learners in the assessment process. A key feature of these arrangements and approaches is their location close to the learning process and to the learner. Thus, assessment tends to occur immediately after the completion of a module or portion of a course rather than at the end of a year or cycle. The use of approaches beyond written tests, such as a performance assessment, puts the learner and learning at the centre of the assessment process. The need to use assessment to motivate learners to learn, rather than to simply engage with the assessment or test is acknowledged as fundamental by those working in this sector. While the opportunities remain to be exploited in full, and the challenges of supporting dialogue within the more

individualised culture of schooling are widely acknowledged, they are particular strengths of the New Opportunities programme, and have much to offer the assessment system for all students in schools.

Student assessment has an external dimension but it does not cover some strands of secondary education

One of the challenges faced by any system committed to internal, formative and teacher-led assessment is the need for checks and balances across the system to ensure reliability in the application of standards and criteria and to gather system-wide data for the purposes of evaluating system quality. The provision of end of cycle wholly externally marked educational progress tests at the end of the first cycle, of national examinations at Grades 6 and 9 and of a series of external components for subject-based examinations in the secondary cycle represents a considered attempt to address this challenge. The capacity of the Office for Educational Evaluation (GAVE) in how it approaches and conducts its work is an important feature of the quality processes. However, in secondary education, external assessment is applied only to the scientific and humanistic courses, and not to technological, professional/vocational, artistic or other specialised courses. This gives rise to two concerns. First, there are some questions about the reliability of assessment that is completely internal. Second, in light of the fact that external assessment is expanding across the school system, not including some element of external assessment in certain elements of provision in secondary education seems to signal that reliability matters less for these courses and these students.

Moderation is focused on procedures rather than on outcomes of learning or shared understandings of standards

One of the challenges faced by all systems of student assessment that rely heavily on the judgement of teachers and schools is maintaining the quality of moderation and improving the processes by which standards across schools are assured to be assessed consistently. Some attention is given to this in the Portuguese system with a system of checks and balances in place once the teacher has scored the test and produced a sheet of results as the outcome of an assessment event. There is checking that the procedures have been followed and the criteria applied correctly. However, this process does not include discussion or analysis of student work, across classes in schools, across schools, nor at national level. Examples of what is expected (except in numeric terms, with targets set for acceptable percentages at each classification level) are not available. In first cycle schools, the review team encountered some evidence of such sharing of examples of student work, but little was found in the second or third cycle, and none in the secondary system, nor any concern expressed that it was not available. Because the moderation is focused on results and on the application of procedure, there is little focus on teacher judgement, and none on the work of students, to arrive at a particular score or mark. Thus, the "product" of learning is seen as a grade or a test score rather than any "real" work. This has serious implications for the validity of the internal assessment process – a process which, given its location in schools and the role of teachers in its design, should be highly valid.

There is growing consensus around the need to strengthen teacher appraisal and teaching standards have been developed

In less than five years since 2007, Portugal has come far in developing a comprehensive framework for teacher appraisal. With the launch of a new system-wide model for teacher appraisal in 2010, the national authorities clearly communicated the need to strengthen teacher appraisal as a priority for the education sector. The government in office since June 2011 confirmed the intention to establish teacher appraisal as a regular practice in the Portuguese school system with the approval of a new model to operate as of 2012/13. This is an ambitious policy given that there is little tradition of pedagogical evaluation in the Portuguese education system. Despite the highly contentious debate about the design and implementation of teacher appraisal, a general consensus appears to have emerged among teachers regarding the need for teachers to be evaluated, receive professional feedback, improve their practice and have their achievements recognised. The OECD review team formed the view that there was indeed wide agreement about the necessity to grow and sustain a formative appraisal and support culture. Also, the establishment of teaching standards that provide a clear and concise profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do was a very positive development associated with the implementation of the 2010 teacher appraisal model. The fact that, at this stage, the 2011 appraisal model does not involve the use of national teaching standards is a source of concern. Teacher appraisal conducted within schools are to be based on references developed within each individual school with the clear risk that standards across schools will differ considerably.

Teacher appraisal procedures are rooted in some good principles but there is insufficient focus on the improvement of teaching practice

In a very short period of time, the Portuguese education system has developed a comprehensive teacher appraisal system that includes most domains of teacher performance and a wide range of instruments and data sources. The system as developed since 2007 is based on a number of good principles such as the principle of career advancement on merit, the account of the school context, the introduction of classroom observation, the importance of self-reflection and the multiple sources of evidence. However, the review team formed the impression that there is still insufficient focus on the improvement function of teacher appraisal. This is due to a range of factors including tensions between the career progression and improvement functions of appraisal, limited opportunities for feedback on teaching practices, and insufficient linkages between teacher appraisal and professional development. In the schools visited by the review team, there appeared to be an over-emphasis on assigning marks and classifying teachers for career progression, with less attention paid to genuine professional discussions about effective teaching. Also, in its current form, the teacher appraisal model does not provide a consistent means to build a school-level professional development culture based on a thorough evaluation of teaching practices. Classroom observations are not a systematic part of the formal appraisal of each teacher and there is little tradition for school leaders or teacher peers to conduct informal classroom observations with an evaluative focus. The review team also formed the view that the provision of professional development appears not systematically linked to teacher appraisal.

There is a tension between school-level teacher appraisal and national-level consequences

Since the teaching career, salary scales and competitions for permanent posts are defined at the national level, consequences of a school-based teacher appraisal model go clearly beyond the school. These include progression within the career, chances to access ranks 5 and 7 of the career with no need for a vacancy to be available, chances to access a permanent post upon completion of the probationary period, and chances to get the contract renewed for teachers on fixed-term contracts. The 2011 model provides for a dominant internal appraisal component, which is based on references determined at the school (school educational project, and evaluation parameters established by the pedagogical council for each of the three dimensions of appraisal). This risks a lack of consistency and equity in career progression as a result of different standards applied to teacher appraisal across schools. There is a clear tension between school-level standards for teacher appraisal and national-level consequences of teacher appraisal.

School leadership could play a stronger role in fostering teacher appraisal and feedback cultures

Given that teacher appraisal is relatively recent in Portugal, it is not surprising that the process still appears fragmented and *ad-hoc* in many schools, conducted largely to satisfy national requirements rather than an ongoing process that is mainstreamed into the work of the school. While some schools have collaborative structures and regular feedback mechanisms in place, whether such practice exists varies among schools, and largely depends on school leadership. In many schools, educational leadership practices are still incipient. School directors do not yet appear to take responsibility for the leadership of pedagogy and for the quality of education at the point of delivery. School leaders interviewed by the review team explained that they had few opportunities to influence teaching quality because they cannot select their own teaching staff. There also appear to be few interactions between teachers and school leadership regarding pedagogical directions and approaches. The introduction of teacher appraisal could have been a possibility to provide greater leverage to school directors to engage in leading the core business of teaching and learning in their school. But, quite the contrary, the appraisal approach has taken the responsibility for teacher appraisal away from the school leaders. Neither the 2010 model nor the 2011 model grant the director an active role in the actual appraisal process, which appears to further weaken their pedagogical role.

External school evaluation is becoming well established but the culture of evaluation and improvement needs to be strengthened

There has been, at least since the start of the millennium, a clear commitment on the part of the central government to establish a powerful role for external school evaluation within its overall strategy for quality improvement in education. The lack of opposition to the inspection cycle is significant. None of those interviewed, in schools and more widely, expressed any strong opposition to the principle of external evaluation and comments invariably focused on how it might be improved or linked more directly to other areas of policy. At the same time, long-established traditions of professional autonomy have resulted in attitudes which inhibit challenge or professional learning in relation to teaching practices and student outcomes. Recent moves to strengthen

leadership allied to external evaluation, self-evaluation and accountability therefore face considerable challenges in establishing themselves within a culture which apparently places such high value on a teacher's classroom autonomy. Perhaps the greatest single challenge facing school education in Portugal, therefore, is to establish a powerful and persuasive narrative which aligns policy, strategy and practice around these big strategic issues of leadership, evaluation and improvement.

The external school evaluation model embodies a number of features of best practice but there is an insufficient focus on learning and teaching

The process of evaluation undertaken by the Inspectorate is well structured and systematic. Each stage in the process is clear and the approach builds logically towards the ultimate evaluations. A set of publicly-available criteria for external inspection has been drawn up with an extensive framework of areas for analysis. Evaluations are made on a straightforward five-point word scale which helps to promote consistency both of judgement and of interpretation by readers. Inspection teams combine full-time inspectors with "outsiders". The approach is also designed to be evidence driven. The provision of a data profile for an inspection team provides outcome information, aids efficiency by allowing the team to focus its attention on key issues and can help to benchmark and contextualise judgements. Similarly, documentation is sought and analysed as a key part of evidence gathering and a sample of stakeholders is interviewed in the course of the inspection. However, there is insufficient focus on the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching. The direct observation of learning and teaching in the classroom is not part of the process. As a result, there is not enough emphasis on pedagogical aspects particularly on identifying the main features of effective or high quality teaching.

School self-evaluation requires to be strengthened

Although the importance of school self-evaluation has been recognised as a policy imperative over at least the last decade, its penetration across the school system remains at an early stage of development. The policy decision not to promote any particular model was designed at least in part to encourage creativity and local ownership but the lack of specificity can also be interpreted as indicating a lower priority to this aspect of school reform. It is clear that schools have only a limited understanding of the contribution which self-evaluation can and should make to improving practice and no clear models have emerged generally. School leaders and key staff lack the confidence and competence to develop bottom-up approaches and as a result, although some form of self-evaluation can be identified generally, its rigour and impact on practice remains at best very rudimentary. The absence of an evaluation tradition and culture which encourages openness and reflection means that, as with external evaluation, the focus is more on administrative processes rather than the quality of learning and teaching and its impact on outcomes for learners. The outcomes of self-evaluation are also very diffuse and lack traction on practice. The extent to which action may or may not be taken is very much at the discretion of individuals, particularly the school director. The potential of self-evaluation reporting to engage parents in the work of the school has also not been sufficiently exploited.

The impact of external school evaluation is limited

Evidence available to the review team suggested that the Inspectorate reports are not widely read. In one school, the view was expressed that they were only really for the director and there was a general unfamiliarity with the findings of past inspections. Parental groups were generally positive about reports but unsure about their impact. Part of the reason for this lack of impact may have lied in the absence of any clear follow-up by the Inspectorate to its inspection findings, except in the most critical cases where the then Regional Director ensured that there was an improvement plan, as was characteristic of the first cycle of external evaluation (2006-11). As a result there was a general perception that, while there was no strong antipathy towards inspections, they were not seen as being of great significance.

There are concerns about school leadership appraisal

There appear to be a number of challenges in the implementation of school director appraisal processes. First, the clear intention that appraisal results shall be used only for summative purposes, namely advancement on the career scale, limits the potential for school leaders to learn from the process and use the results to improve their own practice. Second, given that the post of school director was created only recently, the Portuguese system does not yet have a framework or professional standards for effective educational leadership. Hence, there is no system-wide statement or profile of what school directors are expected to know and be able to do and no uniform performance criteria against which they could be appraised. Third, the systematic implementation of school director appraisal in all schools was perceived as challenging for the Regional Directorates in terms of logistics and human resources. Finally, there were no indications that the appraisal of individual school leaders by the Regional Directorates was connected to the evaluation of school "leadership and management" by the Inspectorate. As a result, there might be a risk that the two processes send conflicting messages regarding effective practice and expected improvement.

There is little emphasis on the evaluation of the education system

The review team formed the impression that the evaluation of the education system as part of the evaluation and assessment framework has received limited policy attention thus far and there is no comprehensive strategic approach to it. As it stands, system evaluation draws mostly on the evaluation of schools complemented with external student assessment (educational progress national tests and national examinations) and a set of indicators on education. A reflection of this is the inexistence of an annual report with an assessment of whether or not the education system is achieving its objectives. Similarly, the way system evaluation has been conceived has not yet allowed in-depth investigations of the factors underlying student performance in Portuguese schools. The current narrow approach to system evaluation does not allow a broad enough assessment of the extent to which student learning objectives are being achieved.

An Education Indicators Framework is established but there are key information gaps at the system level

An Education Indicators Framework is in place to assist decision makers analyse the state of the education system, monitor trends over time, and provide information to the general public. The framework includes five core components: students, teachers, non-teaching staff, schools and use of technology. However, some key information gaps remain. A significant gap is the unavailability of measures on students' socio-economic background. Other gaps include the unavailability of analysis of student performance across student groups (*e.g.* by gender, socio-economic or immigrant background), the incipient analysis of student performance across regions of the country and the limited information on the teaching and learning environment.

Student performance data are part of system monitoring but there are challenges in monitoring student outcomes over time and across schools

The national monitoring system for school education is strengthened by the availability of national data on student performance: educational progress national tests and national examinations. These data allow the monitoring of the achievement of student learning objectives and inform the debate on educational policy. However, there are challenges in monitoring student performance over time (as the comparison of assessment results over time is not ensured) and across schools (as there is no account for the socio-economic context of each school).

System-level information is not fully exploited

The review team formed the view that system-level data are not used to their full potential in analysis which could be useful to inform policy development. Comprehensive statistical analysis of student outcomes such as an assessment of the factors influencing student performance or a study about the impact of socio-economic background on student performance does not seem to be available. In addition, there is limited use of system-level data to inform school management and there is no comprehensive presentation of results of system evaluation for stakeholder use.

Policy recommendations

Integrate the evaluation and assessment framework

The full potential of evaluation and assessment will not be realised until the framework is fully integrated and is perceived as a coherent whole. An important initial step is to develop a strategic plan or framework document that conceptualises a complete evaluation and assessment framework and articulates ways to achieve the coherence between its different components. The plan should essentially constitute a common framework of reference for educational evaluation across the country with the ultimate objective of embedding evaluation as an ongoing and essential part of the professionalism of the actors in the education system. The plan should establish a clear rationale for evaluation and assessment and a compelling narrative about how evaluation and assessment align with the different elements in the education reform programme. It

should describe how each component of the evaluation and assessment framework can produce results that are useful for classroom practice and school improvement activities. The plan should include strategies to both strengthen some of the components of the evaluation and assessment framework and to develop articulations across the components.

A key principle is to place the students at the centre of the evaluation and assessment framework

Given that the fundamental purpose of the evaluation and assessment framework is to improve the learning of the students, a key principle is to place the students at the centre of the framework. This translates into teaching, learning and assessment approaches which focus on students' authentic learning. There has been considerable progress in the last few years in the Portuguese education system in focusing attention in student learning with better provisions for individualised support, growing opportunities for differentiated learning, and greater say of students in their learning. However, these approaches need to become more systematic across schools and classrooms. There is a need for strong messages and incentives for teachers to get away from more traditional teaching strategies and engage with more constructivist principles with a focus on motivating students and using assessment for learning and high quality feedback. In addition, it is important to build community and parental involvement and an acceptance of learning and teaching as a shared responsibility. A particularly important priority for Portugal to ensure evaluation and assessment focus on student learning is to reduce the high rates of grade repetition. The review team does not recommend an abrupt abolition of grade repetition in the system but rather its gradual elimination as alternative measures to support students with learning difficulties are introduced.

There should be greater emphasis on the improvement function of evaluation and assessment

A priority is to reinforce the improvement function of evaluation and assessment and reflect on the best ways for evaluation and assessment to improve student learning. Realising the full potential of the evaluation and assessment framework involves establishing strategies to strengthen the linkages to classroom practice, where the improvement of student learning takes place. Channels which are likely to reinforce such linkages include: an emphasis on teacher appraisal for the continuous improvement of teaching practices; involving teachers in school evaluation, in particular through conceiving school self-evaluation as a collective process with responsibilities for teachers; ensuring that teachers are seen as the main experts not only in instructing but also in assessing their students, so teachers feel the ownership of student assessment and accept it as an integral part of teaching and learning; building teacher capacity for student formative assessment; and ensuring that school evaluation focuses on learning and teaching.

Significantly invest in evaluation and assessment capacity development across the school system

It is clear that an area of policy priority is consolidating efforts to improve the capacity for evaluation and assessment. Areas in which the review team believes considerable investment should be made are: improving the skills of teachers for formative assessment including engaging students in assessment; enhancing the capacity

of teachers to assess against the objectives defined in the national curriculum including promoting collaborative work among teachers around student summative assessment; and improving the data handling skills of school agents. Capacity building through adequate provision of initial teacher education and professional development should be a priority making sure provision is well aligned with the national education reforms. Other strategies involve the provision of support materials; marking guides and exemplars of different student ratings along the lines of what is currently being done by the Learning Goals project; and Internet platforms proposing formative teaching and learning strategies. Also, a more systematic approach to training for teacher appraisal and school evaluation should be developed. There is a need to develop school leader and leadership team capacity in school self-evaluation and teacher appraisal. Another area to explore is building capacity at the system level to ensure an effective use of the results generated by evaluation and assessment activities. Finally there is a need to put in place systematic processes to identify best practices within the evaluation and assessment framework and ensure their dissemination across schools.

Develop the quality of feedback to learners to strengthen formative student assessment practice

A commitment to formative assessment on paper needs to be matched with engagement with formative assessment practices in classrooms and schools. Building on the culture of evaluation, and the centrality of the teacher in the assessment system in Portugal, greater focus on a culture of feedback on student learning would deliver a number of wins for the system. First, it would serve to highlight the role of the learner in the learning process, and encourage a greater sense of agency and responsibility in learners of all ages in the school system. Second, a greater focus on rich feedback would support classroom and school discussions on the quality and process of student learning, to accompany the current widely supported emphasis on marks and results. Third, it might go some way towards engaging the public and the media on the outcomes of education beyond a numeric mark. Finally, extending such a focus to external assessment arrangements might usefully counterbalance the drive to add further to external assessment, by developing richer feedback on current external assessment already in place.

Use the Learning Goals project to support moderation of student work and foster greater collaboration around student learning

The Learning Goals project and the intermediate tests offer some potential in developing a focus on feedback for learning and on exemplification of student work in support of that focus. The benchmarks and indicators that are being developed to support the Learning Goals project could be extended to include real examples of student work to illustrate expectations at the different levels, with student and teacher commentary. Generating and sharing such evidence at school level might be the basis for shaping the many meetings of teachers about results and grades towards genuine professional learning communities which, when they work effectively, can improve the quality of moderation and reduce the inconsistency of teacher marking within and between schools.

Ensure the centrality of teaching standards

Teaching standards are a key element in any teacher appraisal system as they provide credible reference points for making judgements about teacher competence. As noted earlier, a very positive development of the 2010 model was the creation of national standards of teacher performance with a shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching to provide the basis for appraising teachers. The teacher appraisal model approved in 2011 has not included thus far national teaching standards among its features, which raises concerns about the lack of a solid reference against which teachers are appraised. A framework of teaching standards is essential as a reference for teacher appraisal and therefore it should be given priority in the design of any teacher appraisal model. The standards are a key element to ensure that all evaluators across Portugal have a common understanding of different levels of teaching performance and help achieve greater consistency and fairness in evaluators' judgements.

Refocus teacher appraisal on improvement

Meaningful teacher appraisal should aim at teacher development and improvement in teaching and learning processes. It can help teachers develop their competencies by recognising strengths on which they can build and identifying weaknesses to be addressed by suitable professional development. To resolve tensions between the improvement function and the career progression function of teacher appraisal, the review team recommends to disconnect regular developmental appraisal somewhat from the more formal career-progression appraisal focus. While links between the two aspects should be assured, it is difficult to achieve both aims in a single process conducted only every two years (or every four years, following the approval of the 2011 model). It would be desirable to develop a component of teacher appraisal fully dedicated to developmental appraisal. Such developmental appraisal would benefit from a non-threatening evaluation context, a culture of mutually providing and receiving feedback within the school, simple evaluation instruments, supportive school leadership, opportunities for professional development and close linkages to school self-evaluation. It should not be associated with a rating or labelling of teacher performance but should focus on identifying areas for improvement and follow-up with adequate learning opportunities. Regular, improvement-oriented appraisal and feedback approaches should involve both peer observation and observation of classroom teaching by the schools' pedagogical leaders. The point of such formative appraisal is that over time it becomes embedded and mainstreamed in regular school practice. To ensure that developmental teacher appraisal processes are indeed conducted in a regular, systematic and coherent way across schools in Portugal, it is important that an external body such as the Inspectorate provides a validation of school-level processes and holds the school director accountable for their effectiveness. Also, the linkages between teacher appraisal, professional development and school development need to be reinforced. Teacher appraisal is unlikely to produce effective results if it is not appropriately linked to professional development which, in turn, needs to be associated with school development if the improvement of teaching practices is to meet schools' needs.

Strengthen the appraisal model for career progression

The teacher appraisal model that has been introduced and adapted since 2007 forms a good basis for summative appraisal of teachers at key stages of their career. Such summative appraisal (or career-progression appraisal) should serve to maintain the principle of career advancement on merit, hold teachers accountable for their practice and complement the regular formative appraisal by providing an account of the ways in which it has contributed to professional development and improvement. It can provide incentives for teachers to perform at their best, bring recognition to effective teachers and help recognise and spread good practice more widely. It should also offer possibilities to move on consistently underperforming teachers who have not responded to development opportunities. The review team recommends the strengthening of career-progression appraisal, with the simplification of appraisal procedures vis-à-vis the 2010 model, as long as the suggested developmental appraisal of teachers is introduced. However, it would be important to keep key features of an effective teacher appraisal model such as meaningful self-evaluation, classroom observation for each teacher appraised, opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their competence in individual portfolios, and opportunities for professional discussions with evaluators during the appraisal process. Also, given the high stakes that the formal appraisal is intended to carry for teachers in terms of career and salary progression, it is essential that the judgements made by evaluators are reliable and fair within and across schools. In addition, given the national-level consequences of teacher appraisal in Portugal, it is essential that teachers are appraised against reference standards of teaching performance which are common across schools. To this end, it is crucial to further invest into building a solid professional development structure with a range of offers to develop the skills of evaluators, including their ability to appraise against national standards of teaching performance. Summative appraisal should include a school-external component to ensure the moderation and fairness of appraisals across schools. The appraisal could be undertaken jointly by a school-based evaluator, together with an accredited evaluator, typically a teacher from another school with expertise in the same subject area as the evaluatee.

Enhance and support the role of school leaders in teacher appraisal

School leaders can play an essential role in making performance improvement a strategic imperative and to promote teacher appraisal as being key to teacher development and broader school policies. In Portugal, there is a need to build the capacity and credibility of the new school directors as educational leaders. School directors need to be equipped to focus thoroughly on the quality of teaching and learning and help set up the collaborative and trusting work environment necessary to embed a focus on continuous evaluation and improvement in the everyday work of teachers. It is suggested giving a greater role in teacher appraisal to the school leadership team, which would provide them with a much-needed opportunity to exercise pedagogical leadership and support improvement of teaching across the school. It would also help define a smaller group of people responsible for summative appraisal to whom professional development in this area should be targeted. This should go in line with a larger distribution of school leadership within schools, where deputy directors and middle leaders can hold specialised functions for areas such as evaluation, appraisal and assessment. To ensure their

credibility, it is crucial that individuals with such leadership and evaluation responsibilities have priority in receiving adequate learning opportunities.

Establish the focus for school evaluation as being to improve learning and teaching and student outcomes

Evaluation frameworks, the criteria and questions governing judgements and the methods employed should all focus much more directly on the quality of learning and teaching and their relationship to student outcomes. That will require significant alterations to existing models and instruments and a determined effort to build a culture of openness and reflection around what happens during the learning and teaching process. Government policy should articulate much more clearly the legitimacy of a focus on learning and teaching and student outcomes for both external evaluation and self-evaluation and that such a focus will be the key concern of wider accountabilities. The Inspectorate, drawing on its previous experience with the "Integrated School Assessments" model, should be asked to revise its inspection framework to ensure that the quality of learning lies at the heart of external evaluation, including with direct classroom observation as an evaluation instrument. New criteria should be developed, engaging leading practitioners from schools and higher education institutions in shaping the factors to be taken into account. Also, current approaches to data gathering and the content of inspection profiles should be reviewed to create a sharper focus on the most important factors, particularly in relation to student outcomes.

Improve the alignment between school external and self-evaluation and raise the profile of school self-evaluation

Better alignment is needed between policy and practice in both external evaluation and self-evaluation. In particular, there is a need to ensure that the criteria used in both spheres are sufficiently similar as to create a common language about priorities and about the key factors which influence high quality learning and teaching. Lack of clarity about what matters is likely to reinforce current confusion and continue to relegate self-evaluation to something which serves inspection rather than creating a platform for an exchange based on reliable and comparable evidence.

Improve the acceptability and impact of external school evaluation

Creating a stronger focus on learning and teaching is likely of itself to improve the impact of inspection. However, a number of other steps need to be taken to reinforce the significance of inspection for the improvement of the school. In particular, the credibility of teams needs to be improved and transparency of reporting used more directly as a driver of improvement. Also, a more systematic follow-up by the Inspectorate to its inspections should be introduced. Routine follow-up is a feature of inspection in many inspectorates across Europe and is seen as a means of maintaining momentum for improvement. The Inspectorate should make reports less technical and more readable to a non-specialist audience. Schools should also be required to be proactive in publicising reports with staff and parents.

Ensure school leaders receive appropriate feedback on their performance

Further enhancing the performance appraisal of school directors is one way to contribute to building and enhancing the new role of school directors as educational leaders. Effective school director appraisal should help provide constructive external feedback, identify areas of needed improvement and offer targeted support to improve practice. In order to strengthen school leadership appraisal, the OECD review team recommends the development of a school leadership framework or standards to provide a credible reference for the appraisal of school directors. Another key element to make school director appraisal effective and useful is to ensure that both evaluators and evaluatees have the necessary competencies. School directors themselves need to be prepared to use appraisal results for their own professional learning.

Raise the profile of system evaluation within the evaluation and assessment framework

The profile of system evaluation within the evaluation and assessment framework needs to be raised. An initial priority is to broaden the concept of system evaluation as the wide range of system-level information which permits a good understanding of how well student learning objectives are being achieved. It should include a varied set of components such as broad measures of student outcomes; demographic, administrative and contextual data; information systems; and research and analysis to inform planning, intervention and policy development. A strategic approach to system-level evaluation would benefit from clear national objectives and priorities so progress against these can be assessed. System-level evaluation should include the production of an annual report with an assessment of whether or not the education system is achieving its objectives.

Prioritise efforts to meet information needs for national monitoring

An immediate priority for meeting information needs to adequately monitor student outcomes in the Portuguese school system is to strengthen the information on the student socio-economic background, including parental level of education, occupation and income level, immigrant or minority status, and special needs. Also, to have reliable national measures of performance across broader curricular areas Portugal could consider introducing sample-based national monitoring surveys. Moreover, the monitoring of student performance across specific groups (*e.g.* by gender, socio-economic or immigrant background) as well as the analysis of student performance across regions needs to be strengthened. Finally, there is a need to include stakeholders' perceptions of the teaching and learning environment in the national monitoring system.

Explore ways to more reliably track educational outcomes over time and across schools

System evaluation in Portugal needs to place greater emphasis on the monitoring of "progress" of students in contrast to achievement levels at a given point in time. To achieve that, it needs to improve its monitoring of both student results over time and the progress of particular student cohorts. First, it would be useful to ensure the comparability of results of educational progress national tests over time by keeping a stable element of

items in the tests. Second, a more strategic use of the results of national assessments (tests and examinations) could provide indicators on the progress of particular student cohorts through compulsory education in both Portuguese and mathematics. Another imperative is to make comparisons of student results across schools and regions more meaningful through the correction for the socio-economic context of the schools.

Optimise the reporting and use of system-level data

The amount of existing information on schools and system performance offers many opportunities to engage stakeholders in supporting improvements across the school system. While large amounts of data are collected from schools and comparable student results are available, there is room to strengthen the analysis and mobilisation of such information for system monitoring and improvement. This includes strengthening the analysis for educational planning and policy development; consolidating the communication of system-level data to stakeholders; and improving feedback for local monitoring.

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