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**Teacher education accreditation
in the context of teacher qualification certification**

Case study: Portugal

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I. ACCREDITATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHERS' QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATION

1. Teacher qualification public assurance

Accreditation of initial teacher education programmes aims to contribute for the solution of a key education policy issue: *assuring society that people wishing to teach are properly qualified to respond to teaching demands in a satisfactory way*; that means, assuring they hold the qualifications and competencies needed for the teaching performance in a way to be awarded their respective professional title and teaching license.

The most common solutions that education policies have been traditionally calling for to solve this issue are the following:

- (i) accreditation/recognition of teacher education programmes targeted to teachers' professional qualification
- (ii) external individual certification of this qualification, open up to graduates through certain programmes or eventually to those who have also achieved a professional tirocinium for this purpose;
- (iii) both accreditation of programmes and external individual certification.

Sometimes, selection procedures for licensed teachers who apply for a teaching job constitute (whenever existing) a complementary device for or even an alternative strategy to these solutions.

It should be underlined that in the countries where most teachers are employed by the State, the State does not always clearly distinguish among its following responsibilities: regulating admittance to the teaching profession, provision of public and private basic and secondary education (including the quality of teachers), and access to employment in state-schools.

The situation of utmost social deregulation happens when there is no selection in the admittance to employment, no programme accreditation, and no external certification awarding teaching licenses. This has been the situation in Portugal until the setting out, in 1999, of the accreditation system for initial teacher education.

With the increasing internationalisation of higher education and labour market, another policy issue arises for which programme accreditation has been pointed out as an alternative solution to a new individual process of certification of professional qualification (Campos, in press *a* and *b*): *assuring that teacher qualification and license to teach obtained in another State, is comparable to the one obtained in the State where someone wishes to attend part of his/her higher education or be allowed to teach*. In this case two main proposals have been put forth:

- (i) the setting out of an international accreditation system comprising the programmes supplied in a range of States;
- (ii) mutual acceptance in a range of States of their own systems of programme accreditation or of external individual qualification certification.

The former issue has mostly been the one leading to the setting out in Portugal of the accreditation system of initial teacher education programmes for basic and secondary education. However, policies to enhance student mobility and teacher employability in the education and employment European space highlight this system's relevance for the latter issue.

2. Entities interested in accreditation

So far, we stressed the contribution of accreditation to public regulation of the teaching profession licensing, whenever existing, as it happens in most countries. In this case, programme professional accreditation by itself or complemented with an external individual

certification is a sufficient condition or a necessary one, as the case may be, for licensing graduates to teach in the country or countries where it is recognised for this purpose.

However, there are other entities also interested in the public assurance accreditation provides on the adequacy of teacher education programmes to the demands of future professional performance.

The *Ministries of Education* responsible for public education policies and for its quality assurance are no doubt in the top rank; and this is the case whether they are, or not, the direct operating agents of schools running the education levels at stake.

Teacher education institutions have also an interest in this process, both when dealing with the admittance of students who have started their studies in another institution, and for the sake of the social credibility accreditation may provide to teacher education at large, and to each accredited institution; besides, accreditation avoids the competition with programmes that have less quality.

Assurance provided by the accreditation system is also of interest for *students* applying or attending teacher education programmes. It is also of interest for *teacher employers*, namely those responsible for state-schools whether, or not, they rely on specific selection procedures in the admittance of teachers applying for a job. It is also of interest for *teachers* themselves because of the public image of their own qualification and of the quality of their future colleagues qualification in a school context where teamwork is a growing concern (Campos, in press c).

At last, it is of interest for the whole *society* which holds a legitimate expectation that school education of all citizens is in the hands of well-prepared teachers.

3. The nature of the accreditation process

There are two categories of higher education accreditation: *academic* and *professional*. Each can be referred to *institutions* or to *education programmes*.

The *academic* accreditation of an institution or a programme leading to a certain academic degree consists of a judgement on its adequacy to the criteria that characterise the degree at stake and it is often related to the process of recognition of its national (or international) value.

The *professional* accreditation of an institution or a programme intended to provide a certain professional qualification consists of a judgement on their adequacy to the criteria that characterise the demands of the professional performance they prepare for, and it is often related to the process of awarding a professional title and license to act as a professional.

That is, whereas the professional accreditation focuses on the criteria concerning the level and field of a certain professional qualification, the academic accreditation is centred on criteria characterising the education leading to the academic degree they intend to award. Adequacy to academic criteria does not necessarily assure adequacy to professional criteria; yet, whenever professional qualification programmes lead to an academic degree, matching the academic criteria is also considered necessary.

Taken as whole, there are several features that, in international terms, characterise the process of accreditation and distinguish it from other processes:

- (i) the existence of a conclusive statement on the adequacy of the institution or programme to previously defined criteria;
- (ii) the definition of criteria is the responsibility of an instance external to the higher education institutions
- (iii) the existence of an accreditation entity independent from the accredited institutions.

And furthermore, in the case of professional accreditation:

- (i) the existence of criteria specific of the professional qualification level and field the programme intends to prepare for;
- (ii) and the participation of employers and professionals from the sector in the setting out of such criteria and in the programme accreditation process.

The system that is the object of this case study is a programme professional accreditation system.

II. THE PORTUGUESE SYSTEM FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

1. Higher education certifies professional qualification for teacher performance

In Portugal teacher education for pre-school education (3-6 years of age) and for unified basic education (6-15) and diversified secondary education (15-18) is supplied by higher education institutions, according to the international trend of "universitisation" of this kind of education (Campos, 2002, Chap.3): *Universities* can and do supply education programmes for all education levels, whereas *Teacher Education Colleges*, integrated in vocational higher education and having inherited Normal Schools' legacy, supply teacher education programmes for pre-school education and for the school levels from 6 to 12 years of age (Campos, 2002, Chap. 1).

All programmes are "licenciatura" programmes lasting 4 years for class teachers (in pre-school and primary education – 1st cycle of basic education –, from 3 to 10 years of age) and lasting 5 years for subject teachers (from 10 to 18 years of age). All are organised according to the *concurrent* model, that is, the different teacher education components (subjects to be taught, education studies, including didactic, and professional practice, including an yearly supervised practicum in schools) are integrated in a single programme. Among the programmes that follow this model and prepare subject teachers, some place the latter two components in its second half; in these cases, teaching vocational choice is only made at that time, because until then programmes are undifferentiatedly attended by students aiming several goals.

For subject teachers from the artistic, technological, and vocational fields, initial education can also be organised following a *consecutive* model: after a "licenciatura" programme in these fields, teacher professional qualification is obtained through attendance of a pedagogical complementary programme, equally provided by higher education institutions and lasting two years on average.

There is a governmental definition regarding the range of qualifications for subject teachers which frames the school level(s) and the subject(s) the programmes should prepare for: e. g., qualification to teach Biology and Geology from the 7th to the 12th school years.

Therefore, teacher education programmes provide and award not only an *academic degree* ("licenciatura") but also a *certificate of professional qualification for teacher performance*. Those in hold of such a certificate can apply for a job as a teacher in state or private schools because they are thereby licensed to teach.

So, *higher education institutions are the ones that award the teacher professional qualification certificate*, which allows for direct admittance to a teaching job. This is the only case where Portuguese higher education is supposed to organise programmes in a way to provide professional qualification and to certify it.

In the case of other professions, such as engineers, doctors and lawyers, university only provides programmes awarding an academic degree; it is the task of professional Orders to attribute the professional title that gives access to the license to perform the profession; some of them do even exempt graduates from certain requirements they usually ask for in the case of professional qualification certification when these graduates come from programmes accredited by those Orders (following application by the higher education institutions that provide those programmes).

In Portugal there is no professional Order for teachers in spite of a movement in favour of it, which has the opposition of teacher unions. There are different difficulties to its setting out by the State with competence delegation similar to the one provided other professional orders. Besides the known objections related to orders' difficulties in harmonizing public and corporative interests, maybe there is also the fact that teacher performance is not exclusively based on professional knowledge grounded on research and consolidated professional

practice. In fact, teacher performance is still framed by the state policy for basic and secondary education that defines a curriculum, including the objectives, the organisational context and sometimes even the methods to be considered — a situation that does not happen in other professions.

2. Accreditation credentiares higher education as an entity certifying professional qualification for teacher performance

Higher education programmes, and therefore teacher education programmes, need a State's license to be run as programmes awarding academic degrees of a nation-wide value. This process is different according to the type of higher education provider — public vs. private university vs. polytechnic — although there is a claim that the process should be the same. In the case of public universities the process consists of an automatic recognition. Public polytechnics and private institutions have to fulfil certain requirements and the programme curriculum is subjected to a very superficial analysis, based on the names of the subjects and their respective workload. In all cases, this process is conducted by the Higher Education Department that sometimes relies upon experts (who in some cases would hardly be considered as experts in the field) to analyse the curriculum.

In the first place, this license recognises that programmes award an academic degree of nation-wide value. Besides, it is also a condition for the assignment of a number of admittance vacancies as there is *numerus clausus*. Finally, in the case of public higher education programmes it is also a condition for the institutions' state funding, which is calculated according to the number of students they get.

Until recently, the process of recognition of initial teacher education programmes as providing and awarding teacher professional qualification, besides an academic degree, has been merged in the above mentioned general process, which, in turn, used to pay little or no attention to their professional dimension. The accreditation system of such programmes, set out in 1999, has put an end to this situation. From then onwards:

- (i) previous accreditation (*ex ante*) of such programmes becomes a necessary condition, although not sufficient, to obtain the license to run it as a programme recognised as providing and awarding teacher professional qualification;
- (ii) moreover, to maintain their license to be run as programmes thus recognised they must submit to periodically renewable accreditation (*ex post*);
- (iii) finally, for this same purpose, all teacher education programmes presently running must also submit to one first *ex post* accreditation process.

Thus, accreditation becomes the process chosen to credential higher education institutions as the entities that certify professional qualification for teachers' performance of graduates in their teacher education programmes. Professional Orders' programme accreditation is only meant, as aforementioned, to exempt their graduates from some requirements of the professional certification process which is their responsibility.

3. Features of the accreditation process

It is convenient to distinguish the *process* of accreditation from its *effects* in terms of decisions driven from its results and taken by the different actors, including the State. Some of the effects attributed by the State have already been mentioned (we will return to this question in 3.4.). We will deal now with the nature of the process itself.

The accreditation of a teacher education programme is "the recognition of this programme's suitability to the demands of the teaching performance at the level and education area it is targeted to". Therefore, it consists of

- (i) a judgement of scientific, pedagogical and professional nature,
- (ii) conclusive as for the programme's adequacy or inadequacy to
- (iii) criteria and standards set out from outside the higher education institution
- (iv) specific of teacher education programmes, and
- (v) accomplished by an independent public entity in which diversified social actors participate.

So, it is

- (i) a *professional* accreditation process and not a merely academic one,
- (ii) of *programmes* and not institutions,
- (iii) based on *criteria and standards externally defined* and not defined by the higher education institution itself,
- (iv) these being *referenced to the demands of the teaching performance* and not merely to the demands driven from the level of the academic degree it awards (as is the case of purely academic accreditation), and
- (v) of a purely *scientific, pedagogical and professional* nature, with no interference from political options, as, for instance, the quantitative needs of teacher employment market, where
- (vi) the accreditation entity is *independent* from the entities that can apply to the accreditation of their programmes, and with
- (vii) the inclusion in the Accreditation Committee of *basic and secondary school teachers* besides *higher education teachers*.

3.1. Independent and socially participated accreditation entity

The entity responsible for the development of the accreditation process is INAFOP (National Institute for Accreditation of Teacher Education). It is an independent public entity created by the Government and to which it has delegated this competence. Its existence and mission rely upon a governmental political act and option. However, the process leading to a statement on the accreditation of a programme is completely independent and there's no possibility of appeal to the Government (only to administrative courts for process formal reasons).

INAFOP is governed by a *General Council*, involving representatives from

- (i) teacher education institutions,
- (ii) basic and secondary education teachers,
- (iii) teachers' public and private employers,
- (iv) public interest groups (departments of the Ministry of Education, student teachers, parents of students from all education levels, and enterprises).

Thus constituted on the basis of the social participation of the main stakeholders interested in the adequacy of initial teacher education to the demands of the teaching performance, to this General Council is due the strategic decision-making. It does never render judgement on the accreditation of a programme, but it approves the accreditation regulations and the standards that serve as a framework to accreditation; besides, the General Council' appoints the members of the Accreditation Committee.

The *Accreditation Committee* is composed of experts chosen on an individual basis for their recognised competence. This Committee has the task of appreciating and deciding on the accreditation applications. It may include teachers from teacher education institutions, basic and secondary education teachers and experts in organisation, development, evaluation or accreditation of curricula for the preparation of teachers or other professionals. According to the teaching areas of the programmes applying to accreditation, temporary subcommittees are also constituted within the Accreditation Committee, composed of teachers from different

education levels related to those areas; the inclusion of students being also possible. Whereas review of the accreditation applications and the decision proposal is due to these subcommittees, actual decision on accreditation is taken by the permanent members of the Accreditation Committee to avoid the risk of heterogeneity in the interpretation of the accreditation criteria.

The accreditation entity acts, therefore, in an independent way in relation to the Government and to the institutions that apply for accreditation. This independence is a condition for the credibility of the process. On the one hand, self-accreditation makes no sense; on the other hand, if submitted to political criteria or to the pressure of party and election politics, the exclusive scientific, pedagogic and professional character of the judgement underlying the decision of accreditation would not be assured.

The fact of being governed by a wide socially participated structure allows for a process of collective bargaining. The cost for this wide social participation is the time it takes to get wide consensus; the risk comes from eventual impasse situations or decisions driven from the coalition of sectorial interests hardly compatible to public interest. The benefits of social consensus justify the costs; impasse has never been in the horizon up to now; the minority position of the representation of each interest in presence, as well as the great diversity of interests represented, has prevented the latter risk.

However, it should be stressed that within the accreditation entity there is a distinction between the body responsible for its strategic guidance and the body responsible for the accreditation of programmes; the former is constituted on a social representation basis whereas the latter is based on individual competence.

Anyway, the socially participated character of the governing body is not an essential characteristic of the accreditation entity contrarily to what happens in relation to its independence in relation to the Government and to the teacher education institutions.

3.2. Reference criteria for accreditation

Standards. To appreciate the adequacy of programmes to the demands of the teaching performance some criteria have been set out named *Initial Teacher Education Standards*.

These criteria refer to

- (i) programmes' *objectives* and *outcomes*,
- (ii) *processes* devised for the implementation of those objectives,
- (iii) *actors* responsible for those processes and
- (iv) *resources* needed.

Ideally, criteria related to the objectives/outcomes would be sufficient to judge whether the programme aims are adequate to the education demands of expected teaching performance (in the case of the previous accreditation of new programmes) or whether they do, in fact, provide their graduates with a professional qualification that meets those demands (in the case of the full accreditation of ongoing programmes and already with graduates). Moreover, the international trend of accreditation systems is centred on the appreciation of the outcomes, thus inverting previous practices exclusively focusing actors, resources and processes.

If it is true that this new orientation seems better fit to the aims of accreditation and should therefore be taken into consideration it is also true that, so far at least, there is no need for a complete withdrawal from criteria concerning actors, resources and processes. Mainly for two reasons:

- (i) on the one hand, teacher education institutions do still need some more time to acquire experience in the identification of programmes' outcomes and in assessing

- their fitness to the qualifications and competencies needed for the teaching activity, to be able to provide the evidence when applying to accreditation, and,
- (ii) on the other hand, there are some outcomes not only difficult to identify but whose relevance for the teaching performance is only manifest in the medium or long run.

However, consideration of criteria related to actors, resources and processes is only justified if there are at least well-founded hypotheses that they are related to the attainment of results that are difficult to identify. And if it is true that the relationship between the satisfaction of these criteria and the assurance of outcomes achievement will always be considered in terms of hypotheses, more or less plausible, depending on its grounding on research or diversified practice, it is also true that lack of satisfaction of such criteria can, with high probability, denounce lack of outcome achievement. However, on choosing these criteria there is the need to consider their probable relationship with the attainment of the outcomes expected in terms of the professional qualification to be acquired, thus contradicting the practice of attributing them value on their own, which is quite common in quality assurance systems paying little attention to the outcomes.

It should be stressed that the majority of the criteria selected in this accreditation system do not refer to singular situations or to specific behaviours, whose presence, objectively observable and eventually quantifiable, would be an indicator of the programme adequacy. On the contrary, they are generally referred to principles of teacher education curriculum development compatible with a wide range of diversified concrete solutions built by the education institutions; accreditation should appreciate to what extent the solutions built by each institution fit the criteria devised in the principles. Generally speaking, the accreditation criteria are not therefore *indicators*, but rather broad *principles*; and the process of accreditation does not consist of *checking* the presence or absence of such indicators, but rather of *appreciating* the adequacy or inadequacy of the institutional answers to principles related to objectives/outcomes, actors, resources and processes.

Anyway, these standards *are not legal norms* enforcing institutions. They are the criteria to be taken into account during the process of accreditation in the appreciation of the programme's adequacy to the demands of the teaching performance. They are explicit and they have been disseminated to make public the framework on which appreciation of adequacy is based, and to minimise the possibility of depending on the implicit agenda of each member of the subcommittees and of the Accreditation Committee.

The fact that accreditation is of the order of *appreciation* rather than of the order of *checking* raises important consequences to the competence of both these bodies' members. And the fact that the criteria are mostly of the order of *principles* rather than of *indicators* and that they emphasise the outcomes (rather than the actors, resources and processes) constitutes a relevant feature for conciliating accreditation with higher education autonomy and innovation.

Let's exemplify what has been just said on accreditation criteria in relation to programmes' objectives/outcomes. About these the Standards set out as a criterion:

"The programme develops in the prospective teachers the qualifications and competencies necessary for professional teaching performance and lifelong learning, based on a teacher education project which expressly takes into account:

- (i) *the legally defined, general and specific, professional profiles;*
- (ii) *the curriculum guidance and plans for basic and secondary education;*
- (iii) *the scientific and technological development;*
- (iv) *the relevant conclusions from the education research;*
- (v) *the changes in society, schools and teacher profiles;*
- (vi) *the guidelines of national education policy*

Criteria would be indicators if they defined the specific qualifications (knowledge, methodologies, attitudes, skills...) prospective teachers should have acquired at the end of

the programme (“what they should learn”); or else, if they defined the curriculum units that should integrate the study plans (“what they should be taught”). As it is well known, in some European countries there still is a governmental definition of teacher education curriculum. In Portugal, although there is a governmental definition on the broad curriculum components [(i) education in specific areas they will teach, (ii) education studies, covering specific didactic, and (iii) professional practice in schools], as well as their workload in the whole programme, such definitions are considered to be more and more under the scope of the education institutions, increasingly autonomous, scientifically and pedagogically.

Anyway, this is the assumption underlying this accreditation process. Their criteria set out the external parameters, covering those legally defined, to consider in the appreciation of the institutional solutions. The assumption is that when institutions wish their programmes to be recognised as qualifying to the teaching performance, their scientific and pedagogic autonomy does not exempt them from taking into consideration the aspects related to social demand in the organisation of their education supply without forgetting they can and should actively contribute to the formulation of this demand; teacher education should be not only supply driven but also demand driven.

Teacher professional performance profile. Among the legally defined parameters are teacher professional performance profiles: general profiles, common to all the school teachers, and specific profiles for each teaching area. Although they do not constitute a framework only or mainly directed to accreditation (as they also guide curriculum organisation to be undertaken by institutions), they do constitute an important frame to judge the adequacy of the curriculum objectives selected by the institutions and their outcomes regarding the demands of the teaching performance, that is, regarding social demand.

The Government defined the existing profiles (for some levels), following a proposal by the accreditation entity. Their underlying philosophy is the same as for standards (see above).

They are professional profiles; commonly these define:

- (i) the *level* of professional qualification;
- (ii) the professional performance *field*;
- (iii) the characterisation of expected *performance* of the professional;
- (iv) the *qualifications* needed for that performance; and
- (v) the *learning opportunities* to promote those qualifications.

In this case, governmental definition of the professional profile is restricted to the first three aspects, with special attention to the third one, leaving the others to the competence of higher education institutions. And this is no doubt the trend in the countries where it does not happen in this way yet. This trend is due to the fact that teacher education has been increasingly supplied by more and more autonomous universities, on the one hand, and to the increasing consideration of the teaching performance as a professional activity, rather than that of a technician or civil servant (Campos 2002, chap.2). Although it is true these two aspects are interrelated.

Take an example. In the general teaching profile, one of the characterisations of teacher performance is the one that follows:

"Participates in the conception, development and evaluation of the school educational project and its curriculum projects, as well as in the school management activities, paying close attention to the link between the teaching levels".

This way, definition is not made either for the qualifications (knowledge, etc.) to be acquired or for the curriculum units needed. The accreditation process will appreciate whether the qualifications and curriculum units set out and implemented by the teacher education institutions are able to ensure the preparation needed for the teaching performance.

3.3. Steps in the accreditation process

Application. The accreditation process begins with an application made by the institution responsible for the programme. This application means that the institution wishes the programme to be recognised as teacher professional qualification, this way being credentiated to certify its graduates.

The institution is mainly expected to make evidence in the application that the programme satisfies the demands of the professional teaching performance in the level or teaching area it is meant to prepare for. This way, the onus of proof belongs to the teacher education institutions, which will be facing a difficult task if they don't rely on a permanent device for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme development. This device, besides its contribution to improvement, also enables the institutions to pay public accountability, namely on the opportunity of the accreditation process.

For this first step the accreditation entity provides the institutions with *Applying Guidelines for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education*. According to these guidelines the institutions are expected to refer aspects concerning

- (i) the *teacher education project and curriculum* (guiding principles and objectives; programme structure and syllabi; specific curriculum aspects: initiation to professional practice; information and communication technology; research);
- (ii) the *actors*: teaching and non-teaching personnel (number and qualifications) and prospective teachers (selection, evaluation and professional qualification certification);
- (iii) the *support resources* (partnership with schools, premises and equipment); and
- (iv) the programme *coordination and regulation*.

On each one of these aspects institutions must *describe* the current situation and *demonstrate* that it is fit to the accreditation *reference criteria*.

The institution is mainly expected to *demonstrate* that:

- (i) the qualifications (knowledge, skills, methodologies, attitudes...) and competencies (capacity to mobilise the qualifications acquired to solve problems arising from real context-based situations) provided by the programme are the ones needed to meet the demands of future teaching activity, namely in relation to the respective teacher professional profiles;
- (ii) all graduates acquire these qualifications and competencies;
- (iii) in the institution there are the actors and resources needed, in quantity and quality, to devise, develop and evaluate a process intending to provide a certain number of students with the opportunity to acquire the qualifications and competencies;
- (iv) in the institution there are leading and managing structures for the conception, development, monitoring and evaluation of the education process, both to ensure the qualification needed for the teaching performance and to elicit evidence on the presence of expected outcomes in terms of qualification and performance in the short and medium run.

Application appreciation. Application is followed by appreciation of the Accreditation Committee. To guide this appreciation, the accreditation institution has provided the *Appreciation Guidelines for the Applications to the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programmes*, which systematise, in 28 items, the programme aspects whose adequacy has to be appreciated; these aspects are the same as the ones provided to institutions.

The appreciation subcommittees are not supposed either to evaluate the programme or subsequently to demonstrate its adequacy — that is responsibility of the teacher education institution.

It makes sense that the onus of proof is due to the institution that applies and is interested in the accreditation of the programme or in its renewal. Additionally, this aspect represents a further advantage for the institution and for the flexibility of the accreditation process as it fosters innovation in the teacher education project and contributes to contradict the idea that accreditation inhibits it; in fact, the only thing the institution is supposed to provide is the relevance of it.

For the application appreciation, the subcommittee can call for

- (i) the respective dossier and
- (ii) a visit to the institution (which, in the case of new programmes, is replaced by a meeting session with people responsible for the programme) to take place after a preliminary analysis of the dossier.

This visit is intended to clarify any issues that might arise from this preliminary analysis and to allow for the institution to complement the demonstration provided with the elements difficult to integrate in the dossier. With this objective, there are:

- (i) meeting sessions with the different actors (not only teachers, but also with prospective teachers, managers and teachers from partner schools and support personnel)
- (ii) document analysis (for instance, tests – not only test delivered but also students' responses and their corresponding assessment);
- (iii) observation of the existence, state of conservation and updating and conditions of use of the equipment and premises needed to accomplish the programme's professional objectives.

When the appreciation is over, the subcommittee prepares a report and sends it to the institution for possible feedback. After the given deadline for this feedback the subcommittee makes the final adjustments to their report when justified.

Decision on accreditation and its dissemination. Finally, the subcommittee prepares a well-founded decision proposal to be submitted to the scrutiny of the permanent Accreditation Committee. There are three possible decision statements:

- (i) *accreditation for a six-year period*, with or without recommendations;
- (ii) *accreditation for a four-year period*, with renewal conditioned to the attainment of certain objectives (the validity period of *ex ante* accreditation of new programmes is also a four-year period);
- (iii) *accreditation withdrawal* (in this case, the decision intends only becomes effective if by the end of a defined period, not longer than a year, changes haven't been made which make accreditation possible).

The decision on accreditation as well as its foundations is publicised. It is also due to the accreditation entity to promote and disseminate overall analyses of the applications and appreciations aiming to characterise the quality of teacher education in the country, identifying critical aspects or new challenges to be addressed.

3.4. Effects of accreditation decisions

The mission of the accreditation entity can be summed up as the provision and communication of a conclusive statement on the programme's adequacy or inadequacy to the demands of the teaching performance, grounded on the analysis of an application dossier and a complementing visit. *The setting out or implementation of the effects of such a judgement are not within the scope of competence of the accreditation entity.* It depends on the subsequent decisions of the actors to whom it has been made known; in what concerns policy actors, Government has already established some effects, independently of others which on the same basis they can carry out.

These are the main consequences for policy actors, already in force:

- (i) accreditation is a necessary condition for the licensing to run a new programme, as a programme recognised as providing and awarding teacher professional qualification (however, it is not a sufficient condition and an accredited programme can be refused this license to function for other reasons);

- (ii) accreditation withdrawal of an ongoing programme, as a result of the process of accreditation renewal, is a sufficient condition for the withdrawal of the licence to run, as a programme recognised as providing and awarding teacher professional qualification, even for the students who are still attending it.

Besides the legally established effects it is also possible for policy actors to use the accreditation decisions, together with other factors, to ground other measures within their scope of competence concerning specific teacher professional education programmes, namely in relation to the number of students they can admit (which can reach down to a zero limit) and to the public funding to assign them; whatever the case, these can be increase-intended or reduction-intended measures.

Yet, these programmes' accreditation cannot help influencing different actors' decisions and attitudes. To begin with, it can influence present and future students' demand for these programmes, as well as their mobility among teacher education institutions. Besides, teacher employers will certainly take them into account in their recruitment selection procedures which only happens in the private sector in Portugal; the fact that the public employer does not rely upon selection procedures, only trusting teacher education institutions' diplomas, increases the social relevance of accreditation and the need to be rigorous in its attribution, as it is the only guarantee, external to those institutions, society can have in the certification of their graduates' professional qualification.

Accreditation can also influence, namely among parents and employers, the social credibility teacher education institutions enjoy, as well as teachers whose qualification is provided and assured by them, the schools where they teach and the students attending those schools. All this under the assumption, underlying the existence of the accreditation process, that the quality of teacher qualifications influences their own professional performance and students' learning in a very significant way.

Finally, in the context of the increasing internationalisation of higher education and labour market, accreditation can contribute to enhance recognition in other countries on account of the assurance it provides on the teacher professional qualification (Campos, in press *b*).

4. The system's state of development

By the end of the first quarter of 2001, 21 months after the setting out of the system, all the conditions that depended on the accreditation entity were already created to allow for accreditation application; the duration of this period of preparation of the system's structuring documents was due to their having been built on a widely socially participated basis, as it will be explained further on. It has also been necessary to wait for the Government to define teacher professional performance profiles; this happened in August 2001, when some profiles were published: the general profile common to all teachers and the specific profiles for pre-school teachers and primary education teachers (first cycle of basic education). This has made possible to announce the acceptance of accreditation applications for programmes preparing pre-school teachers and primary school teachers, having the teacher education institutions been given a seven months preparation period. This way, by the end of April 2002, the accreditation entity had recorded 66 application dossiers corresponding to all the existing ongoing courses: 33 "licenciatura" programmes destined to prepare pre-school teachers and the remaining 33 destined to prepare primary education teachers. The appreciation subcommittees were also constituted, which, after having participated in several preparation workshops, have already started their work.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The political importance and attention paid in Portugal to the process of recognition of the teacher professional qualification, envisaged as the one some individual possesses or the one some programme awards, haven't been constant over the last decades. It's now time to examine the evolution undertaken to identify the main factors in the origin of the setting out of such a specific recognition system and to understand the methodology its development has followed, as well as the power exerted by the different actors in this process.

1. Emergence of the need for this system

In what concerns the political analysis of this issue, in the latest forty years we can distinguish three periods that correspond to different overall goals for basic and secondary education and to different roles the Ministry of Education has played in relation to teacher education:

- (i) up to mid 70's
- (ii) up to mid 90's
- (iii) present times

1.1. Selective and elitist education; teacher education under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education; recognition considered as unnecessary

The first period corresponds to a selective and elitist education and to the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education over teacher education.

This way, until mid 70's, the State didn't need to recognise educational programmes as teacher professional qualification because it was the direct responsible for institutions' management and for the processes leading to the acquisition of such qualification. Primary education teachers were prepared in the Normal Schools governed by the Ministry of Education. Secondary education teachers were admitted to the teaching job and only some years later some of them were provided with a specific teacher training programme also organised by the Ministry of Education and carried out in only a few Normal Gymnasium Schools that ended with a "State Examination", thus certifying each individual teacher with professional qualification.

In this period the following should be highlighted:

- (i) The entity responsible for teacher education, in this case, the Educational Public Administration, certifies graduates' professional qualification; as it is well-known there are policies under which both responsibilities – that of providing qualification and that of certifying – are separate, although the teacher education institutions can participate in certification together with other entities; the principle "the one who qualifies is the one who certifies" has continued in Portugal up to nowadays;
- (ii) Public recognition of programmes as teaching qualification was not necessary because the Ministry of Education directly organised and governed the qualifying education;
- (iii) In secondary education little attention has been paid to the quality of the specific teacher training programmes, as only a small percentage could afford to get it – it should be stressed that this would happen many years after having started teaching – corresponding to a mechanism linked to the conditions of employment rather than to the adequacy of qualifications to the demands of the teaching performance. Graduates by the few existing university programmes created by the Ministry of Education with an identical curriculum academic structure more or less automatically recognised as academic teaching qualification (the expression "proper teaching qualification" – and not professional teaching qualification – has been stamped) have

been enough to ensure a selective and elitist secondary education attended by a small percentage of the corresponding age group;

- (iv) The first type of recognition of teacher qualifications was that of the academic programmes as "proper" teaching qualifications, carried out through an automatic or summary process; until recently and maybe nowadays, within the context of education, to most people, even those with significant public responsibilities in this sector, the expression "teacher qualifications" means "proper teaching qualifications" and the recognition of teacher qualifications means recognition of "proper teaching qualifications"; yet, during the latest thirty years over 300 higher education programmes have already been created and implemented, recognised as teacher professional qualification.

1.2. Massification of school education; teacher education under the responsibility of higher education autonomous institutions; nominalistic recognition

The second period is characterised by the massification of school education and by a shift in the responsibility of teacher education to higher education institutions where several changes have been occurring which, by the end of this period, will raise the need for the setting out of a more rigorous system for the recognition of teacher professional qualifications.

The growing massification of post primary education starting in late 60's has caused the need for an accelerated recruitment of a higher number of people to ensure the teaching activity; as a result there was an increase in the percentage of people performing the teaching activity with no professional title and with increasingly insufficient qualifications, even in academic terms (ironically named as "sufficient" by law).

The union pressure towards the professionalisation of teachers before starting the teaching activity has increased, even in secondary education (mainly because of economic consequences and job security). Moreover, awareness has been emerging, although at a slow pace, that massification of school population would require a better qualified teaching labour force. At the same time, the trend has arrived to Portugal of shifting the responsibility for teacher professional education to higher education institutions (a phenomenon internationally known as the "universitisation" of teacher education) which has deserved special acceptance in recently created new Universities in search of a specific identity in relation to the classic ones (Coimbra, Lisboa and Porto).

All these factors, in addition to others, have contributed not only for the building up of the political and social acceptance of the need to professionally qualify secondary education teachers, before starting their activity, but also to the emergence of a university supply in most teaching areas, even in classic universities.

Transference of all the components of secondary teachers' education to the university education was followed by transference of teacher education for pre-school and basic education to recently created vocational higher education and to universities as well. Initial teacher education has therefore ceased to be directly organised and governed by the services of the Ministry of Education, with the responsibility being transferred to higher education institutions, as had happened in the USA several decades before, and has been happening in other European countries. In Portugal, competence to certify graduates' professional qualification was also attributed to higher education institutions; the principle under which "the one who qualifies is the one who certifies" has been kept on. As it is well known this is not what happens in all countries; the international tradition in this matter is the one of external certification mostly available only to graduates from programmes recognised as adequate to assure professional teacher professional qualification.

Meanwhile, in a short period, some changes have occurred in higher education, some of which should be highlighted: own massification; recognition of autonomy, not only scientific

but also pedagogic; and the proliferation of private operators. These phenomena have also influenced initial teacher education programmes which nowadays ascend to about 330 and represent about 20% of the total number of higher education programmes giving access to the first academic degree. Up to nowadays, corresponding to these changes, there hasn't been a credible system of public regulation for higher education and not even for teacher education programmes.

It is true that “universitisation” of teacher education has been accompanied by the definition of a governmental policy framing the organisation of programmes; the existence of a specific policy for these programmes, besides the overall policy to be applied to all higher education, is unique in the Portuguese scenery. The justification for this specific policy lies in the existence of a policy concerning the very content of basic and secondary education. This specific teacher education policy is mainly constituted of guidelines of a qualitative nature, whose implementation, however, is not susceptible of being evaluated through classical checking methods characteristic of public administration.

In this period the following should be stressed:

- (i) Recognition as teacher professional qualification of higher education supply has been made necessary. It was necessary to know which higher education programmes would see their graduates accepted by the Ministry of Education, both as the tutelage instance of basic and secondary education and as the greatest employer of teachers.
- (ii) The recognition process has, however, been diluted in the process leading to the programmes' State license to run as higher education degrees. This process was led by the Directorate of Higher Education, that did not take into consideration the fact of being teacher education programmes — which is understandable in a context of an urgent need for a high quantity of teachers with professional qualification and of fostering autonomous higher education supply, which presumably institutions would do using more adequate solutions than those existing before “universitisation”.
- (iii) Although the programmes to be recognised were all provided by higher education institutions, the separation of recognition governmental tutelage has been consecrated: higher education tutelage for those leading to *professional* qualifications and non higher education tutelage for those leading to "proper" qualifications, since it was still necessary to resort to people holding this last kind of qualifications.
- (iv) Therefore, in professional qualification recognition the same methodology has been settled as the ongoing one used for the recognition of "proper" qualifications: a *nominalistic* methodology based on the name of the programmes or the subjects and on the assumption that these designations always report to identical realities.

1.3. Quality mass school education; teacher education as professionals; qualitative recognition

As the 90's passed by and most conditions of access to school had been ensured, success of a greater number of students in ever higher education levels started to be a matter of more evident social concern. This aim for a quality mass school education has direct implications on teacher professional performance, which is not that of a civil servant or technician but rather that of a professional and raises new demands to their preparation.

Although the changes that have occurred in the previous period have significantly contributed to solve the quantitative issues of teacher education, doubts have arisen as for the qualitative similarity of the qualifications the different institutions certify the same teaching activity, and as for their adequacy to the demands of the teaching activity, with added doubts driven from the new demands quality mass education was arising. Competition among higher education institutions due to a growing decrease in the demand for school teachers and in the number of students applying to higher education led them to begin echoing these doubts themselves.

No wonder then that in the second half of this decade new recognition policies for teacher qualifications have emerged. These policies continued not to call for the system of external certification of each graduate's qualification, put aside after 25th April 1974; however, they formally announced a specific system for higher education programme recognition as teacher professional qualification.

From these policies' first measure defined in 1995 some aspects should be highlighted:

- (i) programme recognition as teacher professional qualification comes to be based on this specific analysis;
- (ii) this analysis has a framework constituted by the set of subjects and respective workload that should be embodied in the programme study plan preparing for the same type of qualification.

A change in Government having in the meantime taken place, the legal document that consecrated these policy measures was suspended and another new project started which, however, maintained this new recognition system. Yet, the National Council of Education issued a negative advice on it because, in its opinion, it was based on the name of the subjects and didn't, therefore, actually judge on the substance of the qualification provided and consequently on their adequacy to the demands of the teaching performance.

That Council recommended that recognition should be based on the methodology of programmes' professional accreditation; identical recommendation came from the Council of Rectors of the Portuguese Universities. It should be right away stressed that maybe because of little tradition in such a methodology in Portugal, because of unfamiliarity with the way it is undertaken in other countries and because of corporate and economic interests, thus protected, even nowadays there are people who consider this methodology identical to the nominalistic one defined in 1995, therefore claiming it should be implemented in the same way.

It was in this context that the Government set out, in 1998, the accreditation entity and, in 1999, the accreditation system, both outlined in the second part of this case study.

Therefore, the following factors, among others, have contributed to the emergence of a system for the accreditation of teacher education:

- (i) The fast massification and privatisation of higher education, simultaneously with its greater autonomy in the decision to run and implement programmes, have arisen doubts as for the comparability of the professional qualification provided by all the programmes intended to prepare for the same teaching area, and as for the evidence that the analysis of the names of programmes and their subjects (which have ceased to be "passwords", probably univocal as when there were only a few) as well as of their respective workloads would not be enough for the purpose; will, for instance, all programmes qualifying to be a teacher of Maths in secondary education provide students with a similar professional qualification or will there rather be significant unbalances among them?
- (ii) In addition to eventual unbalances which is urgent to avoid, the lack of a culture of teacher professional qualification in this field in higher education institutions and the emergence of evidence on the graduates insufficient professional preparation (for instance, not being able to teach children how to read and write, even though they have learned plenty of linguistic theories) began to arise suspicions as for the adequacy of the qualifications provided by higher education institutions to the demands of the teaching activity, (Campos 2002, chap.3); if it is true that, in the first case, comparison among programmes is at stake, it is also true that the issue here is the one of the comparison of programmes to an external criterion.
- (iii) These doubts as for the substance of the qualification provided by the programmes emerge in a moment when, on the one hand, there began to be a surplus in programme and graduate supply (it is an international constant that requirements on

the quality of teacher professional qualifications are more or less rigorous depending on the mismatch of supply and demand of teachers) and, on the other hand, previous political concern about massification of access to school education began to be replaced by a concern about the quality of mass education, which implies new demands for the professional performance and qualification of teachers (Campos 2002, chap. 2).

That is, there was a need for regulation of the full, or almost full, autonomy in the certification of teacher professional qualification for basic and secondary education, thus putting an end to the situation of complete deregulation of the process of public recognition of teacher qualifications.

2. The implementation strategy of the accreditation system

The development of a new system for the recognition of teacher qualification programmes is not a mere technical and rational process, but rather one of cultural and political change. This new system, that of accreditation, does, in fact, mean a significant change for higher education institutions: it implies new practices and comes into conflict with some of their values and with the power they share among them and with society. For the development of this system a strategy has been implemented of a *wide social participation* in the setting out and implementation of its structuring features and of *promotion of public debate on the culture of teacher professional education in higher education*. This strategy has contributed, among many higher education teachers (i) to smooth the understandable initial cautions towards the accreditation system, (ii) to help perceive its added value, creating positive expectations, and (iii) to promote their active participation in its implementation.

2.1. Wide social participation

The participation of the main social actors in the context of teacher education has been, by political option, a constant in the development and orientation of the system both in the phase of *preparation* of decision-making that has culminated in the setting out of the accreditation entity and of the accreditation system and in the phase of its *implementation*.

In the first phase, the Government set out a Task Force to prepare a proposal about the accreditation entity and the accreditation system. It was chaired by an independent individuality, appointed by the Government, and included a Council of Rectors' representative (which has been represented by the Vice-president, the launching mentor of engineering programme accreditation some years before), a representative from the Council of Polytechnic Institutes (which has been represented by its President), representatives from departments of the Ministry of Education (departments for basic, secondary and higher education and staff management), and by two teachers from universities linked to teacher education.

In the preparation of their proposals, approved by consensus, this Task Force disseminated preliminary versions and organised public debates with the participation of representatives from teacher education institutions and teacher associations.

On its turn, after having transformed these proposals into legal document project, the Government submitted it to the appreciation of higher education representative structures (Council of Rectors, Council of Polytechnic Institutes and Association of Private Higher Education Institutions), which came to give their agreement, with the exception of the latter, with some suggestions that wouldn't change the substance of the accreditation system devised.

It should be stressed that the accreditation entity itself, under the Task Force's suggestion, has come to be governed by a General Council constituted, as mentioned before, by representatives from several social institutions.

In the phase of implementation, preliminary versions of all the structuring documents of the accreditation system (Regulation, Standards, Application Guidelines, Appreciation Guidelines, Teacher Professional Profiles) have also been widely disseminated, with hundreds of appreciation reports been received; these documents have also been the object of a great debate in numerous seminars organised for this purpose in several places in the country, always accounting for wide participation. Final versions have been approved by wide consensus in the INAFOP General Council, with the exception of the Profiles, approved by the Government by Decree-Law, without changing the proposals presented by the accreditation entity.

2.2. Public debate on the culture of teacher professional qualification in higher education

Higher education has no tradition in teacher professional education. Therefore, for this purpose, it has confined to add the *academic tradition* of the university programmes (that ensure preparation in a certain subject) to the Normal Schools' *technical tradition* in class teacher education programmes. The fact is that this adding solution does not fit quality mass education demands for the preparation of teachers as highly qualified professionals. Consequently, the challenge basic and secondary education places to higher education is that of the construction of a teacher education culture as highly qualified professionals, and no longer as civil servants or technicians (Campos 2002, chap.3). Higher education institutions are committed to this task — however, it is fair to recognise that there is still a long way to go and that each institution's experience in this process is different.

Although the core mission of INAFOP is to judge on the adequacy of programmes to give guarantee to society, it has been considered as important to foster interchange of ideas and practices and debate on a teacher education culture in higher education, viewing teachers as professionals. This interchange and debate is intended to promote awareness of the changes to be undertaken, as well as of the resistance arisen from current logic of organisation and functioning in higher education institutions — this way contributing to the perception and acceptance of the meaning of accreditation and of its added value for such a change.

In this context, without forgetting the contribution public debate brought to the preliminary versions of the structuring documents, several seminars have also been organised, widely participated, on some aspects of the mentioned culture, which have also been disseminated through INAFOP's web page and through publication by a commercial editor of their resulting texts. With the same purpose, some further texts on teacher education produced in other countries have been also disseminated through the web page.

3. The power exerted by social actors over the development of the system

3.1. The desired balance of the different actors' power

Although there are plenty of social actors with interests in the definition of who is properly qualified to teach, it can be stated that, considering the experience in several countries, mainly three of them do actually exert power in that sense:

- (i) the State (basic and secondary education tutelage, responsible for its national curriculum and often the greatest employer of teachers);
- (ii) teacher education institutions (including students), and
- (iii) basic and secondary education teachers.

In Portugal, during the last decades, with the shifting of the responsibility for teacher education to higher education institutions, and with the simultaneous recognition of their scientific and pedagogical autonomy, the State ceased to exert power in the same way it traditionally did, without having built a new consequent form of exerting it to assure society on the due adequacy of the education programmes provide and graduates acquire. Higher education institutions came to exert, almost exclusively, the power to define the qualifying programmes and the certified graduates. Contrarily to what happens in other professions, school teachers have not exerted real power in this matter.

The situation where society is in the best position to obtain better guarantees on the qualification of their teachers is maybe the one where there is an interdependent use of these three powers. This is not surely the case when only one of them is exerted, and much less is the situation where the power exerted is that of the institutions which simultaneously ensure society a double function: providing teacher education and exclusively assuring its adequacy to the needs of social demand.

The development of the accreditation system aimed at building up a new configuration in the use of the power these three social actors have, departing from a situation of almost complete public deregulation of the process of defining teacher qualifications.

3.2. The social actors' expected behaviour

The initiative to change the system was taken by the State through the Government, the only one with real power for the purpose. The probabilities of success would most likely depend on the Government's consciously assuming the system, and not only the Minister who has proposed it, and on exerting its power throughout the first phase of the system's development process, which would be increasingly more difficult if the Minister or the Government changed — even because there was the need to manage with the coordinating structures of higher education public institutions the policy conditions that had ensured their support to the launching of the system.

From higher education institutions, opposition and support were simultaneously expected: opposition mainly from professors because they held the power almost exclusively; opposition from providing institutions, mainly those in fear that their programme supply could be put into question; support mainly from the institutions' governing boards to the extent to which they would perceive the advantages of an eventual decrease in the number of programmes to be supplied by other concurrent institutions (which would, anyway, be difficult under their double condition of professor and member of a governing board); support, once again, in case they would welcome the reinforcement of the power of the institution against the power of the individual members of the academic corporation, organised around knowledge fields, the source of resistance to the pedagogical autonomy of the institution in developing programmes having teacher professional profiles as a reference.

From basic and secondary education teachers only a slow and progressive consolidation of the conditions was foreseeable that would allow them to exert the power expected from them but not yet conquered. There is no public professional association representing them, moreover within the universe of teachers there are several divisions that make the exercise of power very difficult, among which two of them stand out: to this universe belong the teacher “trainers” and teacher “trainees” with different interests in this matter; besides, for this universe there are several union and pedagogical professional associations. On the other hand, although school teachers are the ones, in addition to the State, that possess

high legitimacy to pronounce themselves on the needs for qualification demand, unfortunately, they do not yet enjoy social credibility enough for the purpose, namely among the supplying institutions, specially if they are universities.

3.3. The social actors' actual behaviour

Intent to rely on the system for the professional accreditation of programmes to get public recognition for them as teacher professional qualification came from the Ministry of Education on the occasion of a movement within higher education institutions, with a most lively participation of their students, in which some of them questioned the capacity of others to ensure an adequate qualification for teachers. Government wanted teacher education for lower secondary education (which in Portugal belongs to basic compulsory education constituting its 3rd cycle) to be also provided by Teacher Education Colleges, which already ensured initial teacher education for the lower school grades; the idea was implicit that these Colleges were better qualified to prepare *curriculum* teachers for basic education (thus contributing to enhance success in a mass school) than universities, which would rather prepare *subject teachers*.

This governmental initiative caused reaction from universities and their students, which in order to avoid this concurrent opening up of supply, argued that Teacher Education Colleges had no capacity to prepare these teachers with quality. Colleges and their students counter-argued they were better enabled to ensure teacher education for basic education as a whole. Then, the Minister proposed that all the programmes, whatever the institution wishing to supply them, should be submitted to an identical process of professional accreditation to be carried out by an independent entity, which would assure that only the programmes adequate to the teaching performance demands would run. This calmed the students down and so did the institutions, at least apparently. Universities accepted the cost of accreditation hoping this way proliferation of concurrent programmes would be avoided; for Teacher Education Colleges, integrated in Polytechnic institutions, this was the cost to be paid to increase their supply.

Although the professional accreditation system for initial teacher education has its justification in the above-mentioned reasons, the truth is its development was captive from the historical circumstances in which the political decision has been taken.

In the years that followed the setting out of the accreditation entity and system, several facts happened susceptible of creating the feeling among education institutions that Government was not sticking to the conditions for this political pact — which has partly come from the fact that in a few years three Ministers of Education followed the one who pushed this social pact forward, although the Prime Minister was the same.

In fact, the legal possibility for Teacher Education Colleges to provide teacher education programmes for the 3rd cycle of basic education has never been regulated. As a consequence, Government-depending conditions for the accreditation of programmes preparing subject teachers have not been implemented as well. Such conditions are the definition of teacher qualification areas and their respective performance profiles.

In the absence of Government's accomplishment of the political pact conditions that lead the institution leaders to accept the accreditation system, no wonder these have started to see no immediate interest in it and even to attack it, hoping then to lead the Government to stick to its promises. That's what happened with the university leaders in the first case and with the polytechnic leaders in the second.

The Council of Polytechnics met up with powerful allies in higher education individualities who had never accepted accreditation or who would only accept it if it followed a methodology close to the aforementioned nominalistic one, instead of the internationally consensual parameters characterising it.

The two favourite arguments were, at a first moment, the incompatibility of accreditation with higher education *autonomy* and, at a second moment, that of duplication of functions with higher education *evaluation* system.

In fact, it is well known that university autonomy is referred to its competencies and that, nowhere in the world, those include dealing with the regulation of the access to a professional activity, either for engineers, architects or teachers. Besides, critics themselves know, and have proclaimed, there are deep unbalances in the qualifications provided by the different teacher education institutions, which even taken together have no power to overcome this situation by themselves. And it is also clear that accreditation application is only necessary to the higher education institutions interested that their programmes become externally recognised as teacher professional qualification and that they become the qualification certifying entities themselves.

As for the Portuguese system for higher education evaluation, it is well known that it does not possess the characteristics internationally considered as indispensable to be recognised as a professional accreditation system. And this is because it has focused on the not less indispensable mission to support internal evaluation of institutions. There wouldn't be any sense in performing this mission and making believe the other is performed as well; besides, it is generally considered as impossible to perform efficiently both missions simultaneously. One cannot perform the function of *consultant* of institutions in supporting them to fulfil their responsibility to build up programmes' quality and to pay society public accountability, and simultaneously being the *auditor* of those accounts and assuring society that same quality. Besides, in Europe, in the countries where the need for academic accreditation has arisen in the context of the implementation of the Bologna process, the higher education evaluation systems similar to the Portuguese are not being recognised as adequate for this purpose (Campos, in press a).

All these have only been normal positions of power exerted by higher education institutions. In fact, accreditation may constitute a threat to corporate, labour and economic interests, which are this way protected under the pretext of defending public interest. The important is that the Ministry, in whose responsibility the defence of public interest falls, namely that of the quality of basic and secondary education, does effectively exert its own power* even because, in this matter, the profession is not able to exert it in an efficient way.

* Having elections for the Parliament taken place, from which resulted a new Government, Law no 16-A/2002, May 31, establishes the extinction of the accreditation entity, INAFOP, cancelling the ongoing appreciation process of the accreditation applications from 66 initial teacher education programmes. The specific reasons for this political decision have not yet been publicly announced.

IV. FINAL REMARKS

On ending up the description and the framing of Portuguese system for teacher education professional accreditation some final remarks are worthy to be highlighted.

1. The social perception on the need for a more qualitatively demanding system for the recognition of the teachers' performance competence is sharper when the State transfers direct responsibility on teacher education to higher education institutions and they simultaneously get autonomous, massified and privatised. On the other hand, public assumption on the possibility to increase rigour tends to occur only when there is a surplus in teacher education supply, either because it has boomed or because the number of school students decreased.
2. The need for such a system will be perceived in an even sharper way if in addition to that there is, on the one hand, a clear and socially supported political goal to achieve a quality mass education and if, on the other hand, there is the understanding not only that such a goal is not compatible with a teacher performance as technicians or civil servants but also that without an external pressure higher education is not able to build up the needed culture of qualification of teachers as professionals.
3. The way in which each country and in each historical moment deals with the problem of public recognition of teacher competence and with the configuration of the political solution consequently chosen are in fact tightly related to two aspects: on the one hand, to the standing and policies of basic, secondary and higher education and, on the other hand, to teacher education supply and to the teachers labour market. Therefore, solutions should be context based, avoiding a-critical benchmarking with systems and methodologies eventually considered as good practice in other countries.
4. On its turn, the process of decision-making and implementation of the solutions chosen depends on the power the social actors, at that very historical moment, will be able to exert and on the sense they will give to it, among which the State stands out and others follow such as the teacher education institutions, including teachers and students, and the organisations representing basic and secondary education teachers. It doesn't seem desirable that the power to influence the recognition of teachers' competence resides exclusively, or is highly concentrated, in only one of these actors; moreover, with the aim to build up a balance of interdependent powers, public incentives seem to be necessary to increase the power to be exerted by teachers of basic and secondary education.
5. To solve the policy issue outlined at the beginning of this case study, the option for the development of a system for the professional accreditation of teacher education programmes supplied by autonomous higher education requires a change in practices, in values and in power shared among these institutions, which ends up in breaking out understandable oppositions. That's why one should bare in mind that, besides the indispensable power balance of actors (among which the State will probably be the only one having the possibility to contravene significant unbalanced situations), merely technical and rationalist strategies for the implementation of the system would surely be insufficient.
6. The option to accredit programmes, trusting in the certification of graduates' professional qualification carried out by the teacher education institutions, has limitations regarding the expected contribution to guarantee the professional competence of those admitted to the teaching activity; and more so the least the institutions themselves feel they can account for their outcomes and they are sure of their graduates' competence both at the end of the programme and during their future professional performance; this is why the existence, in each institution, of an adequate device for programmes' monitoring and internal evaluation is a *sine qua non* condition for a trustworthy accreditation.
7. It is in the context of the limits to the guarantee given by the accreditation system and of the oppositions this causes that the alternative arises to call for an external certification system of each teacher's professional competence. However, this one also has well-

known limitations, namely due to difficulties in building up reliable methodologies, mainly if they do not include the observation of teacher performance during a long period. This is why one of the alternatives might be to rely upon both systems in a complementary way. Or otherwise to focus on the system that at each historical context seems able to give a more significant contribution for the solution of the policy issue as it is equated at that moment.

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Annexes

- *Standards in Initial Teacher Education*
- *School teacher general teaching profile*
- *Pre-school and primary school teachers specific teaching profiles*
- *Candidature guidelines for accreditation of initial teacher education programmes*
- *Appreciation Guidelines for the Applications to the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programmes*

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