

SUPERVISION IN CONTINUOUS TEACHER TRAINING

Supervisión en la formación continua de profesores

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SUMMARY: The concept of Supervision is not new, however, in the XXI century, it has been reframed and gained a more relevant status in Portugal, because it operates in a changing context of the exercise of the teaching profession, emerging associated with a new paradigm of teachers' intervention and action.

With regard, continuing education is assumed as a determining factor, and therefore the present study searched for i) evidence of implementation of supervising

processes at School Association Training Centres (CFAES); ii) information on the nature of supervision practices and iii) perceptions/opinions of those involved in the CFAES, in order to establish the concept of supervision of its stakeholders.

We followed a multiple case study design, selected and characterized five CFAES geographically dispersed in the Portuguese mainland (North, Centre, Lisbon and South), we developed instruments for opinion collection, with a sample of directors, trainers and trainees with a mixed methodology: qualitative through interview with the directors of the CFAE's and quantitative (the predominant approach) through a questionnaire applied to trainees and trainers (who do not accumulate those two functions in the period of analysis). Results of both the interviews and the questionnaires were presented by category.

The relevance of pedagogical supervision in order to present a recognized and respected *praxis* is therefore assumed, with the purpose of making it essential to the efficient and effective balance of the Education and Training system(s) in Portugal.

Key words: Supervision; Continuing teacher training; Supervising practice; Teacher Training Center

RESUMEN: El concepto de Supervisión Pedagógica no es reciente, sin embargo, en el siglo XXI, ha ganado nuevos significados y un estatuto de mayor relevancia en Portugal, en la medida en que forma parte de un contexto de cambio del ejercicio de la profesión docente, surgiendo asociado a un nuevo paradigma de intervención y acción de los profesores.

En este sentido, la formación continua se asume como un factor determinante para el mismo, por lo que en este estudio se han buscado i) evidencias de la operacionalización de procesos de supervisión de Centros de Formación de Asociación de Escuelas (CFAE); ii) información sobre la naturaleza de esa práctica de supervisión y iii) percepciones/opiniones de los implicados en la comparación de los CFAE con el fin de establecer el concepto de supervisión de sus intervinientes.

Siguiendo un diseño de estudio de caso múltiple, se seleccionaron y caracterizaron cinco CFAE geográficamente dispersos en Portugal continental (Norte, Centro, Lisboa y Sur). Se elaboraron instrumentos que reducimos a encuestas para recopilación de opinión, en una muestra constituida por directores, formadores y alumnos, con metodología mixta: cualitativa para la encuesta por entrevista a los directores de los CFAE y con predominio cuantitativo para la encuesta a los alumnos en prácticas y los formadores tomados en la exclusividad de su figura (o perfil o función). Los resultados fueron presentados por categoría de la encuesta en la entrevista y en el cuestionario.

Se asume, así, la importancia de la supervisión pedagógica desde la perspectiva de la presentación de una *praxis* reconocida y respetada, de modo que se vuelva indispensable al equilibrio eficiente y eficaz del sistema de Educación y Formación en Portugal.

Palabras clave: Supervisión; Formación Continua del Profesorado; Práctica Supervisiva; Centro de Formación de Asociación de Escuelas (CFAE).

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT AND CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF PEDAGOGICAL SUPERVISION

The present article presents data from one of the axes of a research project which is underway at the Centre for Studies in Human Development of the Portuguese Catholic University. That project aims to study models and processes of pedagogical supervision, presupposing a close relation among education and training. This relation is all the more pertinent if we consider that:

It is the training's incumbency not only to introduce people in society and to train them on their rules and regulations, but also to assume the mission of establishing a reflexive and critical distance with it. Training always has to be self-training and encompasses more than knowledge. [...] [it] acts on behaviors and actions of people as a structuring and dimensioning force (García, 2005: 50).

Thus, the project in question aims to analyze some of the theoretical models on pedagogical supervision, and to know practices which confirm, counteract or nullify those models, focusing on the importance and meaning of supervision within curriculum development and with expression on both formal and non-formal education. The empirical dimension encompasses the period between 2010 and 2015. The present article focuses on the supervision of teacher training, specifically continuous training, which is framed by a juridical regimen and made available at the CFAE.

The study of those training centers focused on i) the evidence of the assumption of the supervisor role by the continuous teacher training trainer; ii) the knowledge of those practices and iii) the opinions of the main stakeholders, specifically: directors of teacher training centers (CFAE), trainers and trainees.

We also intended to detect and characterize ongoing supervision processes which were determinant to the formation and development of professional learning communities, to the benefit of the pedagogical practices and the development of the teachers' identity and their professionalism.

It is a fact that the concept of supervision when applied to teaching has a strong potential in the field of education. However it is also important to keep in mind that each interpretation of this concept encloses underlying conceptions of society, culture, public administration, educational philosophy and policy, theories and conceptions on teacher training and the school. Admitting that 'supervision of training' corresponds to an initial moment of teachers' continuous training which establishes the transition between initial training and the professional exercise, Nóvoa (2002: 41-48), as well as Alarcão and Tavares (2010: 3-5) stress, on the one hand that the concept under attention has been the target of a progressively more consistent acceptance in the field of teacher training in general, and on the other hand is diminishingly used and used in ways that detract from its fundamental role in the improvement of the teachers' activity.

When considering a diachronic perspective, all definitions connect supervision to the guidance of the pedagogical practice by someone, preferably someone more experienced and informed (Alarcão & Tavares, 2010), which highlights the fact that it is strongly determined by the supervisor's vision. It is the supervisor's role to assume a role «of one who enters a process in order to understand it inside and out, to penetrate it with their gaze and to see beyond it in a prospective vision based on strategic thought» (Mintzberg, 1995, In Alarcão & Tavares, 2010: 45). However, supervision is sometimes related to inspective diligences or in a restrictive perspective, associated to the training of future teachers or of teachers in the early stages of their careers – internship or pedagogical practice (Canário, Alves & Rolo, 2001). Furthermore, Gaspar, Seabra and Neves (2012: 31) point to the fact that in the pedagogical field the concept under analysis has traditionally been limited to the initial teacher training and in virtue of the changes to the vision of the school and the teachers' role and in particular of the sense and meaning of the teaching profession, the concept of supervision has been widened to encompass the school context. It is thus framed in a school understood as a learning organization, extending its reach to the whole of the pedagogical action and being considered as a fundamental piece of school management: «This is at the heart of creating in schools a culture of education and training for all, which is an essential prerequisite of applying in schools the lessons of 'the learning organizations' so that schools become true learning communities» (Hargreaves, 2000: 86). This broad and encompassing dimension of supervision is pointed out by Garmston, Lipton and Kaiser (2002: 88), when they consider it is perceived «as a mediating activity and not as a parent process constitutes the key to the emergence of new forms of supervision».

Nevertheless, in the scope of this project, the focus is placed particularly on the relevance of the supervision practices to teacher training and consequently, as Gaspar, Pereira, Oliveira and Teixeira (2015: 148) state, «the validity of the teacher training model which prepares for the exercise of the teaching profession (initial training), as well as of the continuity to that training (continuous training), grow in importance» since, quoting Alvarez and Maroto (2013: 28),

a teacher who permanently cultivates their theoretical training extracts ideas to construct their pedagogical convictions, establishing relations between what they study and their educational activity, committing themselves with social transformation values and developing practical commitments in their everyday affairs to intervene more justly in teaching and implicate themselves with school innovation in a more illustrated sense than by mere common sense.

Thus, supervision will be assumed as a resource passible of concurring in a determinant fashion to the promotion of the quality of the service provided by the School and to revitalize teachers' professional motivation and inclusive-ly reinforcing their investment on the search for innovation. In reality «[...] we should state that it is more than necessary to reflect and propose measures counting on the coordination and active, responsible and committed participation of

all administrations, local corporations, associations, teachers, and of society in its whole» (Ruiz & Sánchez, 2013: 41). We are before «a deep, reflexive and self-critical vision of the surrounding context [...]; a vision with the capacity to foresee; a hindsight; and a second vision to promote what one wishes to institute, to avoid what is unwanted and to recognize what has happened and should not have» (Gaspar, Seabra & Neves, 2012: 30).

We may therefore state that the field of supervision has a nuclear meaning as it can promote the improvement of the services' products' and institutions' quality, extending its scope of intervention to the development of the organization and to the collective of educational agents. This project is strategically developed according to three axes: i) supervision in teacher training, ii) supervision in non-formal curricula; iii) supervision in online distance teaching, the first of which was selected as support to this article.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF TEACHERS' CONTINUOUS TRAINING IN PORTUGAL

García (2005: 63), referring Garrido (1998: 31), states that «continuous teacher training could occupy the center of the educational policies on teachers. The quality of education demands, over the next decades, a particular attention to this matter».

When focusing this article on the continuous training of teachers in Portugal we will mobilize some of the main legal references which frame and sustain it. It is mandatory to call on Law n.º 46/86, of October 14th, Law of Bases of the Educational System, item e) of the 3rd article, where it is explained that the educational system is organized in order to «develop the capacity for work and to provide, based on a solid general education, a specific training towards the occupation on the work place which allows the individual to pay their contribution to the progress of society according to their interests, capacities and vocation». It also consecrates on the n. 1 of the 8th article the right to continuous training to «all educators, teachers and other professionals of education». Since the publication of the Law of Bases of the Educational System (Law n.46/86 of October 14th) teacher and educator training in Portugal has been recognized as both a right and a duty. With the publishing of the Statute of the Teachers' Career in 1990, although continuous training is not mandatory, it becomes a requirement for career progression of educators, and basic and secondary education teachers. According to Estrela (2001: 136-137) this may lead to «detrimental effects on continuous training in function of the need to accumulate [training] credits to advance in the career [...]» and to a «relative failure of the Centers of School Associations' promotion of such training» (idem).

Sequentially the Statutes of the teachers' career, Law-decree n. 139-A/90 of April 28th establishes in article 16th (corroborated by article 3rd of regulatory decree n. 26/2012, of February 21st, which regulates the teachers' assessment and evaluation) establishes that teachers' continuous training in Portugal be organized, made available and implemented according to the training plans elaborated by the

schools or school clusters according to their assessment of teacher training needs. Individual training projects of the teachers' own initiative and contributing to their professional development should also be considered.

In the same sense, the teachers' professional appreciation by means of an investment in continuous training is one of the priority measures according to the Law-decree n. 22/2014 of February 11th – juridical regimen of teachers' continuous training (RJFCP). This diploma states that the organization and management of teaching, as well as educational success, constitute the core of the teaching activity and that the continuous training system is guided toward the improvement of the quality of teachers' performance and is a requisite for career progression. This document also defined the areas of training, specifically: Area of teaching – that is, areas of knowledge that constitute curricular subjects of the various levels of teaching; Pedagogical and didactic practice of teaching – namely training in classroom organization and management; General educational and educational organizations; School administration and educational administration; Pedagogical leadership, coordination and supervision; Ethical and deontological training; and Information and communication technologies applied to specific didactics or to school management.

The modalities of training are also defined, and may be constituted as: training courses, training workshops, circles of study and short term actions.

This document considers as training entities the CFAES, as well as higher education institutions, the training centers associated with nonprofit professional or scientific associations, the central services of the Ministry of Education and Science as well as other nonprofit public, private or cooperative entities, accredited to that effect.

3. METHODOLOGY

Keeping in mind the previously clarified aims within this research, five teacher training centers were selected – in this case, five Portuguese training centers of school associations (CFAES) (the term schools is applied to both clusters of schools and non-aggregated schools), which constituted the sample for this study. This selection was based on criteria of convenience, related to the opportunity and proximity to each of the research team members commissioned with the task of gathering data. The geographical dispersion and comprehensiveness of the country's mainland was also taken into consideration – North (1 CFAE), Center (1 CFAE), Lisbon (1 CFAE) and South (2 CFAES) – admitting that this diversity might bring pertinent and more complete contributions to the characteristics under analysis and therefore provide more robust and consistent grounds to the study's general conclusions. The research followed a multiple case study design, gathering the necessary information for the research inferences.

The commitment to guard the identity of the training centers and of the study participants as well as the respect for ethical principals in the treatment of

information and data was respected, as recommended by Tuckman (1999). The identification of the training centers was therefore intentionally not disclosed in order to guarantee anonymity of all data and participants; the centers were referred to by their conventional codes: N01, C02, L03, A04 and AA05.

Data gathering was previously referred to a research framework that guided the research; data gathering was based on the reading and analysis of different types of documents and conduction of interviews. Having as reference the social and geographical dimensions, the design and organization of each center, several categories were analyzed and described, whenever possible, according to a comparative matrix. The elaboration of the inquiries was supported by data resulting from this first phase of data gathering and analysis. In this context, semi-structured interview script to be applied to the directors of the CFAES under study was produced, tested and reformulated. The interviews were then applied and recorded with the consent of each participant. Data gathered were transcribed and treated according to Bardin's (1977) conception of content analysis, resorting to NVivo software to support qualitative analysis by coding, categorization and questioning.

A survey by questionnaire was also developed, tested, improved and applied to a sample of trainers and trainees from each training center. These questionnaires were made available for the five CFAES under study through access to an online link. Questionnaires were supported by the google forms application and launched to all of the separate populations of trainees and trainers – that is, to all trainers or trainees who did not accumulate the roles of both trainee and trainer at the center and during the period in question.

Finally, the data gathered were treated with the help of the program *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) and interpreted by the team in relation to the research questions and searching for evidence to support the theoretical framing of the realities under study and the process of knowledge production.

4. CFAE: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING

Concerning their genesis, it is important to remember that the training centers emerged from the need to create structures to support teachers' updating and professional development in Portugal, as a result of the Law-decree n. 207/96 which framed the institutionalization of teachers' continuous training. In 2008 the Ministry of Education extinguished the CFAES then in existence, allegedly in order to ensure their sustainability, and led to the constitution of new centers. The country went from a network of 300 centers to one of 90 more encompassing centers. The CFAES under study were created in the sequence of this reorganization and in that same year.

Any one of these training centers is obliged to service extensive geographical areas, where their associated schools are located. Concerning continuous teacher training, those services can also be made available according to what is legally stipulated and regulated for each CFAE, to the private and cooperative schools in

the same geographical area. The legal framework in force during the period under analysis assumes it is the Ministry's duty to provide the centers with financing that ensures the necessary human and physical resources. Part of the schools' budget should therefore be allocated to teacher training, which in practice revealed to be hard to implement in light of the Portuguese laws of public accountancy. This lack of investment is, in the perspective of Blackburn and Moisan (1987), a constraint to the development of continuous training.

The schools associated with each center are important supports to the constitution of an internal pool of trainers and participate in the pedagogical commission and the promotion of the procedures inherent to the proposal/search for training actions, enrollment and frequency of the actions. On the other hand, the CFAES attend to the guidelines of the Scientific-Pedagogic Council of Continuous Training (CCPFC) and of the central services of the Ministry of Education. The CCPFC is commissioned with the accreditation of the centers and the training proposals, and the CFAES are gifted with pedagogical autonomy as defined by the RJFCP. The CFAES frequently establish protocols with other institutions aiming to optimize resource management and the quality of the training provision.

In general, the formative communities of the five CFAES under study impose concrete variables to each CFAE, such as the diversity of the school cultures of the teaching establishments involved, the different sociocultural contexts of the cities and regions where they are located and the extension of the geographical area imposed by the physical dispersion of the schools they serve.

The five CFAES under analysis serve the teaching and non-teaching staff (technical assistants, superior technics, and operational assistants) of the schools they are associated with, as well as the educational community. The most relevant target population is that of the teaching staff, towards whom the bulk of the training offered by the CFAE is directed, which relates to the number of teachers present in the schools, to the appraisal of the frequency of continuous training for teacher performance evaluation and to the fact that continuous teacher training is mandatory for teachers' career progression. This observation does not contradict the perception of a need for continuous training for the various dimensions of the career evidenced by this professional group of educational agents. It should be noted that Portuguese teachers have long experienced a period marked by the absence of career progression – from 30th August 2005 to 31st December 2007, and from January of 2011 onwards. This aspect has the consequence that practically all teachers have accumulated training credits, and there has been no funding for teachers' continuous training – although training should be free of charge whenever it is mandatory for each of the career brackets (point f, of article 33rd of Law-Decree n. 207/96 of November 2nd). Even thus, the CFAES continue to offer a diverse array of training offers, which in general gather a sufficient number of candidates to operate.

The structure of the training center is comprised of its direction and management organs, the pedagogic commission, the director and the council of accompaniment of the administrative and financial management. For the development of

their action, the centers rely on pedagogical, informatics and financial advisories, a training consultant and a secretariat.

The director represents the center, coordinates and manages the continuous training process of teachers from the associated schools. To that effect he/she promotes the identification of training needs and the elaboration of the training plan and the activity plan, is responsible for the organization of the training initiatives foreseen in those plans, and for the process of the trainees', actions' and training/activities plans' evaluation and assessment; ensures the articulation with other training entities namely higher education institutions in the local area and the contact network and proposes the allocation of funds necessary to the center's functioning. It is important to highlight that the pedagogic commission includes representatives from each of the associated schools.

The elaboration and approval of the center's budget project, as well as the budgetary control over the center's activity is an incumbency of the council for accompaniment of the administrative and financial management, and the secretariat is assured by a school management technical assistant from the host school or one of the associated schools, preferably full-time.

With regard the consultancies, the profiles, competencies and number of weekly hours attributed to each one are approved by the center's pedagogical commission, with the proposal from the director. They should include financial consultancy, belonging to the center's host school; pedagogical consultancy, given by one or more of the associated schools' teachers, and informatics consultancy, given by a teacher from the host school or the associated schools.

Finally, the training consultancy, when present, is given by a teacher with a relevant curriculum, by proposal of the center's pedagogical commission and deliberation by the CCPFC. In reality, the CFAES are propitious organizations to the emergence of a training which is closest to the teachers' and schools' concerns, as it establishes an organic connection with the schools.

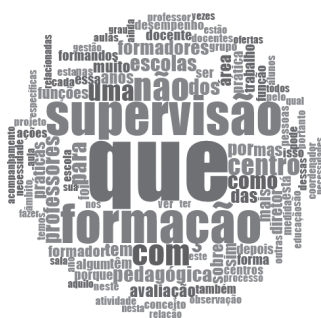
5. SUPERVISION AT THE CFAES: PERSPECTIVES OF THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

5.1. *CFAE Directors*

As a brief introduction, it is relevant to account on some traits that characterize the directors of the aforementioned CFAES. They are all 50 or more years old; three are male and two female and all of them have a vast professional experience. Three of them are in service as directors at a training center for more than twelve or more years, whereas two have played that role for less than five years. The directors of the centers under analysis hold academic degrees including doctorates, masters, and specialized training, mostly in the fields of training management and school administration, and therefore hold the preferential requisites for application to this position.

In relation to the questions of the interview, namely those inscribed in the blocs (i) perspectives on pedagogic supervision; (ii) teacher training in the domain of supervision; (iii) practices of pedagogic supervision of the trainers in teacher training contexts and (iv) practices of teaching practice supervision of the center's trainees, the directors' discourses allow for the identification of concept nuclei – training and supervision – and to point out connections which enable the coding according to the category system and in coherence with the study's objectives and its theoretical framework, as expressed in the following figure (Figure 1):

FIGURE 1
Nuclear concepts and respective connections
(search in the sources - wordle - NVivo)



Thus, applying the processes of coding and search in the program NVivo to the directors' words, the following system of «knots» was obtained¹ (Figure 2):

The treatment of the data reveals that the unanimousness concerning the pertinence and operability of supervision in continuous teacher training contrasts with the concept of supervision expressed by the directors, conceived as an activity centered on the teachers' professional development and the optimization of the teaching and learning processes:

- i) by the assessment of the repercussions of training on practice: «which is related also with the area of supervision and has to do with the evaluation of impact, that is, the articulation between the exercise of the teaching practice and [the processes of teaching in learning] in the classroom and the ways of assessing how the teacher training acquired by the teachers is reflected there [...] how the training was chosen, which one and with which effects, which effects have been manifested at the school, on the field and the real effects it has caused in the classroom...» (Director CFAE C02);

1. When analyzing the table, «sources» are the interviews and «references» is the number of occurrences of each «knot», corresponding to each category.

FIGURE 2
Category system (Knots - NVivo)

Nós			
Nome	Fontes	Referências	
Ações de formação em Supervisão Pedagógica		5	22
Ações SVP e relação ADD		4	8
Aplicabilidade conceito no CF		2	2
Apoio posterior do CF		1	2
Condições CF		1	1
Contexto de propostas de ações de formação em Supervisão Pedagógica		4	5
Duração funções CFAE		5	7
Duração funções exercidas		3	3
Funções exercidas		5	5
Opiniões e comportamentos de evitamento relativamente à SPV		1	1
Perceção de pertinência conceito supervisão na atividade do CF		5	10
Perceção práticas de Supervisão Pedagógica		5	38
Perfil formador Supervisão Pedagógica		4	4
Relação com Universidades		2	2
Satisfação com experiências Supervisão Pedagógica		4	4
Supervisão CF e relação escolas de origem		5	10
Supervisão objeto de estudo CF		4	21
SVP e regulação da prática letiva		5	6

ii) as an accompaniment of the training process itself: «only the systematic accompaniment of the process that is expected to produce impacts on results, can regulate this process in order to improve it» (Director CFAE A04) where «...in your practice you conduct your didactic and formative contacts. With whom? With the trainers, the teachers, other educational agents...» (Director CFAE L03).

The directors assume difficulties towards the exercise of a supervision activity concerning the impacts of training and the transference of learning to professional practice:

In abstract, in continuous training and in the CFAE's work concerning both trainers and trainees as well as in the role as director, there is something that has always been one of the limitations of the continuous training system and that intersects with the field of supervision and that has to do with the evaluation of impact, that is, the articulation between the exercise of the teaching practice and [...] how to assess how the training acquired by the teachers is reflected there and that is work that hasn't been done a lot and still isn't being done (Director CFAE C02).

Besides, as the director of CFAE N01 says, «We are very limited in the action we have as pedagogical supervision. We don't even hold any "power" over schools, so to speak, to exert that pedagogic supervision». To this acknowledgment of the difficulty to promote supervision practices in a consistent and encompassing way,

they add a reference to the assessment questionnaires filled by the trainees, the assistance of training moments as only elements of supervision of the trainers activity or the analysis of the work produced by the trainees as a supervision practice. Some directors highlight the efforts towards promoting supervision practices on their CFAE and point out several examples, namely those who try to promote collaborative work among teachers with whom continuous training is developed in the circle of studies modality, aimed at promoting the critical and reflexive analysis of their teaching and pedagogical practices.

Directors also referred to specific training on supervision fundamentally aimed at the schools' intermediate leadership structures and the development of training actions in the project or internship modality that focus on practical aspects of supervision and provide formative experiences of supervision among peers at the same school and one way of applying the concept and help undo prejudices and preconceptions.

Another situation of implementation of supervision which was presents refers to the observation of classes in the scientific and pedagogical dimension, framed in the current legislation concerning teacher performance evaluation, where the director assumes the roles of coordinating and managing the pool of external evaluators responsible for accompanying and watching the classes of the teachers under evaluation. The same happened in the case of one teacher who had a performance evaluation of «unsatisfactory», which requires accompaniment by the evaluator in order to improve his performance. In all these instances, the CFAE invests on the training of teachers and evaluators and accompanies the consequent supervision processes.

In this study the directors also consider they apply supervision practices within the responsibilities inherent to the role of coordinating the pool of external evaluation of teachers' performance, that many equate supervision and assessment and criticism of one's work and that the training centers can and should incentivize it, leading into practice formative activities in the area of supervision in order to contribute to their dissemination in schools.

When questioned about the pertinence of the concept of pedagogic supervision for the activity of the training centers, three out of five directors referenced the questionnaires applied to trainees at the end of the training:

This questionnaire has a number of questions related to the trainer's performance. Concerning their scientific knowledge, their pedagogical practice, their relation with the class, the type of language (whether it is clear, motivational...) and in the end some of those indicators go into a formula that allows us to grasp a level of satisfaction with the trainer's performance on a qualitative scale of regular, good, very good and excellent (Director CFAE C02);

Then we do the traditional short answer questionnaire... (Director CFAE L03);

By the analysis of the respective questionnaires and reports (Director CFAE A04).

The director of CFAE L03 assumes the importance of these questionnaires as an opportunity on the trainers' practices, leading to a greater consciousness, as exposed in Amaral, Moreira and Ribeiro (1996: 97),

of their actions, helping them identify problems and plan strategies to solve them on a collegial basis that frames the trainee as some who is capable of taking responsibility for the decisions that affect their professional practice,

when he/she asserts that:

Afterwards we do another task of projective inspiration to have a perspective of what can be done in the future, which is analyzed with the trainer. Therefore this after training is very important, in fact the trainer has to turn in a report after the training in which he himself has to reflect and report on what happened. Thus, we have a series of things that aren't seen as supervision, but indeed they are. The aftermath is fundamental, it is projecting the future (Director CFAE L03).

In the case of the CFAE AA05 this «projecting the future» from the questionnaires includes not repeating actions «with trainers that were not appraised as very good or excellent» (CFAE AA05).

According to these directors, supervision emerges associated to the development and improvement of the training they provide «as only the systematic accompaniment of the process which is expected to produce impact on results, that is, in the products, it is possible to regulate this process in order to improve it» (Director CFAE A04).

This perspective agrees with the answers given by the trainees to the questionnaire, since they associate the supervision developed by the CFAE directors with a reflection on the practices developed and consider that the fact that the school's director acts as a supervisor is connected with the gauging of the assessment and evaluation criteria and with a supervision: «observation of the teaching practice inside the classroom».

According to the interviewees, the supervision practices assume some relevance and we may add they consider that they should be widened and disseminated:

[...] Some experiences are being successful! Namely some of those developed in the scope of the Collaborative Project. In concrete terms, the teachers from a disciplinary group within a training action are developing practices of observation of classes among trainees, followed by the joint analysis of that observation's results. We would very much like that practice could be accepted and carried out by other groups (Director CFAE AA05).

5.2. *Trainers*

Concerning the universe of trainers, the sample is as follows (Table 1):

TABLE 1
Sample of trainers

CFAE CODE	N01	C02	L03	A04	AA05	TOTAL
No. of respondents	7	31	20	5	21	84

All the trainers who replied to the questionnaire have a wide professional experience, and all are teachers, whether at the basic and secondary levels or of higher education. The female gender is predominant. The majority consider they have been subjects of supervision as teachers, and only as such. Besides, they relate the experience of supervision mostly to processes of evaluation and assessment, not expressing knowledge that it is underway as a practice leading to the enhancement of teachers' performance quality. Their answers present significant negative correlations among age and the belief that supervision requires the application of a previously defined model, as younger teacher have a greater tendency to agree with this statement than older teachers. However, there is no correlation between the academic degree and the conviction that supervision requires a previously defined model, just as age does not correlate with the notion that supervision can take place in group settings, as illustrated in the following figures:

FIGURE 3

Correlation between academic degree and the belief that supervision requires the application of a previously defined model (SPSS)

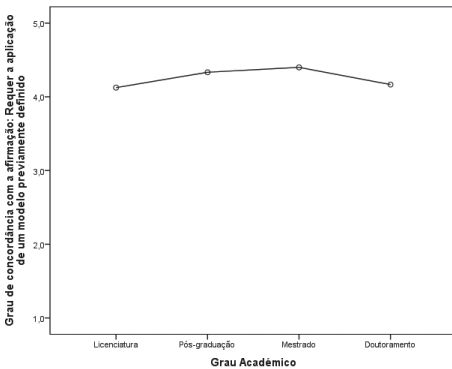
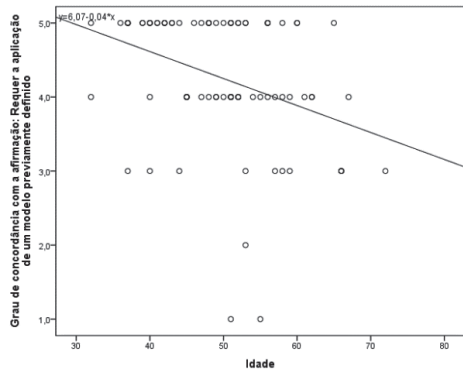


FIGURE 4

Correlation between age and the belief supervision requires the application of a previously defined model (SPSS)



However, answers to the questions concerning the number of years of experience as a trainer and the belief that supervision requires the application of a previously defined model show a significant negative correlation, as the trainers with less years of experience are more likely to agree with this assertion than those

with more experience. Curiously, neither the years of experience nor the academic degrees correlate with the belief that supervision can take place in group settings.

The trainers who possess continuous teacher training related to supervision are older than those who don't. However, no correlation was found between holding such training and the number of years of experience as a trainer or the academic degree they hold.

Experience in the role of supervisors is greater among teachers who have an average of three years of experience as trainers, and there is no association between the academic degree and the experience as a supervisor. There are also no significant correlations between age, number of years of experience, or academic degree among the trainers with the fact that they were subject to supervision themselves.

As for the concept of supervision as requiring the observation of the teaching practice inside the classroom, there was a greater agreement from older trainers, those with more years of experience and those who hold higher academic degrees. These also showed more agreement with the assertion that supervision implies the relation between the formal and non-formal components of curriculum, whereas the younger and less experienced trainers are more prone to agree with the assertion that supervision requires the application of a previously defined model. More experienced trainers also reveal a greater agreement with the assertions that supervision contributes to the improvement of the quality of teachers' work and of the professional relationships among teachers and between them and the school organization, encompassing the school as a whole and contributing to teachers' professional development.

Also to be considered is the fact that there were no correlations between age, professional experience, or academic degree and either of the following statements: i) that it requires a process of assessment; ii) that it implies a formal relationship, following pre-established criteria; iii) that it can take place informally; iv) that it requires a process of accompaniment; v) that it can happen in a dyadic relationship between supervisor and supervisee; vi) that it can take place in group settings; vii) that it happens in the scope of teachers' continuous training; viii) that it requires a process of guidance; ix) that it can take place among colleagues/peers; x) that it contributes to teachers' continuous training; xi) that it is common in the scope of teachers' initial training; xii) that it can be done by oneself by individual reflection; xiii) that it requires a process of leadership; xiv) that it requires an asymmetrical relationship among supervisor and supervisee, or xv) that it requires that the supervisor holds more experience and/or training than the supervisee.

There was, however, a significant association among the fact that the trainer has had his/her own teaching practices supervised and having effected supervision on the practice of his/her own trainees.

5.3. *Trainees*

As for the universe of trainees, the sample of respondents is presently as follows (Table 2):

TABLE 2
Sample of trainees

CFAE CODE	N01	C02	L03	A04	AA05	TOTAL
N.º respondents	93	261	30	22	34	440

Once again, most respondents possess an extensive professional experience, and the female gender is predominant.

Positive and significant correlations were verified among the trainees' age and their agreement with the statements concerning the concept of supervision: i) it requires a process of leadership and ii) it requires that the supervisor hold more experience and/or training than the supervisee. On the other hand negative and significant correlations were perceptible among the respondents' age and how they scored the following assertions on the concept of supervision: i) it can happen informally and ii) it can encompass the school as a whole, which indicates that younger trainees are more prone to agree with these statements.

Also significant and positive were the correlations among the trainees' higher academic degrees and the following statements on the concept of supervision: i) it contributes to the improvement of the quality of teachers' work; ii) it implies the relation between the formal and non-formal components of the curriculum; iii) it requires a process of accompaniment; iv) it contributes to the improvement of the professional relationships among teachers; v) it can take place in group settings; vi) it can encompass the school as a whole; vii) it requires a guidance process; viii) it can take place among colleagues/peers; ix) it contributes to the teachers' continuous training; x) it is practiced within teachers' initial training; xi) it contributes to the improvement of the school organization and xii) it contributes to teachers' professional development.

The aforementioned correlations are illustrated in images 5 and 6:

FIGURA 5
 Significant correlation among age
 and the concept of supervision
 (SPSS)

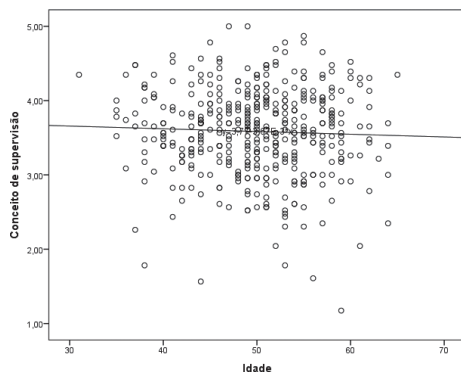
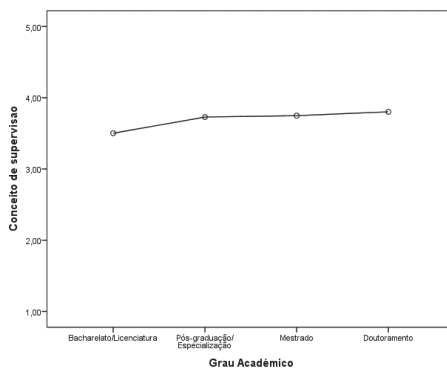


FIGURA 6
 Positive correlation among academic
 degree and the concept of supervision
 (SPSS)



A positive appraisal of all of the statements about the concept of supervision was also detected, as presented in the following table (Table 3):

TABLE 3
 Statements associated with the concept of supervision

1. It requires a process of assessment
2. It requires the application of a previously defined model
3. It contributes to the quality of the quality of the teachers' work
4. It implies a formal relation, according to pre-established criteria
5. It implies the relation among the formal and non-formal components of the curriculum
6. It can take place informally
7. It requires a process of accompaniment
8. It can take place individually
9. It contributes to the improvement of the quality of professional relationships among teachers
10. It can take place in group settings
11. It is practiced within the scope of teachers' continuous training
12. It can encompass the school as a whole
13. It requires a process of guidance
14. It can take place among colleagues/peers
15. It contributes to teachers' continuous training

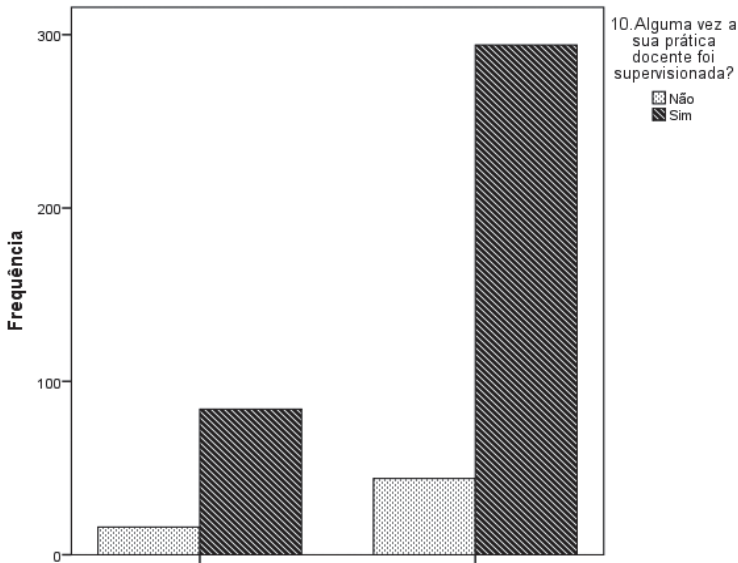
16. It is practiced within teachers' initial training
17. It can happen in isolation, by individual reflection
18. It requires a process of leadership
19. It requires the observation of the teaching practice inside the classroom
20. It contributes to the improvement of the school organization
21. It requires an asymmetrical relationship among supervisor and supervisee.
22. It contributes to teachers' professional development
23. It requires that the supervisor has greater experience and/ or academic training than the supervisee.

On the other hand, no significant differences were found at the level of the number of years of experience among teachers who frequented training actions in the previous year and those who didn't. Although the trainees whose practices were supervised had in average, a lower number of years of service than those whose practices were never supervised, no correlation was found among having experienced training in the previous year and having ever had their practices supervised.

The positive and significant correlation among the trainees' years of service as teachers and their tendency to agree with the assertion that the supervisor should be more experience and/or hold a higher degree than the supervisee, should also be noted. There are also negative and significant correlations among the trainees' teaching experience and how they scored the statements concerning supervision being practiced within teachers' continuous training. Younger trainees are more likely to agree with supervision encompassing the school as a whole, and taking place through individual reflection.

Although no significant differences were found concerning the years of experience of those who underwent training the previous year and those who didn't, there were significant differences concerning the years of experience of the teachers who did or did not have their practices supervised. In average, those who did have less years of service than those whose practices were never supervised. There were also no associations among ever having had their practice supervised and having had training experience the previous year (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7
 Relation between having frequented training and ever having been supervised (SPSS)



On the other hand, the nature of supervision as understood by the trainees who have undergone supervision of their teaching practices is different from the one understood by those who performed supervision. To these participants, the internship advisor (school) and the internship supervisor (university) are associated to: i) applying planning and evaluation grids; ii) gauging of assessment and evaluation criteria; iii) reflection on the practices carried out; iv) clarifying of doubts on the profession; v) exchange of views on the trainees and their needs; vi) analysis of strategies to implement during the training; and vii) observation of in-classroom teaching practice. When referring to the trainers' perspective, the supervision developed encompasses all the options mentioned above, with the exception of the application of planning or evaluation grids.

Concerning the figure responsible for assessing and evaluating teachers' performance, the nature of supervision recognized is associated to: i) application of planning or assessment/evaluation grids; ii) gauging of evaluation and assessment criteria; iii) reflection on the practices carried out; and iv) observation of in-classroom teaching practice.

It should also be noted that the application of grids for planning and evaluation/assessment and the reflection on the practices developed are associated with the Department Coordinator and to the person responsible for the disciplinary group. The previous is also associated with the observation of in-classroom

practices and to the gauging of evaluation and assessment criteria. The possibility of having other colleagues develop a supervision process is not associated with any particular type of supervision activity.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The teaching profession occupies a relevant part of the reflections by education specialists and is also marked by several stereotypes or prototypes widespread by the media. The teachers' relevance to the students' educational process and their consequent relation with innovation in education are therefore underlying to every existing teacher training model. Hence,

[...] Training workshops contribute to a deep understanding of the theory and to the appropriate use of educational strategies based on research results. Studies reveal that teachers' reflexive thinking levels increase after having received training and been observed in classroom (García, 2005: 263).

This article presents part of a wider ongoing research, and intends to constitute a starting point to a profitable discussion on how supervision is being implemented to continuous teacher training in Portugal, focusing particularly on the CFAES.

It is already possible to conclude from the knowledge resulting from this phase of the research that it is pertinent to characterize the continuous teacher training centers, the specificities of their leaders, how they organize the contents of their training offers, their training practices, and to understand the processes taking place in those organizations, with their similarities and differences, since the CFAES are the entities responsible by a vast amount of the initiatives integrating the continuous training of teachers. They therefore directly or indirectly influence the quality of the processes led by their trainees, and their actions impact the school/cluster of schools as an organization, and the classroom at the levels of curricular decisions and of pedagogical practices.

The discourses of the main actors inquired noted, and confirming Nóvoa's (2002) conviction that supporting continuous teacher training practices that stimulate the teachers' appropriation – whether individually or collectively – of their own training processes being called to perform simultaneously the roles of trainer and trainee, is a strategic axis at the level of teachers' continuous training.

Also relevant is the fact that the CFAES under research did not evidence remarkable differences among them. The law that defines them structures a pattern where originality may only seldom occur, case by case and in answer to concrete specificities of either the training needs identified or of the educational community they serve.

Finally, the work developed around the understandings of the concept of pedagogical supervision places this article in the continuity of others that have been developed some years ago, about a new comprehensiveness of the concept in question, as Alarcão (2009: 120) considers:

school supervision and the supervision of continuous training, that is, of the collective of teachers. All these dimensions intertwine. [...] we note a broadening of its area of influence, and note a greater association between supervision and professional development. [...] not only of the candidate to new teachers, but mostly [...] [of those who are already professionals and are involved in in-service continuous teacher training environments.

Understood in this way, it is our belief that the concept of supervision is enrobed in a new comprehensiveness pointing, among other aspects, to the pertinence of the collaborative interaction and to its assumption as a resource for the promotion of students' educational success. This may ultimately and predictably lead to the reinforcement of the investment on the field of curriculum development, which is evidently lacking supervision practices, and therefore concurring to the valuing, dignity and personal and professional growth of teachers.

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