

# eduser

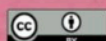
**Procedimentos de autoavaliação das escolas  
relevantes para o ensino primário e  
escolas secundárias: geometrias variáveis**

**Schools' Self-evaluation procedures relevant for primary and  
secondary schools: variable geometries**

**Procedimientos de autoevaluación de las escuelas relevantes  
para primaria y escuelas secundarias: geometrías variables**

**ANA MOURAZ, JANA BERESOVA, CARLA FIGUEIREDO, MARTA SAMPAIO,  
HANA VANCOVA, DANIELA PINTO**

ISSN 1645-4774 | e-ISSN 2183-038X  
<https://www.eduser.ipb.pt>



## Procedimentos de autoavaliação das escolas relevantes para o ensino primário e escolas secundárias: geometrias variáveis

Schools' self-evaluation procedures relevant for primary and secondary schools: variables geometries

Procedimientos de autoevaluación de las escuelas relevantes para primaria y escuelas secundarias: geometrías variables

ANA MOURAZ<sup>1</sup>, JANA BERESOVA<sup>2</sup>, CARLA FIGUEIREDO<sup>3</sup>, MARTA SAMPAIO<sup>4</sup>, HANA VANCOVA<sup>5</sup>, DANIELA PINTO<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidade Aberta; Lisboa; Portugal; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7960-5923>; ana.lopes@uab.pt

<sup>2</sup> Trnava University; Trnava; Slovakia; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3336-5324>; jana.beresova@truni.sk

<sup>3</sup> Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Porto, Porto; Portugal; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3261-4907>; cfigueiredo@fpce.up.pt

<sup>4</sup> Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Porto; Porto; Portugal; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6848-377X>; msampaio@fpce.up.pt

<sup>5</sup> Trnava University; Trnava Slovakia; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8495-4391>; hana.vancova@truni.sk

<sup>6</sup> Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Porto; Porto; Portugal; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8867-4733>; danielapinto@fpce.up.pt

**RESUMO:** A importância da autoavaliação das escolas está intrinsecamente ligada à sua autonomia e responsabilidade na interpretação e execução das tarefas educativas. No entanto, esta autoridade é influenciada pelas políticas europeias e nacionais. Este artigo tem como objetivo comparar as políticas e práticas subjacentes ao processo de autoavaliação escolar na Eslováquia e em Portugal. Empregando uma abordagem qualitativa enraizada na investigação comparativa, este estudo envolve a análise de documentos legais e notas de campo recolhidas através de conversas informais com diretores escolares em ambos os países. Embora ambas as nações demonstrem alguma influência das recomendações europeias nos seus objetivos e procedimentos, existem disparidades nas suas abordagens e ênfases. Notavelmente, são evidentes variações nos objetivos da auto-avaliação das escolas e das equipas responsáveis pela sua condução. Todavia, ambos os países sublinham a importância do desempenho escolar dos alunos no quadro da autoavaliação escolar.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Autoavaliação escolar; Abordagem comparativa; Práticas de avaliação; Qualidade educacional.

**ABSTRACT:** The significance of schools' self-evaluation is intrinsically linked to their autonomy and responsibility in interpreting and executing educational tasks. However, this authority is influenced by both European and national policies. This paper aims to compare the policies and practices underlying the process of school self-evaluation in Slovakia and Portugal. Employing a qualitative approach rooted in comparative research, this study involves analyzing legal documents and field notes collected through informal conversations with school board directors in both countries. While both nations demonstrate some influence from European recommendations in their objectives and procedures, disparities exist in their approaches and emphases. Notably, variations are evident in the purposes of schools' self-evaluation and the teams responsible for conducting it. Nevertheless, both countries underscore the importance of students' achievements within the framework of school self-evaluation.

**KEYWORDS:** School self-evaluation; Comparative approach; Evaluation practices; Educational quality.

**RESUMEN:** La importancia de la autoevaluación de las escuelas está intrínsecamente ligada a su autonomía y responsabilidad a la hora de interpretar y ejecutar las tareas educativas. Sin embargo, esta autoridad está influenciada por las políticas tanto europeas como nacionales. Este artículo tiene como objetivo comparar las políticas y prácticas subyacentes al proceso de autoevaluación escolar en Eslovaquia y Portugal. Empleando un enfoque cualitativo basado en la investigación comparada, este estudio implica el análisis de documentos legales y notas de campo recopiladas a través de conversaciones informales con directores de juntas escolares

en ambos países. Si bien ambas naciones demuestran cierta influencia de las recomendaciones europeas en sus objetivos y procedimientos, existen disparidades en sus enfoques y énfasis. En particular, las variaciones son evidentes en los propósitos de la autoevaluación de las escuelas y los equipos responsables de realizarla. Sin embargo, ambos países subrayan la importancia de los logros de los estudiantes en el marco de la autoevaluación escolar.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Autoevaluación escolar; Enfoque comparativo; Prácticas de evaluación; Calidad educativa.

## 1. Introduction

Trends that shape educational policies in Europe have been redefining the role of primary and secondary education schools, as well as their responsibility in educational tasks. Closely related to these, movements of decentralization in educational policies occurring between 2000 and 2007 were renewed. Since then, regulation of schools by means of student achievement rates followed international agency evaluations (Kärkkäinen, 2012). This brings together features and arguments of centralized and decentralized trends, having some effects on school evaluation processes, among other educational issues.

Discussion surrounding the need for centralization argues in favour of raising standards by providing the same economic and market-driven curriculum, while arguments for decentralization call for different approaches to school regulation, in terms of pedagogic action, as well as school self-management, including self-evaluation as a central tool. Also, the increase in local autonomy and the recognition that teachers are competent professionals and responsible for curriculum effectiveness have moved some educational responsibilities away from the central government (Kuiper et al., 2008; Nieven & Kuiper, 2012).

The importance of self-evaluation was emphasized in the 'Effective School Self-Evaluation' project (ESSE) (European Commission 2001-2003), participated in by 30 European countries. Led by a consortium of General Inspectorate boards, it discussed, apart from other issues, the role, and the functions of Inspectorates in enabling schools to take on the task of evaluating themselves in a transparent and effective way. In countries and regions such as Belgium/Flanders, Denmark, England, Hesse in Germany, Northern Ireland, and Scotland (National Inspectorate of Education, 2006), schools' self-evaluation is understood as a quality assurance strategy.

The goal of self-evaluation is to objectively analyze the effectiveness and impact of school procedures on students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders so that the institution can improve procedures in the future. According to Miliband (2004), former Secretary of State for Education, a critical test of a strong school will be the quality of its self-evaluation and how it is used to raise standards.

The term self-evaluation is viewed by Valent and Sihelsky (2014) as the achievement of objectives and contents of education from the perspective of the school itself. The aim is to ensure the quality of education within the school education program. In this regard, self-evaluation can be perceived as a mechanism for continuous self-regulation of educational work at schools, educational work of individual teachers, and as a means of recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the state-determined curriculum implemented at schools. Moreover, self-evaluation provides feedback regarding the quality of achieved learning outcomes (McNamara et al., 2008).

Due to globalization and uniformization throughout many European countries, quality assurance has become a general concern in education. At the same time, the competitive market and interconnections between countries have enabled education systems to adopt similar processes, such as school self-evaluation. Educational institutions should have a policy, as well as associated procedures, for the assuring quality and standards of their functioning. This is a clear movement of "lending policies" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

Three main features are related to this European dissemination of self-evaluation potential, in terms of how self-evaluation promotes quality: the rise in the idea that self-regulated schools are more competitive and more accountable; the standardization of educational indicators served by international tests such as PISA; and the standardization of competences for teacher training and student achievement (McNamara et al., 2008).

Issues concerning quality of primary and secondary education are at the heart of education because compulsory education shapes average citizens to raise critical mass. Improving and sustaining quality of basic education is important, as good-quality teaching and learning environments assure effective learning

outcomes (UNESCO, 2015). School quality is a condition under which schools can function effectively in a market economy. The population growth curve decreases rather than increases and schools are obliged to struggle for their financing as the criteria for budgeting might be diverse in different countries (OECD, 2013).

Having recognized the role of self-evaluation in educational quality, this paper aims to analyse the reality of two countries, namely, Portugal and Slovakia, which are former participants of the ESSE project, and which share struggling socio-economic contexts at the time of the mobility (2017). Due to their historical backgrounds and economic developments, these two countries seem to have similar centralized systems that regulate public services and result in a less autonomous mentality (Barroso, 2009). Keeping the previous arguments in mind, this article intends to compare trends that shape schools' self-evaluation processes in primary and secondary schools in both countries.

## 2. The schools' self-evaluation process

The schools' self-evaluation (SSE) could be defined as the process performed by schools to evaluate the quality of the education they provide. The importance of such process was broadly recognized at an international level by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council from 2001 on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (EURYDICE, 2015). The Recommendation called on Member States to 'encourage school self-evaluation as a method of creating learning and improving schools' (European Parliament, 2001). Following this recommendation, SSE had become compulsory, recommended, or indirectly required for schools in almost all countries in European Union (Eurydice, 2015). Such diversity regarding national governments interest shapes the first level of variation when someone thinks about SSE role for enhancing quality.

Three further drivers of SSE processes were identified by Chapman and Sammons (2013) and interlinked with competing logics. These drivers help to bring some clarity to the possible purposes for self-evaluation. They are:

Economic logic – self-evaluation is cheaper than expensive external inspection frameworks particularly where money is devolved directly to schools.

Accountability logic – that schools must provide proof to key stakeholders (i.e. parents and the local community) as well as to the government that they are providing value for money. This has become increasingly important in the English context, as budgets are being devolved to schools.

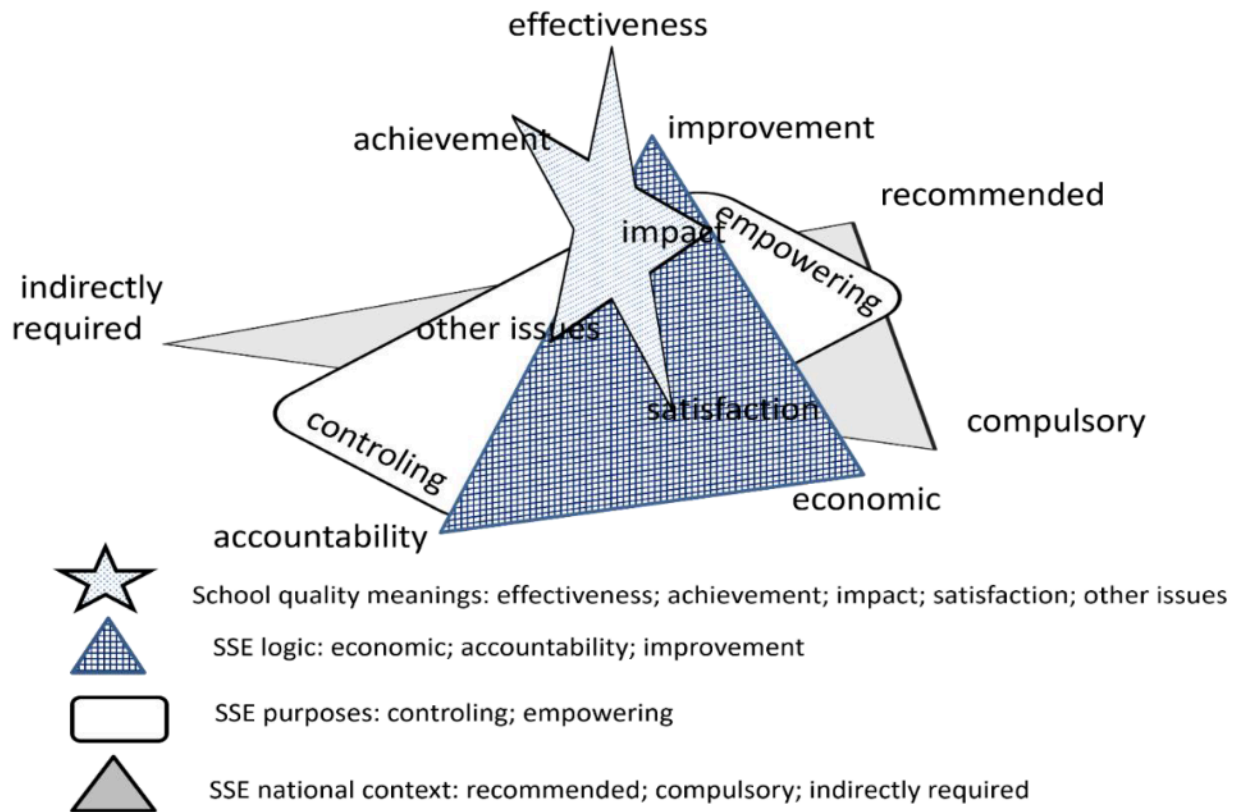
Improvement logic – it is seen as obvious that in order to know how to improve, a school must be able to evaluate where it is, what it needs to improve, and what indicators will suggest that it has achieved its aims. (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 11)

Looking from the perspective of the relevance of SSE, meaning its uses, it is possible to see its close relation with school autonomy, as SSE results are used at the school level and to a wide extent left to the autonomy of school staff (Eurydice, 2015). The relevance of schools' self-evaluation is closely related to school autonomy and the movement of empowering schools' decisions and schools' responsibility. It means that schools are largely responsible for the uses they give to the process and results which is also related to the movement of empowering schools' decisions and schools' responsibility. However, and according to Barroso (2006), this movement also could be seen as the State attempt to ensure the role of piloting and monitoring the public policies (in a close relation to the previous economic logic), by giving more room to other actors that undertake such policies at a local level. Similar perspectives were also defended by MacBeath (2008) when he identified the SSE as a form of ritual self-inspection and the idea is also argued by Ozga and Grek (2012) when they discussed the SSE as a knowledge-based regulatory tool. In other words, it is possible to introduce the concept state control from this argument and, at the same time, the arising of school responsibility coming from the empowering argument as this recognizes to the SSE ability to identify needs and priorities for the improvement in each school. This is the third level of variation.

The fourth axis explains the variation regarding school quality meanings related to devices' components and their priority within SSE processes chosen by schools.

How do the SSE devices answer to the quality schools search for? What does school quality mean? What are the SSE devices looking for? Are they looking for effectiveness; achievement; impact; satisfaction or other issues?

**Figure 1**  
SSE geometries.



Source: elaborated by the authors.

Studies have been stressing the importance of the connections between quality concepts as well as between the arising of schools' self-evaluation procedures and the schools' effectiveness measured by students' achievement (Hofman et al, 2009). In fact, the study coordinated by Hofman et al. (2009) was able to identify that the SSE perspectives that seem positively related to student achievement are those the authors "typified as 'learning organizations' that optimize the talents of their staff so that they can contribute maximally to the quality of the school" (Hofman et al., 2009, p. 65). Nevertheless, if SSE devices look at students' achievement as a sign of school quality it does not mean that the SSE process presents (strong) effects on student achievement (Schildkamp et al., 2009).

Other study, aiming to understand the contributions of self-evaluation (SE) processes towards the development of curricular and social justice and educational improvement, establish a relation between SSE and the equity purpose of schools, considering this a measure of effectiveness (Sampaio & Leite, 2017).

By presenting and discussing the LEAD Project – 'Listen to our stakeholders, evaluate what is said, Act on this knowledge and deliver better outcomes', Antoniou, et al. (2016) focused on the schools' performance as it is viewed by parents, staff and students' satisfaction surveys. To look for the satisfaction of the recipients is a quite common measure of schools' quality, sometimes crossed with other focus like students' achievement as the framework presented by Antoniou, et al. (2016) indicates.

Working on data from a European Project on school self-evaluation, Meuret and Morlaix (2003) studied a hundred and one schools that had experimented with self-evaluation and reported on what they did. Some of them "used 'Technical Models' that rested on quantitative indicators which are often imposed or strongly suggested by the authorities, while the 'Participating Model' applicants used mainly the school stakeholders' judgements". Such division shapes, roughly, the effectiveness and the satisfaction meanings attributed to school quality as well the trends concerning SSE methodological approaches. Discussing results from the final questionnaire focused on the success of the self-evaluation process (which is a kind of meta-evaluation), the authors could conclude that both methods were able to lead schools to improve quality. Therefore, they conclude that it makes relevant to look at their optimal combination.

The connection between schools' quality and schools' impact seems to be a lack within SSE devices or, at least, less studied in the literature. In fact, if it was possible to state that schools care about and even know what the impact of their action in further lives of their former students is, it was not found any study that brings to light this measure or any descriptor within SSE devices.

Other issues as school climate or curricular mentality could also be related to other uses of schools' self-evaluation and schools' quality meanings (Mouraz et al., 2014). Looking to these kinds of issues one is stressing the importance of the processes that a particular school organizes to carry on teaching and learning that lead to some (or all) meanings of quality: effectiveness, achievement, satisfaction, or impact.

Also, and accordingly, Hofman, et al. (2009) speak about two complementary perspectives on schools' accountability. The first perspective focuses on the determination and assessment of quality, which is closely related to the idea of quality as product or result. The second perspective focuses on the development and improvement of the school as an organization which is related to the idea of process.

To sum up, literature revision focused on SSE delivers the idea of variables dimensions and angles that, when crossed, shape each school self-evaluation 'geometry'.

This article aims to study the crossed dimensions that shape Slovakian and Portuguese SSE, as 'geometries' put in place.

Specifically, this article intends to identify main features of schools' self-evaluation practices in the two countries and to relate such practices with schools' quality perceptions and discourses.

### 3. Methodology

The study presented in this paper follows a qualitative approach based both on documental comparative research and from empirical data collected in ten schools of the two countries (five in each country). Considering that the goals were to compare the policies that underlay raising process of schools' self-evaluation in Slovakia and in Portugal and to compare trends that shape schools' self-evaluation processes in these two countries, this methodological approach constitutes the most suitable option.

Every piece of comparative research aims to analyze similarities and differences between situations and contexts (Mills et al., 2006). The richness of such a methodology is that it allows to understand, for instance, how similar processes are conducted in various contexts, and to explain the differences in their development and, more importantly, in their impacts. As Mills, et al. (2006) argues, "comparisons not only uncover differences between social entities but also reveal unique aspects of a particular entity that would be virtually impossible to detect otherwise" (p.621). These studies are also very useful in the field of policy analysis.

The legal documents used in this analysis were:

- In the Portuguese case: laws from the Ministry of Education regulating school evaluation processes (Law n.º 31/2002; recommendations and notices from the National Council for Education (CNE) concerning school evaluation; Government Programs since 2005; guiding documents used by the entity in charge of school external evaluation, the General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC), such as the evaluation framework.
- In the Slovak case: laws regulating education and training; recommendations and supplements from the national project of the State School Inspection (SSI) formulating the model of self-evaluation and providing its manual; government documents since the late 1990's (The National Program of Education – Milénium); guiding documents used by national institutions running school external evaluation.

The comparison between the Portuguese and Slovak cases concerning policy documents was guided and was achieved by answering three research questions: (1) What policy recommendations originated the need for the SE process within the two countries?; (2) What are the national strategies for developing school quality/ school improvement?; and (3) How is the SE process legally defined in both countries?

However, as mentioned before, during the project, field notes were collected coming from informal conversations with schoolboard directors of the two countries. Schools, where information was collected, were previously invited to receive researchers.

Invited schools were chosen due to their privileged relationship with universities where researchers work and due to their diverse educational projects. This means that schools provide basic and or secondary education; that were attended by many students or were of smaller scale; that are rural or urban and that are

attended by students with families with low income and socio-economic difficulties, or not. A set of responsible persons or teams from five schools in each country, did talk with researchers about the SSE subject.

**Table 1**  
*Schools' characterization.*

Schools' characterization	Slovakia			Portugal		
	basic	secondary	both	basic	secondary	both
Educational levels provided by schools	2	2	1	2	0	3
School size (> <400 students)	small		large	small		large
	2		3	0		5
School geographic context	rural		urban	rural		urban
	1		4	1		4
School social and economic context – Huge number of families with lower income	yes		no	yes		no
	1		4	3		2

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Gathering data from schools' organization is a sensitive issue and as such, data was obtained through persons with direction roles, namely from headmasters, or self-evaluation roles. To have a better understanding due to the international context where the conversations took place, the research team was always composed by persons from the two countries, but the leading role of the interview belonged to the foreign researcher in each case. The local researcher acted, sometimes as a translator when persons from schools were not fluent in English. This approach overcame the risks that could be related mainly to the reliability of information and the risk of misunderstanding some issues. Ethical issues were respected, regarding informed consent and data protection.

Conversations took place during the researchers' mobility, of Portuguese researchers to Slovakia and of Slovakian researchers to Portugal. Mobility took place in May 2016; July, 2016; September 2017 and November 2017.

The conversations focus on self-evaluation devices, their trends, uses, foci, difficulties...to characterize the SSE framework. The structure of data collected was arranged following the key questions aligned with dimensions presented in table 2.

**Table 2**  
*SSE framework.*

Dimensions	Key questions
Referential and Focci	What has been the main purpose of schools' self-evaluation? What has been the relation between schools' external evaluation and schools' self-evaluation?
Team in charge	What has been the organization model followed by self-evaluation? Who controls and who does the self-evaluation?
Models and Instruments	What has been the structure model followed by self-evaluation? What has been under focus within a self-evaluation process, and by which means and instruments?
Recipients and effects	To whom do self-evaluation exercise should concern? How to communicate and evolve such people?

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Data was treated in a qualitative way. A content analysis was done on this material.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Portugal and Slovakia: differences and similarities concerning policies

As previously stated, this comparative analysis considered four categories, namely, (1) SE legal framework and implementation; (2) Participants in school SE; (3) Data collection, tools and analysis; and (4)

Schools' responsibilities in the SE process. Based on the document analysis and organized by these categories, Table 3 presents the characteristics of the SE process in the two countries.

Both countries have legally mandated SE processes. However, there are significant differences in its implementation, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Legal framework and implementation.*

Portugal	Slovakia
<p>SE process is mandatory due to Decree 31/2002 (Portugal, 2002). Schools are responsible for the SE process. Nevertheless, law frames the broad scheme. SE process is grounded on the following dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The school educational project.</li> <li>b) Organisation and management.</li> <li>c) Educational environment.</li> <li>d) Educational community participation.</li> <li>e) Student achievement and school success.</li> </ul>	<p>SE is mandatory due to Decree 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (Slovakia, 2008). Schools are responsible for the SE process. Nevertheless, law frames the broad scheme (Decree n.º 245/2008 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) evaluating quality of teaching and educating (Article 3, k).</li> <li>b) the internal system of evaluation and assessment of students (Art 7, m).</li> <li>c) the internal system of evaluation and assessment of school staff (Art 7, n).</li> <li>d) Monitoring and evaluating quality of upbringing and education focusing on 1) continual processes of improvement or deterioration of educational achievement, 2) achieving performance and qualitative goals of inputs, 3) external and internal evaluation and comparison of schools and 4) decision impact (Art 154).</li> </ul> <p>SE processes are grounded on the following dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Outcomes.</li> <li>b) processes concerning education.</li> <li>c) processes related to institution functioning.</li> <li>d) community participation.</li> </ul>

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Concerning the participants in the school evaluation process, in both cases, different groups of people have a voice. Nonetheless, in the case of Portugal, the entire school community participates via representatives. In the Slovak case, every member of an educational community (stakeholders included) is involved in the SE process.

**Table 1**

*Participants in school SE.*

Portugal	Slovakia
<p>There is a group or team responsible for the SE process that defines the objectives and the use of resources.</p> <p>The SE process is developed in different steps that must necessarily involve – in different ways, although always systematically – all members of the school community, namely, teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents, and others in the local community.</p>	<p>SE requires identification of a group or a team by the headmaster, who has the ultimate responsibility for SE.</p> <p>The participants are selected from teachers, students, parents, administrative staff, and stakeholders, all of whom are influential whether in issues they cover or providing viewpoints on those areas they do not hold highly in real life.</p>

Source: elaborated by the authors.

There are also significant differences between the two countries in this regard, as is clearly shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 2***Data collection, tools and analysis.*

Portugal	Slovakia
<p>Schools must evaluate the dimensions previously listed. To assess these dimensions, it is necessary to use indicators and descriptors and these ones are defined in article 9 of Law n.º 31/2002 (Portugal, 2002):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Compulsory education attendance.</li> <li>2) School results.</li> <li>3) Employability.</li> <li>4) Curricular development and organisation.</li> <li>5) Educational community participation.</li> <li>6) Organisation and methods and techniques for teaching and learning, including student assessment and use of educational support.</li> <li>7) Adoption and use of textbooks.</li> <li>8) Levels of training and teachers' educational and scientific experience.</li> <li>9) Existence, status and use of facilities and equipment.</li> <li>10) Organisational and management efficiency.</li> <li>11) Articulation with the vocational training system.</li> <li>12) Collaboration with local authorities.</li> <li>13) Partnerships with business entities.</li> <li>14) School Dimension and educational environment.</li> </ol> <p>SE processes should follow simple and selective procedures.</p> <p>SE group/team should work with information that schools have on students, the social environment, academic success, the quality of school services or effectiveness of additional support, among others, using internal statistics, document analysis, surveys, and interviews.</p> <p>It is necessary to ensure that information collected will match what the SE group/team wants to know; the data collection methods and analysis are appropriate; there is technical capacity to lead the process with confidence.</p>	<p>Schools must evaluate the dimensions previously listed. The indicators and descriptors are listed in Slovak Ministry of Education Decree 245/2008 (Slovakia, 2008):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The number of pupils (including the pupils with SEN).</li> <li>2) School curriculum and condition for its implementation.</li> <li>3) Processes of curriculum implementation. (education processes and extracurricular activities..)</li> <li>4) Pupil achievements (successful applications for higher education, competitions).</li> <li>5) The relationship between school and parents.</li> <li>6) Professional skills of teachers and their further education.</li> <li>7) School marketing.</li> <li>8) School management and project participation.</li> <li>9) Relationship of school regarding its setting.</li> <li>10) Technical and material conditions of the school.</li> <li>11) Budget and finance report.</li> <li>12) Concept of school development.</li> <li>13) School strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ol> <p>The SE team must agree with the selected means and methods to achieve the formulated results.</p> <p>The members of SE teams can use different methods of analyzing identical/different aspects and compare their findings before formulating final conclusions. Typical methods are interviews, observation, peer-observations, document analysis, analysis of pupils' work and portfolios, collecting opinions, analysis of internal statistical data, etc. After each step, they discuss findings before proceeding with the next step.</p> <p>School management should promote an open dialogue, create the climate for searching for solutions as well as cooperation and helping the SE team to be accepted and understood by other school actors.</p>

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Overall, the role of schools is somewhat similar in the two countries, however, there seems to be a bigger focus on SE's role to facilitate school improvement in the Portuguese case. In Slovakia, every internal assessment is thoroughly confronted with external assessment provided by independent institutions to direct schools along their way towards enhancement.

**Table 3***Schools' responsibilities and SE effects.*

Portugal	Slovakia
<p>By engaging in the SE process, each school has two main responsibilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) to start a systematic process of diagnosis that cyclically allows for understanding how the school</li> </ol>	<p>Schools are responsible for assuring quality using either instruments available or those they can develop for evaluation.</p> <p>The choice of evaluation instruments is based on individual school discretion. The philosophy behind this</p>

<p>could have achieved the objectives of its educational project.</p> <p>(2) to know in what way expectations were exceeded or results were lower than expected (strengths and weaknesses). These should allow schools to improve organisation and functioning</p> <p>An improvement plan is the usual effect of the SE process.</p>	<p>is to present good practices at schools which are checked with external measurements and data provided by either national bodies or quality assurance agencies.</p> <p>In cases when schools do not achieve good results, they must prepare an improvement plan, presenting approved steps towards enhancement.</p>
--	--

Source: elaborated by the authors.

## 4.2. Portugal and Slovakia: differences and similarities concerning school practices

### 4.2.1. School 1 (SK)

School 1 is a basic school with 408 students, with high rates of socially disadvantaged students and students with cultural diversity (31% Romani students). The Government provides support to these students, and this school has 5 assistant teachers who support the classes. School also provides vocational courses which are known by vocational school.

The school has special classes and regular classes – students in special classes move to regular classes as they progress. The school's priority is to provide equality in the education it gives its students.

One of the activities that develops to give this support to the students are extracurricular activities in which the school is open daily after classes (2 hours) to give support to students (mainly Romani, but not only these), both in the homework and preparation of the next day and provided hobbies. The self-assessment of this Inclusion project, developed two years ago (2017), has shown that students are happy and begin to succeed. The project has developed in students a broad sense of schooling importance. Parents also began to change their minds about school by seeing their children succeed.

School failure is a problem in that school and despite the efforts, on average, three children drop out of school each year.

The school implements the vocational school, so the students complete, in this way, their compulsory education. This school has curriculum flexibility and can organize its own curriculum. The vocational school project hired another four professionals: one pedagogue, one social pedagogue and two extra teachers. This project is funded by the government, which pays teachers and activities undertaken.

This project is evaluated through regular meetings where student outcomes are analysed.

Reports from this project, as from all the other developed in the school, are made, focusing on the activities carried out and their achievements and are sent to the municipality.

Self-evaluation and monitoring are done in a regular basis. Weekly meetings allow to collect information on extracurricular activities and to evaluate according to the results. The results of the competitions / Olympics of several subject matters, are used as a sign of effectiveness.

The task for teachers is very demanding. Teacher stability is a problem. Last year, three teachers left.

The SSE of this school is focused on effectiveness of measures taken to improve students' achievement and satisfaction.

### 4.2.2. School 2 (SK)

The school has 210 students from 6 to 12 years old. It has not only children from the village, but also of neighbouring towns.

The school is famous for having a special kind of care for students with specific learning difficulties. There is a special teaching teacher and an assistant teacher in these cases.

Other specificity of teachers' work with kids is they use a lot of technology in classroom. School results are very good. School self-evaluation, conducted by direction board, utilizes student, teacher, and parent questionnaires for self-evaluation, with a strong emphasis on student feedback and a parliamentary representation for students. Overall, School has very good results on these questionnaires.

Furthermore, School has a parliament representing the students. In this space, students can share their opinions and suggestions.

If the students are not satisfied the headmaster tries to see if it is the opinion of the class or if it is an individual experience. If it is an opinion of the class, there is a class observation to identify problem.

In a general approach, teachers work in teams and have various activities, such as informal meetings and parties that improve the relationship and the school climate.

All teachers know the curriculum and the school supports and promotes the development of activities by teachers. Cooperation and school climate is very important.

SSE is notably understood for improvement, and it is based on community players' satisfaction.

#### **4.2.3. School 3 (SK)**

Professional school with 512 students, offering bilingual courses and emphasizing connections with enterprises.

This is a very demanding and highly attractive school to which students must apply after a very competitive call – since 2004 students are applying with marks obtained in national external assessments.

Students attend and must be approved in subject matters that were defined by national curriculum (50%). Schools define the other 50%.

As educational quality started to be understood by Government as a schools' task and a system priority, educational evaluation was defined as an issue for headmasters, too. They participate in the definition of schools' quality descriptors.

Schools are responsible and they perform this accountability task, presenting an annual report to regional departments including a set of compulsory descriptors to which headmaster could add more. Students' results; students' behaviour; teachers' training and curricular activities are the main topics included in the report. School itself included the impact of its action by adding the information regarding further activity of former students, one year later they are leaving. Also, schools perform a set of statistical analysis concerning students' results, by class, by teacher, by department, by school and at regional level. Such information is discussed with each department. Even if it is not compulsory, school makes a plan for improvement for the next year.

If something is not running well, considering the students' achievement, teachers must understand what is happening and act to prevent failure. These actions should be included in the report too. Reports are compulsory and are headmasters' responsibility. To produce it, headmaster organize the process as they want and discuss the report with other members of school staff.

In short, self-evaluation focuses on students' results, behaviour, and teacher training, with reports submitted to regional departments and emphasis on accountability.

#### **4.2.4. School 4 (SK)**

It is a Primary School in a small village not far from Trnava. It is attended by 221 students and has been increasing the number of students enrolled.

To know all students, their needs, their aims is a key issue of the headmaster. School follows the national curriculum but, by parents' pressing, added the English language from the first year of schooling. Another advantage of the little size of school concerns teachers' works that is collaborative.

Concerning school self-evaluation it includes three topics: students' results; teachers' appraisal and leadership evaluation.

Regarding teachers' appraisal it is performed by headmaster and includes teachers' classes observation. The main goal is to discuss the issues that come up from the observation.

Regarding general school functioning or issues related to classes, there are forms to be fulfilled by teachers and discussed with intermediate leaderships. Teachers must be responsible to evaluate activities and projects they organize. Therefore, they must collect enough data to support such evaluation. Innovative strategies or resources are evaluated by the coordinator of department and then, communicate to headmaster.

Municipality is responsible for the general evaluation of the primary schools and gives the guidelines to schools produce their evaluation reports. These are headmasters' responsibility. Reports are public and disseminated among similar schools, procedure that stimulates the competition.

#### 4.2.5. School 5 (SK)

This is a gymnasium and secondary school (from 12 to 18 years old) and hosts 500 students.

Students compete to come to this school that have usually good results and offer seminars, laboratories to improve students learning.

School's self-evaluation is a task to be performed by the headmistress that must do a report to be presented to the regional government to be approved and publicized. Accountability is the main goal of SSE process.

This report includes students' results, teachers' appraisal and school environment. Other topic of the report is a kind of improvement plan or actions or objectives regarding the future.

Teachers' appraisal includes classes observation, appraisal of a plan done for the school year and a teacher self-evaluation form to be filled until the end of the year. Furthermore, teachers' appraisal focuses on their students' results (including external exams); extracurricular activities developed and professional behaviour. This process runs in a stressing atmosphere, but the headmistress recognizes it as a positive issue as it helps to focus on pertinent problems.

#### 4.2.6. School 6 (PT)

A basic school with 584 students, serving socially disadvantaged students as an Educational Priority Intervention Territory.

The school's priority is to provide better opportunities in the education it gives its students. Students' results are a sensitive issue and school looks for increasing learning opportunities by diversifying teaching strategies.

SSE focus on such new strategies, and different ways to promote learning. Each action included within the school improvement plan must be evaluated according to the indicators or descriptors, initially defined. Each action has a teacher responsible that ensures the information that concerns it. By the end of the year the Direction looks at each report to assess the outcomes of each action (namely its contribution to the school aims) and decide to keep it or give away the initiative. Furthermore, the school did sign a contract regarding some aims related to students' achievement percentages, students' external results and progressive elimination of earlier dropout rates. These figures are each year compared with school's effective results.

The school must produce, twice a year, a report, presenting its situation, contrasting the initial goals.

Additionally, the school designed a questionnaire concerning school climate that uses to evaluate several services, activities and relations among teachers, other staff, students, and parents. This satisfaction questionnaire is to be filled by students, teachers and other staff and the results are treated and a reflection on the subject takes place within the Pedagogic council for further improvement. There is a set of teachers in charge of such evaluative tasks that collect, treat, and present data to the Direction board that is the main responsible for the SSE process and presents reports to Central Government.

It emphasizes better opportunities in education, utilizing self-evaluation to evaluate new strategies and promote learning diversity, with reports submitted to the central government.

#### 4.2.7. School 7 (PT)

This school is a cluster of three basic and secondary schools with 1712 students, serving a significant number of socially disadvantaged and Roma students. This is a TEIP, Educational Priority Intervention Territory. The Ministry of Education provides extra support to these schools, and this one has extra assistant teachers to support teaching and learning, namely in these subject matters that are the core of curriculum.

One of the problems of school is related to Roma students concerning their inclusiveness and their less appraisal regarding schooling.

The school's priority is to improve students' achievement and reduce school failure, namely in lower and upper secondary level.

As other schools that are TEIP, this one also contracts with Ministry of Education some aims related to students' achievement percentages, students' external results and progressive elimination of earlier dropout rates. Each year, school must present its position regarding such aims, and design a new improvement plan.

SSE collects students' results that analyze statistically in different ways and levels, both to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives developed and to discuss potential improvements. SSE also collects information

regarding some variables that could explain the effectiveness or the failure of some actions. Each action has a teacher responsible that ensures such information. The school has a team in charge for collecting all the data and producing the evaluation report that also includes a decision on the actions to maintain or to refresh next year. Self-evaluation focuses on student results and effectiveness of initiatives, with reports submitted to the central government and emphasis on accountability.

#### **4.2.8. School 8 (PT)**

This school is a cluster of three elementary and one basic school with 1628 students, serving a significant number of socially disadvantaged and Roma students. This is a TEIP, Educational Priority Intervention Territory. The Ministry of Education provides extra support to these schools, and this one has extra assistant teachers, a psychologist, and a social animator to support teaching and learning.

The school's goal is to challenge students to overcome their boundaries and ensure equal opportunities to all students.

SSE device tries to combine TEIP's obligations (equal to previously described for schools 6 and 7) related to accountability purposes, with a further look on school climate, parents and students' satisfaction and participation.

Therefore, school organized a process, emerging from some issues related to actions planned to increase expectations regarding schooling. The questionnaire focused on social results of education, as they were perceived by students and parents, was used both to deepen knowledge about features that characterize parents and students' expectations, and also to identify curricular and pedagogic initiatives to frame the school's plan improvement. Furthermore, the school used the findings to communicate with students and parents.

To sum up, the SSE device is clearly aiming to improve school actions and at the same time, pay attention to accountability obligations.

#### **4.2.9. School 9 (PT)**

School 9 is an urban school and offers basic and secondary level, it even has more students at secondary level (910 students). It is also a school attended by students coming from families with average income and with good school results and high expectations.

School is committed to excellence and projects and actions foster such goal.

School has a committee to organize SSE process, that includes teachers and two elder students. SSE focus crosses school activities with their effect on students' results. SSE referential in use is like the one that General Board Inspection uses to do schools external evaluation.

#### **4.2.10. School 10 (PT)**

School 10 is an urban and basic cluster of schools (offers education from kindergarten up to 9th grade), (2160 students). It is also a cluster of schools attended by children and students coming from families with average income (50% of students has no economic support) and with fair school results – students' achievement rates are over the national average. It is also a reference school for early education and has a unit for kids with special needs.

The school has a committee in charge of SSE that organizes its work following an SSE model (led by a University) that treats students' results in a statistical and sophisticated approach. Results from this exercise challenge intermediate leaderships to involve themselves into a reflection on school quality and on improvement plans, namely, to defeat school failure that persists.

Some of the initiatives organized by the school to improve students' results are the foci of SSE process, namely those which are a novelty within the school.

## **5. Discussion and conclusions**

In coming to a summary of the main trends of school self-evaluation processes followed by two countries, it is possible to conclude, in broad terms, that both demonstrate some kind of influence from European recommendations, in terms of aims and in the procedures adopted. Nonetheless, the national realities from Portugal and Slovakia show different approaches and different focuses concerning school self-

evaluation. This idea was well expressed by head teachers. In Portugal, the main concern is set, first and foremost, on improvement, but it is measured under an accountability process. Portuguese schools are concerned with improving their processes, in providing a good teaching and learning environment for students and teachers as well as to upgrade all areas of education – curriculum, social issues, etc. Nevertheless, by the end, this improvement must be shown and translated into evidence of school achievement.

In Slovakia, the main concern is centred on accountability, particularly in terms of the use of resources and academic results. This means that high stakes accountability is closely related to quality improvement. Schools are concerned with showing the best results they can and that their teachers' quality reaches the highest level possible, which is also indicative of concerns for improvement but with a different focus.

There is a major similarity between the two countries regarding student achievement. Both Portugal and Slovakia are concerned with student performances and this issue is under focus in school self-evaluation. However, there is also a major difference. While in Slovakia, the central quality measurement system enables schools to present objective data, in Portugal, the national measurement system has an important role, whereas schools have in mind other aspects. In Slovakia, student achievement is directly displayed along with respective teacher performance, in addition to school programs and conditions under which education is provided. Teacher employment decided upon by headteachers is closely related to teaching results. In Portugal, teacher recruitment does not depend on headteachers, and student results have no influence on their career. In Portugal, self-evaluation is more concerned with schools as a whole institution and involves every aspect of school functioning. In Slovakia, the most important aspect is effective teaching. Therefore, special attention is paid to teacher qualifications, his/her training whether in in-service teacher training institutions or at universities, their attendance in teacher conferences and their direct performance in the classroom (this means that more attention is paid to teacher performance, to their practices and how they conduct themselves in the classroom). Discussion related to self-evaluation of teachers is more a "face-to-face" approach, in the sense that headteachers address teachers individually to discuss conclusions from self-evaluation.

From the two last paragraphs it is possible to discuss the sense of accountability as a device for centralization, in both countries. In fact, the growing process of school self-evaluation in Slovakia and in Portugal in their different perspectives (to improve or to pay account), are mainly ruled by an external look introduced by the uses of data – no matter if it comes from General Inspection Board, or from public rankings of schools. As Ozga (2009) argued these are central forms of regulation as they maintain control through their management and use of data.

This also leads to differences in how data coming from self-evaluation is discussed in the two countries. In Portugal, the dissemination of results could be wider, involving the educational community. Nevertheless, decisions taken because of a self-evaluation exercise, remain inside the pedagogical and direction bodies, despite providing conclusions concerning the whole school (Mouraz et al., 2014). In Slovakia, legislation concerning technical conditions or hygienic conditions is very strict and in case of any problem, the bodies concerned are addressed and an official investigation is carried out. Parents are very active players in inviting national agencies responsible for quality of provided services. The relationships between schools and parents are very close and intensive. Parents actively participate in school functioning either providing assistance or checking the quality of school functioning.

Another difference can be found in who is responsible for the self-evaluation process. The norm, in Portugal, is to have teams constituted by representatives from the educational community – teachers, students, non-teaching staff, and parents. This team is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and sharing conclusions from this process to top management, as well as to middle management and the overall community. Meanwhile, in Slovakia, the responsibility seems to be more on the headteacher's side, who is responsible for analyzing the information on school functioning and discussing it with the teachers, parents, and stakeholders. Each school must invite students for an active dialogue. The role of students is becoming more and more important for society, and therefore their active participation is recognizable through forming students' organizations.

Furthermore, and following the interpretation of Ball (2003), it is possible to discuss to what extent the wider participation of members from community within self-evaluation process is also driven by a performativity purpose rather than a pedagogical or inclusive one.

The source of these differences may be related to school management practices, both in a local context as well as on national level, meaning that there are considerable differences in how schools manage teachers, funding and students. The Slovakian national context is more competitive in the sense that funding given to each school is dependent on the number of students. At the same time, schools are autonomous in how they choose and manage teachers. Teachers must prove their qualities or eliminate any incompetency by further education, training or attending special courses. School quality depends on two factors combined - student results and teacher performance. If students' results are an indicator of the quality of the school, it is also an attractive motive for parents to place their children in a school. The other quality factor is teacher performance. Schools want to have the best teachers to reach the best results possible, and teachers want to be good to maintain their jobs. In Portugal, teachers' appraisals are not formally included in the school quality equation. The self-evaluation process is focused on the school as whole: projects, clubs, activities, teaching and learning, student results, leadership and management, among others. Moreover, schools are externally pressured by students' achievements, made public throughout schools' rankings. If schools' self-evaluation highlights pedagogical issues and improvement aims, in Portugal in the public spaces, schools are still judged mainly by their results (Mouraz et al., 2019).

To sum up, one can conclude that despite the European influence on setting concepts, aims, and devices concerning schools' self-evaluation, each educational system under analysis shapes the SE device according to the school culture in place. However, even if it is possible to identify different aims within the purposes of self-evaluation in the two countries, there are other forces that stress schools to act following a performativity goal. Furthermore, the discussion regarding schools' self-evaluation power is still "on the table", namely when its potential is far from being fully used.

## Acknowledgments

This paper was produced under the development of the project *Schools' self-evaluation: Self-evaluation Procedures Relevant for Primary and Secondary Schools* - SK-PT-2015-NEWPROJECT-6457- Collaborative project with the University of Trnava (Slovakia), funded within the scope of FCT's bilateral agreements with its Slovak counterpart (January 2016 - December 2017).

## Contributions

Conceptualization: A. MOURAZ, J. BERESOVA, C. FIGUEIREDO, M. SAMPAIO, H. VANCOVA, D. PINTO; methodology: A. MOURAZ, J. BERESOVA, C. FIGUEIREDO, M. SAMPAIO, H. VANCOVA, D. PINTO; data collection: A. MOURAZ, J. BERESOVA, C. FIGUEIREDO, M. SAMPAIO, H. VANCOVA, D. PINTO; documental data analysis: J. BERESOVA, C. FIGUEIREDO, M. SAMPAIO, H. VANCOVA; qualitative data analysis: A. MOURAZ, D. PINTO; writing-original draft preparation: A. MOURAZ, J. BERESOVA, C. FIGUEIREDO, M. SAMPAIO, H. VANCOVA, D. PINTO; writing-review and editing: A. MOURAZ; project administration: A. MOURAZ, J. BERESOVA.

## References

- Antoniou, P., Myburgh-Louw, J., & Gronn, P. (2016). School self-evaluation for school improvement: Examining the measuring properties of the LEAD surveys. *Australian Journal of Education*, 60(3), 191-210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944116667310>
- Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18, 2, 215-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>
- Barroso, J. (2006). *A regulação das políticas públicas de educação: Espaços, dinâmicas e actores*. Educa.
- Barroso, J. (2009). A utilização do conhecimento em política: O caso da gestão escolar em Portugal. *Educ. Soc.*, vol. 30, n.º 109, 987-1007.
- Chapman, C., & Sammons, P. (2013). *School self-evaluation for school improvement: What works and why?* CFBT Education Trust.
- European Parliament. (2001) *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education*, OJ L 60, 1.3.2001. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32001H0166>
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2015). *Assuring quality in education: Policies and approaches to school evaluation in Europe*. Eurydice Report. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Hofman, R. H., Dijkstra, N. J., & W. Hofman (2009). School self-evaluation and student achievement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice*, 20:1, 47-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450802664115>
- Kärkkäinen, K. (2012). *Bringing about curriculum innovations: Implicit approaches in the OECD area*. OECD Education Working Papers, N.º 82, OECD.

- Kuiper, W., Van den Akker, J., Letschert, J., & Hooghoff, H. (2008). *Curriculum policy and practices in a European comparative perspective: Finding a balance between prescription and professionalism*. Enschede: SLO. [https://iris.utwente.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/5389682/Curriculum\\_Currdevelopment\\_re-invented.pdf](https://iris.utwente.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/5389682/Curriculum_Currdevelopment_re-invented.pdf)
- MacBeath, J. (2008). Leading learning in the self-evaluating school. *School leadership & management*, 28(4), 385-399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430802292332>
- Meuret, D., & Morlaix, S. (2003). Conditions of success of a school's self-evaluation: Some lessons of a European experience. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 14(1), 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1076/14.1.53.13867>
- Miliband, D. (2004). Personalised learning: Building a new relationship. *North of England Education Conference*, Belfast, 8th January 2004. Department for education and skills.
- Mills, M., Bunt, G., & Bruijn, J. D. (2006). Comparative research: Persistent problems and promising solutions. *International Sociology*, 21(5), 619. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30496185\\_Comparative\\_Research\\_Persistent\\_Problems\\_and\\_Promising\\_Solutions](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30496185_Comparative_Research_Persistent_Problems_and_Promising_Solutions)
- Mouraz, A., Fernandes, P., & Leite, C. (2014). Efeitos da avaliação externa das escolas no desenvolvimento de uma cultura de autoavaliação. *Revista Portuguesa de Investigação Educacional*, 14, 67-97.
- Mouraz, A., Leite, C., & Fernandes, P. (2019). Between external influence and autonomy of schools: Effects of external evaluation of schools. *Paidéia (Brazil)*, 29, e2922. <https://doi:10.1590/1982-4327e2922>
- Nieven, N., & Kuiper, W. (2012). Balancing curriculum freedom and regulation in the Netherlands. *European Educational Research Journal*, 11(3), 357-368. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eej.2012.11.3>
- OECD. (2013). *PISA 2012 Results: What makes schools successful? Resources, policies and practices* (Volume IV). OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>
- Ozga, J. (2009). Governing education through data in England: From regulation to self-evaluation. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24:2, 149-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930902733121>
- Ozga, J., & Grek, S. (2012). Governing through learning: School self-evaluation as a knowledge-based regulatory tool. *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, 43, 83–103. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rsa.786>
- Portugal (2002). *Decree Law 31/2002*. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/diario-republica/294-2002-119001>
- Sampaio, M., & Leite, C. (2017). From curricular justice to educational improvement: What is the role of schools' self-evaluation? *Improving Schools*, 20(1), 62–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13654802166885>
- Schildkamp, K., Visscher, A., & Luyten, H. (2009). The effects of the use of a school self-evaluation instrument. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 20:1, 69-88. <https://DOI:10.1080/09243450802605506>
- Slovakia (2008). *Decree-law 245/2008*. <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/>
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2012). Understanding policy borrowing and lending. Building comparative policy studies. In G. Steiner-Khamsi, & F. Waldow (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2012. Policy borrowing and lending in education* (pp. 5-17). Routledge.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global monitoring report – Education for all 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges*. <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2015/education-all-2000-2015-achievements-and-challenges#sthash.zmhlnQdf.dpuf>
- Valent, M., & Sihelsky, B. (2014). *Inovácie v sebahodnotení školy*. [http://www.mpc-edu.sk/library/files/sihelsky\\_inovacie\\_web\\_27102014.pdf](http://www.mpc-edu.sk/library/files/sihelsky_inovacie_web_27102014.pdf)