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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides an overview of the policy and status of early childhood education in Portugal and includes the text of Law 5/97, the Framework Law for Pre-School Education, as well as the Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Education adopted by Portugal's government. Two of Law 5/97's nine main goals are: (1) to promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship; and (2) to stimulate each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behavior favorable to significant and diversified learning. Kindergarten in Portugal is conceived both as an educational place meeting children's needs and a support structure for working families. Kindergartens receive children from ages 3 to 5. The Curriculum Guidelines were prepared for all national kindergartens, both public and private, and are seen as an important part of the regulating role of the state. Supervision is provided to the national network of kindergartens through a body of inspectors; the Ministry of Education is responsible for the pedagogical supervision of kindergartens. The Curriculum Guidelines are based in larger questions that society poses for preschool education: citizenship and democratic participation, interculturality, ecology, nonsexist approaches to education, access to new technologies, motivation to use the instruments of reading and writing, and aesthetic and cultural participation. The Guidelines are organized into content areas: personal and social development, expression, communication, and knowledge of the world. (EV)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

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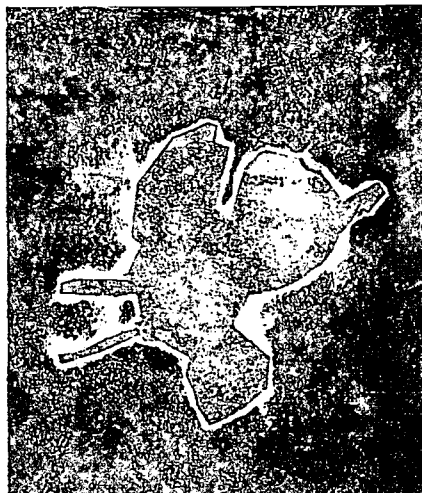


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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

- New developments -

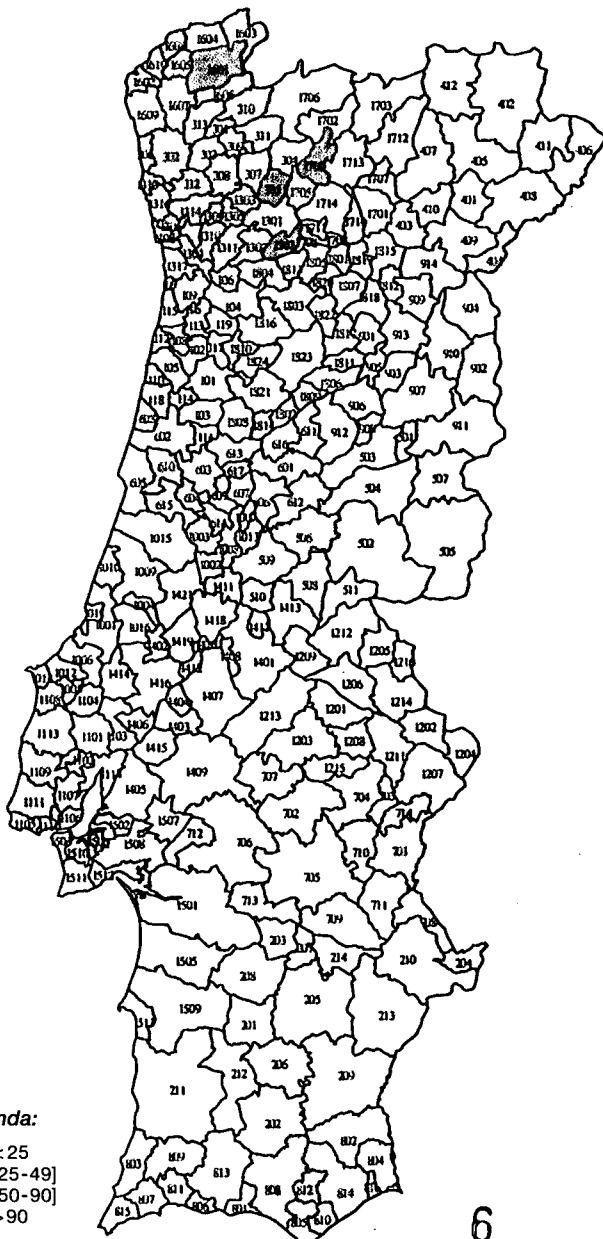
Pre-school Education is considered to be the first stage of basic education, the foundational structure for lifelong learning.

The Law 5/97, Law for Pre-school Education, sets the main goals for pre-school education:

- a) To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;
- b) To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society;
- c) To contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and for successful learning;
- d) To stimulate each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning;
- e) To develop expression and communication through different forms as a mean of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding of the world;
- f) To arouse curiosity and critical thought;
- g) To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health;
- h) To provide support and integration for children with special needs;
- i) To encourage family participation in the educational process and establish real co-operation with the community.

The "Jardim de Infância" (kindergarten), the transitional site between family and school is, in conformity with the law, both an educational place conceived according to the child's needs, and a support structure for working families. The kindergarten receives children from 3 to 5 (entry into formal school).

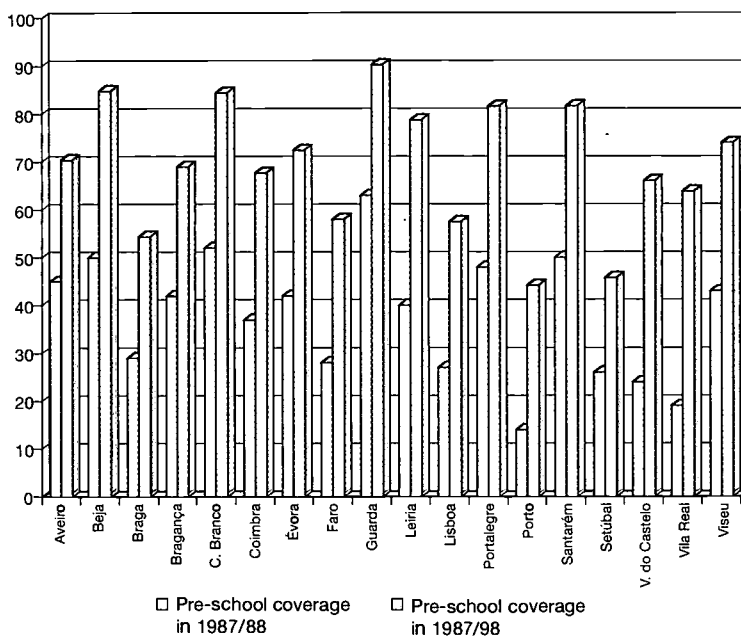
Kindergartens may be created by municipalities, private non-profit organizations, private schools, etc. The State, according to the needs for expansion of the pre-school system, and the recognition of public interest, may provide funding for construction, adaptation, equipment and improvement of the educational quality of kindergartens (both public and private).



This map shows the geographical coverage of pre-school education

The following tables shows the present national coverage by districts:

Districts	Pre-school coverage in 87/88	Pre-school coverage
Aveiro	45%	70%
Beja	50	85
Braga	29	54
Bragança	42	69
Castelo Branco	52	84
Coimbra	37	68
Évora	42	72
Faro	28	58
Guarda	63	90
Leiria	40	79
Lisboa	27	58
Portalegre	48	82
Porto	14	44
Santarém	50	82
Setúbal	26	46
Viana do Castelo	24	66
Vila Real	19	64
Viseu	43	74
Portugal (Continent)	31%	60%



(Source: DAPP, Ministry of Education)

In isolated rural areas, with sparse population, itinerant teachers may provide regular activities to children who stay with their families, or meet for a few hours during the day.

In urban areas, the effort of both responsible Ministries (Education and Work and Solidarity) is to provide, besides educational activities, the support for the parents at work, namely through after-school programs, meals, etc.



Curriculum Guidelines were prepared for all national kindergartens (both public and private). Those curriculum guidelines are seen as an important part of the regulating role of the state. They reflect the existing professional knowledge about the field and are a statement of what children should learn in pre-school. The curriculum guidelines aim to give greater visibility to pre-school education, facilitating educational continuity with elementary school. They also aim to improve the quality of pre-school education by introducing innovative dynamics that will stimulate pedagogical activity.

Parents have a special role in pre-school education. They are very important partners in the organization of kindergartens and, according to the law, they may organize themselves in associations. They are also represented in the board of each kindergarten and have a word to say about the educational project of the institution.

Supervision is provided to the national network of kindergartens through a body of inspectors. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the pedagogical supervision of kindergartens.

A new set of roles are foreseen for the state:

A **regulating role** means creating legislation, providing technical and pedagogical support, creating a system of inspection. **Better supervision** means making assessment and evaluation work by using a consistent system of inspection. **Coordination of provision** means constant monitoring of the system to render possible the compensatory role of the state. **The compensatory role** means that the state should give special and more direct attention to isolated and socially deprived areas.



As the Plan for Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education states:

“The Government has set its sights on a project that can become a true mobilizing contract. Through the harmonisation of initiatives, efforts, energies, good will, through a healthy sense of citizenship and social participation, this project is possible. The role of the state is to regulate,

co-ordinate and guarantee the achievement of equitable goals, which can correct social inequity. The role of civil society is to initiate, propose, innovate and articulate efforts through creative and participatory dynamics."

The Curriculum Guidelines are based in the larger questions that today's society poses for pre-school education: citizenship and democratic participation, interculturality, ecology, nonsexist approaches to education, access to new technologies, motivation to use the instruments of reading and writing, and aesthetic and cultural participation.



The Curriculum Guidelines are organized in content areas: personal and social development, expression, communication (which includes mastering different forms of expression, mastering language and an initial approach to writing and reading, mastering mathematics), and knowledge of the world.

They imply an organisation of the educational environment (group, classroom space and time); organization of the educational setting, relations with parents and other partners. They also support an educational continuity and an educational intentionality which results from a process of reflecting on observation, planning, action and assessment.

Special education is on place through provision of specialized teachers who support the kindergarten teacher. Any child with special needs is placed in a regular classroom with support staff. According to the law, a teacher with a special need child in her classroom has less students (20) than the regular number of 25.

Pre-school teachers are trained at university level (4 years after secondary school) and have special skills in working with children from 3 to 5, and also with parents.

Accredited in service training is provided to teachers both of public and private institutions and special incentives are being prepared for teachers who work in isolated areas or in very difficult conditions.



Law n.º 5/97

10 February

Framework Law for Pre-school Education

Subject to the terms of Article 164, subparagraph d) and Article 169, paragraph 3 of the Constitution, the Assembly of the Republic hereby decrees the following:

CHAPTER I

Object °

Article 1

Object

Following the principles defined the Base Law for the Educational System, this law establishes the juridical framework for pre-school education.

CHAPTER II

General Principles

Article 2

General Principle

Pre-school education is the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education, and complements the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation, fostering the training and balanced development of the child, with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual.

Article 3

Pre-school education

1 – Pre-school education is intended for children between the ages of 3 years and entry into primary school and is provided in nursery schools.

- 2 – Pre-school education is optional, acknowledging that children's upbringing and education is a matter for the family. However it is the State's duty to contribute actively to universal provision of pre-school education, under the terms of this law.
- 3 – Nursery school is understood to mean any institution which provides services aimed at child development, offering educational activities and activities to support the family.
- 4 – The number of children per classroom should bear in mind the different demographic conditions of each locality.

Article 4

Family participation

The role of parents and guardians in pre-school education is as follows:

- a) To participate in the running of nursery schools, either through representatives elected for that purpose or through representative associations;
- b) To develop a co-operative relationship with teachers and staff;
- c) To express an opinion on nursery school opening hours;
- d) To participate, on a voluntary basis and under the educational direction of the school, in educational activities.

Article 5

Strategic role of the State

It is the duty of the State:

- a) To create a public nursery school network, ensuring that provision of services is in line with need;
- b) To support the creation of nursery schools by other organisations in civil society, whenever available provision is insufficient;
- c) To establish the general norms for pre-school education, especially in terms of organisational, pedagogic and technical aspects, and to ensure their fulfilment and application by means of monitoring, assessment and inspection;
- d) To provide special support for areas in need.

Article 6

Participation of local councils

The Government will issue a law setting out the conditions for the participation of local councils in the fulfilment of the objectives envisaged in this law, and will ensure provision of the corresponding financial resources.

Article 7

Private, co-operative and social initiative

It is the duty of the State to support initiatives arising from society within the area of pre-school education, namely:

- a) From private and co-operative teaching establishments;
- b) From private charitable institutions;
- c) From other non-profit making institutions working in education and teaching.

CHAPTER III

Principles of organisation

Article 8

Pedagogic and technical control

The State will define the general guidelines controlling pre-school education, especially in pedagogic and technical aspects, and will have the following powers:

- a) To define rules for the activity of nursery schools;
- b) To define syllabus objectives and guidelines;
- c) To define the qualifications required to work in nursery schools;
- d) To define and provide staff training;
- e) To support extra-curricular educational activities;
- f) To define rules to assessment the quality of service provided;
- g) To undertake monitoring and inspection.

Article 9

Pre-school education networks

Pre-school education networks consist of a public network and a private network, which complement each other, envisaging universal provision and the efficient management of public resources.

CHAPTER IV

General educational principles

Article 10

Aims of pre-school education

The aims of pre-school education are as follows:

- a) To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;
- b) To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society;
- c) To contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and for successful learning;
- d) To stimulate each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning;
- e) To develop expression and communication through different forms as a means of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding of the world;
- f) To arouse curiosity and critical thought;
- g) To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health;
- h) To correct precocious, deficient or socially unacceptable behaviour, promoting the best guidance for the child;
- i) To encourage family participation in the educational process and establish real co-operation with the community.

Article 11
Pedagogic co-ordinator

- 1 – Each nursery school will have, among other governing bodies, a pedagogic co-ordinator who will be a suitably qualified person and will ensure compliance with syllabus guidelines and co-ordinate educational activity.
- 2 – In public nursery schools, the pedagogic co-ordinator will be elected from among the nursery teachers, numbers permitting.

Article 12
Opening hours

- 1 – Nursery schools should adopt such working hours as are adequate to develop educational activities, with specific periods for learning activities, extra-curricular activities and family support, bearing in mind the needs of families.
- 2 – Nursery school working hours should also make it possible to serve the children meals.
- 3 – Nursery school working hours will be approved by the Ministry of Education, based on a proposal by the pedagogic co-ordinator and after consultation with parents and guardians.

CHAPTER V
Pre-school education networks

Article 13
Public network

The public network is considered to include nursery schools working under the direct control of central government, the Autonomous Regions and local councils.

Article 14
Private network

The private network includes nursery schools working within private and co-operative education, as part of private charitable institutions or as part of other non-profit making institutions working in education and teaching.

Article 15

Other types of pre-school education

- 1 – Pre-school education is also considered to include the following, among others:
 - a) Peripatetic nursery education
 - b) Community nursery education
- 2 – Peripatetic nursery education is provided through regular visits by a nursery teacher to remote areas or areas where there are few children.
- 3 – Community nursery education consists of child development activities in poor urban or suburban areas, organised in facilities provided by the local community for a given period of the day.

Article 16

Free provision

- 1 – The educational component of pre-school education is provided free of charge.
- 2 – The other components of pre-school education will be subsidised by the State according to the family's socio-economic condition, with the aim of promoting equality of opportunity, subject to terms to be defined by the Government at a later date.

CHAPTER VI

Administration, management and staffing

Article 17

Administration and management

The administration and management of public nursery schools will be defined in a decree-law.

Article 18
Staffing

- 1 – Nursery teachers working in nursery schools directly controlled by central government, the Autonomous Regions or local government will be covered by the career structure for Nursery, Primary and Secondary School Teachers.
- 2 – Nursery teacher working in the private sector should progressively be provided with identical conditions for the practice of their profession and professional development.
- 3 – The Ministry of Education will establish the qualifications required for non-teaching staff at nursery schools.

CHAPTER VII

Training and development

Article 19

Training and development

Through the Ministry of Education, the State will foster training and development programmes and support for activities and projects in the nursery school and will sign collaboration agreements with existing training networks.

CHAPTER VIII

Assessment and inspection

Article 20

Assessment

The State will define criteria to assess the quality of service provided throughout the pre-school education system.

Article 21

Inspection

It is the duty of the Inspectorate-General of Education to monitor all pedagogical and technical aspects of the working of nursery schools.

CHAPTER IX

Final dispositions and transitional regime

Article 22

Funding

- 1 – The Government will establish the general norms for the funding of the various types of pre-school education defined in this law.
- 2 – The norms referred to in the foregoing paragraph should include:
 - a) Pluri-annual planning;
 - b) Breakdown of direct public investment and support to initiatives in other sectors;
 - c) The criteria to be adopted to achieve equality of educational opportunity, in line with the stipulations of article 16 of this law, and improved quality in education, namely by means of incentives for nursery school staff development and longer opening hours to meet families' needs.

Article 23

Transitional regime

- 1 – For the purposes of the stipulations of Article 12 of this law, public nursery schools will progressively extend working hours to meet family needs, from the day this law comes into force to the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year.

2 - The free provision envisaged in Article 16, paragraph 1 of this law takes effect from the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year for children over the age of 5, extending progressively to all other children by the 2000-2001 school year, in accordance with Article 3 of this law.

3 - From the 1998-1999 school year, financial support will be granted only to institutions which fulfil the requirements for staff qualifications envisaged in Article 18, paragraph 2.

Article 24 Revocation

1 - Law nº 5/77 of 1 February is hereby revoked.

2 - The dispositions of Decree-Law nº 542/79 of 31 December which contradict the stipulations of this law are also hereby revoked.

Approved on 10 December 1996

The President of the Assembly of the Republic, *António de Almeida Santos*

Promulgated on 24 January 1997

To be published

The President of the Republic, JORGE SAMPAIO

Ratified on 27 January 1997

The Prime Minister, *António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres*

Ruling n° 5220/97 (2nd series)

In Article 2, Law n° 5/97 (10 February), the Pre-school Education Law, defines pre-school education as the first stage of basic education in the process of lifelong education, with Article 8, subparagraph b) stipulating that it lies within the State's power to define objectives and guidelines.

These legal dispositions are articulated with the stipulations of Decree-Law n° 286/89 (29 August), which established the principles of the organisation of the syllabus for primary and secondary education. These were further developed by Decree-Law n° 147/97 (11 June), which defined the juridical system for the development and expansion of the pre-school education network.

Within this context, approval of Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education is a decisive step towards ensuring the quality of the national pre-school education network, involving the definition of common reference points to guide the work undertaken by pre-school teachers in the schools making up the network, regardless of whether they belong to the public or private sector.

Curriculum Guidelines are thus a set of general educational and organisational principles to help pre-school teachers make decisions concerning day-to-day practice, i.e., how to conduct the education process to be undertaken with the children.

Thus, subject to the terms of Decree-Law n° 286/89 (29 August), Article 3, Law n° 5/97 (10 February, Articles 2 and 8, and Decree-Law 147/97 (11 June), Articles 13 and 16, I determine the following:

1. Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education are hereby approved, the general principles of which are attached to this Ruling and are to be considered an integral part of the same.
2. For the 1997-98 school year, Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education are to be considered as recommendations, but they become binding from the 1998-99 school year onwards. They are expected to be revised in the 2001-02 school year.
3. The Department of Basic Education, together with the Office for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education, will, within 60 days of the date of publication of this Ruling, ensure the publication of these Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education.

10 July 1997 – the Secretary of State for Education and Innovation, *Ana Benavente*

CURRICULUM GUIDELINES FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education approved under the terms of this Ruling are the result of a wide-ranging and comprehensive debate which led to a gradual reworking of the original proposals.

The diversity and richness of the contributions made by services and institutions which play an important part in pre-school education, as well as from groups of pre-school teachers who were willing to analyse the first working document and submit their criticisms and suggestions, made it possible to rework and improve the final document. This process also made it possible to distinguish general principles of the curriculum guidelines mentioned in the title of this Ruling from their practical pedagogical development published by the Department of Basic Education. The complementary nature of these two documents is intended to make them a useful instrument for pre-school teachers to reflect on their practice and to enable them to find the most suitable educational solutions to the problems posed by the children they work with.

Curriculum Guidelines are a set of principles to support the pre-school teacher in decisions on his/her practice, i.e., how to conduct the educational process to be developed with the children.

Curriculum Guidelines are a common reference for all pre-school teachers working within the national pre-school education network and are intended to provide organisation for the syllabus component. They do not constitute a curricular in themselves, since they are intended as guidelines rather than a prescriptive list of learning targets to be achieved by the children. They may also be differentiated from the curriculum notion since they are more general and wide-ranging, i.e., they include the possibility of using various types of learning/teaching options and therefore, various types of curriculum.

In forming a frame of reference for all pre-school teachers, curriculum guidelines are intended to contribute to promoting an improvement in the quality of pre-school education.

This document is organised as follows:

- 1) General principle and pedagogical aims as set out in the Pre-school Education Law
- 2) Grounds and organisation of Curriculum Guidelines
- 3) General guidelines for the pre-school teacher

Curriculum Guidelines are based on the following foundations:

- development and learning are indissociable from each other;
- the child is the subject of the education process - which means starting with what the child already knows and valuing his/her knowledge as the basis for new learning. This new learning fundamentally envisages the development of curiosity, a critical approach and the ability to learn how to learn;
- articulated building of knowledge - which implies that the different areas should not be seen as closed compartments, but approached in a global and integrated way;
- to respond to all children - which requires presupposes a differentiated teaching methods centred on children co-operation, in which each child benefits from the educational process developed within the group.

Based on these foundations, curriculum development will take into account:

Overall aims - listed in the Pre-School Education Law as intentions which should guide the professional practice of pre-school teachers:

Organisation of the educational environment - as a support for curriculum development syllabus and fulfilment of its intentions. The educational environment includes different interacting levels: organisation of the group, classroom space and time; school organisation of the educational establishment organization; relations with parents and other partners in the educational process;

Learning areas – these are the general references to consider in planning and assessing learning situations and opportunities. There are three learning areas:

- Personal and Social development
- Creativity/Communication, covering three domains
 - a) different forms of art – kinetic, dramatic, plastic and musical expression;
 - b) language and literacy an initial approach to writing;
 - c) mathematics
- Knowledge of the World;

Educational continuity – as a process which starts from what children already know and have learned, creating conditions for success in later learning;

Educational intent – which results from a process of reflecting on observation, planning, action and assessment carried out by the teacher, with the aim of matching classroom practice to the children's needs.

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLE AND PEDAGOGIC AIMS LISTED IN THE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK LAW

The Pre-school Education Law establishes as a general principle that "pre-school education is the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education, and complements the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation, fostering the training and balanced development of the child, with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual".

This principle provides the grounds for the rest of the dispositions of this Law and for the general pedagogic aims defined for pre-school education:

- a) To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;
- b) To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging a growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society;

- c) To contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and for successful learning;
- d) To stimulate each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning;
- e) To develop creativity and communication through different forms as a means of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding the world;
- f) To arouse curiosity and critical thought;
- g) To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health;
- h) To correct precocious, deficient or socially unacceptable behaviour, promoting the best guidance for the child;
- i) To encourage family participation in the educational process and establish real co-operation with the community.

2. GROUNDS AND ORGANISATION OF CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

The general principle and pedagogical aims listed in the Law provide the grounds for the organisation of Curriculum Guidelines for pre-school education.

Thus the different statements contained within the general principle of the Law, quoted in this text, are related with the general aims, in order to make explicit how they are translated into Curriculum Guidelines: "Pre-school education is the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education".

This statement implies that it is at this stage that the conditions are created to enable children to continue learning, i.e., it is important that during their pre-school years children should learn how to learn. This statement is also the starting point for the general aim: "to contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and successful learning".

The intention is not that pre-school education should be organised in such a way as to prepare children for primary education, but rather that it should prepare children for lifelong

learning. However, it should prepare children to deal successfully with the next stage of education.

Pre-school education has been considered out as a possible contribution for early academic failure where some children find out that they are not as capable as others. Sociological research has also shown that poor school performance is associated above all with the poorer classes, where there is a greater mismatch between the family's cultural background and that of the school.

In order for pre-school education to be able to contribute to greater equality of opportunity, these Curriculum Guidelines stress the importance of a structured teaching approach, which implies intentional and systematic organisation of the learning process and requires that the teacher plan his/her work and then assess the process and its effects on the children's development and learning.

Adopting an organised and structured pedagogical approach does not mean bringing into pre-school education certain "traditional" practices which make no sense to children, nor does it mean undermining the importance of the fun side of many learning activities, since the pleasure of learning and mastering certain skills requires real effort, concentration and personal investment.

Pre-school education creates the conditions for successful learning in all children, insofar as it promotes self-esteem and develops skills which enable each child to recognise his/her own potential and progress.

The different contexts for pre-school education are thus spaces where children build their own learning process, in such a way as to "foster the training and balanced development of the child".

This statement of the general principle is the grounds for the aim of stimulating "each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning"

This aim points towards the interlinking of development and learning defended by a series of different modern strands of psychology and sociology, which consider that the human being develops through a process of social interaction. Within

this perspective, the child plays an active role in his/her interaction with the environment which, in turn, should provide favourable conditions for development and learning.

Admitting that the child plays an active part in the construction of his/her own development and learning means that (s)he should be seen as the subject and not the object in the educational process.

In this sense, it is important to stress that pre-school education should start from what children already know, their own culture and individual knowledge.

Respecting and valuing the individual characteristics of each child, the fact that each child is different, is the basis for new learning. The opportunity to take advantage of a diversified range of educational experiences in a context which facilitates broad social interaction with other children and adults, allows each child to contribute to the development and learning of others as (s)he builds his/her own development and learning.

Respect for differences in others includes children who do not follow "normal" patterns, and pre-school education should respond to any and every child. Within this perspective of the "inclusive school", pre-school education should adopt the practice of a differentiated teaching approach, centred on co-operation, including all children, accepting all differences, supporting learning and responding to individual needs.

The "inclusive school" concept assumes that the planning process should take the group into account. This plan is adapted and differentiated in line with children's individual characteristics, so as to offer each child stimulating conditions for his/her development and learning. By its reference to the group, it goes further than the view of integration that posited the need for individual and specific plans for "different" children. Thus even children diagnosed as having "special educational needs" are included in the group and benefit from the educational opportunities made available to all.

The conditions considered necessary for an "inclusive school", such as the efficient working of the educational establishment, the involvement of all interested parties – staff, children, parents and community –, team planning, are all aspects to be taken into account in the educational process to be developed in pre-school education.

The response which pre-school education should provide for all children is organised "with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual".

This last statement of the general principle guiding pre-school education is made concrete in different aims, and is directly related with the following:

"To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;

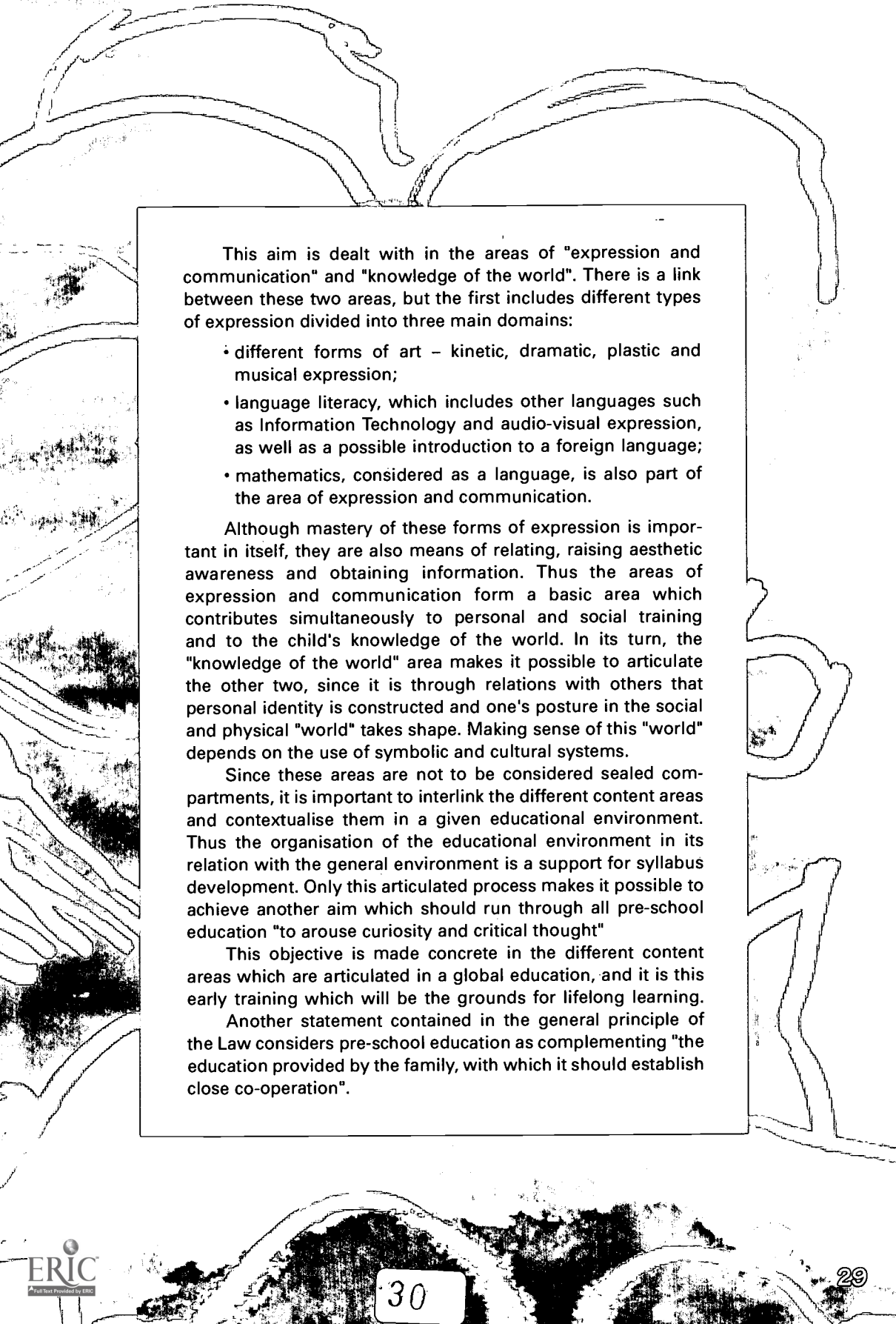
To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging a growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society".

In its search to provide education for citizenship, the Curriculum Guidelines attribute particular importance to the organisation of the educational environment as a context for democratic life in which all children participate, where they come into contact with and learn to respect different cultures. It is this experience that provides the grounds for the area of personal and social education considered as an area integrating the whole process of pre-school education.

It is also an aim of pre-school education "To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health".

Welfare and safety also depend on the educational environment, in which the child feels welcomed, listened to and valued, all of which contributes to his/her self-esteem and willingness to learn. An environment in which (s)he feels comfortable because his/her physical and psychological needs are satisfied. Welfare related to individual and collective health is also a chance to provide health education, which is part of anyone's education as a citizen.

But the child's education, aimed at the child's full integration in society as an independent, free and co-operative being, also implies other ways of developing and learning, as referred to in the aim of developing "expression and communication through different forms as a means of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding the world".



This aim is dealt with in the areas of "expression and communication" and "knowledge of the world". There is a link between these two areas, but the first includes different types of expression divided into three main domains:

- different forms of art – kinetic, dramatic, plastic and musical expression;
- language literacy, which includes other languages such as Information Technology and audio-visual expression, as well as a possible introduction to a foreign language;
- mathematics, considered as a language, is also part of the area of expression and communication.

Although mastery of these forms of expression is important in itself, they are also means of relating, raising aesthetic awareness and obtaining information. Thus the areas of expression and communication form a basic area which contributes simultaneously to personal and social training and to the child's knowledge of the world. In its turn, the "knowledge of the world" area makes it possible to articulate the other two, since it is through relations with others that personal identity is constructed and one's posture in the social and physical "world" takes shape. Making sense of this "world" depends on the use of symbolic and cultural systems.

Since these areas are not to be considered sealed compartments, it is important to interlink the different content areas and contextualise them in a given educational environment. Thus the organisation of the educational environment in its relation with the general environment is a support for syllabus development. Only this articulated process makes it possible to achieve another aim which should run through all pre-school education "to arouse curiosity and critical thought"

This objective is made concrete in the different content areas which are articulated in a global education, and it is this early training which will be the grounds for lifelong learning.

Another statement contained in the general principle of the Law considers pre-school education as complementing "the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation".

This statement, which stresses the importance of relations with the family, can be seen in the objective of encouraging "family participation in the educational process and establish[ing] real co-operation with the community".

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for the child and their first and main educators. Since the prevailing fashion has now swung away from the idea of education compensating for what parents cannot provide, it is thought that the effects of pre-school education are closely related with the degree of articulation with families. The intention is not to compensate for the family background, but rather to use it as a starting point and take into account the culture(s) from which the children come. This is to ensure that pre-school education is then able to mediate between the children's culture of origin and the culture they will have to appropriate to learn successfully.

Since pre-school education is to be seen as complementary to the upbringing provided by the family, there must be articulation between the educational establishment and families, aimed at finding within a certain social context the solutions best suited to children and families. It is thus the parents' right and duty to participate in the drafting of the educational plan of the school in question.

However, not only the family but also the social environment in which the child lives influences his/her education, and the school benefits from the united effort and the resources any community will make available for the education of its children and young people. Parents and other members of the community may therefore work together to develop the school's educational plan.

This process of collaboration with parents and the community has effects on children's education and consequences for the development and learning of adults involved in their education.

3. OVERALL GUIDELINES FOR THE PRESCHOOL TEACHER

The underlying intention of the education process which characterises the professional intervention of the preschool teacher involves different interlinked stages. The basic tenets of this approach are as follows:



Observing

Observing each child and the group to know their abilities, interests and difficulties and to gather information on family context and the environment in which the children live are necessary to understand the children's characteristics and to mould the educational process to respond to their needs. Knowledge of the child and his/her development are the basis for the different teaching approach which begins with what the child knows and is able to do, then broadens his/her interests and develop his/her potential. This knowledge is the result of continuous observation and pre-supposes the need for references such as what the children produce and different types of registers and records. This is fundamentally a question of having information which may be analysed periodically so as to be able to understand the process and its effects on each child's learning. Observation is thus the basis of planning and assessment, and serves as a support to the underlying intention of the educational process.

Planning

Planning the educational process in line with what the educator knows about the group and each child, his/her family and social background is an essential condition to ensure that pre-school education provides a stimulating environment for development and promotes significant and differentiated learning experiences contributing to greater equality of opportunity.

Planning implies that the educator reflects on underlying intentions and the ways of adapting these to the group, anticipating learning situations and experiences and organising the material and human resources necessary to ensure that they take place. Planning the learning environment allows children to explore and use the spaces, materials and instruments placed at their disposal, providing them with a range of diversified interaction with the whole group, in small groups and in pairs, and the possibility of interacting with other adults. This

planning takes into account the different content areas and their articulation, as well as foreseeing the various possibilities which arise or change in accordance with situations and the children's proposals.

It is therefore the teacher's job to plan learning situations which are sufficiently challenging to interest and stimulate each child, providing support to enable the child to reach levels which (s)he could not reach alone, but avoiding the danger of being over-demanding, which might discourage the child and lead to low self-esteem.

Planning carried out with the participation of the children allows the group to benefit from the diversity, ability and skills of each child, in a sharing process which facilitates learning and development for each and every one.

Acting

Putting educational intentions into action, adapting them to the children's proposals and taking advantage of unforeseen situations and opportunities. The participation of other adults – auxiliary staff, parents, other members of the community – in bringing to fruition the educational opportunities planned by the nursery teacher is a way of broadening children's interactions and enriching the educational process.

Assessing

Assessing the process and its effects implies being aware of action in order to mould the educational process to the needs of the children and the group and their development.

Assessment done with the children is an educational experience, and it also serves as a basis for assessment for the nursery teacher. Reflection based on observed effects makes it possible to establish a progression in the learning experiences to be developed with each child. In this sense, assessment is a support for planning.

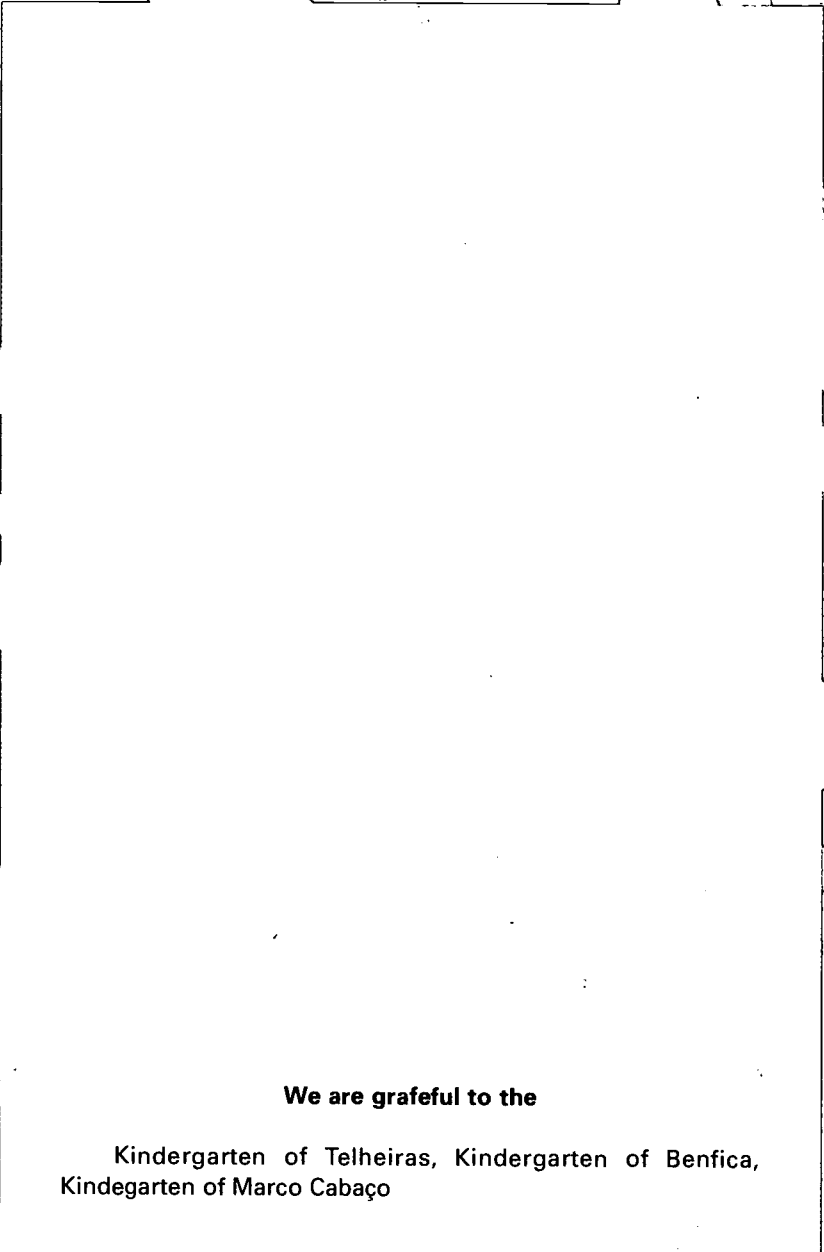


Communicating

The knowledge the pre-school teacher acquires of the child and how (s)he develops is enriched by sharing with other adults who also have responsibility for the child's education, especially fellow teachers, auxiliary staff and parents. While team-work by professionals is a means of self-training with benefits for the child's education, exchanging opinions with the parents provides greater knowledge of the child and other contexts influencing his/her education: family and community.

Articulating

It is the teacher's duty to promote educational continuity in a process which begins with entry into pre-school education and ends with the move to primary school. The relationship established with parents before the child attends nursery school facilitates communication between the teacher and parents, thus encouraging the child's adaptation. It is also the nursery teacher's job to provide conditions for the child to be a successful learner in the next phase, and working with both the parents and primary school staff, to make the child's move to primary school as easy as possible.



We are grateful to the
Kindergarten of Telheiras, Kindergarten of Benfica,
Kindegarten of Marco Cabaço

ERRATA

Page 2 – Title
where we read "CGILHOOD"
we must read "CHILDHOOD"

Page 5
1rst table, 3rd column
add "in 97-98"

Page 5
where we read "in 1987/98"
we must read "in 1997/98"



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