

Continuing vocational training in local government in Portugal, 2000-05 – What has changed?

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SUMMARY

Local government in Portugal had a good opportunity to modernise through the Programa de Formação para as Autarquias Locais (Foral) [Training programme for local authorities], implemented between 2000 and 2005. Substantial financial resources were made available through the programme to retrain local government human resources in order to improve coordination between services, respond to requests from local inhabitants, and equip municipalities with technical and human resources.

The programme was in operation for six years and its development and outcomes can now be assessed.

Starting from an analysis of local authority 'social balance sheets' in two key years (2000 and 2005) and from information obtained as part of a process for assessing the impact of the Foral programme (2006), some of the changes brought about in local government due to the effects of the programme are presented and discussed.

Introduction

Portugal is a constitutional democracy in which central and local government coexist. Central government comes under the authority of the prime minister, who is appointed by the President of the Republic after legislative elections by direct universal suffrage in a secret ballot of resident citizens. In line with the constitution of the Portuguese Republic, the President of the Republic asks the leader of the majority party in the legislative elections to form a government.

Local government is exercised by local authorities, i.e. municipalities, municipal councils and parish councils. These are local, autonomous, decentralised bodies which respond to the collective problems and interests of the resident population in a particular area. Mayors or local councillors, who are democratically elected by direct universal suffrage in a secret ballot of resident citizens, are responsible for implementing local policies.

Recent moves to devolve powers to local authorities are based on recognition of the role played by local government in building democracy and providing an effective response to people's day-to-day problems. In the context of decentralising functions, powers that were previously exercised by central government in areas such as education, medical and social care, culture and sport have been devolved to local government. These new powers require both financial resources and qualified human resources. Financial resources are allocated to local government under the *Lei das Finanças Locais* [Law on Local Finance]. There have been very few municipal initiatives to upgrade the qualifications of local government employees.

The urgent need for qualified employees capable of responding to the demands arising out of the decentralisation of powers by central government, however, led to the creation of a training initiative for local government called the Foral programme under the third Community Support Framework. The programme aimed to help to train local government officials and employees in mainland Portugal so as to reinforce the decentralisation of power and the modernisation of services.

Substantial investments were accordingly made in local government training from 2001 to 2005.

Now that the Foral programme has concluded, several questions arise. Did the investment made grow in a similar way throughout the years of implementation of the Foral programme, and/or act in a similar way in the various regions of the country? Did the Foral

programme produce the expected changes in the qualifications of local government human resources? Have organisational changes taken place in local authorities due to the implementation of this programme? This article seeks to provide answers to these and other questions raised in examining the initial and final situation of local authorities (relating to the years 2000 and 2005 respectively), based on certain indicators.

The first part will set out the state of training in local government in 2000 as the reference framework underlying the subsequent analysis. The second and third parts will analyse the development of local government training activities and of the physical and financial implementation of the programme respectively. The fourth part will present the conclusions relating to the 12 case studies carried out in 2006 as part of the national assessment of the impact of the training delivered under the Foral programme.

The article concludes with a critical reflection on the nature and intensity of the changes experienced in local government as a result of the application of the Foral programme.

Initial situation

In 2002, three researchers from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Lisbon University carried out an extensive study characterising local government training (Canário, Cabrito and Aires, 2002). The activities referred to here as 'training' include all training activities geared specifically towards local government personnel, regardless of the characteristics involved. This study showed that:

- there were significant asymmetries in access to training between employees in different occupational categories, to the detriment of the less qualified 'auxiliary' and 'manual' categories. These two groups, accounting for 56.3 % of local government officials, used a mere 14.0 % of the total training delivered in 2000. On the other hand, the 'administrative' and 'senior technical' categories, representing 24.3 % of these officials, used 51.2 % of the training provided; finally, the 'managerial, technical executive, IT and technical' categories, which represent only 19.4 % of staff, jointly used 34.8 % of the training made available;
- this lack of equality in access to training explains why only 2.3 % and 6.1 % of 'manual' and 'auxiliary' staff were able to undergo training, while for the 'senior managerial', 'technical executive'

- and 'technical' occupational categories, the figures were 100 %, 91 % and 72.1 % respectively;
- the training delivered was mostly of short duration, with 78 % lasting less than 30 hours.
 - the training provided was mostly outsourced, i.e. 77 % of all training;
 - there was a predominance of classroom training, which fosters the passive consumption of training provided and purchased in the 'market';
 - most of the training was made available by local authorities, using training on offer in the market or provided directly by private training companies;
 - in 2000, local authorities were incapable of making strategic use of Foral programme funds, with 81.9 % of training being financed by own resources;
 - the experience of employees and the training potential of work situations and organisational problems in institutions were not exploited;
 - there was a general lack of training plans, consistent needs analyses and human resources training and management services;
 - there was no training culture.

In these circumstances and in view of the financial resources made available by the Foral programme and its objectives, the programme could have been a powerful instrument for expanding and diversifying training initiatives for local government officials.

The development of local government training activities in the period of implementation of the Foral programme is outlined below. It should be noted that the data are aggregated by NUTs, i.e. by aggregated territorial units, the regions involved being the North, the Centre, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (LVT), Alentejo and Algarve.

Development of local government training, 2000-05

Number of applications submitted to the EU and approval rates

Table 1 shows the number of training applications submitted by local government by region.

In the first two years of implementation, the number of applications submitted was low for various reasons, most notably the lack of a

training culture, the inflexibility of local government structures and the difficulties inherent in the application process itself, which many council leaders complained was difficult, slow and complex. For a significant number of the officials surveyed, in fact, the bureaucratic difficulties of the application procedure made training using the authorities' own resources more attractive.

Table 1. Number of applications submitted

Years	2000-01	2002	2003	2004	2005	2000-05
North	47	40	58	143	178	466
Centre	33	16	67	116	137	369
LVT	37	30	50	71	113	301
Alentejo	11	15	16	41	31	114
Algarve	10	7	11	32	48	108
Total	138	108	202	403	507	1358

Source: Secretaria de Estado da Administração Local [Secretary of State for Local Government] – Núcleo de Coordenação e de Acompanhamento Estratégico do Programa Foral (NCAEPF) [Foral programme Strategic Coordination and Monitoring Unit].

The situation changed considerably from 2003, with the total number of applications submitted in 2004 doubling compared to the previous year.

The factors influencing this change included a high profile national campaign to publicise the Foral programme, the gradual standardisation of application forms, a reduction in the bureaucratic burden and the training courses for local government development officers and training managers proposed by Canário, Cabrito and Cavaco (2002).

Table 2, which shows the percentage development of application approval rates, clearly illustrates this change in training activities in the period, particularly in the North, which had an aggregate implementation rate of 106 % at 31 December 2005.

The dynamism shown by the North, the country's most industrialised region, was not representative of the pattern of training in general, however. The Alentejo and Algarve regions actually had very low figures, due basically to the fact that they are depressed regions with very small local authorities in which it was more difficult to implement the Foral programme. The position of Algarve in the last two years should nevertheless also be noted, a situation arising in part due to the establishment of networks among local authorities that enabled joint applications to be submitted.

Table 2. Approval rates, aggregate figures as a percentage

	2000-01	2002	2003	2004	2005
North	12	21	39	71	106
Centre	9	14	32	50	74
LVT	11	16	27	46	64
Alentejo	2	6	10	19	29
Algarve	4	9	14	26	29
Total	9	15	28	48	62

Source: NCAEPF.

The Lisboa e Vale do Tejo region is a special case in which the development recorded was due to the fact that there was already a strong training culture in this area, particularly in the municipalities of Lisbon, Oeiras, Cascais, Sintra and Almada, with countless initiatives financed by own resources.

Applications by type

One of the most consistent characteristics of training in general, particularly in local government, is the predominance of ‘training courses’ per se, involving classroom training where a relationship of ‘dependence’ is established between trainer and trainee, faithfully reproducing a now outmoded educational model (Canário, 1999). Training courses were also the prevalent type of training in applications for the Foral programme from 2000 to 2005, accounting for around 93 % of the total, as can be seen from Table 3.

Since one of the objectives of the Foral programme was to help to modernise local government in Portugal by stepping up training activities, and recalling that ‘training courses’ in general do not provide the desired results, given their cumulative nature external to the problems of trainees, it is fair to question whether that objective has been met.

It should nevertheless be noted that, although restricted in number, new types of training were presented and approved from 2003, following the study by Canário, Cabrito and Aires (2002) and the pressure exerted by local authorities themselves on the European Union and the Secretary of State for Local Government, leading to the publication of legislation allowing applications for new types of training.

Particularly important among these new types is ‘practical training’, which by its nature simultaneously involves many employees, and which can genuinely give rise to organisational changes. This was

in fact one of the issues focused upon in the case studies. It should also be noted that this type of training is not yet a true alternative to traditional training courses.

Organisations promoting training

In the period under analysis, training was promoted by a diverse range of organisations, with municipal councils and private training companies nevertheless predominating, as can be seen from Table 4.

Although the organisations promoting training were diversified, this did not give rise to significant changes in the types of training on offer, as Table 3 shows. 'Training courses' predominated for two basic reasons: on the one hand, private training companies have a 'catalogue' of training essentially consisting of the provision of 'training courses/programmes', which is the cheapest and most profitable way of delivering training; on the other, because local authorities generally lack training services and pools of in-house trainers, council leaders seek training in the market, where what is on offer essentially consists of training courses.

Table 3. Number of applications by type

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total number	% of total
Distance training	-	-	0	1	1	2	0.2
Advanced training	-	-	1	4	5	10	0.8
Practical training	-	-	0	30	54	84	6.1
Training courses	138	108	201	368	447	1262	92.9
Total	138	108	202	403	507	1358	100.0

Source: NCAEPF.

Duration of training

One of the guidelines in the document *Orientação Estratégica para a Formação na Administração Local* [Strategic guidelines for training in local government], by Canário, Cabrito and Aires (2002), was to favour medium and long duration training courses, since short duration programmes always have very little effect on the people who attend them. Despite this suggestion, however, the duration of training courses run during the period concerned under the Foral

Table 4. Organisations promoting training, 2000-05, as a percentage

Municipal councils	52	Associations of municipalities	11
Parish councils	2	Local authority training centre	5
Municipal undertakings	1	Educational institutions/universities	1
Concessionaires	2	Others	2
Private training companies	23	Development associations	1

Source: NCAEPF.

programme was very short, with programmes lasting less than 40 hours predominating, as can be seen from Table 5:

The figures in Table 5 are clearly indicative of short duration training, which goes hand in hand with the ‘training course’ mode. A total of 40 hours is too short a period in which to try out other types of training, and explains the extremely limited number of long duration initiatives, such as practical training and advanced training. This option will naturally adversely affect the objective of modernising government, and it therefore follows that the effects of training in the public administration in the period were not significant, either at individual or at organisational level.

Table 5. Average duration of training proposed, in hours

Years/Hours	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Average number of hours per programme	30	36	37	40	35

Source: NCAEPF.

In summary:

The implementation of the Foral programme from 2000 to 2005 suggests that:

- there was a significant increase in the number of applications and the number of approvals for training courses from 2003;
- from 2003, new types of training were submitted and approved, particularly practical training;
- in general, the training made available was essentially determined by what was on offer in the market rather than by the diagnosed

- needs of organisations and individuals;
- the training made available was essentially delivered by means of outsourced short duration training in the form of training courses.

Physical and financial implementation of the Foral programme, 2000-05

The analysis of the success of a measure is also gauged by its implementation. Thus in order to assess the success of the Foral programme, besides the indicators already presented and examined, indicators demonstrating the (in)ability of local authorities and the country to ensure the programme's implementation in physical and financial terms are presented below.

Physical implementation

To examine the physical implementation of the Foral programme, an indicator was used that relates the number of trainees approved for training to the number of trainees who actually underwent training.

This indicator is highly indicative of the way the programme was implemented, as it highlights the existence of a considerable shortfall in the number of officials and employees undergoing training, while a much greater number of individuals were approved for training. Table 6 shows these figures.

The figures illustrate the inability of local authorities to provide training for all trainees who apply. This suggests that there are failings in local authority planning processes in terms of the human resources available to deliver training, and the capacity of authorities to make personnel available for training.

These figures indicate the local authorities' initial difficulties in organising training for their officials. While inflexibility and bureaucracy may explain this situation in the first two years of implementation of the programme, after 2003, with the changes introduced into application processes (standardisation of documents, streamlining of the process) and with the provision of new types of training (practical training, distance training), a higher rate of physical implementation of the programme would be expected. In the light of the data under analysis, however, it can be seen that the Foral programme has not made the desired contribution towards new ways of organising and managing training, or towards modernising local government in general.

Table 6. **Relationship between the number of trainees approved and the training implemented**

	2000-01	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Approved (1)	47 764	25 797	65 002	82 094	107 197	327 854
Implemented (2)	9 653	15 905	20 613	29 963	29 943	100 077
(2)/(1)x100	20.2	61.7	31.7	36.5	27.9	30.5

Source: NCAEPF (adapted).

Financial implementation

The deficit in the physical implementation of the programme set out above suggests that the financial implementation would parallel this, and that is in fact the case. The rates of financial implementation, by region and nationally, were very low during the whole period, as can be seen from Table 7.

These figures very clearly illustrate the inadequate effort made by local authorities to train their officials and employees, though a willingness to take advantage of the financial resources available from 2004 can be observed. Combining the poor results for the programme's financial implementation with the results for its physical implementation, however, shows that Portugal missed its 'last chance' to modernise local government.

Table 7. **Rates of financial implementation, aggregate figures as a percentage**

	2000-01	2002	2003	2004	2005
North	1.0	5.7	12.6	16.1	20.6
Centre	1.3	4.1	6.7	10.8	17.7
LVT	1.5	5.6	9.9	17.9	29.1
Alentejo	0.4	2.4	5.6	19.9	25.3
Algarve	2.5	6.9	13.5	19.4	23.3
Total	1.5	5.5	10.8	17.0	23.4

Source: NCAEPF.

In summary:

- the physical implementation of the programme was extremely inadequate, with the delivery of a number of initiatives falling significantly below expectations;
- the financial implementation of the programme was also extremely inadequate, at around 30 % of the volume of capital allocated;

- while the shortfall in the implementation of the Foral programme appears to be 'excusable' until 2003, it is inexplicable from that year.

The Case Studies

Presentation

The need for a qualitative approach

The Foral programme was an important source of financing for the training of local government officials. With the ultimate aim of modernising this part of the public administration, thousands of training hours and events were funded from 2000 to 2005, yet at the same time thousands of individuals also slipped through the net of this training.

As seen above, however, in overall terms the implementation of the programme was very disappointing. Much of the training delivered in the period concerned suffered from the same inadequacies that characterised local government training in 2000, i.e. the fact that it was external to individuals and work situations, trainees' low participation in its planning, its short duration and the predominance of 'training courses'.

This also clearly shows that a significant proportion of the resources made available for training were not exploited, indicating that a range of institutions did not have the capacity to use the enormous volume of capital allocated to the Foral programme and thus to ensure the essential modernisation of services.

Despite the rather negative picture painted by this overall analysis, however, some positive aspects can be identified. Clearly the mere fact that many thousands of individuals were undergoing training was positive in itself, though the shortfall between what was achieved and the expectations placed on the Foral programme is disappointing.

It is nonetheless difficult for the overall analysis to pinpoint particular situations whose distinctiveness may have a positive effect on practices. That analysis does not make it possible to identify improvements that may have been brought about in the organisation, management and planning of training in a particular municipality, or to perceive the changes observed in a particular group of local government officials or employees. In short, the quantitative analysis

does not highlight signs of change (if any), whether in individuals, organisations or practices. Only a qualitative analysis of the process, in the sense attributed by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), can indicate the seeds of change that may develop in the near future.

In this context, an impact evaluation study of the Foral programme was conducted in 2006 (Nóvoa, Cabrito and Canário, 2006), which favoured a qualitative approach close to the case study.

The case study

In this study the research team sought to examine the distinctiveness of each training process rather than the numbers and figures involved to explain the particular features of each process and to identify the signs of change the Foral programme was hoped to bring about. The aim was to build up a detailed picture of certain experiences, and the case study as advocated by Lessard-Hébert *et al.* (2005) was therefore adopted.

The researchers chose to investigate and interpret what took place and how it took place in a restricted number of specific situations, rather than to 'measure' outcomes and organisational changes by means of a questionnaire survey of all municipalities. It was thus decided to carry out qualitative research into a number of cases to be determined, since as Yin (2001) has stated, the study of multiple cases is one of the possible types of case study. The aim was to characterise the training carried out in each case and to compare the procedures relating to that training with the situation diagnosed for Portugal in 2000.

In this way, starting from the analysis of these actual situations in terms of indicators such as the existence or otherwise of a training plan, the accessibility of training to certain occupational categories, the types of training carried out, the establishment or otherwise of networks of municipalities etc., the objective was to understand the changes that took place in local government training processes brought about by the implementation of the Foral programme from 2000 to 2005.

The cases

After opting to carry out qualitative research close to the case study, the number of cases and their identification had to be decided.

At this point, the time and the human and financial resources available were considered to preclude a representative sampling of the universe of several hundred municipalities. It was decided instead to focus on a limited number of municipalities, bearing feasibility in mind and based on the principle that it was not intended to make

generalisations, on the one hand, and that the information obtained from a range of cases could, by saturation, reveal 'generalisable' trends on the other.

In line with this methodology, it was decided to study 12 situations, since the research teams were small, their members were to continue their respective professional activities, and they lived in different areas that were some distance from each other and from the potential cases.

These 12 situations nevertheless had to meet different criteria that would ensure that the situations analysed were diverse. Twelve cases were thus actively chosen for the sample, selected according to regional and geographic distribution, principal economic activities and the nature of the organisation (the municipality and the association of municipalities).

In view of the number of municipalities in each region and the respective population, the first decision was to carry out three case studies in each of the North, Centre and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo regions, two in the Alentejo and one in Algarve.

The nature of the institutions to be studied then had to be determined. The first idea was to study 12 local authorities. In some places, however, their small size means that they have to join together to achieve objectives common to the respective regions and populations. Some municipalities, for example, have joined forces to promote training because their size does not allow them to form the cohort of 15 officials for training laid down by the European Union, or have joined together to share trainers or equipment.

On a day-to-day basis, sometimes diverse municipalities therefore come together to form associations of municipalities, creating a structure that allows their individual members to carry out particular functions common to them all. Considering the total number of municipalities and associations of municipalities in the country, it was decided to study five associations of municipalities and seven municipal councils.

In view of the number of these organisations in each region, it was decided to study:

- two associations of municipalities and one municipal council in the North;
- two municipal councils and one association of municipalities in the Centre;
- two municipal councils and one association of municipalities in the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo region;

- one municipal council and one association of municipalities in the Alentejo;
- one municipal council in Algarve.

After this stage, and in specifying which municipal councils or associations of municipalities were to be studied in each region, the urban or rural nature of the different organisations was also taken into consideration.

Finally, in deciding which cases were to be studied, i.e. in forming the sample, account was also taken of the knowledge available on the training initiatives and experiences delivered by the various municipal councils or associations of municipalities in order to find 'exemplary' cases that could be illustrative of good practices.

It was eventually decided to study the following cases:

Table 8. Cases studied

		North	Centre	LVT	Alentejo	Algarve	Total
Municipal council	Urban	1	-	2	1	1	5
	Rural	-	2	-	-	-	2
Association of municipalities	Urban	1	-	1	-	-	2
	Rural	1	1	-	1	-	3
Total		3	3	3	2	1	12

Data collection

In conducting the case studies, documents were used that enabled to ascertain what training had been delivered and what its nature and justification was. Training application proposals and training plans, if any, were therefore examined, with consideration in the case of training plans being given not only to their content but also to the way they were drawn up.

Since the lack of training plans was one of the dominant characteristics of the organisation of local government training in 2000, it was important to discover whether such planning was now part and parcel of practice in the municipalities or associations of municipalities five years later.

Besides investigating the existence of training plans, the teams also wished to examine how such plans were drawn up in order to gauge the importance the various organisations attribute to making a diagnosis of the respective problems, and to verify the extent to which the training initiatives proposed may contribute towards resolving the problems encountered in the diagnostic stage.

Other documents were examined, particularly the 'planning' of the training made available and the respective curricula, agreements between institutions relating to the sharing of physical and human training resources, documents supporting information networks, statistical data, etc.

In collecting data, in line with the recommendations of Bogdan and Biklen (1994), bearing in mind the wealth of information they make it possible to obtain, semi-directive interviews were held with managers of training services and activities and with the leaders of the municipal councils or associations of municipalities.

The advice of Bardin (1977) was followed in examining the content, the documents observed and the interview protocols.

Conclusions of the case studies

The studies carried out in the various municipal councils or associations of municipalities, notwithstanding each one's specific features, were generally guided by three lines of analysis:

- comparing the current situation with the diagnosis made in 2002 (Canário, Cabrito and Aires, 2002);
- identifying good practices;
- understanding future developments.

As far as lack of equality of opportunity in access to training is concerned, there appears to be a genuine desire to democratise training which is reflected in more equitable access to and use of training. Certain opportunities geared towards the 'manual' and 'auxiliary' categories were identified in the training delivered as a whole, even though training provision for other occupational categories continues to predominate. Training during working hours, in complete days and in a work context was a consistent feature in some cases, with the aim of extending training to all.

The small scale of some local authorities, however, is not conducive to this 'universalisation' of training, especially with respect to the less qualified occupational categories, given the small number of such professionals. In this case two sometimes simultaneous approaches were noted: the pooling of officials from different local authorities to form a cohort of trainees, and/or the delivery of training in a work context.

As to whether training plans do or do not exist, meanwhile, in general it seems that they do, which is a positive development compared to the situation in 2002. In most cases, however, training plans still conform to a cumulative, catalogue-based top-down

approach, with low worker participation. Hence the predominance of short duration classroom training determined by what is on offer in the market, which is very often inappropriate to actual situations.

In associations of municipalities, great stress was laid on persuading the various members to cooperate in drawing up the training plan rather than waiting for the association to present a completed plan.

In some cases, particularly where practical training was involved, there was a genuine willingness to promote the participation of various categories of employee. These cases also involved an embryonic transformation in the organisations because of the introduction of practical training and project work approaches. An attempt to expand training to all employees in all occupational categories could be discerned in these cases, with embryonic organisational change being visible, particularly in relations between employees of different categories, between employees and managerial staff, and between employees and training teams.

It should also be noted in connection with training for the less qualified occupational categories that some organisations have invested in cooperation with Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification Centres, with the aim of simultaneously providing trainees with dual certification training, both academic and vocational. This may help to raise the low educational standard of these employees and thereby help to modernise municipal services, which will create a pool of better qualified officials who are less change averse. In many of these cases, training is thus seen as a way to modernise services and as a strategic investment.

Contrary to the isolation of local authorities noted in 2002, these studies highlight a trend towards the initiation and development of networking, revealed by the formation of intermunicipal information and training networks that seek to increase effectiveness and competitiveness through economies of scale. According to the interviewees, the 30 or so development officers who attended the respective local government course have contributed towards this type of sharing. A very telling attitude was displayed by some local authority leaders who, because of the limited number of development officers, ensured that 'training promoters' were trained who became links in the intermunicipal projects.

Another situation observed in several cases concerns the nature of the training to be made available. Considerable stress is laid on the one hand on in-house training, i.e. delivered in the premises

of the municipality or association of municipalities, by in-house trainers where possible, to ensure that it is more relevant to trainees' problems. Outsourced training on the other hand is encouraged and represents a means to ensure contact with colleagues in other municipalities, with all the advantages arising out of the sharing of information and knowledge.

Networking, the building of partnerships, practical training, attempts to increase the participation of all in drawing up training plans, training as an investment in developing institutions and trainees and coordination with the Skills Recognition and Validation Centres all accordingly came to the fore as good practices to be promoted in all municipal councils or associations of municipalities.

The analysis of interviewees' future intentions shows that some of the concerns set out coincide, particularly the need to adjust training to the problems of organisations and trainees and to break the mould of training driven by technical rationality, the need to move away from the cumulative approach to training, the need to create an in-house pool of trainers and/or a pool of network trainers and to involve employees in planning and implementing training.

Besides issues concerning training per se, other aspects of the future development of training also stand out. These include in particular the consolidation of regional training or information networks, the promotion of cross-cutting approaches, with emphasis on the collective, the easing of the trend to commercialise training, subordinated to the quality, effectiveness and efficiency approaches, the integration and coordination of training with overarching strategies to develop the municipal territory, the stepping up of cooperation with the Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification Centres which bring trainees' academic and vocational dimensions together, and the creation of mechanisms to assess the impact of training, which are lacking in all the cases under study.

Future prospects reveal a commitment to participation in drawing up training plans and programmes, stress on less general training that is geared more towards problem-solving, the approval of new types of training such as vocational and academic training courses, the building of partnerships, particularly with higher education institutions, and the perspective of training as an investment in the organisation and in the personal and professional development of government officials.

In summary:

- Some difficulties persist, notably in connection with the lack of equality between occupational categories in access to training, and in particular as regards the invisibility of the organisational effects of training, which appears to be seen mainly as an action with consequences and implications for trainees considered individually.
- A number of aspects stand out that may represent potential embryos fostering the consolidation of changes in local government vocational training in Portugal. These include certain practical training initiatives which are consistent with forms of training planning in which training is not the sum total of sundry training courses.
- Initiatives to build regional networks among specialists and local authority organisations which are mobilised both in the planning and implementation of training are also in evidence.
- Note should also be taken of the emergence of specialists who act as the ‘persons responsible’ or ‘interlocutors’ for training, raising the profile of this issue within organisations and in relations between organisations, and who may help to encourage the emergence of a training culture.
- Some interlinking between training processes and vocational certification processes through the agreements established with the Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification Centres should also be noted.

Finally, in terms of the future development of training activity, based on the analysis of the cases, the aim is to:

- involve managerial staff in training processes;
- carry out a rigorous and systematic diagnosis of the initial situation in terms of organisations, occupations and individuals;
- create a regulating mechanism during the training process;
- integrate assessment into the training process;
- favour training for the personal development and social recognition of trainees;
- promote the consolidation of intermunicipal training networks.

Conclusion

The development of the implementation of the Foral programme in the period from 2001 to 2005 can thus be summarised as follows:

- there was a significant increase in the number of applications throughout the period; at 31 December 2005, however, the rate of approval was no more than 62 % of the programme's total financial resources;
- stress was placed on introducing new training methods, particularly practical training, though over 90 % of applications submitted concern training courses per se;
- the most important organisations promoting training are local government institutions; the role of private training companies nevertheless grew significantly;
- long duration programmes such as practical training came into being, though short duration programmes predominate;
- the physical implementation of the programme fell well below expectations, as can be seen from the difference between the number of proposals approved and the number of proposals carried out;
- the financial implementation of the programme also fell well below expectations, amounting to 23 % of the available resources in aggregate terms.

Thus although Foral programme financial resources were exploited more efficiently and training methods were diversified, particularly from 2003, the overall analysis of the available data does not bear witness to widespread improvements in training provision in local public administration that could lead to its effective modernisation.

A more detailed analysis of the impact of training under the Foral programme, however, highlights a more optimistic outlook, albeit gauged from the overall figures.

Data obtained from the 12 case studies illustrates the work that has been done in some municipalities or associations of municipalities to diversify training methods, improve mechanisms for building training demand, broaden the section of the public undergoing training, invest in professionals who act as training agents/promoters, establish intermunicipal partnerships and partnerships with training institutions such as universities and Skills Recognition and Validation Centres, and foster networking.

The conclusions drawn on the basis of the case studies nevertheless do not disguise the inadequate training practices in local government. It can be seen from bringing the macro and micro studies together that short duration programmes still predominate, that training plans continue to be drawn up with little participation, that access to training remains unequal, to the detriment of the 'manual' and 'auxiliary' occupational categories, that organisational changes continue to be 'irrelevant', and that as a rule there is no training culture.

It should be noted, in conclusion, that in overall terms the implementation of the Foral programme is marked by tension between what could be called a 'traditional' view of training dependent on formal trainer-centred classroom-based training courses or programmes on the one hand, and a training approach which aims to ascertain the real needs of a particular organisation or group of people on the other. This simply involves contrasting the provision of more or less formal classroom-based training courses and actions which are designed in virtually total isolation from real work situations with the tailoring of training on the basis of a deeper analysis of organisations and work practices, favouring close liaison between training and the work context.

In practice, the macro and quantitative analysis seems to suggest that the former approach prevails, but the more detailed analysis based on the case studies allows certain signs of change and innovation that may fall within the latter approach to be identified. This includes, for example, the approach in some practical training institutions whereby training plans and programmes are drawn up after discussion with and cooperation between various training stakeholders (trainers, trainees, supervisory personnel, etc.), and investment in training geared towards solving problems previously identified in organisations.

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