



EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT *ESCOLA+*, PHASE II IN SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE _ Executive Summary _

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report refers to the external evaluation of the *Escola+ (School) Project, Phase II*, which took place in São Tomé and Príncipe (STP). After reviewing its initial design for budgetary reasons, the project underwent a substantial reduction aiming only at improving the skills of secondary school teachers and reinforcing the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education (ME). The evaluation covers the total period between September 2013 and August 2017, the financing, the country's geographic area, the target community/groups and the project components. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the contribution of Portuguese cooperation in strengthening the São Tomé and Príncipe secondary education system, analysing the extent to which the specific objective of the intervention - to promote the improvement of secondary education (SE) in STP - has been achieved and has contributed to the overall goal of STP economic growth, increased employability and private return on investment in education, as well as the general improvement of the living conditions of the population.

Methodology

The evaluation was based on a participatory and *multi-method perspective*, using different sources of information and combining several methods of data collection and analysis: documents and data collection and analysis, semi-directive interviews and focus group with stakeholders. Among the main methodological limitations is the lack of baselines and targets, which led to the need to resort to a theory-based evaluation model, mainly in the theory of change.

Main findings

- i) The *Phase II* intervention areas of *Escola +* resulted from a relevant diagnosis for the continuation of the priorities of educational policy.
- ii) The curricular revision made by *Escola+* started in *Phase I* and resumed in *Phase II* managed to improve and diversify the offer in the SE, which is more appealing today, expanding the supply and school network coverage and creating more demand.

- iii) The project team involved teachers, mostly agents of Portuguese cooperation, and local and international experts for technical functions.
- iv) The coordination structure was generally appropriate to the needs, although with problematic areas namely in the institutional capacity.
- v) The Monitoring Committee ensure the involvement of the stakeholders in the execution of the project, and the relationship with education cooperation partners is foreseen.
- vi) Libraries and documentation centres do not exist or are poorly equipped. The lack of laboratories was also identified as one of the great obstacles to the experimental teaching of sciences,
- vii) The project design did not follow the recommendation to update the support programs and texts. In the educational community there is a perception of a situation of non-compliance with the programs, so, rightly, the intervention included raising teachers' awareness for program compliance, one of the objectives of supervisory work, and continuous training. But this work must, in the short term, to be extended to the reanalysis of programs and materials to support teaching. Support programs and texts are criticized for their poor scientific, pedagogical and graphic quality and for their model of publishing and distribution.
- viii) The actions of continuous teacher training were generally adequate to the needs of the teachers of São Tomé and have resulted in the creation of a culture of training and, as a result of the agreement with USTP, create and recognize a certified training perspective.
- ix) School-based training was identified, to which the active presence of teachers involved in cooperation contributed.
- x) Training programs for supervisors highlight the concern for the training required to perform the new functions.
- xi) Peer training in pedagogical supervision as well as work among colleagues in subject groups has promoted a teamwork perspective.
- xii) The project provided support to the services and technicians of the Ministry that is recognized. This activity has developed unevenly.
- xiii) The project was, in fact, the Department of Secondary Education (DSE), since this is a very fragile structure with very scarce human resources for the challenges it faces. The difficulty of DSE and the Ministry of Education in responding to the project's questions led the project to function as outsourcing and then when the Ministry declined support and recognition were given responsibilities it did not have.

xiv) From the perspective of this evaluation, the sustainability of what was achieved with the *Escola+* implies a phasing-out period. It would be unsustainable to introduce a gap that implies loss of the progress made so far, without replacing what exists with something new both in educational management by the authorities of STP and in the cooperation between Portugal and STP:

Unexpected effects

- **Drastic acceleration of schooling levels** of the STP youth, with the explosion in the frequency of SE resulting from the combination of public policies that the project was part of and the social dynamics, **enormous pressure on higher education** as a direct consequence of this explosion of the existing type of SE and **intensification of the need for teachers** which occurs precisely when the Project was intended to focus on continuous training, favoring the pedagogical-didactic domain.
- The inclusion of Portuguese teachers in a group of teachers that teaches the same subject in a school, materialized in their **scientific and methodological support** to their São Tomé colleagues.
- Resulted from the teaching role of Portuguese teachers, it was also found the **reinforcement of students' motivation**, reflected in the greater propensity to attend classes and the desire to pursue studies.
- The **pupil attendance / assiduity control of the students**, the **class group organization**, although circumscribed to some teachers who knew how to take ownership of the evaluation system and the pedagogical training in the field of didactics / organization of the classroom, are effects that could be disseminated as good practice and widespread. Also, the **increase attendance in classes** is due, in a large extent, to the much criticized pedagogical evaluation regime of students.
- The training in education of a group of STP local officials, even if given the extreme rotation of functions that was found, the skills acquired are being used in functions other than those for which the project prepares.

External factors influencing outcomes

- The financial difficulties of the State of São Tomé and Príncipe do not allow it to significantly increase public expenditure on education and the development of SE is heavily dependent on Portuguese cooperation, the only one with a focus on this education level. The financial crisis and budgetary constraints on Portuguese cooperation have led to a significant reduction in the volume of development aid for SE.

- Failure to regulate the professional career negatively affected the possibility of moving forward with one of its activities - professionalization in service.
- USTP's inability to keep pace with the growth of the education system in teacher training has an impact on the teaching conditions in SE.

Main conclusions

C1. Secondary education in STP is undergoing a process of massification but still without qualification, which, even being typical of the educational development phase in which the country is, generates phenomena whose correction requires measures.

C2. *Phase II of Escola+* was designed in coherence with the detected needs, but as a result of the financial constraints of Portuguese cooperation the intervention focused only in strengthening teachers' technical skills institutional and capacity building of ME.

C3. The effects of a change in the political cycle on the change of educational policy priorities vis-à-vis the key actions of the project were not minimized by the Portuguese cooperation and the potential dysfunctions resulting from the agendas and interventions of other international donors were not minimized by the Embassy.

C4. The project team was adequate. The coordination structure was adapted, in execution, to better fit the project, and sought to provide adequate responses to new situations it identified and situations created by requests made to it.

C5. In the pedagogical coordination there were successive changes that translated in: (i) a continuous methodological and instrumental groping in the ways of collecting information to elaborate the characterization of the teachers of São Tomé and to execute the diagnoses of training needs; (ii) a progressive reformulation of the strategies, priorities and areas and modalities of organization of continuing training; (iii) a significant delay in the initiation of continuing training actions; (iv) an incipient monitoring device of actions and their effects, which only improved in the third year of the project.

C6. The institutional capacity-building activities require a different plan and design, as well as more appropriate implementation methodologies to the methodological collection of this activity in development projects.

C7. The good level of the teachers, agents of cooperation, has been verified, and their performance and experience are recognized in terms of teaching, involvement in the school life, support to

colleagues and their delegates, in continuous training and work with supervisors. The recruitment profile of teachers has evolved to adapt to different roles.

C8. There is a need to continue the mobilization of teachers who are agents of cooperation on: (i) professionalization; (ii) continuous training and proximity support to colleagues in the disciplinary collective; (iii) formal or informal advice to subject delegates; (iv) the dissemination and promotion of the use of new teaching materials within a framework of broadening available resources; (v) the affirmation of a first line of expression of quality in teaching, also for students and families. The teaching function should assume only fundamental subjects of the curriculum and not fill the full teaching time of the cooperating teacher.

C9. While USTP's involvement in continuing training was far less than desirable, this first experience allowed the project access to local instructors and allowed USTP to participate in continuing teacher training.

C10. There was a concern to develop continuous training in a modular perspective, better adapted to target audiences.

C11. Generally, training has made it possible to increase the mastery of the subject content that teachers teach, improve the way they plan, give their classes, evaluate students, and develop materials.

C12. The other continuous training that has been carried out is highlighted, a school-centred training, strengthening the presence of teachers agents of cooperation in schools.

Lessons

L1. *Phase II* of the *Escola+* had as one of its major objectives the consolidation of the previous phase. In similar situations, it would make sense for a second phase of a project to include a specific measure to monitor and evaluate the reforms initiated, and to create an appropriate monitoring device.

L2. In a project with these characteristics and duration, it is necessary to carry out an ongoing, mid-term evaluation, which guarantees its executors on the ground an external look at its initiatives and results.

L3. A cooperation project, such as the *Escola+*, should provide for a phase of transition and transfer to local entities (USTP, Ministry of Education...) of the capital and resources produced and / or used in their various activities.

L4. The structured provision of continuous training must combine different training modalities and provide the necessary flexibility to meet criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness,

particularly in contexts such as STP, where the volume of potential demand is reduced and / or is very diversified, generating difficulties in the construction of homogeneous and accessible groups to potential trainees.

L5. The support for teaching in some subjects by the agents of Portuguese cooperation does not exhaust its results in teaching in a narrow sense, but rather provides an opportunity so that the support to teachers in the scientific and pedagogical fields is substantiated. The peer work between supervisors and cooperation agents has proved to be a useful intervention to consider in future projects that wish to act in the context of schools.

Main Recommendations

To Portuguese cooperation

1. Adopt in future cooperation projects a project design model that requires the identification of baselines, results of actions and outcomes.
2. Ensure in future projects a monitoring model involving the regular flow of information between partners, with a feedback monitoring mechanism for project implementation.
3. Include in future projects a sustainability plan and an exit strategy focused on the appropriation of instruments, methodologies and results.
4. Include, in future projects and in particular in the support to the educational system, explicit measures, materialized in actions and materials that stimulate the correct and adequate use of the Portuguese language and that promote its consolidation.
5. Involve the Ministry of Education of Portugal in the follow-up of sectoral cooperation projects in education.
6. Maintain the support to secondary education in STP and support the reflection on its diversification.
7. Maintain teaching support in secondary education using Portuguese teachers, organizing their participation so that, as an example of good practice identified, they systematically interact with their colleagues from STP, and regulate the use of Portuguese teachers with teaching functions so that they: (i) teach key subjects in the curriculum, where there is a proven lack of teachers from São Tomé with adequate scientific and pedagogical training; (ii) have extended hours in the school or group of schools covered by the São Tomé subject delegate and, in addition to teaching, assume tasks of scientific and methodological support to the collective of teachers of this subject;

(iii) provide support functions for secondary school supervision in partnership with DES supervisors.

8. Aid the revision of materials to support secondary education in order to improve its scientific, pedagogical, graphic and editing quality.
9. Create a line for publicizing educational materials banks in digital support, produced by themselves or others, but of free access, to be used by teachers and students.

To the authorities of São Tomé

10. Promote a broad reflection in the society of São Tomé on the necessary diversification of secondary school curricula and, consequently, the development of professional education courses, adopting appropriate measures.
11. Regulate the teaching career and define a model of access and progression that articulates the different systems of teacher training, covering the different cycles, and identifies the certification system for training and accreditation of training entities.
12. Intervene in an articulated way in the accelerated development of the three fronts of teacher training - initial, continuous and professional - and, in another aspect, the complementary training (initial).
13. To prevent school dropout in the RAP baccalaureates through a more flexible teaching system.
14. Maintain and encourage good practice in the organization of certified training, contributing to the differentiation in the assignment of functions in schools and to the conditions necessary for the progression of the teaching career, and organize the structured training offer in a modular way so that it allows differentiated training courses and to build new forms of school-based continuous training.
15. Encourage the responsibility of schools and teachers' groups for the choice of teacher training, applications and enrolment, and the effective frequency of training.
16. Take advantage of extended access to smartphones, through the internet or through the mobile telephone network, to disseminate actions and materials for ongoing teacher training.
17. Equate measures to support, experimentally, the completion of the 2nd cycle of SE for students with up to three subjects in arrears, through the creation of specific groups that allow them to learn different years of schooling in these subjects.

To Portuguese cooperation and the authorities of São Tomé

18. Promote the articulation between development partners in the area of education so that the result is coherent with the real needs of improvement of the education system of STP and act in

concert to reduce the number of students per class in SE, finding the appropriate financing solutions to improve educational infrastructures.

19. Define an institutional capacity-building model for the central services of the ME that adheres to good international practices and draws on experts in educational administration.
20. Create and implement a model for monitoring curriculum reform, which will plan necessary interventions and give coherence to their introduction.
21. Continue to support the improvement of school management.
22. Invest in the development of the capacity of teacher training by the University of São Tomé and Príncipe, promoting the partnership with one or more Portuguese institutions specialized in teacher training.
23. To continue the good practice generated by the project in the organization of continuing teacher training, seeking to bring schools and teachers together more closely.
24. Create a device to exploit the potential of distance education and support, in particular to RAP teachers and students of their baccalaureates.
25. Continue language-based training for all teachers including, for example, academic language (oral and written) and subjects.
26. Ensure continued reproduction and distribution of teaching support materials until their revision or replacement by other instruments, and continue to develop teaching support materials and updating and reviewing existing scientific, pedagogical, graphic and editing materials.
27. Act for the creation of minimally reasonable conditions for the experimental teaching of sciences, namely in terms of equipping laboratories and didactic resources.
28. Recover and put into operation a resource centre in a school space with easy accessibility to the teaching community.
29. Pursue and deepen the training of supervisors, following up the needs created by the evolution of functions that are best entrusted to the supervisory sector.
30. Develop the good practice of peer work among cooperating teachers and supervisors, considering the objectives of the supervisory function.
31. Ensure the necessary support, including logistical and follow-up, to the supervision actions of DSE.

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