

THE BOLOGNA REFORM: NATIONAL STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION AND OPINION OF PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the perception of Portuguese higher education teachers about the adaptation processes adopted by national institutions to meet the challenges posed by the Bologna Reform and their opinion on the effects generated by the reforms undertaken. From a theoretical point of view, we made use of neo-institutionalism and the theory of practical action which emphasizes a cognitive perspective of professional action from an affective and evaluative perspective, considering the influence of normative schemes and pre-conscious processes that are transformed into routine behavior, internalized, and rebound into practical action. The methodological design ensured the representativeness of the higher education subsystems in the sample set, and the quota sample comprised 381 Portuguese higher education teachers. To gather data, a questionnaire survey was sent to all higher education institutions and various national bodies, using Google technology. The data analysis and the statistical treatment of the data collected were possible due to IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 21.0, using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results suggest the objectives aimed at with the Bologna Reform were only partially achieved, especially those referring to the development of students' professional and research skills, linked to the degree structure and the Bologna curricular reform, which were evaluated by a not insignificant number of teachers as not being achieved. The comparison of the results according to the sub-systems to which the teachers belong has made it possible to find out that, despite the low explanatory power that the type of education sub-system has on the differences registered in the perceptions built by their teachers around the Bologna Reform, there are statistically relevant differences between the perceptions of the various groups of teachers which suggest that teachers from private sector institutions felt more impact and more change because of the Reform than teachers from public higher education institutions. The results showed that within the private higher education sector, the teachers from the polytechnic institutions were the ones who presented the "strongest" perceptions regarding the scope registered by implementing the various Bologna dimensions, their implementation in the teaching-learning processes and regarding the globally perceived implementation of the Reform.

Keywords: Bologna Reform; higher education teachers; Portuguese higher education subsystems; national survey.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our original study aimed to reflect on, characterise and compare the processes and measures implemented by Portuguese higher education institutions to meet the challenges laid down by the Bologna Reform, considering their distribution across the various education subsystems: public, private, polytechnic and university. In addition, it was our intention to know the perception of the Portuguese higher education teachers regarding the adequacy processes/strategies adopted by the institutions and their opinion on the impacts caused by the reforms undertaken. This article reports on the theoretical framework, the empirical design and the main results of the study conducted around this second, and last, objective.

The starting question that guided us can then be stated as follows: What is the extent to which Portuguese higher education institutions have adapted to the various lines of action set by the Bologna political-educational reform according to the perception of their teaching staff, and what is their opinion on the impact that this has generated, considering the institutions where they teach?

What we proposed was, therefore, to look at organisational change from a bottom-up perspective and take into consideration the institutional actors' capacity for intervention (agency), portraying institutionalisation processes as complex phenomena that presuppose both persistence and transformation, involving social intermingling and autonomy, and contemplating an analytical approach that is simultaneously macro, mezzo and, necessarily, microsocial.

Neo-institutionalism, in its theory of practical action, emphasizes a cognitive perspective of action, which goes beyond its calculative and rational orientation, to observe it from an affective and evaluative perspective and in its non-intentionality, considering the influence of normative schemes and pre-conscious processes that are transformed into routine behaviour, taken for granted, internalized, and converted into practical action [1]. This consideration is useful for the perspective of the diversity of responses and behaviours adopted by the actors in contexts of organisational change, such as the one raised by the implementation of the Bologna Reform in higher education institutions.

To a large extent, the neo-institutional perspective of practical action corresponds to Bourdieu's analytical construct of *habitus* [2], which emphasizes the doxical elements of action, social classification, practical consciousness ("knowledge without concepts"), and the situated reproduction of social structures. The *habitus* is seen as a system of "regulated improvisation" comprising rules which arise from the internalization (cognitive, affective, and evaluative) that the actors experience having at its base shared social categories and roles, which are experienced phenomenologically, in the mirror of social interaction, as relative to "people like us" [2], [3].

The internalization of past experiences and common histories leads members of a given social category to share similar *habitus* which create regularities of thought, patterns of appreciation, expectations, dispositions, and strategies of action, which unreflectively and continuously contribute to reproduce a given social structure [1]. The *habitus* is thus a structuring structure, in the sense that it results from an accumulated history that carries with it a set of dispositions for action, through which it reproduces the structure at its origin.

The concept of *habitus* is useful for understanding the motivations and the means that mobilize strategically oriented agents/actors to recurrently reproduce and consent to structures that may or may not be in their interest, and is in line with the neo-institutionalist perspective of organizational change, which considers that organizational actors, through their actions, disseminate internalized beliefs and rules that are the driving force as a driving force of inertia and, correlatively, a driving force of change in organisations [4], [5].

Returning to Scott's "3 pillars" theory, we place in the normative pillar the origin of the values and norms that frame the action of individuals and that define, respectively, certain conceptions about the desirable or preferred patterns of action and the acceptable or legitimate means to achieve them. Some values and norms are shared by all members of an organisation, while others are specifically associated with certain groups of actors and the positions they occupy, generating different social roles that incorporate functions and prescribe specific behaviours [6]: "To describe behaviour as driven by rules is to see action as a matching of a situation to the demands of a position. Rules define relationships among roles in terms of what an incumbent of one role owes to incumbents of other roles" [7 p. 23].

The rules that guide the individuals' behaviour, according to the role they play and the game of expectations that unfolds around them, are not subject to automatic and unreflective internalisation: actors can select and interpret the rules associated with the role they play, which they internalise and are called upon to respect, adapting them to the specific context in which they find themselves. In other words, the normative pressure to which the behaviour of organisational members is subject confers on them both power and capacity for action, "rights as well as responsibilities, privileges as well as duties, and licenses as well as mandates" [6].

However, the actors' capacity for action sustains their reasonableness, perceived by themselves and by others, in the values and social rules that guide their behaviour, meaning that the choices they make, not being determined, are socially mediated by the frameworks of values and rules that incite them to act according to what is expected of them and the roles they play: "institutional behaviour is morally governed behaviour" [6].

Thus, in the framework of institutions, the persistence of the practices and behaviours of social actors tends to occur due to their intertwining in an integrated network of relations that contributes to their reproduction and does not necessarily depend on active efforts to sustain them. This is why any attempt to change institutional rules is generally surrounded by hostile considerations and attitudes of resistance that question their legitimacy, in comparison with previously established and internalised institutional routines, particularly by those who benefit most from them. As Powell [8 p. 194] states, "Efforts at change are often resisted because they threaten individual's sense of security, increase the cost of information processing, and disrupt routines. Moreover, established conceptions of the 'ways things are done' can be very beneficial; members of an organizational life can use these stable expectations as a guide to action and a way to predict the behavior of others".

Once this conceptualisation is transposed to the subject under study, a more elucidated perspective is acquired on the behaviour that the various institutional actors - leaders, teaching staff, technical administrative staff, and students - assumed in the face of the Bologna Reform, given the profound transformation that was anticipated in the different structures, values and practices of the institutional units. Along the same line of reasoning, it is to be expected that actors differently positioned in the institutional structure have assumed dissimilar responses to the various components of the change brought about by the reform, and that the actors who occupied more favourable positions in the institutional context that existed prior to the reform have reacted in a less positive manner to it, offering more resistance, the opposite being equally valid.

At the same time, we consider that among the various groups of institutional actors, the teachers were the ones who experienced the greatest degree of constraint on the values and rules that they had previously internalised and that guided their organisational behaviour: the profound pedagogical change implied in the Bologna Reform, with the transition from a teaching-learning paradigm centred on the teacher and on the transmission of knowledge to another, centred on the student and on the acquisition of competences, has underlying a true revolution of the social role of the higher education teacher. A role that, it should be added, due to historical tradition and the organisation of the education system itself, was solidly institutionalised in the sense of giving the teaching profession a high degree of autonomy in the exercise of its teaching and research activities.

According to Gornitzka [9], this circumstance can be explained by the existence of the more or less widespread belief that the function and objectives performed by higher education are more fully realised in an environment of academic freedom. Now, this role, historically instituted and normatively configured, was then questioned by the change in the teaching paradigm and by the corresponding pedagogical reforms on which it was based, implying considerable changes for the teachers' practices.

Firstly, in the definition of training competences, coherently related to objectives, contents and strategies, which require reflection and definition of competences, articulated with the qualifications profile of the courses and of the curricular units that integrate them, with the learning objectives associated to them, and with the credits, calculated based on the student workload. Then, in the structuring of new pedagogical approaches, more active, builders of learning environments based on new materials and technologies, enhancers of the development of learning competencies in more flexible paths that require an increase in the level of student participation and workload, and the consequent transformation of assessment methodologies. Finally, in their role and autonomy, not only at the level of the temporal reorganization of different types of activities, such as teaching/learning (including tutorial activities), entrepreneurial, research and administrative activities, but simultaneously by the growing pressure for research development and publication, for mobility (national and international), and by the elevation of academic standards, more exposed and subject to evaluation.

The profound transformation of the role of the higher education teacher directly questions the values and rules that professionalization and accumulated experience have normatively "taught" them to use in the performance of their professional activity. The *habitus* is, as [2] designated, a "history made body", a socially constituted personality that cannot, of course, be coercively changed by legal devices.

The rewriting that Bologna proposed of the role of the higher education teacher requires time, a lot of time, so that: (i) on the one hand, the new values and the rules that are desired to be associated with it can be constituted as legitimate in the institutional context and be, by the recursive experience of the actors, internalised and reproduced; (ii) and, on the other hand, so that the new role can be the object of teaching in teacher training study cycles or in pedagogical training activities; a very important normative mechanism for social imbrication (logic of appropriateness) to take place and new cultural elements to be institutionalised.

The low degree of implementation of pedagogical reforms and other dimensions of the Bologna Reform, which the first evaluation studies carried out show occurred in Portuguese higher education, can thus be partially explained by the low adherence of teachers, key pieces in the chess of the Reform, and by the plausible non-conformity that their strategic responses have assumed, in the context of the institutions.

If the sharing of norms and values is the basis of a stable social order, explaining the objectified behaviour of individuals, the importance of shared definitions and meanings of social reality cannot be neglected in the understanding of the subjective meaning of individuals' actions. In other words, the representations that actors construct around the situations and contexts in which they are involved contribute to explain the behaviour they assume.

The cognitive-cultural pillar of Scott's theory [1], [3], [6] significantly reinforces the non-determined and non-deterministic perspective of individuals' action by emphasizing the importance of interpretation in the construction of the meanings they attach to the contexts in which they develop their practices, meanings that mediate the influence of cultural elements and objective conditions on their action and practices.

Institutionalised practices, such as those of higher education teachers, are not immune to temporal variation: as they are recursively concretised in the context of social interactions, they can be maintained or changed in their internal elements and dynamics. It is important to remember that the degree of institutionalisation of practices affects their possibility of change, and that it is unlikely that a highly institutionalised practice can be abruptly changed. Institutionalisation is generated in the sharing of meanings, values, rules and behaviours which bind individuals to a culture, as a consequence of the recursiveness of the interactions they establish, being a consequence of social action rather than its objective, and implying time for its internalisation.

It is clear from the above that the effective implementation of reforms that, like the Bologna process, affect the institutionalised practices of teachers, can only take place over time, through the interaction and actions that are generated around these practices, conditioned by the culture of the institutions and mediated by the interpretation of the teachers who, cognitively, associate and associate certain meanings to it. Not all teachers, as well as not all students or organisational leaders, will have shared the same position and equal opinion about the goals, the means, the degree of implementation and the impacts that Bologna will have achieved in the institutions' environment, a fact that can be explained by the subjective meaning they associate to them within the institutional context.

The interpretations that, intersubjectively, teachers have built around the Reform are, therefore, a decisive factor to understand the scope of the implementation of the proposed reforms, particularly in its more pedagogical aspect, being time the key coordinator in which their actions were, are and will be inscribed, contributing or not to the institutionalisation of the new practices that the Reform prescribed. The time elapsed between the first legislation that launched the bases for the implementation of the Bologna Reform in Portugal, in 2005, and the last legislation introduced, in 2009, regulating the National Qualifications Framework, and the time that followed it, may not have been enough for the practices, associated to roles crystallised along decades, to be transformed in order to correspond, in degree and form, to the radical and deep change that Bologna presupposed.

The consideration of the cognitive dimension of institutional actors is not incompatible with that of the nature of cultural structures and dynamics which run through and guide institutions. In fact, the construction and negotiation, of social reality, in the contexts of interaction, are carried out under the aegis of the wider cultural systems which pre-exist them, which, functioning as symbolic frameworks, perceived as objective and external, guide and direct the interpretation and action of individuals [6], [10]. This reflection supports the assumption that social actors participate in the social construction of reality by means of their capacity for action/agency. The same which is conditioned and made possible by pre-existing structures and cultural systems, created, in turn, in the sharing of common interpretations and meanings that emerge during their action, thus establishing a dialectical relationship between individual action and cultural/institutional structures [11].

The reflection developed throughout this theoretical framework may be summarised in the idea that the attachment of the actors (teachers) to cultural beliefs and to rules and values institutionally attached to the roles they play may be subject to reconfiguration as they interpret new rules and values and attribute legitimate meaning to them. This meaning they share, through action, in the interactions they establish with other actors. The interest and the option to internalise change is, however, socially and culturally conditioned by the pre-existing organisational arrangements that determine the routinisation of their practices which, strongly institutionalised, require time to be transformed within institutionally defined limits.

2 METHODOLOGY

Aware of the centrality of the role played by individuals in this process, and that their behaviour may be the explanation for the dynamics of procedural diversification, this research adopted a methodological design which placed the teachers' perceptions and opinions at the centre of its empirical dimension.

2.1 Sample

The procedures used to sample the higher education teachers' population follow a statistical sampling strategy that was intended to be representative of an existing feature in the population: the distribution of teachers across the various sub-sectors and education systems, a factor that we believe to be potentially

explanatory of the diversity of perceptions about the implementation of the Bologna Reform in the higher education system.

The reasons behind this choice relate to: the nature of the data that it was deemed convenient to collect from a questionnaire survey, which we believe should be applied to a representative sample; the fact that we do not have a list of all the teachers in the population, which prevented us from using a probability sample based on the principles of randomness; the need to use the principle of stratification of the sample according to a theoretically and statistically relevant variable in order to reduce sampling error and increase the representativity of it.

Thus, within the group of existing non-probability sampling techniques, we opted for the use of quota sampling, as it allows for the most accurate reproduction of the population under study and its characteristics, consisting of strata or subgroups which are proportional to those existing in the population. The sample is stratified in a weighted manner in relation to the original distribution of the population around the same characteristic, and the cases within each subgroup or stratum are selected non-randomly, i.e., accidentally or by convenience [12], [13].

Following the approach that estimates the sample size through power analysis, a sample consisting of a total of 381 higher education teachers was drawn. The number of teachers to be considered for each stratum or subgroup considered was then calculated, ensuring its proportionality in relation to the known population distribution, resulting in the following sample composition: public university subsystem, 160 teachers; private university subsystem, 72 teachers; public polytechnic subsystem, 106 teachers; private polytechnic subsystem, 43 teachers.

2.2 Survey

The questionnaire survey is a data collection instrument that allows for extensive direct observation as it consists of an ordered series of questions that require a written response from a more or less large number of subjects [15]. The questionnaire is usually completed without the presence and assistance of the researcher and may be distributed by mail or via the Internet and is generally returned by the same means after completion, which places it in the pole of non-interactive data collection techniques [13], although it depends on the reactivity of the respondents for its success, which is, in fact, one of its most critical points.

In this study, a questionnaire used in a doctoral thesis on the institutionalisation of the European Higher Education Area was adapted and authorised by the author. The first part of the original questionnaire (political perspective of the Bologna Process) was removed, and a fourth section was added to allow for the respondents' socio-professional characterisation. Finally, a pre-test was conducted to assess the consistency of the structure of the new questionnaire.

The final structure of the survey comprises thirty-one questions organized into four sections: Part A - The Bologna Reform in the Institution: Implementation and Impacts, with 3 questions; Part B - The Implementation of the various dimensions of the Reform, with 8 questions; Part C - The Bologna Reform in the teaching-learning processes, with 7 questions; Part D - Socio-professional characterisation data, with 13 questions.

The final version of the survey was built on Google's form creation tool, and the questionnaire was massively sent out over the internet: first, to all the institutions that integrate the Portuguese higher education network, requesting the dissemination of the questionnaire to their teachers; Then, forwarding the same message to the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP), the Coordinating Council of Higher Polytechnic Institutes (CCISP), the Portuguese Association of Private Higher Education (APESP), the main unions representing the teaching profession in Portugal, the National Union of Higher Education (SNESUP) and the National Federation of Teachers (FENPROF), and also the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire survey was analysed and statistically processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 21.0, using descriptive and inferential statistics.

In this study, the following measures were used for the descriptive analysis of data: absolute and relative frequency distributions, some measures of central tendency or location, such as the mean value, some measures of variability or dispersion, such as the range of variation, the coefficient of variation and the standard deviation, some measures of asymmetry and kurtosis, in addition to Pearson's correlation

coefficient. The inductive statistical techniques used were the One-way ANOVA, the chi-square test, and the Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Variance.

3 RESULTS

The presentation and data analysis begins with the sample characterisation based on the data collected from the 13 questions included in Part D - socio-professional characterisation data. In order to speed up the presentation of the results extracted from the descriptive analysis carried out for the various sections of the questionnaire, summary indexes were built for the various questions asked in them (Parts A, B and C). To close the presentation of the main results, we reflect the answers obtained to some of the questions we asked ourselves, for which descriptive-correlational and inferential statistical analysis procedures were used.

3.1 Sample characterisation

The sample for this study consisted of 381 teachers who were evenly distributed between the two genders: 51.3% men and 50.9% women.

More than half of the teachers, 58.5%, were married, with the remainder in other marital statuses. The age groups most represented in the sample were "51-60 years old" (27.2%) and "31-40 years old" (26.7%), the least represented being "21-30 years old" (1.3%). The level of academic qualifications of the sample is naturally high: 70.1% with education levels equal to or higher than a doctorate.

The sample was made up of 42% teachers from the public university sector, 18.9% from the private university sector, 27.8% from the public polytechnic sector and 11.3% from the private polytechnic sector, being proportional to the distribution of teachers across the various sectors of the existing education system. There are 69.9% of teachers who are in the university career and 30.1% who are in a polytechnic career.

The sample is mainly made up of teachers who have been working for 10 or more years (81.6%), who were already working before the beginning of the implementation of the Bologna Reform, and who have long-standing professional ties with the institutions in which they work: 71.9% have been with the institution for 10 or more years. Most of the teachers, 40.5%, have stable professional contracts and 70.2% work full-time and exclusively in the Institutions.

The most represented scientific areas of teaching in the sample are "Social Sciences, Commerce and Law" (26.1%) and "Health and Social Protection", with 17.6% of the answers.

Regarding the performance of management or direction positions during the period when Bologna was in progress, almost half (48.3%) of the teachers avoided answering, and of those who did, the majority, 56.9%, said they had held "Other unspecified", an answer that we consider it might be a subterfuge to avoid not answering directly.

3.2 Perceptions on the implementation of the Bologna Reform

The analysis of the information in Table 1, which summarises Part A of the questionnaire, allows us to conclude that, in the opinion of the teachers, the implementation of the Bologna Reform in institutions has brought about "Some change" (48.3%), as a consequence of "Some impact" (42%) that the various initiatives, both European and national, have had on higher education institutions, resulting in the existence of some elements that are partially constituted as European dimensions of the Reform (45.9%). Even so, a more detailed analysis of the indexes shows that there is a close proximity between the number of professors who appreciate them as described above and those who consider (35.2%) that the impact of the initiatives was reduced and that the degree of change achieved was not very significant. In this more detailed analysis, the only index that reveals itself to be more expressive is that referring to the elements that prevailed in the institutions as reflections of the European dimension of the Reform, in relation to which, the second largest group of registered answers expresses unrestricted agreement, covering 29.4% of the respondents.

Table 1. Summary of the impacting initiatives and changes experienced in the institutions.

Scales	Don't know No opinion		No impact		Little impact		Some impact		A lot of impact	
			Disagree		Partially disagree		Partially agree		Agree	
			No change		Little change		Some change		A lot of change	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Part A										
A.1 - Impact of the various initiatives on the implementation of the Bologna process	20	5,2	36	9,4	134	35,2	160	42	31	8,1
A.2 - Impact/prevalence of the reflexes of the European dimension of the Bologna process	4	1,0	14	3,7	76	19,9	175	45,9	112	29,4
A.3 - Change registered as a result of the Bologna process?	13	3,4	19	5,0	134	35,2	184	48,3	31	8,1

The analysis of the overall meaning of the data from part B of the questionnaire (Table 2) indicates that 49.6% of the teachers perceive the various dimensions of the Bologna Reform as having been fully implemented, even if some dispersion is perceived in the representations about the degree of implementation achieved, if we consider that 38.8% of the teachers appreciate it as moderately implemented.

A correspondingly discordant indication comes from the perception regarding the implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms, which is considered by 39.9% of the teachers as only moderately implemented. Regarding this last dimension of the Reform, it is important to consider the clarity that prevails, in relation to the achievement of its objectives, in the perceptions expressed by the 49.6% of teachers who express agreement in relation to the item.

Combining these perceptions with the objectives achieved as a result of the impacts felt following the implementation of the dimensions of the Reform, it can be seen that none of the objectives is appreciated as having had much impact, distinguishing, additionally, the moderate impact experienced as a consequence of the implementation of the Bologna degree structure (43.3%) and the ECTS credit system, (43%), compared to the low impact perceived with the implementation of the Diploma Supplement (31.2%). This analysis shows that, in reality, the various dimensions of the Reform have not been fully implemented.

Regarding the degree of participation of institutional actors, teachers tended to assess it as low in the decisions involved in the implementation of the Bologna Process in institutions (58.5%), but as moderate in the calculation of credits based on student workload (36.2%).

Table 2. Summary of the implementation of the various dimensions of the Reform and their impact on the institutions

Scales	Don't know No opinion		Not implemented		Slightly implemented		Moderately implemented		Fully implemented	
			No participation		Little participation		Some participation		A lot of participation	
			No impact		Little impact		Some impact		A lot of impact	
	Disagree		Partially disagree		Partially agree		Agree			
Part B	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
B.1 - Level of implementation of the different Bologna dimensions	3	0,8	3	0,8	38	10,0	148	38,8	189	49,6
B.2 - Participation of the different actors in the decisions involved in implementing the Bologna process	13	3,4	67	17,6	223	58,5	78	20,5	----	----
B.3 - Impact of the implementation of the degree structure in the pursuit of the Bologna objectives	8	2,1	42	11,0	145	38,1	165	43,3	21	5,5

B.4 - Impact of the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in the pursuit of the Bologna objectives	75	19,7	68	17,8	119	31,2	101	26,5	18	4,7
B.5 - Impact of the implementation of the credit system based on student workload on the implementation of the Bologna objectives	11	2,9	55	14,4	126	33,1	164	43	25	6,6
B.5.1 - Participation of the different stakeholders in the calculation of credits based on student workload	20	5,2	14	3,7	80	21,0	138	36,2	129	33,9
B.6 - Implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms	4	1,0	24	6,3	77	20,2	152	39,9	124	32,5

Looking at the data presented in Table 3, it can be seen that teachers consider, in general terms, that some change has been achieved in the area of teaching learning processes (213 teachers, corresponding to 55.9% of the sample), partially agreeing with the changes registered in their role and activity (176 answers or 46.2%).

The teachers only partially agree with the idea that the implementation of the different dimensions of the Reform has contributed to transform positively certain aspects of the teaching-learning processes. The implementation of the ECTS credit system was appreciated by 159 (41.7%) teachers, the Bologna degree structure and the curricular reform by 157 teachers (41.2%) and the Diploma Supplement by 103 (27%).

Regarding the definition of the training competencies associated to the adequacy of the study cycles to the Bologna degree structure, the teachers consider that the various instruments foreseen for its implementation had some impact on the definition process, an answer given by 169 teachers, corresponding to 44.4% of the sample.

Finally, almost half of the teachers (49.6%) consider the impacts generated by the implementation of the various dimensions of the Reform as neutral.

In our view, the results reflect an environment of mistrust and a certain lack of consensus around the various dimensions of the Reform and the contributions and objectives that led to its implementation, which may contribute to explain its partially unfinished character. The same incompleteness seems to be supported by the change experienced in relation to the role of the teacher him/herself, by the unsound image that half of the teachers revealed to have built regarding the objectives pursued by the Reform, and by the inconsistent impression that the Reform has left regarding the contributions that should have resulted from the implementation of its various dimensions, especially when considering the changes and effects it has generated in the pedagogical environment of the institutions.

Table 3 – Summary of the changes brought about by the Bologna Reform in the teaching-learning processes

Part C	Scales		Don't know		No change		Little change		Some change		A lot of change	
			No opinion		No impact		Little impact		Some impact		A lot of impact	
	Neutral		Disagree		Partially disagree		Partially agree		Agree			
			Highly negative		Negative		Positive		Highly positive			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	C.1 - Degree of change achieved in the area of teaching/learning		2	0,5	15	3,9	97	25,5	213	55,9	54	14,2
	C.2 - Impact felt on the definition of training competences		18	4,7	25	6,6	73	19,2	169	44,4	96	25,2
	C.3 - Contributions generated by the implementation of the degree structure and curricular reform		5	1,3	70	18,4	103	27,0	157	41,2	46	12,1

<i>C.4 - Inputs arising from the implementation of the Diploma Supplement</i>	84	22,0	68	17,8	78	20,5	103	27,0	48	12,6
<i>C.5 - Inputs arising from the implementation of the credit system based on student workload</i>	11	2,9	44	11,5	100	26,2	159	41,7	67	17,6
<i>C.6 - Impact of the implementation of the Bologna process on the teaching role</i>	4	1,0	25	6,6	145	38,1	176	46,2	31	8,1
<i>C.7 - Nature of the impact arising from the different dimensions of the Reform</i>	189	49,6	5	1,3	33	8,7	140	36,7	14	3,7

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results gathered from the questionnaires suggest that the objectives aimed at with the implementation of the Bologna Reform, especially those concerning the development of students' professional and research skills, linked to the degree structure and the Bologna curricular reform, which were mostly appreciated as partially achieved, were assessed by a not insignificant number of teachers as not being achieved.

Regarding the other objectives set by the Bologna Reform, which include facilitating the academic recognition by using the ECTS scale and making the curricular organisation more flexible and balanced, the opinion of most teachers is that they have also been partially achieved, although it should be noted that a considerable number of teachers evaluated them as having been achieved. The promotion of graduates' access to the labour market, another of the objectives to be achieved with the Bologna Reform, was mostly evaluated as having been partially achieved, but with many teachers mentioning their lack of knowledge or absence of opinion.

The Bologna Reform is inevitably associated with the harmonisation of the various European higher education systems, and it is expected that its implementation has generated in the institutions certain reflections of its European dimension, a presence that we were able to confirm.

The research question for this study included the concern with identifying procedural patterns, possibly associated with the sub-systems in which the Portuguese higher education system is organised. The comparison of the results obtained according to the subsystems to which the teachers are associated made it possible to establish that, despite the reduced explanatory power that the type of education subsystem has on the differences registered in the perceptions built by their teachers around the Bologna Reform, there are statistically relevant differences between the perceptions of the various groups of teachers.

Therefore, in general, teachers at private sector institutions felt more impact and more change as a consequence of the Reform than teachers at public sector higher education institutions. Additionally, within the private sector of higher education, teachers from polytechnics had the strongest perceptions about the scope of the implementation of the various Bologna dimensions, their implementation in the teaching and learning processes and the overall perceived implementation of the Reform.

Finally, we could also notice that teachers from the public university subsystem showed weaker perceptions regarding all aspects of the analysis of the implementation of the Bologna Reform when compared with teachers from the private, public and polytechnic sectors, and that the only group for which they do not show statistically significant differences is the public polytechnic teachers.

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