

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATHEMATICS: THE VOICE OF TIMORESE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Cabrita, I.^a, Lucas, M.^a & Silva, L.^b

Research Centre Didactics and Technology in Education of Trainers, University of Aveiro,^b Agrupamento de Escolas Manuel Laranjeira

Teachers' and students' beliefs (Leder, Pehkonen & Torner, 2003) have significant influence over teaching practices – from 'traditional' to 'exploratory' (Allwright, 2003) - and learning 'styles' and 'approaches' adopted (Sims & Sims, 2006). In order for the investment made on the restructuring of Timorese general secondary education curriculum not to be compromised, it is of utmost importance that teachers' and students' perspectives are identified so that the implementation of the new curriculum can be improved in a timely manner. This is one of the main aims of the ongoing *Timor Project* (supported by the Portuguese Foundation FCT (PTDC/MHC-CED/5065/2012), by the COMPETE Programme and by the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER)). Within its scope, teachers and students from public and private schools were surveyed. The main quantitative results from the questionnaires showed that teachers seemed to consider teaching as a process of fostering students' knowledge building, more than a process of reproducing and applying it; to value knowledge transmission and questioning students as their main teaching practices; to use formative and summative evaluation and resort to tests and their correction as common evaluation practices. Regarding students, they seemed to value knowledge transmission, questioning the teacher, solving tasks and discussing their resolution as learning activities. In general, they preferred working alone to groups and selected textbooks, dictionaries and other didactic books as the most important resources for their learning. Their study habits involved doing homework assignments and summarising information from text or notebooks; learning was considered to be a process of knowledge creation, but also of memorisation. These perspectives seem to be in line with a *traditional* way of teaching, with *passive* and *sequential* styles and with a *superficial* approach to learning that is urgent to reverse.

References

- Allwright, D. (2003) Exploratory Practice: Rethinking practitioner research in language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*. 7(2), 113-141.
- Leder, G., Pehkonen, E. & Torner, G. (2003). *Beliefs: A hidden variable in mathematics education?* Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Sims, R. & Sims, S. (Eds). (2006). *Learning styles and learning: A key to meeting the accountability demands in education*. NY: Nova Publishers.