

Curricular ambition and aligned assessment can change a country

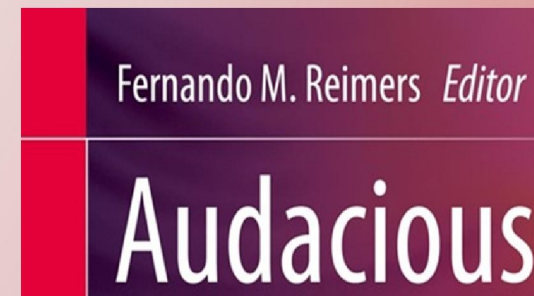
ESZTERHÁZY KÁROLY UNIVERSITY
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Iniciativa Educação

Former Minister of Education and Science of Portugal (2011-2015)



Nuno Crato *Editor*

Improving a Country's Education

PISA 2018 Results in 10 Countries

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Chapter 8 Curriculum and Educational Reforms in Portugal: An Analysis on Why and How Students' Knowledge and Skills Improved



Nuno Crato

Abstract By the turn of the century, following the dismal first results in TIMSS and PISA, the Portuguese educational system was at a crossroads. It was clear that students were not attaining minimal levels of proficiency in reading, math, science, and other basic subjects. The system needed a deep reshaping, and so changes were made. By the time the last PISA and TIMSS international large-scale surveys' results were released in 2015, Portugal registered a quantum leap: in PISA, student achievement was above the OECD average and in TIMSS, 4th graders had higher scores in Mathematics than several usually high-performing countries, including Finland. How was this possible? To understand what happened, we need to look at what Portugal has done in the last 10–15 years. Although many different ministers from different ideological standpoints made different reforms, there is a common thread to most changes: they paid increased attention to results. This proved to be a powerful thrust for improvement, backed up by experienced teachers. However, this general thrust assumed many concrete different aspects and promoted different reforms. During the 2011–2015 period, these reforms went further and were very clear, intentional, and explicit: a clear curriculum, increased school autonomy, students' regular assessment, vocational paths, flexibility. All this helped to prepare

the Goals

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authoritarian times
1933 - 1974

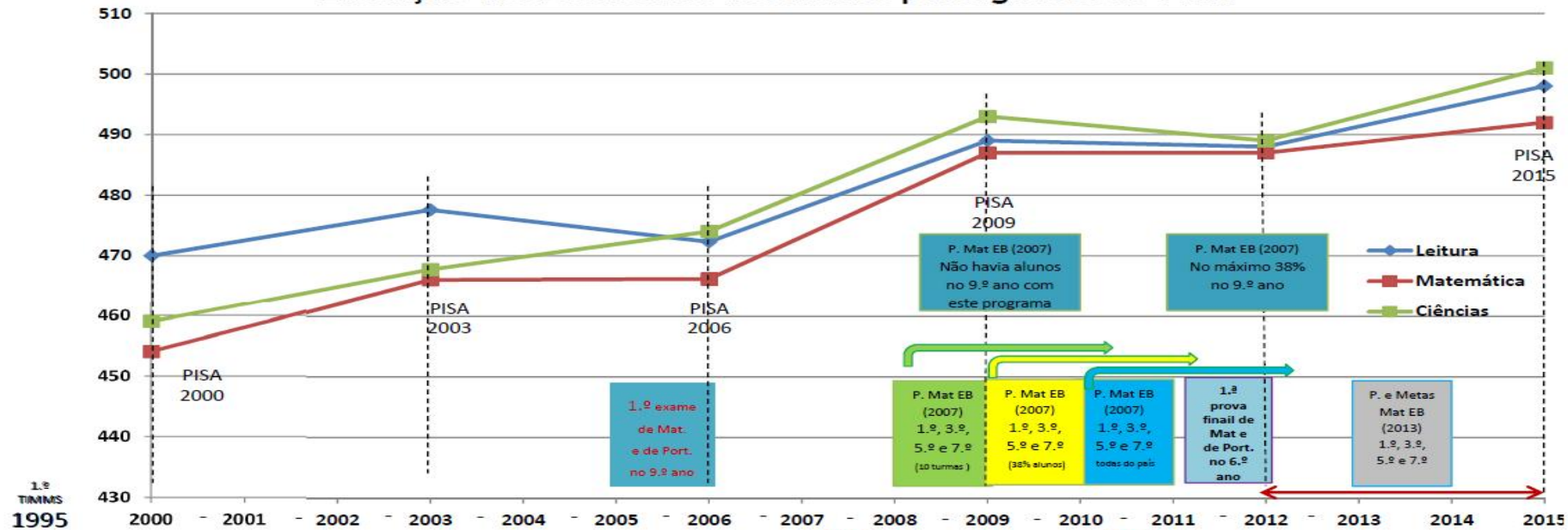
“romantic” era
1974 - 1995/2000

pragmatic times
2000 - 2011

knowledge curriculum
2011 - 2015

???
2016 - ...

Evolução dos resultados dos alunos portugueses no PISA



Two different countries:

1995 - 2000

2001 - 2015

Specific factors

- 2001: School results
- 2004: Competences put aside
- 2005: Evaluation 9th grade
- 2006: Assessment 4th 6th, action programs, PAM
- 2007: Textbook evaluation
- 2011: Competences end, knowledge-based standards start
- 2012: Better standards
- 2012: Evaluation 4th 6th

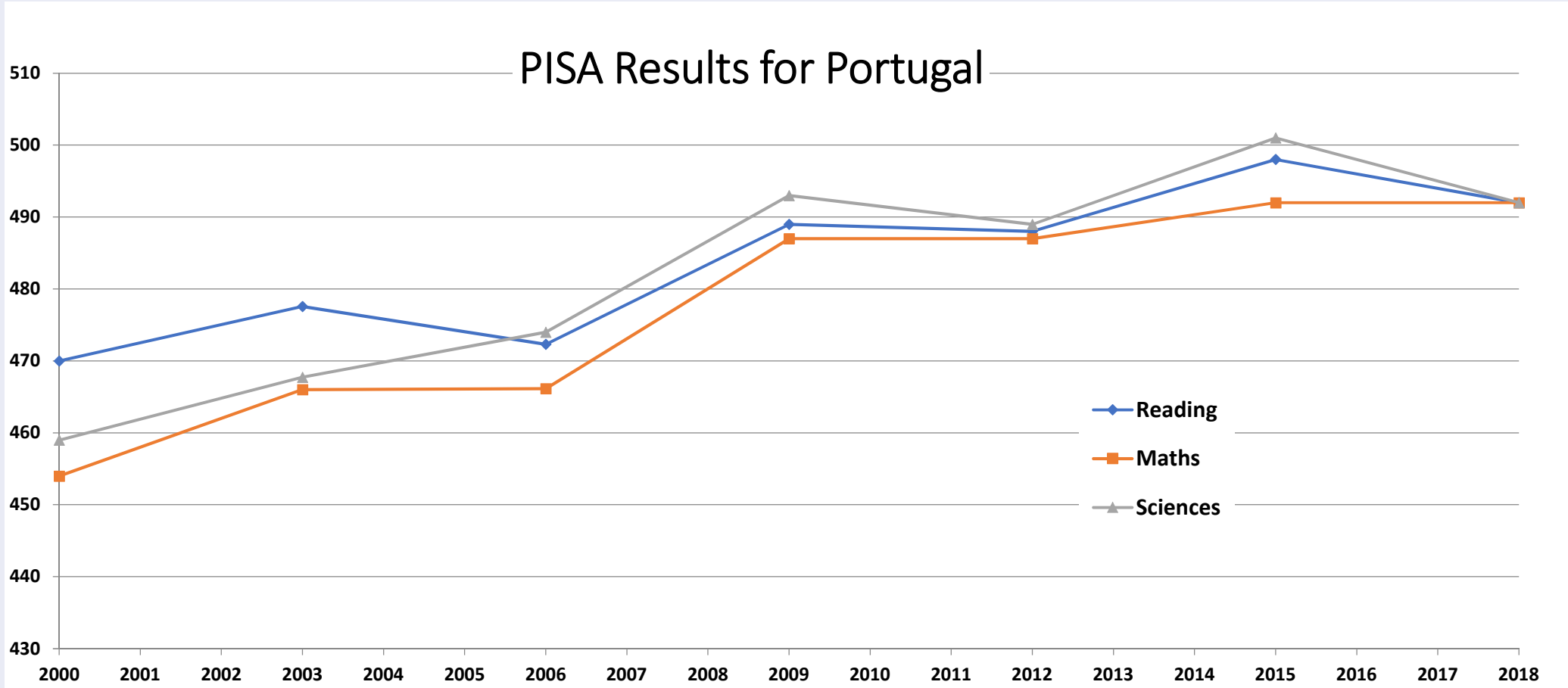
But... what happened next ?

“romantic” era
1974 - 1995/2000

pragmatic times
2000/2003 - 2011

knowledge curriculum
2011 - 2015

vague competences again...
2016 - 2020

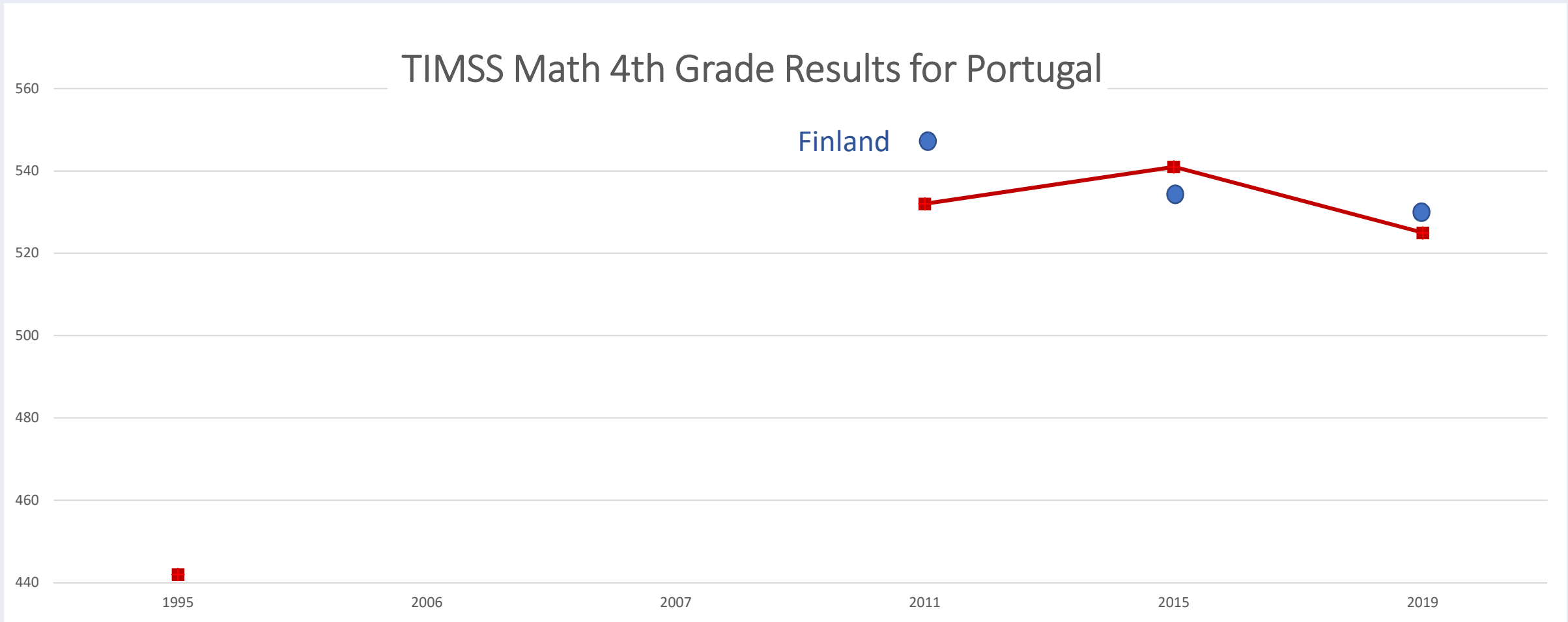


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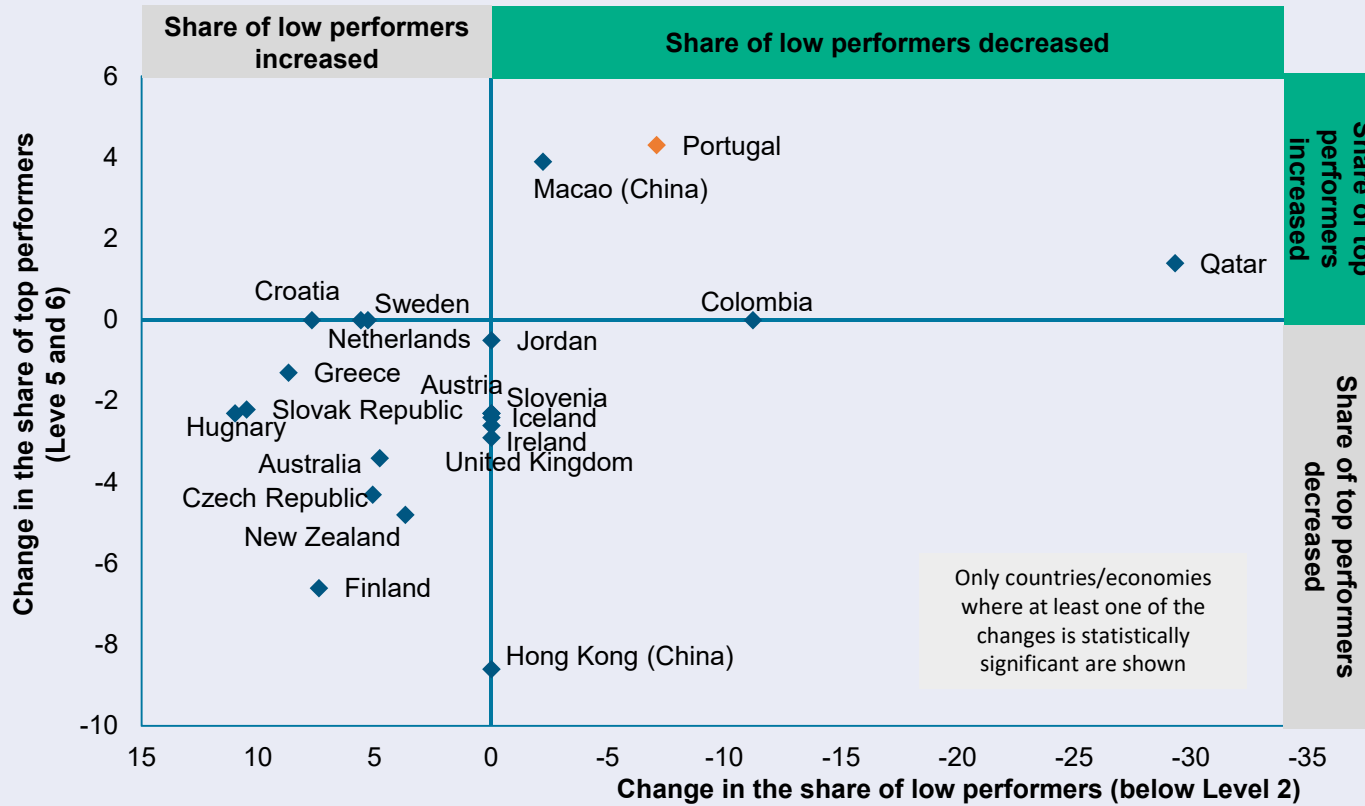


Sometimes, people think there is a dichotomy between quality and fairness.

So, let's have a closer look

Fraction of High- and Low-Performers TIMSS 4th Grade Math - Portugal			
	2011	2015	2019
High Performers = Level 4	8	12	9
Low Performers = Level 1 or below	20	18	26

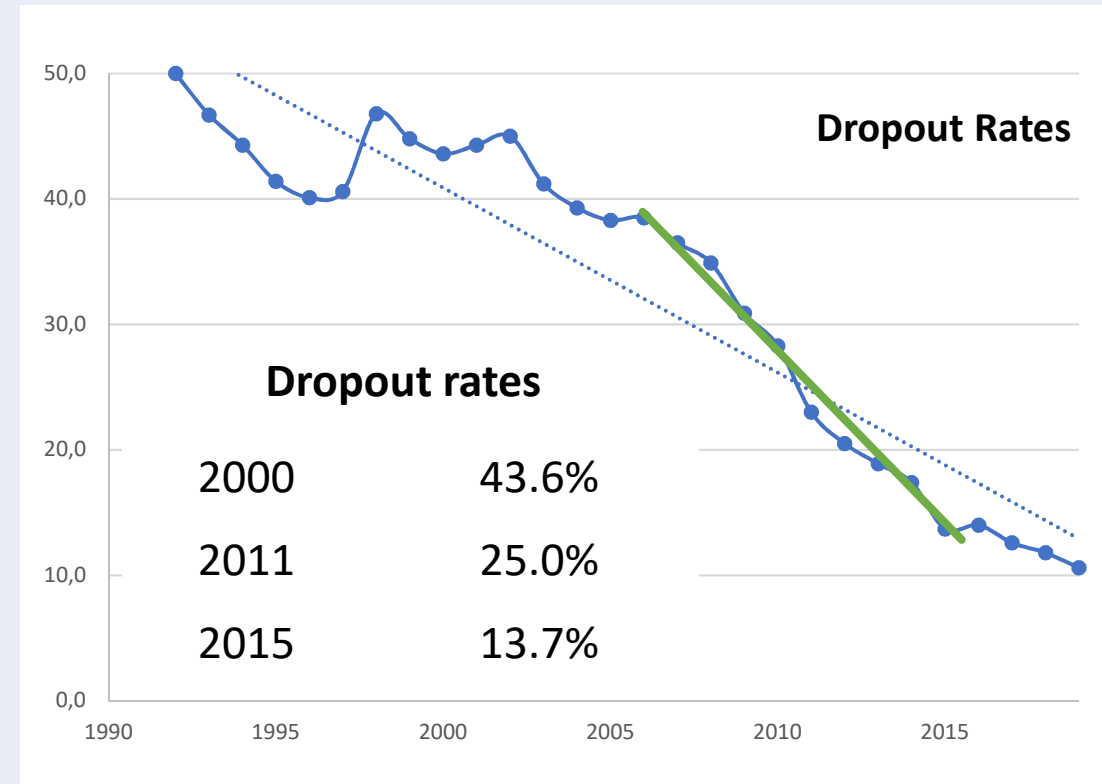
Change in the share of top and low performers between 2006 and 2015



PISA 2015 Report: Fig. I.2.26

PISA 2006-2015

Portugal significantly increased the share of top-performers and decreased the share of low-performers



LOW PERFORMERS	2009	2012	2015	2018
OECD				
Science	18.8	18.7	22.1	22.0
Math (36)	23.5	24.4	24.6	24.1
Reading	19.4	18.9	20.9	22.6
All domains				13.4
PORTUGAL				
Science	16.5	19.0	17.4	20.2
Math	23.7	24.9	23.8	23.3
Reading	17.6	18.8	17.2	19.6
All domains				12.6
EU				
Science		16.6	20.6	21.6
Math		22.1	22.2	22.4
Reading		17.8	19.7	21.7
All domains				12.7*

Everything starts with the curriculum

A demanding curriculum

Centred on the essential subjects

Structured, progressive, and detailed standards

Frequent assessment

4, 6, 9, 12 years

Comparison of internal and external assessments

Program to fight failure

Intervention at first difficulties

Special hours

Temporary groupings

School autonomy

Credits to schools to support students with difficulties

Incentives based on progress

Alternate paths

Vocational paths in middle school

Two vocational pathways

Businesses support from start to finish

Knowledge at the base

Evaluation is an incentive

Everybody can reach a reasonable level

Evaluating results = freedom of processes

Alternatives make all progress



English is a crucial part of our improvements

Learn languages

Start early

Be consistent

Integrate a language with its culture

English is not simply another language

2012 – English from 5th to 9th grade

2014 – English mandatory from 3rd to 9th grade

Ambitious curricula,
aligned assessment, and
focus on all students
can improve education

Thank you!