

Reflections on Drivers Training and Road Safety Education in Portugal

1 - Drivers Training

Actual situation:

- Evaluation focused solely on knowledge of the highway code and ability to carry out manoeuvres
- predetermined routes for evaluation
- competition between exam's centers
- Same entity owner of driving school and exam centers
- Trainers and the examiners contacts

Initial driver training is a fundamental strategic tool to ensure that users authorized to drive vehicles on public roads acquire the necessary knowledge for safe driving. For guarantee this it is necessary to ensure that the assessment of the acquisition of this knowledge is competent and rigorous. In the document "Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011 - 2010", from the European Union, it's written (pag 5) "The driving licence test The driving licence test should not be restricted to checking the candidate's knowledge of the highway code or his ability to carry out manoeuvres. The Commission will consider how to also include broader driving skills, or even an evaluation of values and behaviour related to road safety (awareness of the risks) and defensive, energy-efficient driving (reinforcement of the key elements of eco-driving within the curricula of the theoretical and practical tests)."

"For driver education it is important for learner drivers not only to learn to master their vehicle, and to be familiar with traffic regulations, but also that to learn to assess risks and risk-increasing factors in road traffic as well as to be a good judge of their own skills and limitations. This is reflected in the GDE matrix (Goals for Driver Education) that was applied in the EU-project GADGET (1)" pag 33, Best practices in road safety - Handbook for measures at the country level, EU 2010

Driving tests in Portugal have very serious deficiencies, both in terms of content and the way they are carried out, but also in terms of the structure responsible for carrying them out. For the reform of driving training to be successful, a complete reform of the evaluation system is necessary, from the responsible structure (competition between centers introduces insurmountable vices), to the contents of theoretical evaluations (questions are only about the highway code and sometimes inappropriate to the license itself that the candidate qualifies) and practical test (the existence of predetermined routes that are constantly trained by the candidate seriously compromises the trainee's assessment in the practical driving test. Concerning motorcyclists practical learning process and evaluation the situation is even worst since the system doesn't guarantee that driver has all the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to behave safely while driving).

Driving test system that is in place is based on free competition. Driver candidates are free to choose the center to take the exam. The product sold in the examination centers is an approval that allows the candidate to drive a vehicle on the public road. The criteria used to choose the exam center by the trainee is based on the chance of to be approved, usually on the advice of instructor or the driving school where he took the training. In other words, in a system like this, the service most in demand is the one that offers the best chance of approval, and not the one that offers a better quality assessment. The majority of exams are carried out in centers that are owned by entities that are simultaneously owners of driving schools, we presume this is a unique system in Europe. PRP recommends the concentration of examination centers in a private, non-profit center, of recognized reputation and technical competence, under the legal and administrative tutelage of the Administration entity with competence in this area (at the moment, the IMT) or, alternatively, in the IMT itself.

In order to end with personal contacts between instructors and the examiners, which always generate situations of risk with regard to the seriousness of the procedures, it is also recommended that the examinations are requested by the candidates and not by the driving schools. In fact, CIECA itself, a European association that brings together entities that carry out examinations in Europe, in an inspection that was carried out to examinations in Portugal, negatively registered, among other things, the presence of the instructor in the examination vehicle combined with the fact of the examiner address the instructor and not the candidate, to refer to the observations that he had recorded on his performance in the practical driving test, and mainly the fact that the entities responsible for the examinations are simultaneously owners of the driving schools. There is also a report by the IGAI (General Inspection of Internal Administration) that refers to the same problems recommending an end to this situation.

The PRP even proposes that the practical exams be carried out in vehicles of the entity responsible for the exams, to guarantee the total separation between the driving schools and their instructors from the entity responsible for the exams and their examiners. Alternatively, they may even be carried out in vehicles submitted by candidates, as is the case in most European countries, namely those with the best road accident rates. As for the contents of the theoretical and practical tests, the PRP is of the opinion that they must be adequate to the model that is defined for access to the driving license, suggesting that the research that have been developed in this matter should be studied in detail, with special emphasis regarding the models under study and implementation in the Netherlands and Sweden.

The current system allows candidates to have as their sole objective to have access to their driving license as quickly and cheaply as possible, which leads driving schools to try to meet this need by preparing them to "pass at all costs in that exam ", and not to what should be his real objective, which is to prepare competent and safe drivers. The current training system is completely out of date in the face of the methods that have been studied and tested in the countries that have invested more and better in this sector, in Europe. Thus, it is proposed to restructure the initial training of drivers with a view to obtaining a "gradual driving license", taking into account "accompanied driving", "training in stages" and learning "perception and identification of risks (risks - self awareness training ; hazard perception)". Equally important for the rigor and seriousness of the system is to completely separate schools from examination centers, for which it is necessary, among other things, that examination vehicles be owned by examination centers and not schools.

2- Education

Actual situation:

- Lack of road safety and mobility education strategy involving pupils, students, teachers, parents and all relevant stakeholders
- Road safety and sustainable mobility educational programs are lacking mainly secondary school, adults training and universities.
- No pedagogical resources available to support teachers and students in their activities concerning road safety and sustainable mobility for ages over 12 years old
- Reduced number of trainings for teachers in road safety and sustainable mobility topic
- Reduced number of teachers able to train other teachers
- Inexistence of indicators that allow students to be assessed and self-assessed in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours
- Lack of a training program that combines practical and theoretical training

“In order to achieve Vision Zero in road safety, the EU and its Member States need to implement an integrated approach to road safety. Education is considered an essential part of this integrated approach, alongside measures focusing on, inter alia, vehicle safety, infrastructure safety, enforcement and awareness raising.”

“If good habits are established when children are still small, it is likely that they will grow up to become responsible road users. Road safety education therefore helps in laying the groundwork for the realisation of Vision Zero. It furthermore prepares young people to navigate the streets safely when they are young adults, the high-risk age group between 18 and 30 years old.”

“Traffic safety and mobility education is important to the implementation of the Safe System approach¹⁰, as it helps develop safe road users. Human behaviour is a key cause of collisions and education can teach safe behaviour and correct unsafe behaviour.”

“Traffic safety and mobility education is a life-long learning process. Each age group may face different challenges, yet all should benefit from gaining more knowledge, improving their skills and contributing towards a safety-minded culture. Education is therefore a broad approach that reaches everybody and should be seen as long-term work and longterm investment”

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION, 2020 European Transport Safety Council <https://www.trafficsafetyeducation.eu/key-principles/>

According key principles defined in the report of ETSC mentioned above Portugal doesn't meet the following ones in red:

1. All children and youngsters should receive high quality traffic safety and mobility education with continuity and progression.
2. Integrate traffic safety and mobility education in the curricula for schools, including a minimum amount of teaching hours
3. Set strategic, tactical and operational goals
4. Allocate sufficient resources for traffic safety and mobility education
5. Engage and support school management
6. Motivate schools to have a traffic safety and mobility policy

7. Appoint a traffic contact teacher at school
8. Strengthen teachers' competence and support them
9. Ensure that traffic safety and mobility education is about knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivations as well as training in traffic
10. Keep traffic safety and mobility education up to date
11. Use quality standards
12. Undertake tests, process and/or outcome evaluations
13. Assess pupils and let pupils evaluate themselves
14. Use interdisciplinary material as a means to teach traffic safety and mobility education
15. Educate student teachers about traffic safety and mobility education during their training
16. Follow-up to ensure traffic safety and mobility education is taught

Within the scope of the Road Education Framework for Pre-School Education and Basic Education, it is of utmost importance to continue the process of training Basic Education teachers and Early Childhood Educators, which is being implemented with coordination from DGE (General Directorate of Education), in which we are to participate, both in terms of methodologies definition and content development, or as trainers in promoting training actions in the form of training workshops. We believe that a similar intervention model should also be implemented at the level of training for teachers in Secondary Education and Adult Education within the scope of the Road Education Framework for Secondary Education and Adult Education and Training. A training program should be designed and promote the initial training of kindergarten teachers and teachers in Higher Education Schools and Universities. We also advocate the integration of road safety content in school textbooks. Road Education is explicitly included in some content areas of Pre-School Education and disciplinary areas of Basic Education and Secondary Education. However, only mandatory specific content is contemplated in the teaching program / Curricular Goals of the Physical - Chemical Sciences of the 9th year of schooling, namely a chapter dedicated to movements and forces, in which the theme of speed, safety equipment, among others is addressed. In this sense, we consider it pertinent to analyze the contents indicated above, as well as to conceive, make available and integrate fundamental contents in school manuals, from other levels of education and other disciplinary curricular areas, so that road education has an educational continuity and is approached in a across the curriculum.

In addition to teacher's training, it is also important to design and produce educational material for ages over 12 years old, of a playful and appealing nature, with technical rigor and quality for carrying out road education activities for children and students with different degrees of teaching, as well as to conceive, implement and make available materials for teachers from different degrees of education and educational agents to promote educational projects / activities throughout the school year. The materials should help teachers to integrate road education in the various disciplinary curricular areas.

2.1 Road Safety Campaigns

Actual situation:

- Lack of a 3-5 years Communication strategy plan aligned with priorities/risk factors defined at National Level

- Road safety campaigns developed without being part of a strategy whose purpose is to change behavior. Campaign strategy developed based on theoretical behavior models.
- No evaluations of the campaigns are carried out and there is no information on their effectiveness (reports)