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Grade Inflation in Portuguese High Schools: Perceptions, Challenges, and Solutions from the Viewpoint of Teachers

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GRADE INFLATION IN PORTUGUESE HIGHSCHOOLS: PERCEPTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the phenomenon of grade inflation through the lens of high school teachers in Portugal, addressing a literature gap by focusing on their perspectives. Ninety-six teachers were surveyed, revealing an ageing workforce predominantly between 50-60 years old, with women as a significant majority of respondents.

The research finds that a substantial portion of respondents has experienced external pressures to inflate grades, mainly influenced by schools, students, and legal guardians. Teachers' perceptions indicate that grade inflation may skew students' course choices and distort their self-assessment abilities, potentially impacting their higher education and career paths. The study also explores teachers' views on potential solutions to grade inflation, such as the abolishment of national exams or adjustments to exam scores based on school performance. The opinions on the suggested solutions were mixed, reflecting the complexity of the issue and suggesting that any single solution might not address all facets of the problem. Gender differences in responses suggest that women perceive grade inflation more acutely and face greater pressures. A small sample size, regional bias, and potential self-selection bias are limitations of the study, which may affect the general applicability of the findings. Overall, this research provides a valuable perspective on grade inflation from those directly impacted by it, offering insights into the challenges and potential reforms needed to address this issue in the Portuguese educational system.

JEL Codes: I21, I23, I24, I25.

Keywords: Grade Inflation; Higher Education; Highschool Pathways; Teachers; Optional Courses.

Resumo

Esta dissertação investiga o fenómeno da inflação de notas através da perspetiva dos professores de ensino secundário em Portugal, abordando uma lacuna na literatura, focando-se nas suas perspetivas. Foram inquiridos noventa e seis professores, revelando uma força de trabalho envelhecida, predominantemente entre os 50 e os 60 anos, com mulheres a constituírem uma maioria significativa entre os inquiridos.

A investigação conclui que uma parte substancial de quem respondeu foi alvo de pressões externas para inflacionar notas, principalmente influenciada pelas escolas, pelos alunos e pelos encarregados de educação. As perceções dos professores indicam que a inflação de notas pode enviesar a escolha de cursos pelos alunos e distorcer a sua capacidade de autoavaliação, potencialmente impactando o seu percurso académico e profissional. A investigação também explora as opiniões dos professores sobre possíveis soluções para a inflação de notas, como a abolição dos exames nacionais ou ajustes das notas dos exames com base no desempenho das escolas. As opiniões sobre as soluções sugeridas foram mistas, refletindo a complexidade da questão e sugerindo que uma única solução pode não abordar todas as facetas do problema. As diferenças de género nas respostas sugerem que a perceção das mulheres sobre a inflação de notas é mais pronunciada e que estas enfrentam maiores pressões externas. O tamanho reduzido da amostra, o "bias" regional e o potencial "bias" de autosseleção são limitações do estudo, que podem afetar a aplicabilidade das conclusões. De forma geral, esta pesquisa fornece uma perspetiva valiosa sobre a inflação de notas a partir daqueles que são diretamente impactados por ela, oferecendo discernimentos sobre os desafios e potenciais reformas necessárias para abordar esta questão no sistema educativo português.

Códigos JEL: I21, I23, I24, I25.

Palavras-Chave: Inflação de Notas; Ensino Superior; Cursos de Ensino Secundário; Professores; Cursos Optativos.

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1. Introduction

The high school system plays a pivotal role in shaping individual trajectories and societal development. Within this framework, the issue of grade inflation has emerged as a significant concern, particularly within Portuguese high schools. Grade inflation, characterized by an unjustified increase in grades that does not align with actual student achievement, has profound implications for educational equity, institutional credibility, and social mobility.

The relevance of this thesis goes beyond Portugal, as the existing literature suggests this issue is present in other European countries (Nata et al., 2014). In the event other countries also grapple with grade inflation, exploring the Portuguese context can yield important insights into how systemic and localized factors contribute to the issue. Portugal's educational landscape - with its ageing teacher population, educational reforms, regional and socioeconomic disparities, gender dynamics, and market pressures on education - provides a clear case study that can inform comparative research and policy discussions across Europe.

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine the phenomenon of grade inflation in Portuguese high schools, striving to fill a void in literature by specifically targeting teachers' perspectives, frequently neglected by scholars and policy makers. Although the quantitative results for the Portuguese setting already exist (Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2023) this thesis focuses on the qualitative endeavor of questioning teachers about these same results. With the help of a survey, it was possible to explore teachers' perspectives on the underlying causes, consequences, and potential solutions of grade inflation, integrating their personal experiences into the analysis, comparing the sample to official statistics. This study's small sample size, its regional bias, its self-selection bias, subjectivity, and oversimplification, along with single data source could bias the results.

According to the survey data, the majority of respondents were North-residing, permanent female teachers between the ages of 50 and 60, or older, with over 20 years of experience. This demographic profile is consistent with the trend of teaching as an ageing profession in Portugal (OECD, 2018). Additionally, it was observed that women tend to recognize and worry about grade inflation, being subject to more pressure to comply with external influences. Their higher agreement with proposed solutions reflects a desire for change, but not without a capacity for critical evaluation of their fairness and feasibility,

which can be linked to the traditional roles in a patriarchal society, where they are socialized to be more aware of others' needs, accommodating, and compliant.

Teachers' perspectives are critical in comprehending how external pressures and institutional practices influence grade inflation, offering a nuanced view of the subject while complementing the existing quantitative research. By merging teachers' outlooks into the debate, this thesis aims to improve the process of addressing grade inflation and helping policymakers, administrators and the public grasp the complexity of the issue and the need for more efficient ways to solve it, not only in Portugal, but across the European continent.

The rest of the thesis is organized in five sections: section 2 which encompasses the literature review, section 3 which illustrates the institutional setting, section 4 which delves into methodology, section 5 which explains the results, and section 6 which expounds the conclusions and limitations of the dissertation, along with bibliographic references, and questionnaire transcripts.

2. Literature Review

The problem of grade inflation in Portuguese high schools is not a new subject in the Education research area; however, the availability of rich microdata in Portugal is abundant, as is seen by the extensive existing literature. This literature – both about the Portuguese and international contexts – is mostly empirical and focused on methodological issues; it typically analyses biases in grading systems (specifically those that use GPA-based grading), sometimes offering potential solutions.

To start the literature review itself, it's essential to conceptualize the idea of grade inflation. Most of the literature agrees on a definition like the following "an increase in grades that don't correspond to gains in student achievement or academic attainment" (Eiszler, 2002; Kostal et al., 2016; Rosovsky & Hartley, 2002), or in mathematical terms, the difference between internal final scores and national exam scores (Nata et al., 2014). The literature review will gather the outcomes of grade inflation according to scholars, as well as the solutions.

The literature is quite extensive on the outcomes of grade inflation, with different authors suggesting different outcomes (albeit the common thread is the effect on students' achievements and educational institutions' ability to affect social outcomes). These effects are particularly problematic in countries whose higher education institutions consider high school GPA and grades in their admission process, since they are unable to fairly assess candidates (Silva et al., 2023).

It is possible that grade inflation can motivate students to pursue courses where there is a higher chance of securing better grades (Chowdhury, 2018), independently of their professional usefulness (Silva et al., 2023). It is also argued that inflated grades can convey faulty cues as to a student's preparedness for higher education, leading them to overstate their prospects of accessing it and thriving (Gershenson, 2018). In addition, grading high and low-performing students the same way can culminate in "lower effort and achievement among students" (DeFraja & Landeras, 2006), affecting high-performing students the most (Lackey & Lackey, 2006; Pressman, 2007), which can be connected to grade inflation decreasing the worth of highly qualified students' grades in comparison with their less-qualified peers (Chan et al.,, 2007; Finefter-Rosenbluh & Levinson, 2015).

It is suggested that grade inflation can affect students differently, depending on their families' socioeconomic standing (Gershenson, 2018; Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017; Smith & Naylor, 2005). Students who come from high socio-economic position families, along with those who frequent private high schools seem to be more likely to experience grade inflation. This can be explained by these families' better ability to access and assess information, as well as their aptness to turn it into "educational investments, namely private, selective, fee-paying schooling" (Rahona López, 2009). Even with the massification of higher education after 1974 - where there was an increase in "the gross participation rate in higher education" (OECD, 2012) of about 7% to over 50%, in 1974 and 2001, respectively (Neves et al., 2017) - lower classes have not proportionally benefited from greater social fairness (Dias, 2015). In Portugal, parents' social position affects the kind of upper-secondary course students choose to pursue; in turn, this affects how they choose to partake in higher education - those who select vocational upper-secondary pathways are less likely to partake in higher education (OECD, 2022). If the student doesn't have a parent with tertiary education, there's a higher chance of them selecting a vocational upper-secondary pathway than a regular one (OECD, 2021). In 2019/2020, 81% of students who went for the regular pathway had partaken in higher education in less than a year after concluding high school, compared to 24% of their peers who followed a vocational pathway. In turn, this can "reinforce education stratification and impede policy efforts to improve social mobility and reduce socio-economic inequalities" (Bleemer, 2020), therefore perpetuating the social hierarchy (Nata et al., 2014).

High schools that inflate grades make it difficult to understand how well they can send knowledge and develop students' skills, which might prevent necessary action from being taken toward improving school and student performance (Silva et al., 2023). If Portuguese higher education institutions utilize the high school grading system to place candidates, and this grading system is heavily flawed - not well founded and inaccurate (Silva et al., 2023) - then institutions risk admitting candidates who are less likely to meet their requirements.

Finally, several authors recognize the existence of a consumerist environment surrounding education - with pressures for grade inflation due to the increased competition between students and schools - which is an added layer of inequality (Neves et al., 2017; Nata et al., 2014; Wikström, 2005). If schools are met with higher market pressure - specifically

fee-paying private schools - then there is a bigger incentive to practice grade inflation, to satisfy their elite "consumers" (Buisson-Fenet and Draelants, 2013).

There are two types of conclusions present in Portuguese literature that seem to be prevalent. The first one is that grade inflation is more widespread in marks which are paramount to competing for scarce/most coveted courses in public higher education (Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017). The second one is that students from private fee-paying schools are more likely to benefit from grade inflation, leading to a significantly higher chance of getting into higher education institutions than their peers from other types of schools (Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2023). If grade inflation increases students' chances of accessing higher education and it's mostly prevalent in private fee-paying high schools, then those of higher social status are more likely to access higher education than those of lower social status. In the most competitive courses, increasing a candidate's score by 1 point can increase their chances of getting in by leaping them "somewhere between 80 and 90% of the access list" (Neves et al., 2017). Considering that completing higher education is a part of the pathway to climbing the social ladder (Ball 2003; Wilkinson and Pickett 2011), then it's likely that those without privilege will struggle more when it comes to social mobility. Therefore, the social hierarchy is "maintained and construed" (Nata et al., 2014).

Grade inflation encompasses more than a numerical facet; therefore, a simple mathematical solution cannot address it adequately. It regards social dynamics, whose best solution would necessarily be a utopic one. Consequently, no solution will be exempt from criticism. The first suggestion is the proposal of the Bayesian model for grade data (Johnson, 1997). It evaluates student performance, considering both individual achievement levels within a class, and instructor-specific grade cutoffs. The method proposes that a teacher distributes grades by ordering student achievements from best to worst, possibly grouping students who performed similarly (based on an achievement index the teacher has defined). After that is done, the teacher will cluster students into grade brackets by fixing grade cutoffs between the estimated students' attainment levels. The adjustment made in this method is based on the proposition that students should be assessed by "relative rankings (...) within classes" (Johnson, 1997), and not by grades. This model is proposed as an alternative to GPA-based grading, as it aims to lessen the subjectivity related to "the interpretation of assigned grades" (Johnson, 1997) since it is adjusted for differentiation between teachers. It

also compares "the relative ranking of students as they mix across classes" therefore adjusting for students' achievement levels in the same class and removing stimulus to register for easier courses. Even so, some issues can be raised, like the likelihood of its implementation due to logistical reasons, additional resource spending, or unwillingness to accept change. Another criticism can rest in the Bayesian model instituting its own assessment biases, even though it erases a different one, which can contribute to inequities in assessment. This model can also be misconstrued and poorly interpreted by students and faculty, due to its complexity.

Alternatively, three solutions are put forward (Nata et al., 2014): to stop using internal final scores as a part of deciding entry in higher education institutions, to fabricate a posteriori correction to marks attributed by schools, or to turn to the luck of the draw. As for the first solution, it would mean access to higher education is dependent only on national exams and/or on universities' admission exams, which can favor those students who manage stressful exam-taking better. Regarding the second one, it would distribute different weights subject to the variation of schools' results compared to the average deviation. Despite that, there are no guarantees of substantial fairness, and it could even cause concern about its integrity. Finally, the third solution would first ensure that certain minimum requirements for candidates are met, and then resort to the luck of draw (Stone, 2013). Still, this may go against merit as the key criteria for figuring out entry to higher education.

On the other hand, three – broader – solutions are supplied (Neves et al., 2017): state oversight of grading practices, assessment and redesign of compensatory education programs, and changes in the acceptance procedure into higher education. With the first proposal, the authors suggest the government should supervise grading to guarantee equitableness and accuracy of students' assessment, meaning tracking and regulating grading standards across all four types of schools. However, it can be argued that over-regulation could interfere with schools' autonomy, endangering diversified learning environments and leading to standardized grading practices. Concerning the second proposal, the authors argue that these compensatory education programs are ineffective in aiding distinct types of students' academic performance. For that reason, they believe it necessary to reshape these programs so they will help students from different economic backgrounds. Yet, issues such as the number of resources needed and leaving out the specific needs of underprivileged students can be raised. Concerning the third proposition, the authors highlight the necessity to alter the admission process, meaning potentially amending admission criteria – to ensure

it considers students' diverse backgrounds. Nonetheless, it can be challenging to design an admission process that perfectly balances the need for equity and academic standards.

3. Institutional setting

3.1. The Portuguese High School System

Since the Portuguese context has a specific institutional setting, it's vital to map it out. Firstly, high schools are divided into public and private schools. Public schools are then split into two types (Nata et al., 2014): TEIP and non-TEIP. TEIP schools - Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária - are present in regions where there is significant social exclusion and poverty, setting in place positive discrimination measures inspired by "the French ZEP, or 'zones d'action prioritaire'" (Nata et al., 2014). Non-TEIP schools are ordinary public schools. As for private schools, there are, again, two types: government-dependent private schools and independent private schools. These government-dependent private schools receive state funding for supplying educational services in areas where otherwise there wouldn't be any, whereas independent private schools are fee-paying, profit-oriented schools (Nata et al., 2014).

When it comes to the types of high school pathways, there are six different types: science-humanistic courses [1] (including the science and technologies course, the socioeconomic course, the languages and humanities course, and the visual arts course), own-school-curriculum courses (which include the same general educational components as science-humanistic courses, as well as a workplace training program, following guidelines from the Ministry of Education), specialized artistic courses (including visual and audiovisual arts, music, theatre and dance courses), apprenticeship courses (designed for adults seeking a high school diploma or certificate, organized differently than other high school courses in terms of assessment, schedules, access conditions, and curriculum), CEF courses (the goal is to prepare students to go directly into the job market), and vocational courses (DGES, 2024). In 2020/2021, the scientific-humanistic courses represented 53.3% of all students in high school, while 0.9% were own-school-curriculum courses, 0.7% were specialized artistic courses, apprenticeship courses were 4.7%, 0.1% were CEF courses, and vocational courses represented 29.2% (DGEEC, 2021).

[1] For this dissertation, I will only analyse grade inflation for scientific-humanistic courses.

Table 1: Highschool Pathways in Portuguese Schools (2023/2024).

Pathways
Science-humanistic Courses • Science and Technologies • Socioeconomics • Languages and Humanities • Visual Arts Courses
Own-school-curriculum Courses[2] • Biotechnology • Accounting and Management • Electronics and Communications • Heritage and Tourism
Specialized Artistic Courses • Visual and Audiovisual Arts • Music • Theater • Dance
Apprenticeship Courses[3] • Science-humanistic • Technological • Artistic Specialization
CEF Courses[4] • Administrative Assistant • Hairdresser Assistant • Cook • Waiter
Vocational Courses • Sociocultural • Scientific • Technological

2 Some examples of available own-curriculum courses (Colégio Internato dos Carvalhos, 2024).
[3] Catered towards those who did not access education when younger, and for those who want to take them for cultural or professional reasons.
[4] There is a total of 38 accredited CEF courses in Portugal; the ones mentioned are some of the most popular.

- Work Setting

Since 2019/2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and until the 2022/2023 school year, rules regarding mandatory final national exams changed: students were only required to take exams necessary for the institution/course they wished to apply for.

In the 2023/2024 school year, rules changed again: eleventh-grade students will choose which exams to take, and their grades will be accounted for in the final high school GPA weighing 25% (DGES, 2023); twelfth-grade students still fall under the previous regulations. Starting from the next school year, all students will have to take the mandatory Portuguese exam in twelfth grade, plus two other exams of their choice, all accounting for the final high school GPA, weighing 25%. This can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Evolution of exam requirements for Highschool Students (pre-pandemic to 2025).

Mandatory Exams	**11th Grade**	**12th Grade**
Before COVID-19	Two exams: 1. Two bi-annual courses, or 2. One bi-annual course and Philosophy.	Two exams: Two tri-annual courses.
During COVID-19 and until 2022/2023	Exams required by higher education institution/course.	Exams required by higher education institution/course.
After COVID-19 - 2023/2024	Exams required by higher education institution/course.	Exams required by higher education institution/course.
2024/2025 onwards	Two options: 1. Two bi-annual courses plus mandatory Portuguese exam or 2. One bi-annual course, one tri-annual course, plus mandatory Portuguese exam	

Another aspect that was subject to change was the calculation of the final high school GPA. Before 2019/2020 and until the 2022/2023 school year, national exams were not weighed in the course's final grade. In 2023/2024, new rules will solely affect eleventh-grade students - who must take three exams, Portuguese being mandatory (whenever they reach twelfth grade) and which weigh 30% of each course's final grade. Twelfth-grade students in the 2023/2024 school year are subjected to the same rules as the 2022/2023 school year. Regarding the 2024/2025 school year, every student takes the mandatory Portuguese exam in twelfth grade and two other exams of their choice – either two bi-annual courses, or one bi-annual course plus one tri-annual course - where twelfth-grade exams weigh 30% of the final grade and eleventh-grade exams weigh 25%. The weight of each course on the final GPA depends on its duration of 3, 2, or 1 year (DGES, 2023), which means the final GPA will be a weighted average, decreasing the pressure of 12th grade courses in the final GPA. In turn, this redistribution of weight can reduce grade inflation, since this phenomenon is more frequent in 12th grade courses.

3.2. Access to Higher Education in Portugal

For Portuguese students, access to public higher education in Portugal is done through a countrywide call set in place by Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior (DGES), and the process is split into two or more phases at the end of the school year (DGES, 2024). To apply it is mandatory to have a high school degree or other legally equivalent diploma, to have taken compulsory exams (decided by each higher education institution) within the previous two years, to carry out any prerequisites higher education institutions may deem mandatory, and not be under the international student status. Applicants can take part in all phases of the nationwide call.

Access to higher education is subject to a limited number of vacancies, predetermined annually by each institution and for each course they offer (DGES, 2024). Vacancies that are not occupied in the first phase will be transferred to the second phase and the same is done for the third phase (in the event it occurs, since it is not mandatory for institutions), though it should be noted that those who apply for the second call while having secured a place in the first call will automatically lose the first allocation (the same is done if there is an application for the third call). The predetermined vacancies in the first call are split into a general contingent and several priority contingents[5]: applicants from the Azores, applicants

[5] For this dissertation, only the Mainland Portugal contingent is considered.

from Madeira, applicants who are emigrants, family members, and of Portuguese descent, military applicants, disabled applicants, and applicants who benefit from social benefits. In the second call, the vacancies are split into a general contingent and two priority contingents: disabled applicants and applicants who are emigrants, family members, and of Portuguese descent. In the third phase, there are no priority contingents.

It is possible to apply to up to six different combinations of institutions and courses, ordered by preference. Available vacancies are filled by candidates in descending order of application score for each institution/course pair until all positions are filled, and each candidate can only fill one vacancy (DGES, 2024). The process starts with students searching for information regarding the academic pathway they wish to pursue, as well as the likelihood of getting into their first choice; they will then apply according to their own appraisal. After the application period is over, higher education institutions start the assessment period, where they will review students' applications, and decide which applicants will fill the available vacancies. This allocation process takes place according to the "assignment criteria" (Gale & Shaply, 1962), which requires a number of n applicants to be allocated among a number of m higher education institutions, considering a quota of q_i for each i institution (Gale & Shaply, 1962). It is dependent on students' and institutions' rankings of one another, disregarding institutions students would never choose (students have preferences over these institutions, ranging from reputation to location, among others), and students that institutions would never admit (higher education institutions express preferences over students based on academic performance, extracurricular activities, and/or other types of criteria).

For instance, a student who wishes to pursue a career in business-related areas might apply to the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto, which offers two undergraduate degrees - Economics and Management - with different academic pathways and different numbers of vacancies, but with the same prerequisites to fulfil. This student could apply to one or both courses, as well as similar ones from other higher education institutions, ranking them according to their preferences, as can be seen in Table 3.

After the allocation process is completed (using the Gale and Shaply mechanism), students will decide if their allocation in the first call is personally satisfactory. If this is the case, then the process of enrolment begins; if not, then a student can find an alternative in the second call. However, if a placement is made in the second call (and it is personally satisfactory), it comes at (non-monetary) costs: students can only enroll one month after

classes start[6], meaning the likelihood of falling behind on academic chores, and/or failing some courses is higher than that of peers who started as regularly scheduled. If vacancies are left from the second call, institutions can issue a third one, though the costs for applicants will worsen as registration is delayed.

[6] After 2023/2024, second and third calls were anticipated. This change will not affect the results of this thesis, as this period is not considered for research purposes.

4. Methodology

4.1. Survey method

The data analyzed derives from a questionnaire directed towards high school teachers. The reasoning behind using the survey method was the ability to easily and quickly reach teachers, who may not be familiar with the existing literature on the subject but are primarily aware of the legal aspects. Additionally, their lived experiences, despite any biases, are very valuable for research purposes, as they do not necessarily align with realities presented in literature.

Before the data collection process, assurance of respondents' anonymity and confidentiality was given, as well as informed consent. To collect data, the process was done by e-mail, as well as through social media platforms. For the purposes of categorizing the sample, the first eleven multiple-choice format questions sought information on the sample's demographics, as well as on teacher's professional roles and responsibilities. In order for the results to be valid, respondents had to currently be or have been high school teachers. Of the one hundred and one answers registered, five were deemed null[7], as they did not come from high school teachers, leaving a valid sample of ninety-six answers.

The goal of this survey was to understand if high school teachers have dealt directly or indirectly with situations of grade inflation, testing hypotheses extracted from theories regarding grade inflation as proposed by scholars. To do this in a clear and accurate manner, the questionnaire was piloted, assessing several hypotheses using multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. The first analyzed one was the existence of grade inflation in optional 12th grade courses. The second hypothesis was the possibility of external factors pressuring teachers to inflate grades and whom these external factors could be. Thirdly, the likelihood of grade inflation in optional 12th grade courses altering students' academic path as well as their perceptions of their own capabilities was hypothesized, in line with literary works which state students can pursue courses where there are higher chances of achieving higher grades (Chowdhury, 2018), independently of their professional usefulness (Silva et al., 2023), even if it means students overstate their prospects in higher education (Gershenson, 2018). The fourth hypothesis was that grade inflation in schools is caused by market pressure, specifically a consumerist environment in education, where pressures for grade inflation due to increased

[7] Therefore, based on the literature, their participation in the inquiry stopped at this question as to not bias the results.

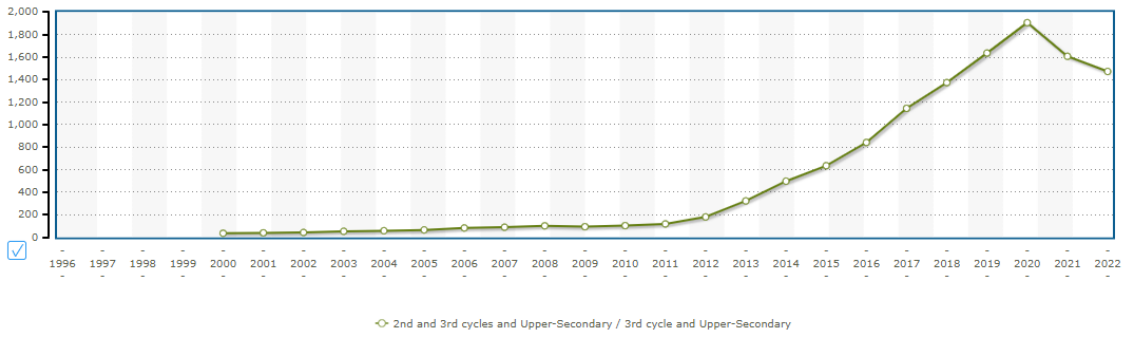
competition between students and schools add a layer of inequality (Neves et al., 2017; Nata et al., 2014; Wikström, 2005). The fifth one was the likelihood of grade inflation occurring predominantly in private schools, since existing literature suggests students from fee-paying private schools are more likely to benefit from grade inflation (Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2023). Finally, the sixth hypothesis gathers some of the solutions presented in literature – the elimination of internal final scores as part of the entry process in higher education, a posteriori correction of school marks, turning to the luck of draw (Nata et al., 2014), tighter State oversight of grading practices, and redesign of compensatory education programs (Neves et al., 2017) - assessing the likelihood of their feasibility in a real-world context. After these hypotheses were presented in the survey, respondents were asked three final open-ended questions: what they considered to be the biggest challenges regarding grade inflation in optional 12th grade courses, which were the biggest concerns regarding the long-term effects of grade inflation in the Portuguese educational system, and if they had any other comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding the subject.

5. Results

From the remaining ninety-six valid answers, the age groups of the teachers are split into five: 20-30 years old, 30-40 years old, 40-50 years old, 50-60 years old, and 60+ years old.

The highest number of answers can be found in the age group 50-60 years old (46 answers), and the lowest in the 30-40 years old age group (2 answers). From this data, the average age of the respondents is 59 years old. The distribution of these results is in line with Portada's statistics on middle and high school teachers' ageing since 2000. The Ageing index of teaching staff in pre-school, primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary education: by level of education - Mainland Portugal (Pordata, 2023) is, for middle school and upper-secondary education, 14.73% in 2022, compared to 34.8% in 2000. The ageing teacher population phenomenon, as well as the higher age average of teachers in Portugal - 49 years old- when compared to OECD countries' average of 44 years old (OECD, 2018), can be explained by the lack of incentives to become a teacher, such as a near-stagnant situation for "statutory salaries of upper secondary teachers in general programmes (…) (in constant price)" (OECD, 2023).

Figure 1: Ageing index of teaching staff in pre-school, primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary education: by level of education - Mainland Portugal. (Pordata, 2023).



As for the gender of the participants, 78% were women - 79 people - and 22% were men – 22 people. These statistics are in line with the "Females as a % of teaching staff in pre-school, primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary education: total and by level of

education index" (Pordata, 2023), which states that women represented 71.7% of teaching staff in 2022 at middle schools and upper secondary education, compared to 69% in 2000[8].

Teachers were then asked about their career span, with timelines of 0-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-20 years, or 20+ years. Most inquired teachers (90), fell into the 20+ year career span which is closely aligned with the conclusion that teaching is an ageing profession in Portugal (Pordata, 2023). The subsequent career span is 10-20 years (3 teachers), followed by 0-5 years (2 teachers), and 5-10 years (1 teacher) - results that support the aforementioned conclusion.

The subsequent question was meant to determine if teachers are active and, if so, what type of employment they are subjected to. The majority – 78 teachers - are permanent school teachers ("professor do quadro de escola ou de agrupamento"). Additionally, 9 teachers are teachers in the educational district ("professor do quadro de zona pedagógica"), 3 are temporary teachers ("professor contratado"), and 5 are retired. These results are aligned with statistics on teachers' contractual situation in Portugal: in 2020/2021, there were 82288 permanent schoolteachers, and 44919 temporary teachers and teachers in the educational district (Flores et al., 2016/2023).

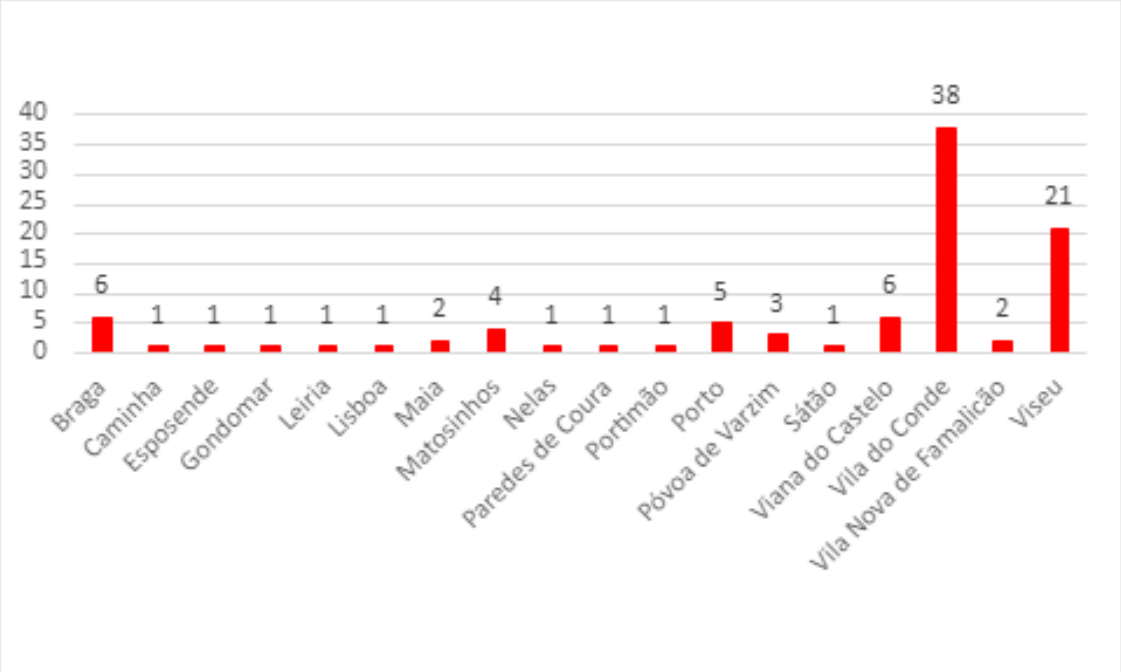
The following question was meant to learn about the geographic location of the inquired teachers. Following the NUTS[9] II designation, 70 inquired teachers were from the North region, 24 from the Centro region, 1 from the Grande Lisboa region, and 1 from the Algarve region. The data regarding the North region is consistent with the one from Edustat (2024a)[10], which claims this region has 34.01% of all high school teachers, representing a total of 29716. However, according to Edustat (2024a), the Grande Lisboa region is where the second largest high school teacher population is – 26,99%, representing 23585 teachers – whereas the Centro region is the second most representative in the survey, and third one according to Edustat (2024a), with 20.82% (18194) of all high school teachers. Regarding the Algarve region, the data matches the one from Edustat (2024a) as the fourth largest population of high school teachers at 4.76% (4163).

[8] Afterwards, teachers were asked if they had taught at least one course with a national exam; 61 had, but 35 had not. When it came to teaching an elective course within the past year, 14 teachers had done so, whereas 82 had not.

[9] Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (Eurostat, 2024).

[10] This data pertains the 2021/2022 school year.

Figure 2: Teachers' municipality of residence.



Teachers were then asked about their current schedule: 93 have a complete one, versus 3 which do not. This is directly related to the following question, which inquired if teachers worked in multiple schools – 93 answered "no", and 3 answered "yes". It makes sense to assume that these 3 professionals are temporary teachers; this is a recurrent phenomenon where, every school year, some temporary teachers are assigned incomplete schedules – less than 22 hours (Ministério da Educação e Ciência, 2015). In the event the hours they are assigned are not enough to constitute a complete schedule, they can be assigned more hours in a different school, therefore teaching in more than one establishment.

According to the sample, 95 out of 96 teachers work or have worked in public schools, 2 have worked in government-dependent private schools, 1 in TEIP schools, and 1 in private schools. These results are consistent with the "Professors in middle schools and high schools by school nature" (Edustat, 2024b) statistics, which states that most teachers work in public schools – 120959 professionals versus 12430 professionals. As a result of the overwhelming response from public school teachers, the conclusions drawn from this study can only be applied to public schools.

The next set of questions is related to teachers' personal experiences with grade inflation practices in the workplace. Firstly, teachers were asked about their agreement with

grade inflation being present in elective 12th grade courses: twenty-four percent answered they strongly agreed, forty-six percent answered they agreed, nineteen percent were indifferent, nine percent answered they disagreed, and two percent answered they strongly disagreed. Out of those who either agreed or strongly agreed, 76% were women, and 24% were men; out of those who were indifferent, 72% were women, and 28% were men; out of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 91% were women and 9% were men. This question is a pivotal gateway to the process of understanding the nuance of teachers' own perceptions of grade inflation, since it allows for direct insight into teachers' acknowledgement of grade inflation's presence in elective 12th grade courses, as well as their general understanding of the issue. Additionally, analyzing answers by gender and agreement level can lead to the uncovering of potential perception biases in these different demographics – the high percentage of women who either strongly agreed or agreed grade inflation is present in elective 12th grade courses indicates teachers' gender can influence their perception on the matter. This question is directly linked to the next one, which aims to understand if teachers have felt a compulsion to inflate grades. Fifty-eight - 60% - claimed they never felt such compulsion, whereas thirty-eight - 40% - claimed they did so. Given this context, teachers whose answer was "yes" were then asked which factors influenced their decision to inflate grades: 31 (82%) felt influenced by the school, 29 (76%) felt influenced by students, and 24 (63%) felt influenced by legal guardians. When asked if there were other influencing factors aside from those mentioned, teachers mentioned other co-workers, specifically advisory teachers within the same class council, with one teacher recounting a time when they stopped teaching an elective 12th grade course, due to "not grading enough students with top marks - 19/20 and 20/20". This type of pressure for grade inflation can be connected to the increasingly consumerist environment in education, since schools are met with higher market pressure (Buisson-Fenet and Draelants, 2013), where competition to retain the highest achieving students is fierce (Neves at. al, 2017; Nata et al., 2014; Wikström, 2005).

After understanding teachers' personal experiences, it was necessary to investigate their perceptions of the context of grade inflation in a school environment. Teachers were then asked if they believed grade inflation in elective 12th grade courses could lead students to choose courses where they're more likely to obtain a higher grade, even if their professional usefulness is lower. Twenty-nine percent strongly agreed with the statement, forty-nine percent of teachers agreed, nine percent were indifferent, eight percent disagreed,

and four percent strongly disagreed. Out of these responses, 76% of those who agreed or strongly agreed were women, and 24% were men; 67% of those who were indifferent were women, and 33% were men; out of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 92% were women, and 8% were men. This analysis discloses that female teachers consider grade inflation to be an influencing aspect in students' course choice to a greater extent than their male peers.

Subsequently, teachers were asked if they believed grade inflation in elective 12th grade courses could lead students to have a distorted perception of their own ability to succeed in higher education - twenty-two percent strongly agreed with the statement, forty-three percent agreed (a total of 81% women, and 19% men who agreed or strongly agreed), eleven percent were indifferent (36% women, and 64% men), eighteen disagreed, and six percent strongly disagreed (a total of 87% women, and 13% men who disagreed or strongly disagreed). In point of fact, a year after enrollment in higher education, 79.3% of students still frequent the same course/institution pair, whereas 11.2% of students are no longer enrolled in the national higher education system (Ministério da Educação e Ciência, 2024). This rate could be related to the overconfidence that grade inflation promotes, preventing students from properly dealing with the difficulties of higher education (Gershenson, 2018). Thus, not only does grade inflation impact course selection, but it also threatens their retention and success in higher education.

The ensuing questions aimed to ascertain whether teachers perceive the education sector as being a consumerist one – where pressures for grade inflation exist due to increased competition between schools and students (Neves et al., 2017; Nata et al., 2014; Wikström, 2005). Firstly, they were asked if schools of all types increasingly attribute higher grades due to market pressures: forty-four percent of teachers agreed, thirty-two percent strongly agreed – out oh which 74% were women, and 26% were men -thirteen percent were indifferent – out of which 83% were women, and 14% were men - seven percent disagreed, and four percent strongly disagreed – out of which 91% were women, and 9% were men. The next question focused solely on private schools: teachers were asked if they believed private schools more frequently inflated students' grades. Forty-three percent agreed so, forty percent strongly agreed so (representing a total of 78% women, and 22% men), fourteen percent were indifferent (representing a total of 77% of women, and 23% of men), three percent disagreed, and one percent strongly disagreed (representing a total of 75% women, and 25% men). These results are supported by existing literature regarding education's

change to a consumerist environment (Neves et al., 2017; Nata et al., 2014; Wikström, 2005), fueled by increased competition and stronger market pressures (specifically towards fee-paying private schools) to satisfy a new kind of demand (Buisson-Fenet and Draelants, 2013).

The following subsection of questions was meant to understand if solutions proposed by existing literature are considered as viable by those who would face the consequences of their implementation. When asked if they believed a viable solution to reduce grade inflation would be to stop using national exams when accessing higher education, 22 agreed, 9 strongly agreed – a total of 84% women, and 16% men - 9 were indifferent – a total of 67% women, and 23% men - 36 disagreed, and 20 strongly disagreed – a total of 75% women, and 25% men. These results could be related to the fact that this solution would not necessarily mean reducing inequalities, since it would favour those students who manage stressful exam-taking better (Nata et al., 2014), while basing all three years of high school education on one assessment moment. If teachers are already aware of inequalities even as students take national exams, then they can understand that eliminating them could lead to an exacerbation of these inequalities, since there would not be a common grading mechanism.

Teachers were then asked if they believed a viable solution would be to adjust national exam scores according to schools' overall performance. Three percent of teachers agreed, eleven percent strongly agreed (making a total of 86% women, and 14% men), twenty-three percent were indifferent (making a total of 68% women, and 32% men), forty-one percent disagreed, and twenty-two percent strongly disagreed (making a total of 78% women, and 22% men). Most teachers may not agree with this solution, since schools with access to more funding (particularly fee-paying private schools) will be able to invest more in their students, giving them better resources for national exams. If an adjustment of national scores to schools' overall performance would be employed, then fee-paying schools would have a better overall performance, therefore perpetuating a cycle of inequality. Similarly, when asked if they believed resorting to the luck of draw would be a viable solution for grade inflation, one percent was indifferent (a total of 100% women), twenty-seven percent disagreed, and seventy-two percent of teachers strongly disagreed (a total of 77% women, and 23% men). Therefore, teachers recognize that this solution ultimately contradicts the principle of merit as the primary criterion for determining entry into higher education. The high percentage of female teachers strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with this strategy suggests a bigger

concern in upholding meritocratic tenets in the academic system, when compared to their male counterparts.

Subsequently, teachers were asked if they believed a tighter State oversight – stricter monitoring of grading practices, to guarantee the fairness of students' assessments (Neves et al., 2017) - would be a viable solution for grade inflation in optional courses, which 10% of teachers agreed with, 39% strongly agreed with – a total of 70% women, and 30% men -, 16% were indifferent – a total of 87% women, and 13% men -, 24% disagreed with, and 11% strongly disagreed with – a total of 82% women, and 18% men. Teachers who agree with this solution may do so because they believe it could ensure a uniform and fair grading system, as well as hold school staff accountable, which could reduce discrepancies, and maintain academic integrity. Those of which who are against it may take that position due to the belief that the State would not be able to implement effective oversight mechanisms.

The last question inquired if teachers believed a solution for grade inflation could be redesigning higher education scholarship programs, making them more accessible to students of different social backgrounds. Thirty-nine percent of teachers agreed, sixteen percent strongly agreed (leading to a total of 83% women, and 17% men), twenty-five percent were indifferent (leading to a total of 71% women, and 29% men), eighteen percent disagreed, and seven percent strongly disagreed (leading to a total of 71% women, and 29% men). Those who agree with it may believe in scholarship programs' ability to provide equal opportunities – particularly those from lower-income backgrounds - thereby potentially enhancing social mobility (Dynarski, 2002). They could also believe that, with more accessible scholarships, the pressure to achieve high grades solely for financial aid purposes would decrease. Those who disagree with it could believe other solutions would have a more direct impact on grade inflation such as curriculum revisions. They could also not believe in the feasibility of implementing and monitoring changes due to bureaucratic burdens.

Next, teachers were asked three open-ended questions regarding their main concerns and challenges when dealing with grade inflation, both present and future. The first question asked what teachers believe to be the biggest challenges they face when it comes to grade inflation in optional courses. There were five pivotal topics identified from their answers. The first one is that students are inclined to choose courses based on potential higher grades, instead of educational value – an issue scholars have identified (Chowdhury, 2018). The second one is the concerns about grading practices across all types of schools, and how these can lead to a deterioration of academic standards, as well as to inequity between public and

private school students, as mentioned in existing literature (Nata et al., 2014; Neves et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2023). The third one is the long-term effects of grade inflation on students' academic and professional development – a consequence scholars have argued exists (Gershenson, 2018) - not allowing them to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The fourth one is the strategies used to motivate students to engage with all courses meaningfully, both mandatory and optional ones. The final one is guaranteeing equitable treatment and assessment of students in all school types, as teachers try to advocate for maintaining high grading standards against external pressures (from parents, other teachers, or students), raising ethical concerns due to the perceived lack of oversight on private schools' practices. Overall, teachers encounter an intricate set of challenges, stemming from systemic issues and external pressures. Students' propensity to choose courses based on grade achievement, instead of usefulness and educational value erodes the learning and skill development processes, which are exacerbated by the inconsistencies in grading practices between public and private schools and lead to higher disparities in academic caliber and equity. Aside from this, the pressure exerted towards teachers to inflate grades jeopardizes the upholding of academic standards and ethical evaluations. Not only does this pose a threat for educational outcomes in the short run, but also in the long run

The second question was about teachers' biggest concerns about the long-term effects of grade inflation in the Portuguese educational system, where five core themes were identified. The first one is the fact that higher grades do not correspond to tangible efforts or learning from students, as argued by DeFraja & Landeras (2006), making the educational system less rigorous. The second one is students' misconceptions about their own abilities to thrive in their academic and professional endeavors, as they create false expectations on their performance, in accordance with literature finds (Gershenson, 2018), along with the pressure for students to achieve higher scores. The possibility of students' unpreparedness for a future in higher education can lead them to underestimate the necessary efforts to acquire knowledge, leading to higher dropout rates, frustration, and even poor mental health – similar to DeFraja & Landeras' (2006) argument for "lower effort and achievement among students". The third one is a decline of trust in the educational system, and its standards. Concerns were expressed about the quality of future professionals, if there is a lack of rigor in teaching practices, and if there is a need for grades to correspond to defined, strict criteria; this, paired with the perceived disparities between public and private schools in grading practices, leads teachers to believe in unfair competition and inequality among students. The

fourth one is the pressure on teachers to attribute higher grades. These external pressures coming from students, parents, and other school staff members make it hard for teachers to maintain their professional integrity and autonomy, since this can impact their own performance evaluations. The fifth one is regarding the widening gap between students from different backgrounds, as those of higher socioeconomic standing have easier access to educational resources - such as information – which can later be turned into "educational investments" (Rahona López, 2009).

The final question inquires if teachers have any personal experiences on the matter they would like to share. There were several teachers who mentioned the systemic issues in Portuguese Education: the social inequalities - not limited to but including in the process of accessing higher education. Another issue which was raised was the inadequacy of evaluation methods: many respondents believe national exams should not be the sole criteria for university entrance. Teachers also believe there needs to be more consistency and rigor across all courses (both mandatory and elective ones), as well as a revision of the educational curriculum and programs. Their suggestions to tackle these issues include the introduction of intermediate tests, less weight of optional courses on the final GPA, external evaluation for discipline approval and increased supervision, as well as aptitude tests conducted by universities. Teachers also mentioned the differences in private and public education: it is their perception that grade inflation is more prevalent in private schools, often due to the lack of national exam requirements for elective courses. However, this suggestion could be biased, since the overwhelming majority of respondents are or were public school teachers. Their final suggestion included a switch to an education system focused on giving students the tools to prepare for their academic and professional future.

Following this analysis, it is possible to draw some conclusions regarding gendered differences in survey responses. Firstly, women recognize the presence of grade inflation in school environments more than men, potentially meaning they perceive it as a more significant matter. Secondly, even though both genders acknowledge external factors as influencing forces on grade inflation, women often feel more pressure to give into them. Additionally, women's agreement rates on solutions proposed in literature reflect their deep desire to implement changes or reforms; however, their disagreement with some of them shows their ability to critically evaluate their fairness and feasibility. Finally, women's responses to the survey indicate a great concern for the long-term effects of grade inflation on academic outcomes, since the likelihood of them recognizing negative effects on students'

higher education success is higher. These conclusions could be connected to women's traditional roles as caretakers in a patriarchal society: women are usually socialized to have heightened awareness and concern over others, and expected to be more accommodating of others' needs, in self-sacrificing and self-effacing roles (Rawat, 2014). The expectation of women to be subordinate, compliant, and obedient (Rawat, 2014) can also be linked to them being more prone to give into external pressures for grade inflation.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

This dissertation aimed to fill a gap in the very extensive literature on grade inflation, one that is perhaps overlooked often by scholars and government officials: teachers' perspectives. The combination of factors analyzed makes it possible to grasp the complex task of looking at grade inflation through the lens of teachers' experiences. Thus, by trying to understand their nuanced (biased, even) perspectives, the present work aims to shed light on the problem of grade inflation.

From the data, it was possible to find an ageing teacher population: most respondents being in the 50-60 and 60+ years old age gaps confirm this trend in the Portuguese workforce. This means the demographic profile inadvertently impacted their own perceptions and lived experiences regarding grade inflation and educational practices. This trend is also consistent with national statistics, which state a high average age among teachers, and a lack of new ones (due to salary stagnation and limited incentives).

A significant majority of teachers are women, which reflects the national statistics on gender distribution of teachers. The fact that most respondents have over 20 years of experience and are permanent teachers, means the stability which comes from so many years teaching can contribute to well-informed answers on the matter. Additionally, the fact that most inquired teachers are from the North aligns with regional distributions of teaching staff, ensuring the data reflects a broad geographic perspective.

About 40% of the inquired teachers have felt compelled to inflate grades, either being influenced by schools, legal guardians, or students; these external pressures can undermine teachers' integrity, as well as originate distrust in the quality of the Portuguese educational system. Furthermore, teachers believe grade inflation can lead students to choose courses for the likelihood of attaining higher grades, and not for educational purposes, potentially distorting their academic and career tracks, as well as their own abilities to succeed in future ventures. Moreover, a significant number of teachers agree with the idea that market pressures lead to grade inflation, particularly in fee-paying private schools, which backs the concept of education being increasingly viewed through a consumerist lens, where schools battle for the best student performance metrics.

As for the solutions, inquired teachers' opinions do not reflect a consensus, in tandem with the complexity of grade inflation. Regarding abolishing national exams, most

teachers do not agree it would be a viable solution; they expressed a similar reaction when adjusting exam scores based on school performance was proposed, as well as for the use of random selection method for entry in higher education. For tighter State oversight and redesigning scholarship programs as potential solutions, opinions were divided, even if there was some support for both.

When asked to list their biggest concerns regarding grade inflation, teachers mention students' course selection based on grades, grading practices across different school types, motivating student engagement, and guaranteeing equitable treatment. Other concerns include the misalignment of grades with actual learning, students' misconceptions about their own abilities, declining trust in the educational system, external pressures on teachers, and the increasing differences in students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. To improve these issues, teachers' recommendations are the introduction of intermediate tests, revising the weight of optional courses in the final GPA, implementing external evaluations, and the introduction of aptitude tests conducted by universities.

As for the gender differences found in the survey, the likelihood of women recognizing the presence of grade inflation is higher than for men, potentially meaning grade inflation is viewed more significantly for women than for men. When it comes to external factors pressuring teachers, both genders acknowledge; however, women are the ones who are mostly affected by them. Concerning proposed solutions, women tend to agree more with them, while remaining critical of their feasibility, therefore reflecting a strong desire for change. Additionally, women seem to be more concerned about the negative effects of grade inflation on students' success in the long run. These results are consistent with the socialization of women in a patriarchal society.

It is important to acknowledge that the data collected for the purpose of this dissertation has some limitations. Firstly, its size – 96 valid answers – may not be representative of the entire Portuguese high school teacher population; a bigger sized sample would be able to provide more accurate results. Secondly, there is a regional bias, as the majority of respondents are from the North region, which undoubtedly leads to different perceptions and experiences regarding grade inflation. Thirdly, it is possible self-selection bias is present, since teachers who feel strongly about grade inflation may be more inclined to participate, distorting the final results. Additionally, even though there was an effort to maintain wording as neutral as possible, the phrasing on questions could sway teachers'

answers. The fact that there were open-ended questions indicates some subjectivity is present, since there was a need for interpretation dependent on the researcher's own point of view. Besides, combining "strongly agree" with "agree" or "strongly disagree" with "disagree" answers can oversimply the subtlety of the issue. Finally, the fact that there is solely one source of data makes it difficult to cross-check findings, leading to a less comprehensive understanding of grade inflation.

The present work contributes to discern the issue of grade inflation from a different perspective than the usual one found in literature. By giving teachers a chance to express their views on the matter, it aims to shift the way grade inflation is perceived by the general public, giving them the tools to further explore its challenges and potential solutions.

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Annex A. Questionnaire Transcripts

Inflação de Notas nas Escolas Portuguesas

No âmbito da Dissertação do Mestrado em Economics of Business and Strategy da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade Porto, convido-o(a) a responder a este questionário, cujo intuito é perceber quais as perceções e experiências de professores do ensino secundário sobre a inflação de notas nas escolas portuguesas. A participação neste estudo é voluntária.
Todas as informações recolhidas durante este estudo serão tratadas de forma confidencial. Não serão recolhidos dados pessoais e os dados recolhidos serão armazenados de forma segura e analisados de forma agregada, sendo os resultados apresentados de maneira a que não seja possível identificar individualmente os participantes.
No caso de concordar em participar, ser-lhe-á solicitado que responda a um questionário online. O questionário consistirá em perguntas sobre as suas experiências e perceções em relação à inflação de notas nas escolas secundárias portuguesas. O tempo estimado para completar o questionário é de aproximadamente 10 minutos.
Qualquer dúvida ou curiosidade em relação ao mesmo, pode contactar o estudante responsável - Beatriz Correia - através do e-mail up201804649@up.pt.

* Obrigatória

1. **Idade** *
   - ◯ 20-30 anos
   - ◯ 30-40 anos
   - ◯ 40-50 anos
   - ◯ 50-60 anos
   - ◯ 60+ anos

2. **Género** *
   - ◯ Masculino
   - ◯ Feminino
   - ◯ Não-binário
   - ◯ Outro

3. **É/foi professor(a) do ensino secundário?** *
   - ◯ Sim
   - ◯ Não

4. **Lecionou uma ou mais disciplinas com exame nacional associado à mesma durante o último ano?** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

5. **Lecionou alguma disciplina optativa de 12º ano durante o último ano?** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

6. **Quanto tempo de experiência tem como professor(a)?** *

- ◯ 0-5 anos
- ◯ 5-10 anos
- ◯ 10-20 anos
- ◯ 20+ anos

7. **Qual a sua situação profissional atual?** *

- ◯ Professor do quadro de escola ou de agrupamento
- ◯ Professor do quadro de zona pedagógica
- ◯ Professor contratado
- ◯ Reformado
- ◯ Desempregado
- ◯ Outro

8. **Qual o seu município de residência?** *

9. **Como é a sua carga horária atual?** *

- ◯ Horário completo
- ◯ Horário incompleto

10. **Leciona em mais do que uma escola?** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

11. **Em que tipologia(s) de escola leciona/lecionou?** *

- ☐ Estabelecimento de ensino público
- ☐ Estabelecimento de ensino público TEIP
- ☐ Estabelecimento de ensino particular e cooperativo
- ☐ Estabelecimento de ensino particular

12. **Considera que existe uma concentração de notas elevadas em certas disciplinas optativas de 12.º ano? Assinale numa escala de 1 a 5 o seu nível de concordância.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

13. **Já sentiu pressão para dar notas mais elevadas em certas disciplinas?** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

14. **Se sim, sentiu-se influenciado na atribuição de notas elevadas, por algum destes fatores?**

15. **Escola** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

16. **Encarregados de Educação** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

17. **Alunos** *

- ◯ Sim
- ◯ Não

18. **Outro**

19. **Assinale, numa escala de 1 a 5. o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações.**

A concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas de 12º ano pode motivar alunos a seguir disciplinas onde existe a possibilidade de obter uma classificação melhor, mesmo que estes cursos não tenham tanta utilidade profissional.

*

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

20. **A concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas de 12º ano pode alterar a perceção dos alunos quanto à sua capacidade de serem bem sucedidos no ensino superior.**
*

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

21. **Existe uma pressão de mercado (devido à concorrência entre escolas, tanto públicas como privadas) para as escolas atribuírem cada vez melhores notas.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

22. **O fenómeno de concentração de notas elevadas é mais frequente em estabelecimentos de ensino privado.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

23. **Assinale, numa escala de 1 a 5, o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações.**

Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria deixar de usar exames nacionais para o acesso ao ensino superior. *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

24. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria ajustar as notas de exames nacionais de acordo com desempenho das escolas nesses exames.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

25. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria recorrer ao método de sorteio para o acesso ao ensino superior.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

26. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria uma supervisão mais apertada do Estado na atribuição de notas das disciplinas opcionais.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

27. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria redesenhar os programas de bolsas para o ensino superior, tornando-as mais abrangentes a alunos de diferentes contextos sociais.** *

- ◯ 1. Discordo totalmente
- ◯ 2. Discordo
- ◯ 3. Não concordo nem discordo
- ◯ 4. Concordo
- ◯ 5. Concordo totalmente

28. **Quais são os principais desafios que enfrenta como professor em relação à concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas?**

29. **Quais são as suas maiores preocupações em relação aos efeitos a longo prazo da concentração de notas elevadas no sistema educativo português?**

30. **Tem alguma observação, sugestão ou comentário sobre a concentração de notas elevadas que gostaria de partilhar?**

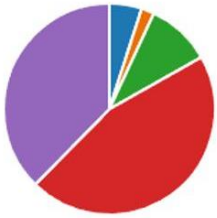
Annex B. Questionnaire Answers

Inflação de Notas nas Escolas Portuguesas

101 Respostas 10:28 Tempo médio de conclusão Fechado Estado

1. **Idade**

20-30 anos	5
30-40 anos	2
40-50 anos	10
50-60 anos	46
60+ anos	38



2. **Género**

Masculino	22
Feminino	79
Não-binário	0
Outro	0

3. **É/foi professor(a) do ensino secundário?**

Sim	96
Não	5

4. **Lecionou uma ou mais disciplinas com exame nacional associado à mesma durante o último ano?**

Sim	61
Não	35

5. **Lecionou alguma disciplina optativa de 12º ano durante o último ano?**

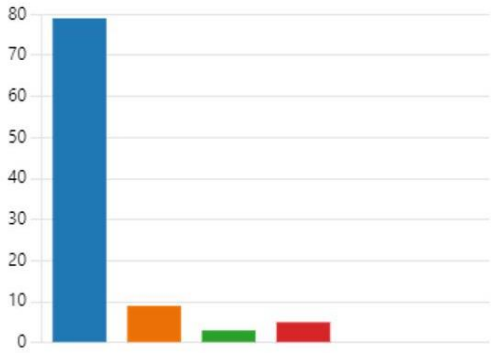
Sim	14
Não	82

6. **Quanto tempo de experiência tem como professor(a)?**

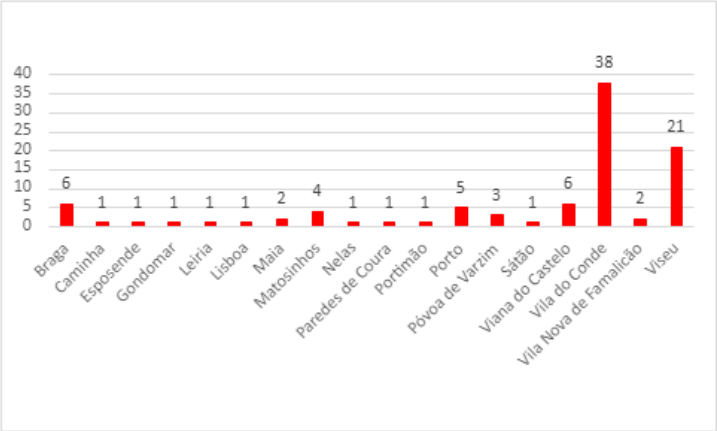
0-5 anos	2
5-10 anos	1
10-20 anos	3
20+ anos	90

7. **Qual a sua situação profissional atual?**

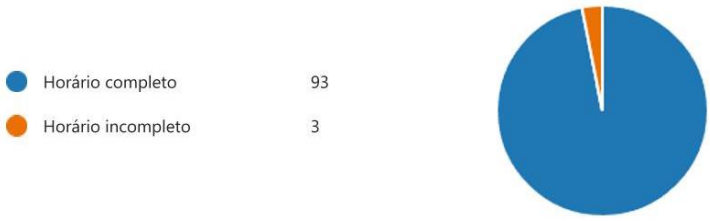
Professor do quadro de escola ...	79
Professor do quadro de zona pe...	9
Professor contratado	3
Reformado	5
Desempregado	0
Outro	0



8. **Qual o seu município de residência?**



9. **Como é a sua carga horária atual?**



10. **Leciona em mais do que uma escola?**

Sim	3
Não	93

11. **Em que tipologia(s) de escola leciona/lecionou?**

Estabelecimento de ensino públ...	95
Estabelecimento de ensino públ...	1
Estabelecimento de ensino parti...	2
Estabelecimento de ensino parti...	1

12. **Considera que existe uma concentração de notas elevadas em certas disciplinas optativas de 12.º ano? Assinale numa escala de 1 a 5 o seu nível de concordância.**

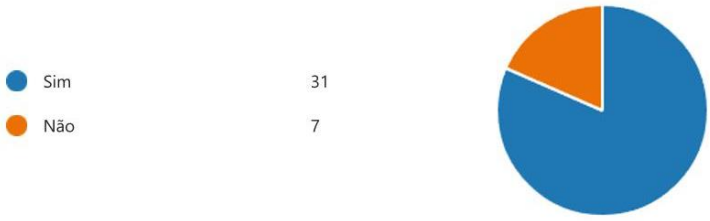
1. Discordo totalmente	2
2. Discordo	9
3. Não concordo nem discordo	18
4. Concordo	44
5. Concordo totalmente	23

13. **Já sentiu pressão para dar notas mais elevadas em certas disciplinas?**

Sim	38
Não	58

14. **Se sim, sentiu-se influenciado na atribuição de notas elevadas, por algum destes fatores?**

15. **Escola**



16. **Encarregados de Educação**

17. **Alunos**

18. **Outro**

5
Respostas

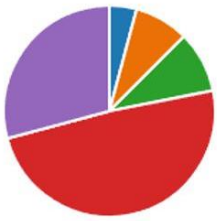
Respostas Mais Recentes

3 inquiridos (**60**%) responderam **turma** a esta pergunta.

19. **Assinale, numa escala de 1 a 5. o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações.**

A concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas de 12º ano pode motivar alunos a seguir disciplinas onde existe a possibilidade de obter uma classificação melhor, mesmo que estes cursos não tenham tanta utilidade profissional.

1. Discordo totalmente	4
2. Discordo	8
3. Não concordo nem discordo	9
4. Concordo	47
5. Concordo totalmente	28



20. **A concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas de 12º ano pode alterar a perceção dos alunos quanto à sua capacidade de serem bem sucedidos no ensino superior.**

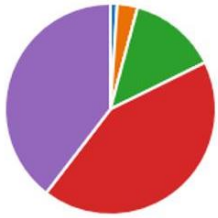
1. Discordo totalmente	6
2. Discordo	17
3. Não concordo nem discordo	11
4. Concordo	41
5. Concordo totalmente	21

21. **Existe uma pressão de mercado (devido à concorrência entre escolas, tanto públicas como privadas) para as escolas atribuírem cada vez melhores notas.**

1. Discordo totalmente	4
2. Discordo	7
3. Não concordo nem discordo	12
4. Concordo	42
5. Concordo totalmente	31

22. **O fenómeno de concentração de notas elevadas é mais frequente em estabelecimentos de ensino privado.**

1. Discordo totalmente	1
2. Discordo	3
3. Não concordo nem discordo	13
4. Concordo	41
5. Concordo totalmente	38



23. **Assinale, numa escala de 1 a 5, o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações.**

Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria deixar de usar exames nacionais para o acesso ao ensino superior.

1. Discordo totalmente	20
2. Discordo	36
3. Não concordo nem discordo	9
4. Concordo	22
5. Concordo totalmente	9

24. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria ajustar as notas de exames nacionais de acordo com desempenho das escolas nesses exames.**

1. Discordo totalmente	21
2. Discordo	39
3. Não concordo nem discordo	22
4. Concordo	11
5. Concordo totalmente	3

25. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria recorrer ao método de sorteio para o acesso ao ensino superior.**

1. Discordo totalmente	69
2. Discordo	26
3. Não concordo nem discordo	1
4. Concordo	0
5. Concordo totalmente	0

26. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria uma supervisão mais apertada do Estado na atribuição de notas das disciplinas opcionais.**

1. Discordo totalmente	11
2. Discordo	23
3. Não concordo nem discordo	15
4. Concordo	37
5. Concordo totalmente	10

27. **Uma solução viável para diminuir a inflação de notas seria redesenhar os programas de bolsas para o ensino superior, tornando-as mais abrangentes a alunos de diferentes contextos sociais.**

1. Discordo totalmente	7
2. Discordo	17
3. Não concordo nem discordo	24
4. Concordo	33
5. Concordo totalmente	15

28. **Quais são os principais desafios que enfrenta como professor em relação à concentração de notas elevadas em disciplinas optativas?**

64
Respostas

Respostas Mais Recentes

"É crucial que os professores e as instituições de ensino tra...

"Posição contra direção do AE e EE. "

↻ Atualizar

21 inquiridos (**32**%) responderam **alunos** a esta pergunta.

29. **Quais são as suas maiores preocupações em relação aos efeitos a longo prazo da concentração de notas elevadas no sistema educativo português?**

69
Respostas

Respostas Mais Recentes

"Não criar falsas expectativas nos alunos que vão ficar a p...

"É essencial que o sistema educativo português mantenha ...

"Alunoa no ensino superior com desempenho muito baixo ...

8 inquiridos (**12**%) responderam **ensino superior** a esta pergunta.

30. **Tem alguma observação, sugestão ou comentário sobre a concentração de notas elevadas que gostaria de partilhar?**

50
Respostas

Respostas Mais Recentes
"*Nada a referir*"
"*Nada a assinalar.*"

11 inquiridos (**22**%) responderam **alunos** a esta pergunta.