



Networked Improvement Community for Equity

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Abstract

Studies on gender differences in students' school results tell us that the most notable gender difference lies in the advantage that girls have over boys in reading. On average, girls read more and enjoy reading more than boys, factors that seem to be at the root of this difference. An OECD report [6] on gender inequalities concludes that not only are there significant gender differences in school outcomes, but these appear to increase as students' progress in the education system (OECD, 2009). Another study by Eurydice [7] states that the patterns observed between gender differences with regard to repetition reveal that there are more boys than girls repeating one or more school years. Repetition can be seen as another consequence of gender differences in student performance. The same report also states that, when analysing the results of national examinations, girls usually outperform boys (Eurydice, 2010). Several studies analyse gender differences taking into account the subject area (reading, mathematics and science) and the performance achieved by students. They discuss gender disparities in terms of "boys overcoming girls" and "girls overcoming boys" in these subject areas using relevant international assessment studies, such as PIRLS, PISA, ICILS and TIMSS. The results of these studies suggest that the most visible and consistent gender difference is the advantage of girls in reading. However, if we analyse the results for Portuguese students in the different international assessments we will conclude that gender differences have change over time in certain domains and are not same across studies [1][2][3][4]. The main goal of this paper is to analyse the gender differences in Portugal across studies and how they have evolved over time.

Keywords: Student assessment, gender differences, international assessment, PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS.