

REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION - TERTIARY EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

CONCLUSIONS (BY CHAPTER)

CHAPTER 2: SYSTEM DIVERSITY AND SYSTEM CO-ORDINATION

A high-level **national council on higher education (CCES)** should be established to develop overall strategy for the system for the consideration of the Council of Ministers

- The various goals and policy objectives that relate to higher education should be integrated by CCES into a **single planning framework**.
- The Ministry should make a major change in its steering philosophy and funding mechanisms by introducing a system of **institutional performance agreements** or contracts negotiated between the Ministry (on the basis of objectives derived from the planning framework) and individual institutions.
- The **diversity in the nature of degree programmes** should be increased significantly with the primary area of growth being in the polytechnic institutes in first-cycle professionally orientated programmes and short-cycle vocationally orientated certificate and diploma programmes. The **binary framework** should be maintained and strengthened. The mechanisms for resource allocation, levels of institutional autonomy, programme accreditation procedures and human resource management policies all need to be reformed to create a policy environment in which professionally orientated polytechnic institutions can create a sustainable future that is distinct from traditional universities.
- A significant **increase in institutional autonomy** should be introduced differentially and over time depending on the capacities of the institutions (including internal governance and management reform), and the extent of the challenges they face. (see chapter three)
- The current differential requirements for the **approval of new programmes** for universities and polytechnics and for public and private institutions should not be continued neither should detailed control over curriculum changes. Full use should be made of the unique opportunity provided by the implementation of the Bologna process for the **renewal of study programmes** in Portugal, and for a reconsideration of educational processes with a greater focus on student learning and outcomes, as well as a more explicit concern for the links between study programmes and the labour market.
- The Review Team does not believe that a major national reconfiguration of the institutional landscape involving a significant number of mergers and/or closures of institutions is a priority for Portuguese higher education. It recommends that the negotiated institutional contracts be used to address internal rationalisation questions in those situations where there are institutional/campus/faculty or programme inefficiencies resulting from small enrolments. It recommends further that existing inter-institutional co-operation initiatives move from statements of intent to the implementation phase where there is a clear emphasis on strengthening regional capacity while respecting the distinct missions of universities and polytechnics, and that other regions be encouraged to do the same.
- The Review Team recommends the provision of additional state **support to private higher education institutions** (in the co-operative and not for profit sectors) on a selective basis through the Ministry periodically issuing tenders for the provision of study programmes where there is insufficient capacity in the system for which both private and public institutions could submit proposals.

CHAPTER 3: INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

- We recommend that each institution of higher education be empowered and be required to establish a governing authority, styled as each decides. It should have responsibility for the control and direction of the institution, including the control of financial, human and physical resources; it should also be responsible for the appointment - and the dismissal - of the rector.

- Government should stipulate the structure of membership, perhaps on the following lines. (If new legislation were introduced it should incorporate this provision explicitly). Its membership should not be large; while a Board of less than ten members would be desirable in the interests of efficiency it is suggested that it should not exceed fifteen persons including the Chair; a majority of members and its Chair should represent external stakeholders. The internal members should include members of academic staff who should be in the majority within that category - administrative staff and students. The Chair, who should be a highly respected person, should be chosen from amongst its members or by invitation of the members to an external stakeholder.

- It is furthermore recommended that the rector should be appointed – not elected – by the governing authority following a public competition using normal search and selection processes. The term of office of the rector should be for seven to ten years and should not be renewable. He/she should be a member of the governing authority. He/she should be entitled to chair the academic council and the executive committee, and to chair subcommittees of these bodies. Deans and heads of department should be appointed by the governing authority on the recommendation of the rector following consultation within the university.

- A statutory Academic Council/Senate should be established by the institution with overall responsibility for the academic affairs of the institution. While being representative of the academic community and elected it should not be a large body; perhaps its membership should not exceed 25. It should be chaired by the rector. Membership to be mainly of fulltime academics from all levels including research faculty including those from research units graded as being excellent or very good and from Associated Laboratories, for example; students to have a number of representatives e.g. a maximum of three is suggested. It should be free to establish as many subcommittees as will assist it in its work, but should not be empowered to devolve its powers as the responsible decision making academic body to any other body or person.

- An Executive Committee should be established in each university to take decisions on resource related matters. Chaired by the rector, its membership – not greater than ten – should be broadly representative of the university community, both academic and non-academic; it should have one student member. There should be no external members. Matters which it should deal with should include finances, human resources, facilities and equipment. It should also be responsible to the governing authority for the annual budget. In order to empower the community within the university it is suggested that budgetary responsibility should be devolved to the lowest possible level e.g. to Departments (academic and service/support) or schools or faculties.

- It is proposed that governing should be reluctant to establish additional statutory bodies and that the creation of such bodies would be subject to the most rigorous examination and justification. An objective should be that decision-making be efficient, effective and transparent. This will make a contribution to reducing the number of deliberative bodies in the institutions and will, therefore, reduce the numbers of academics engaged in meetings and thereby reduce the waste of the valuable time which academics currently devote to attendance of such meetings.

- *The Polytechnics:* We recommend that these same general structures and freedoms be put in place for polytechnics as for universities. This measure will also have the effect of achieving parity of esteem for the polytechnic sector.

- *The Private Sector:* We recommend that they be subject to the same quality controls as the public sector in relation to the provision and modification of academic programmes; these controls should be implemented in precisely the same way in respect of both the private and the public sectors. In addition it should be a requirement that private institutions put a bond in place to cover the possibility of failure or closure in order to ensure that the students who might be affected will be protected.

- *A Regional Council:* An oft repeated view which we have heard is that there is too little attention paid to local and regional concerns and needs, that there is little or no collaboration between higher education institutions located in a particular area or region and that this lacuna results in duplication of effort in higher education provision, a neglect of important local needs and a lack of coordination and cooperation between institutions. A suggestion has been made to us that there should be a regional council formed in each region comprising all of the higher education and other educational and training providers together with a broad representation of stakeholders e.g. from business, trades unions, voluntary groups etc. The intention

would be that such bodies would not have a statutory or a decision-making base but would be a vehicle for local joint initiative, for example. They could also have a role in recommending the realignment or formal new relationships between higher education institutions in the region to CCES. Annual reports on activities arising would be provided to the CNEES as an input to its national overview and also as an input to its annual contract discussions with individual institutions. We believe that there is much merit in this idea and we suggest that Government provide the necessary start up funding to support the administration of such bodies.

CHAPTER 4: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES: ACCESS, QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

An enlarged role for polytechnics

- Future growth in higher education at the undergraduate level should occur primarily in the polytechnic sub-sector, at least until 2010.
- For Portugal's new participants - previously excluded youth and adult learners - polytechnics should be the main source of higher education, encompassing vocational training and further education as appropriate to meet learner needs.
- Polytechnics should be specifically tasked to develop employable graduates with advanced technical skills and practical know-how, underpinned by analytical, problem-solving and communication abilities of a high order.
- Polytechnics should be resourced specifically to develop new delivery modes and services to meet the diverse learning needs of the enlarged student body.
- A variety of new pathways will need to be opened for learners, including post-secondary and further education diploma courses, short-cycle degrees.

A National Qualifications Framework

- A National Qualifications Framework should be developed, through wide consultative processes that outline the structure of educational qualifications in Portugal, the educational meaning of each qualification, and the relationships among qualifications.
- Higher education qualifications should be described in terms of the knowledge, understandings, skills and other attributes expected of graduates.
- For each level of award, the qualifications of university graduates and polytechnic graduates should be defined separately and distinctively.
- The different roles of universities and polytechnics should be clarified in terms of the different capabilities and attributes expected of graduates who successfully complete a programme of studies leading to the award of a Portuguese qualification.

A strengthened system of national accreditation and quality assurance

- All higher education providers should be expected to demonstrate acceptable standards, in educational leadership, curriculum & pedagogy, access to learning resources, financial viability, and probity.
- The accreditation of all new higher education programmes should be based on rigorous evaluation by an independent external authority.
- The continued provision of higher education programmes should be subject to periodic external review, programme by programme, and at the whole-of-institution level. The frequency and intensity of quality auditing of institutions should reflect their performance records.
- A consultative process of programme by programme evaluations, involving providers, employers, professional bodies and students, should be undertaken to build a national consensus of expectations about standards of learning outcomes for university and polytechnic awards in particular subject areas.

A more outward-looking orientation

- Universities and polytechnics need to understand better, and to articulate formally, their particular roles in Portugal's system of mass higher education.
- Universities and polytechnics should consult more broadly and systematically on the development of their educational programmes, including with employers of their graduates.
- Universities and polytechnics need to give greater attention to the destinations of their graduates, to monitor changes in destination patterns, to seek structured feedback from graduates, and to evaluate their programmes in the light of graduate feedback and experience.

A focus on learning outcomes and a commitment to continuous improvement

- Universities and polytechnics need to take responsibility for the educational success of their students. They should set internal limits on acceptable rates of student failure, repetition and wastage, monitor the progression of students, and provide additional programmes and specific learning support services as required to increase rates of success.
- Systematic student feedback on the quality of teaching and a commitment to make the feedback known and to improve performance should be a feature of all higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION

- Building the Portuguese science base and capacity with the targets designed in the Technological Plan and by the measures taken by the present Government is recommended on condition that the authorities develop appropriate new steering and management processes, the main objective of which should be to form linkages and networking in the system. Training in the best practices of human resources management should be enhanced.
- The tertiary education and S&T policy makers should develop a stable and coherent S&T policy evaluation structure, which should be based on a more complete database, with the information and knowledge of the working of the whole system.
- The establishment of the Portuguese graduate school system could be considered to assure the quality of graduate education, to provide systematic education and guidance, to increase efficiency and to network the HEIs.
- A new system of academic careers and the clarification of research careers should be designed and implemented in order to eliminate inbreeding and to enhance teacher and researcher mobility.
- The promotions and recruitment decisions within institutions should be based solely on teaching and research merit. Processes should be competitive, transparent, and open and the evaluations should be performed by external peers supported by international recommendations.
- International evaluations should have a stronger influence on a more selective funding policy. The change toward more competitive funding schemes should be continued.
- The Portuguese Government should complement the tax reduction policy for R&D in firms, with more active instruments in order to encourage firms to have incentives to invest in R&D, to work together with higher education institutions in research and to enhance mobility between firms, universities and polytechnics.
- As the system of Associated Laboratories is enlarged and higher education institutions are expected to be important actors in science-based innovations, it is recommended that expertise in Intellectual Property Rights be enhanced.
- It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education review the position of science and research in the curricula in secondary education with a view to increasing the interest of youth in careers in science and to emphasise its position in the schools. The science and society relations should be part of the legally defined missions of the HEIs.
- The Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education should encourage higher education institutions to adopt a more proactive role in internationalisation. An internationalisation strategy for each institution should be part of the annual negotiations of the contract between the institution and the Ministry. At the

institutional level, greater attention should be paid to providing instruction in foreign languages, especially in English.

CHAPTER 6: FINANCING OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Portugal should articulate an investment strategy for tertiary education, beginning with immediate attention to increasing performance and efficiency, and longer-term strategies to increase overall funding. The strategy should better align financing policies with overall strategic plans for the tertiary sector, and should include articulation of revenue strategies (and appropriate roles for public in contrast to private resources).
- We recommend that Portugal pilot some incentive funding strategies to encourage greater crosssector cooperation between the tertiary and secondary sectors.
- Portugal should retain its current tuition policies which allow tuitions to increase consistent with inflation and minimum wages. Post-graduate tuition levels should be allowed to increase immediately, to levels closer to the full costs of these programs.
- We recommend the establishment of an income-contingent loan programme, and recommend that the Government establish a task force to develop details about how such a programme should be implemented.
- The practice of capturing fund balances at the end of the calendar year penalises prudent fund management at the institutional level, and provides perverse incentives for institutions to spend down funds rather than to commit to multi-year planning. Private revenues should be exempted from any future such sequestrations.
- There should be a further evolution in the distribution of operating funds, away from formulae that cannot work equally well for diverse institutions, toward contracts between the institution and the CNES, negotiated based on strategic plans and indicators of performance. These should be appropriately differentiated by institution, but include common themes to increase cost effectiveness, increase enrolments, and expand degree production.
- A comprehensive review of existing institutional reporting protocols should be undertaken, to reduce paperwork and personnel costs, and to create information that can be used for strategic decision-making. This overhaul should extend to reporting formats for finances, to better relate resource use to activities, and to distinguish between general purpose and restricted revenues.
- The Government and Ministry should move away from the project-funding mode for capital outlay, toward a multi-year plan for capital improvements, linked to national priorities.