

**26th CHER Conference**  
**The Roles of Higher Education and Research**  
**Lausanne, Switzerland, 9 to 11 September 2013**

***Do Portuguese HEIs comply with  
ESG? The case of teaching staff  
quality***

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## Introduction

**ESG**

*“Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so”.*

**Portuguese context**

Are HEIs implementing measures on the quality of teaching and teaching staff in compliance both with the national legal framework and the former ESG standard?

**Aim**

Do Portuguese HEIs promote teaching quality by adopting mechanisms for academics' recruitment, appointment, support, appraisal and professional development, which ensure that they have the necessary 'quality' – e.g. skills, competences, experience and motivation – to teach students?

## Legal provisions for the quality of teaching staff in Portugal

Legislation targeting academic staff, their quality and, therefore, the quality of teaching.

Law 62/2007  
Decree-Law 205/2009  
Decree-Law 207/2009  
Law 38/2007

- HEIs have the autonomy and the responsibility to recruit and appoint their academic staff, depending on need, good management principles and budget;
- Two profiles for academic staff exist: permanent staff and invited staff;
- HEIs must have a permanent body of academic staff, with employment stability, in order to assure pedagogic and scientific autonomy;
- Especially in public HEIs, permanent academic staff are employed in an exclusivity regime and full-time;

## Legal provisions for the quality of teaching staff in Portugal

- The PhD (universities) and the PhD or the *specialist* title (polytechnics): minimum requirement for entering the academic career;
- Academics' recruitment and career progression decided further to competitions and appraisals;
- Academic staff appraisal: consequences for career progression and pay-scale; different dimensions: teaching/research/artistic and cultural creation/administration activity/additional activities;
- HEIs/study programmes assessment and accreditation based, *inter alia*, on teaching and academic staff quality;
- Internal QA systems ensuring that academics have the necessary qualifications and competences.

## Method and data

- **4 Public HEIs:** 2 Universities ( $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ ) and 2 Polytechnics ( $\delta$  and  $\gamma$ );
- Selection criteria: HEIs' subsystem, size and geographic location;
- 1st cycle study programmes from 2 contrasting Scientific Areas:

### *Engineering and Arts*

- Two kinds of data collected:
  - **Legal and institutional policy documents**
  - **Semi-structured interviews** (June 2011)
    1. Members of HEIs' central management and administration
    2. Members of faculty/schools: deans, study programmes' directors, teaching staff and students.

## Questions

1. Institutional policy on academic staff (definition by law and by HEIs);
2. Rationale driving academic staff policy (recruitment & appointment criteria/procedures);
3. Support of teaching performance quality (opportunities for academics' development);
4. Initiatives and mechanisms supporting the development of academics' teaching skills;
5. Additional institutional strategies to support the quality of teaching performance (teaching equipment...);
6. Academic staff performance appraisal (teaching dimension);
7. Motivation of academic staff (institutional strategies and practices).

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.1. Institutional policies on teaching staff

Portuguese HEIs assure the quality of academic staff mainly by complying with national legislation

Aligned with the national legal framework, and in addition to it, more detailed regulations issued at institutional level also exist

Regarding academic staff recruitment and appointment procedures, HEIs establish as main criteria the scientific and pedagogic performance and 'other relevant activities'.

The weight assigned to these criteria and the level of detail describing each of these differs according to the institution's strategy.

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.2. Institutional support for the quality of teaching performance

Support generally incipient (HEIs  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$ ), absent or, at least, not recognised (HEI  $\alpha$ )

In both polytechnics – HEIs  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  – teaching performance is understood as synonymous with research performance

In HEI  $\beta$  differences in the perceptions emerge both between the university's central management and the members of the 2 faculty/schools, as well as between these members (scientific areas).

Despite identifying some weaknesses, *Engineering* interviewees emphasise the existence of several faculty/school initiatives

HEI's representative stresses the role of the programme director

*Arts* representatives believe that no formal support to the quality of teaching performance exists; if verifiable, it does not “function very well”; assumes an informal character

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.2.1. Supporting the quality of teaching performance through pedagogic training

Relative absence of systematic policies to improve teaching skills through training

In one university (HEI  $\alpha$ ) mechanisms designed to support the development of teaching skills, do not exist or are incipient

In the other university (HEI  $\beta$ ) such mechanisms, although incipient at the institutional level, exist at the level of one faculty/school (*Engineering*), promoted by a specific structure – the ‘teaching and learning lab’.

The reality in the two polytechnics (HEIs  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$ ) resembles that of the first university: absence of an institutional policy to improve pedagogy through training programmes.

Moreover, diverse student needs, competences or learning difficulties are only informally addressed by HEIs.

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.2.2. Supporting the quality of teaching performance through infrastructure

Most institutional representatives: equipment and facilities are adequate and sufficient to assure teaching quality (HEIs  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ )

School representatives, academics and students: identification of shortcomings

HEI  $\alpha$

*Arts* school interviewees: difficulties concerning the acquisition and renewal of teaching equipment and materials;

*Engineering* academics and students: not enough investment has been made in laboratory equipment.

HEI  $\beta$ ,

*Arts* interviewees: shortage of both material and human resources;

*Engineering* students : need for an improved access to teaching resources through digital platforms.

HEI  $\gamma$

*Arts* interviewees: lack of sufficient facilities and the poor conditions of the existing ones, facilities badly equipped

HEIs' financial constraints, exacerbated by the current financial crisis: main factor explaining weaknesses in material support for teaching quality

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.3. Academic staff appraisal and effects on teaching quality

Academics' performance appraisal systems in response to the national legal framework  
Compliance with ESG

#### Dimensions

Universities: teaching; research, artistic and cultural creation; additional activities; administration.

Polytechnics: technical-scientific, pedagogical and organisational.

#### Different tools

Pedagogic questionnaires as a transversal tool for the appraisal of teaching performance.

However, the resort to this tool is not always positively perceived.

Consequences: those foreseen by law  
'Practical' effects are starting to be felt  
Some expectations emerge about performance appraisal

Despite its transformative and enhancing 'potential', performance appraisal is the target of criticism among all four Portuguese HEIs

## Teaching and teaching staff quality: policies and practices from 4 Portuguese HEIs

### 3.4. *Improvement of teaching quality through academic staff motivation*

Absence of systematic strategies to motivate academics

Especially financial rewards and other means of recognition

Performance appraisal emerges at the same time as a motivating and a demotivating factor

Academics' motivation depends greatly on self-motivation or on factors more intrinsic to them individually or as a group

## Conclusions

**Portuguese HEIs only partially align with the ESG related to teaching staff quality**

**Alignment derives mainly from HEIs' compliance with national legislation and the stipulated procedures and criteria for the selection, recruitment and appraisal of academic staff**

**Regarding other measures to continuously improve teaching and teaching staff quality, HEIs are still in an incipient stage: a barrier to the ESG's fulfilment**

## Conclusions

**Country's current financial crisis and its negative impact on HEIs' budgets emerge as one of the main factors explaining shortcomings at this level**

**Non-coercive character of ESG**

**Improvements can nevertheless be expected in a near future...**

**INSTITUTIONAL  
MANAGERS**

- **Pedagogic training systems;**
- **Academics' bureaucratic and administrative workload reduction;**
- **Facilities and equipment adjustment to study programmes;**
- **Performance appraisal adaptation to disciplinary areas and institutional mission;**
- **Balance between teaching and research for academics' recruitment, promotion and performance appraisal;**
- **Broader perspective on motivation mechanisms**

## Conclusions

### POLICY MAKERS

- Provide adequate support to HEIs so that teaching and academic staff quality could be enhanced and career progression could be effective.
- Update the legal framework to include academics' pedagogic training as a condition for career progression, so that HEIs would ascribe it a higher value.

***Thank you for your attention!***