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for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

IBAR

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IBAR PROJECT

SURVEY OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS – THE PORTUGUESE CASE

Work Package 5

Research Team

Amaral, A.

Cardoso, S.

Manatos, M. J.

Neave, G.

Rosa, M. J. (rapporteur WP5)

Sarrico, C. (project coordinator)

Tavares, O.

Teixeira, P.

Sin, Cristina

Veiga, A. (rapporteur WP5)

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1. Introduction

The national case study related with Work package 5 – Survey of Internal Quality Assurance Systems starts with a brief overview of the Portuguese quality system, complemented with a description of the higher education institutions selected for the Portuguese case studies, including the reasons for their selection. The report proceeds with a description of the institutional policy context to understand the link between institutional policy and the corresponding European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) - Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions. The present report focuses exclusively on the policy and procedures for quality assurance (ESG 1.1) as stated in standard 1.1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, issued by ENQA:

Standard 1.1: Policy and procedures for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders (ENQA, 2005: 6).

The analysis uses the available legal texts to understand the environment within which higher education institutions operate and policy documents issued at institutional level to analyse different aspects related to the reorganisation of formal structures following the Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions passed in 2007. In the third part of the report the responses given by the leadership of the higher education institutions surveyed to the questions addressed in the IBAR project are analysed. Document analysis complemented the study¹. In the conclusions the identification of barriers and

¹ Document analysis included policy documents (e.g. the institutional evaluation reports - self-evaluation and evaluation report, the Activities and Strategic Plans and the Quality Management System documents) provided by each higher education institution to the research team.

examples of good practice dominate the discussion in implementing policy and procedures for quality assurance.

The Portuguese quality system

The Portuguese higher education system went recently through a deep process of change that followed reviews and recommendations by international organisations such as the OECD and ENQA. Following a review of the Portuguese quality system by ENQA (2006), the existent system was dismantled, under accusations of not being truly independent and not producing results, and a new one was initiated in 2009 under the influence of European developments (namely, the Bologna Declaration and the compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2005)).

The former system was a very close adaptation of the initial Dutch system, based on self-evaluation followed by external peer review. The Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP) has taken the initiative of the design and implementation of the quality system, in discussion with the academic community. The characteristics of the system (Amaral, 1995) – no direct link between quality evaluation and funding; ownership awarded to a body connected to higher education institutions, similar to the Dutch VSNU; emphasis on quality improvement rather than on accountability – and the bottom-up nature of its implementation have contributed to create the idea of a collegial system among academics.

The new system is characterised by the establishment of a system for assessment and accreditation of study cycles and institutions under the responsibility of a new and independent body for its coordination – the Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES). The Agency is also responsible for the pre-accreditation of proposals of new study cycles before they start operating. Within this new system, accreditation assumes a preponderant role as a way to assure that study cycles and institutions accomplish minimum standards conducting to their official recognition. The pre-accreditation of new study cycles (2009/10) has been concluded, the pre-accreditation of new study cycles for 2010/11 is being run and the process of granting preliminary accreditation to running study cycles is currently under development, with its conclusion expected by the end of the academic year 2010/11.

The new legal framework for quality evaluation and accreditation also determines that institutions should develop a quality assurance policy for their programmes, a culture of quality and quality assurance of their activities and a strategy for their quality continuous improvement. It also establishes that external assessment may lead to a comparison among higher education institutions, organisational units, study cycles and their rankings according to parameters to be established by the Agency. These two somehow contradictory provisions raise the obvious question of finding out to what extent institutions can restate that quality is their major responsibility and that the role of outside agencies should be limited to quality audits.

In a recent study on the comparison of European processes for the assessment and certification of internal quality assurance systems, Santos (2011) states that in all countries that have signed the Bologna Declaration institutions are obliged to implement internal systems for quality assurance, in accordance with the fundamental idea that quality and quality assurance are primarily their responsibility. Furthermore, the author refers that although in some countries that obligation was already present before Bologna, the truth is that the adoption of the European standards and guidelines (ESG) in Bergen in 2005 and their transposition to the national juridical regimes has decisively contributed to the visibility that is now given to this topic in higher education at European level.

In his study, Santos (2011) also mentions that in most countries the way these internal quality assurance systems are organised and function is not specified in detail, being up to each institution to define and implement its own system in accordance with its mission, goals and institutional culture. Nevertheless an effort has been made by the national evaluation and accreditation agencies to prepare and adopt guidelines for institutions to set up their systems (most of the times in consultation with the institutions and other interested parties), specially in the cases where institutional audits of internal quality assurance systems are in place. Additionally the ESG, when associating a set of guidelines to each one of the seven standards for internal quality assurance, also provide valuable indications for the institutions to set up their own systems.

In the case of the Portuguese higher education system institutional audits of internal quality assurance systems are, as previously referred, foreseen in the law, although so far they have not been implemented. Nevertheless most Portuguese higher education institutions have already or are now developing their own internal quality assurance systems, as is the case with the institutions selected to integrate the IBAR project.

The Higher Education Institutions

In accordance with the IBAR project design, four institutions have been selected to integrate the Portuguese case studies: HEI α (university), HEI β (university), HEI γ (polytechnic) and HEI δ (polytechnic). The criteria for selecting this sample are based on the need to cover both the university and polytechnic sub-sectors; institutions with different dimensions in terms of number of students (the HEI α is rather small when compared to the HEI β ; HEI δ is also a polytechnic smaller than HEI γ) and location (the four institutions cover the north, centre and south of Portugal, and reflect also geographical differences between those located in the coastline and those more inland since the former concentrates the richer and most heavily populated areas). The sample can then be seen as diversified and able to empirically base the research.

The description of each institution that follows is based on information publicly available, including the official websites.

HEI α (university)

It is a public institution of higher education whose origins date back to 1559. After being closed in the 18th century, the university reopened in 1979. At the present time, it is organised in departments which are grouped in schools related to specific scientific domains: Arts; Social Sciences; Sciences and Technology; and a School of Nursing (a public polytechnic school of higher education that has become part of the university).

The University has around 5,760 students (from all over Portugal and from foreign countries) enrolled in graduate courses (1,588 in Master's courses and 277 in PhD courses). Moreover, it has a teaching staff of 577, of whom more than half hold a PhD degree, and an administrative staff of 406.

In the academic year 2010/2011, the university offers 36 1st cycle degrees, 85 2nd cycle master's courses (3 of which Erasmus Mundus) and 33 doctoral programmes, in almost all areas of knowledge, all in compliance with the Bologna Process.

The research activities of the institution are coordinated by the Advanced Training and Research Institute, an organisational unit of the University, and developed in 11 research centres.

HEI β (university)

With origins dating back to the eighteenth century, the University β is currently the largest education and research institution in Portugal. Spread over three university campuses, all located in the same city, it is organised in 15 schools (14 faculties and a business school) and 69 scientific research units. Overall it has around 31,000 (6,500 postgraduates) students, 2,300 teachers and researchers along with 1,700 administrative staff.

The University β provides a large variety of degree programmes, covering the whole range of study areas and all levels of higher education. In fact, it offers over 700 training programmes per year (from first cycle degrees to masters, doctoral programmes and continuous professional training).

Teaching staff comprises 1,860 full-time equivalent teachers (71% of which PhDs), ensuring in the perspective of the University a high quality of training and the capacity to attract the candidates with the highest grades. Every year, around 2,000 international students choose this university for their higher education.

The University also puts a significant effort in its research mission, being responsible for over 20% of all Portuguese articles indexed each year in the ISI Web of Science and having some of the most productive and internationally renowned Portuguese R&D centres. In the last years, the University has been focusing in providing greater economic value to its scientific production and recent partnerships with the Portuguese industry leaders have already resulted in several successful innovations in the national and international markets.

HEI γ (polytechnic)

The HEI γ is a public higher education institution with a defined mission in creating, transmitting and diffusing technical-scientific and professional knowledge through the articulation of study, teaching, applied research and applied research and development. HEI γ belongs to the European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET), whose main objectives include the transferability of professional skills and the integration of applied research in their professional and technological education mission.

Founded in 1983, the Polytechnic is divided into five schools: Agriculture; Public Management, Communication and Tourism; Education; Health; and Technology and Management. Nowadays, the institute offers one hundred study programmes, including post-secondary technological programmes (CETs), undergraduate degree programmes (first cycle), and master's programmes (second cycle).

As result of its educational offer and research activities, the Institute has witnessed an increasing growth of its student population, reaching the number of 7,500 students in 2011. The institute has also an internationalisation programme with widely recognised success, including the annual mobility of more than 500 incoming and outgoing students and 100 teaching staff members, the result of the collaboration with several European higher education institutions and with universities from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

HEI δ (polytechnic)

With about 4,000 students, the HEI δ offers 23 undergraduate and 17 masters' degree programmes as well as several post-graduate programmes all adapted to the Bologna model. These programmes cover a wide range of training areas in order to meet business needs. In fact, the institute stresses that its teaching staff, facilities and services are directed to a practice-oriented training designed to facilitate access of graduates to the labour market. Also with this aim, the institute establishes strong links with the outside world through the provision of community services.

The campus comprises the School of Management (in one location), and the School of Technology (in a different location). These schools constitute the basic units of the institute.

2. Institutional policy context

In Portugal, we have observed a change of emphasis from governing to governance since the mid-90s. This, has highlighted a tension between institutional autonomy granted, in first place, to universities, and then to polytechnics, and the need for regulation, by governments, to ensure the achievement of policy objectives.

The institutional policy context that impacts the environment of Portuguese higher education institutions in implementing internal quality assurance systems is characterised by the passing of legislation on the following topics:

- Juridical Regime for the Development and Quality in Higher Education Law (Law 1/2003, 6th January, XV Constitutional Government).
- Legal Framework for the Evaluation of Higher Education Law (Law 38/2007, 16th January, XVII Constitutional Government).
- Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions (Law 62/2007, 10th September, XVII Constitutional Government) - RJIES.
- Creation of the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES) (Decree-Law 369/2007, 5th November, XVII Constitutional Government).

The 2003 juridical regime for the development of quality in higher education grants to the State the commitment to promote the scientific, pedagogic and cultural quality assessment of teaching. This law also specifies that the State should (i) guarantee that higher education institutions provide information about quality indicators referred to degree programmes and to the institution as a whole, (ii) implement a monitoring and assessment system of Portuguese higher education institutions; and finally, (iii) establish an inspectorate system independent from the assessment one. This law also introduces the accreditation of higher education institutions and of degree programmes. Accreditation is responsibility of the same Agency that conducts the assessment of quality in higher education. However, this accreditation system was never implemented.

The literature refers to evaluation of higher education as a cornerstone between autonomy and accountability. This principle was enhanced in 2007 by the Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions (RJIES) establishing that “the autonomy of higher education does not preclude (...) the accreditation and external evaluation”. This law also mandates higher education institutions to organise internal quality assurance mechanisms. Interestingly, dimensions related with transparency, information and publicity of European standards and guidelines emerge as key features predicted under the RJIES for internal quality assurance systems. The RJIES was passed by Parliament in 2007 and introduced major changes in the governance structures and processes of Portuguese higher education. By 2009 Portuguese higher education institutions had adapted their statutes, and consequently their organisational and governance structures, to the new legal framework. Three universities have joined the foundation model² and others may be pursuing, now, the same purpose. In this context, the existence of bodies with the participation of external stakeholders brings external interests to the structures and processes of decision-making.

The RJIES brought changes in the relationship between State and higher education institutions; on the other hand, it induced the reconfiguration of higher education institutions’ governance structures. The already existing research reveals that RJIES strengthened organisational rationales such as the enhancement of managerial bodies in detriment of collegial bodies, the centralisation of decision-making processes and the presence of external stakeholders at central and faculty/department/school level (Amaral, Tavares and Santos, 2011).

Further, the new legislation focusing on quality assurance of higher education (Law 38/2007) establishes that HEIs must define a quality assurance policy and take the necessary steps for its implementation. The legislation also imposes that external quality

²Among the higher education institutions that compose the sample of IBAR project, University β joined the foundation model. The Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions (RJIES) allows public universities to become public foundations under private law. Three Universities decided to use this possibility

assessment principles take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance procedures implemented by each HEI.

A new quality Agency, A3ES was established to supervise the quality assurance system. A3ES with the aim of supporting Portuguese higher education institutions to implement their own systems of internal quality assurance has made a concrete proposal about the standards for the certification of internal quality assurance systems, “which may steer national higher education institutions, without losing sight, however, of the flexibility necessary for the desirable development of innovative models which may arise within the ambit of the responsible exercise of institutional autonomy” (Santos, 2011).

Higher education institutions in our sample have diverse organisational structures and the way they articulate central services with Faculties/Schools/Departments is a very sensitive dimension understood as an outcome of the implementation of the new legal framework aforementioned (RJIES).

In the case of the HEI δ (polytechnic) the Development Plan designed for the period 2007-2013 emphasises the need to reformulate the organisational model based on departments to follow a logic grounded on quality and the creation of synergies by allocating more efficiently the resources. A matrix management structure was adopted based on projects. The HEI β (university) established in November 2009 the Resource and Common Services Centre. The Centre is managed by the Rector and the Deans. The Centre is an autonomous service provided by the University β that was specifically designed to support activities at central level administration. It has administrative and financial autonomy and depends on the central government of the University. It should also provide some or all of the support services common to the basic units. In the University α the Statutes created an Institute of Research and Advanced Training to support the research activity, guaranteeing the quality of different research units by promoting both the evaluation of scientific output and the integration of teaching/learning with advanced training at the level of the 3rd cycle and international masters.

The regulative environment of higher education institutions defined by the legal frameworks affects not only formal but also informal systems. For instance, in the case

of the HEI β (university), formal and informal rule systems enhance the need for control and monitoring of the main activities of the university (teaching and research) and the promotion of improvement practices, which should integrate daily-routine practices with evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms (Documento orientador sobre o Sistema de Gestão da Qualidade).

These are examples of reorganisation of structures, which may have consequences at three different levels: strategic management (institutional leadership); monitorisation, accountability and institutional efficiency (management and decision-making processes); and administrative procedures.

Strategic management

In the perception of the surveyed higher education institutions strategic management emerges as being crucial, due to its significant role in the development of the Portuguese higher education system. HEI δ (polytechnic) aims at re-directing the Office for Study and Planning to support strategic decisions of institutional leaders regarding the conception of study programmes leading to academic degrees (Development Plan 2007-2013). HEI β (university) adopted an institutional strategy anchored in the definition of three action-lines: Research, Education/Training and Economic and Social Development. HEI α (university) adopted PROQUAL (2009), a programme oriented to the promotion of quality, which corresponds to the institutional strategy aiming at developing an internal quality culture and the accountability to external demands. HEI γ (polytechnic) followed the emerging trend identified by Santos (2011) within polytechnic institutions of implementing quality management systems according to the ISO 9001:2008 standard, which implies the development of a Quality Manual (2011) approved by the Presidency.

The participation in the EUA's – Institutional Evaluation Programme promoted by the Portuguese government can also be identified as a way to promote the definition of strategic objectives at institutional level. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) requested, and supported financially, the evaluation of ten higher education institutions, including public and private universities, and polytechnics, in 2006/07, an initiative that was extended to the following years. It has

also been agreed that these evaluations were conducted by the EUA with the assistance of the European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), and experts from the USA, Canada, or Australia. Under the terms of the agreement between MCTES and EUA, the objective of the national exercise was to provide institutional evaluation experiences following the best European practices.

In the case of HEI β (university) the self-evaluation exercise was an opportunity to see the extent to which the Vision of the University failed to materialise in strategic objectives committed at the Faculty level. The self-evaluation report recognised that

the new Rector announces the following Vision of [the University β]: *To be one of the 100 best European Universities in 2011 (according to accepted international standards for evaluating university education), for the celebration of its first century.* (...) However, the self-evaluation of the Faculties showed that, in general, the match between these strategic goals and those of the Faculties is not clear. Although Faculties, explicitly or implicitly, have their own strategic objectives, it is not obvious that they derive from the sharing of the strategic goals of the University β , suggesting that the organisational cultures related to different disciplinary areas play an important role in this matter (Self-evaluation report, 2009: 1).

In the case of HEI δ (polytechnic) the self-evaluation report (2009) also states the strategic objectives defined which are focused on the reformulation of the organisational model and on the repositioning of the institute taking into account the core of its training offer; the openness to the community and the expansion of its influence by increasing the training offer.

These facts corroborate the argument that the quest for quality at institutional level involves far-reaching changes at the organisational level with possible impact in raising awareness about institutional strategic management. The extent to which these trends will affect policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards is something that remains to be seen.

Monitoring, accountability and institutional efficiency

The impact of the institutional context on monitoring, accountability and institutional efficiency is noticeable in the establishment of structures to deal and cope with quality demands in education and training, research and quality management activities. All the

higher education institutions surveyed have established these support services as Table 1 intends to show.

Table 1 – Structures established to monitor the quality of activities

Activities covered at institutional level	Institutional Quality Office (HEI α)	Continuous Improvement Unit (HEI β)	Planning and Quality Management Unit (HEI γ)	Quality and Assessment Centre (HEI δ)
Education and Training	X	X		X
R&D	X	X		
Quality management activities	X	X	X	X

These structures are probably key elements for the future certification of internal quality assurance systems. They are important in the way quality policy is implemented, monitored and revised. Interestingly, in the universities surveyed the structures cover the monitorisation of education and training, research and development activities and quality management activities. In the polytechnics the situation differs. In the institution (HEI γ) where ISO 9001: 2008 is in place the structure is responding to the requirements of the norm. The supervision of core activities (teaching and research) is done via quality management activities. In the case of HEI δ the centre is responsible for promoting the quality of education and training activities and an institutional quality culture. The centre is also responsible for monitoring internal and external evaluation processes and for establishing linkages with international organisations in the area of quality assurance (Regulamento Interno, 2011).

It was interesting to note that in HEI β (university) the need to develop an instrument aiming at quantifying the goals to be achieved by 2015 is based on the balanced scorecard methodology. Apparently this exercise is doing the initial steps at central level and it may be relevant to follow the outcomes for the organisation. In the case of HEI γ (polytechnic) there is a similar approach based on quality planning. The methodology defines the process, the indicator and correspondent metric, the goal and the output predicted.

Administrative procedures

The impact of the environment on the administrative procedures of the surveyed higher education institutions is probably more straightforward in the case of both polytechnic institutes, which might be explained by their decision to implement and certify their quality management systems according to ISO 9001:2008 standard. In the case of HEI δ (polytechnic) the certification and international accreditation is viewed as a priority action line and encompasses the development of administrative practices and procedures.

Another very important issue is related to the development of information systems, considered to be the basis for all procedures related with policy implementation, monitoring and revision of quality procedures. In all surveyed institutions it seems an area that will have to expand to encompass the development of strategic goals associated with the development of a quality culture.

Summing up, it is clear that the Portuguese legal framework has been promoting a great commitment of higher education institutions to the development of a culture and institutional attitude which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance. How exactly HEIs are coping with it will be addressed in the next section of this report.

1.3. Framing the enquiry

This part of the report deals with the research questions that framed Work Package 5. These questions head each section of this part of the report. Answers have been collected at the top management level of each one of the four higher education institutions included in the study and the analysis of policy documents complemented the examination.

Is there an institutional quality assurance policy in place?

The four institutions have quality concerns and are in the phase of developing or consolidating their internal quality assurance systems. None of the institutions presented a formal statement for their quality assurance policy, but they all referred continuous quality improvement as one of its underlying bases as well as the need to reinforce and consolidate an institutional quality culture. Furthermore the quality policy seems to be embedded in a more general process of strategically managing and thinking the institution's future.

Interestingly the two Polytechnic institutions (HEI γ and HEI δ) referred that they have implemented or are in their way to implement a quality management system based on the ISO 9001:2008 standard. One of these institutions (HEI γ) has already obtained the system certification (in February 2011).

As aforementioned, the national level promotes the establishment of internal quality assurance systems; higher education institutions being responsible for their own quality (see section 1.2). In the surveyed institutions the institutional quality assurance policy is apparently intermeshed with strategic management. A possible explanation might rely on the participation in the Institutional Evaluation Programme lead by EUA (see section 1.2). The focus of that programme is on the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. The focal points are twofold (i) decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management and (ii) relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management, as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms. Additionally, the reorganisation of structures and decision-making bodies foreseen by the legal framework (RJIES) emphasises the strategic management of Portuguese higher education institutions. Therefore, apparently quality assurance is not a separate policy and is hardly based upon specific dimensions. Explicit reference to ESG was not found, except in a document by HEI β (university) that matches the ESG and the national guidelines promoted by A3Es with existing activities that fulfil those requirements. The document also identifies critical points, the structures involved and

the performance level to attain for the future development of the internal quality assurance system.

How does the policy involve the organization of the quality assurance system?

The four institutions organised their own internal quality assurance systems in different ways as the legal framework leaves to higher education institutions the responsibility to assure their own quality. Nevertheless one can notice in all of them the creation of specific units and/or programmes to deal with the institution's quality assurance. Furthermore the two universities have included their quality programmes in their information system.

HEI α (university) has developed the PROQUAL (Programme for the Promotion of Quality) that is assumed as a process transversal to the whole organisation, involving different basic structures³ in the continuous improvement process. It is coordinated by a Vice-Rector and supported by the Office for the Evaluation and Promotion of Institutional Quality (GAPIQ).

HEI β (university) has a deployed internal system for quality assurance, made of a set of sub-systems that cover different university life areas. The most significant ones are the i) information system; ii) collection, analysis and diffusion of information related to university's performance; iii) procedures for performance monitoring, evaluation and improvement, based on the institution information system and in a Balanced Scorecard methodology; iv) institutional evaluation (both internal and external) based on self-evaluation and in quality audit principles. Furthermore within the quality assurance system high relevance is given to the procedures linked to the academic, non-academic staff and degree programmes⁴ evaluation processes.

HEI δ (polytechnic) developed a new structure – the Centre for Evaluation and Quality – to manage the internal processes for quality evaluation and assurance. Additionally

³ Evaluation Council; Schools and the Institute of Research and Advanced Learning; Pedagogical Councils; Scientific or Technical Scientific Councils; Degree Programs Directors; Teaching Staff and Services.

⁴ In this case the University follows the guidelines provided by the Portuguese Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education - A3ES.

different functional units have been created to assure the strategic quality goals defined, as well as the monitoring of the higher education quality assessment's main parameters.

As HEI γ (polytechnic) has its quality management system implemented and certified according to the ISO 9001:2008 standard it is not surprising that the system is organised around a "Map of Processes", that presents the institution's processes, their sequence and interaction organised around the standard four blocks of requirements: i) Management Responsibility; ii) Resources Management; iii) Product Realisation; and iv) Measurement, Analysis and Improvement. The office for planning and quality management is the unit responsible for the quality management system's implementation, documentation, maintenance and continuous improvement.

How does the policy involve the responsibilities of departments, faculties and other organizational units?

Different ways of involving the institution's organisational units have been put forward by the institutions included in our sample, although all of them underlying the idea that the system is participated by different actors and organisational units.

HEI γ (polytechnic), as an institution certified by ISO 9001:2008, is probably the one claiming a more centralised management of its internal quality management system that nevertheless has the participation of the institute schools because the institute has also a centralised management of most processes for support and management of resources.

The other polytechnic institute (HEI δ) has a much more decentralised management structure (matrix structure), based on projects: schools are sets of projects (educational, research and services to the community), articulated among them and with a project leader. The projects' quality policy is then assured by their leaders, while the quality policy for human resources is secured by each departmental unit. In this case, reference is also made to the regulations defined for the analysis and dissemination of students' and teachers' satisfaction questionnaires' results allowing for the involvement of all in continuous improvement actions.

This involvement of the whole academic community, as well as of different governance bodies (programme degree committees; pedagogic and scientific councils; departments; schools) in the students' and teachers' satisfaction questionnaires is also referred by HEI α (university) as the way of involving the institutions' organisational units in the policy for internal quality assurance. It is based on the results of these questionnaires that schools and departments identify improvement needs or actions to reinforce excellence and integrate them in their activities plans. In fact the bottom-up organisation followed in the production of self-assessment reports allows for the successive analysis of results and decision-making regarding performance improvement at organisational units' level.

Finally, HEI β (university), due to its dimension and decentralised structure and organisation, adopts the approach of developing its strategic and activities plans based on an integration and incorporation of all its organisational units. In the same vein, these documents' objectives and goals are deployed for the whole organisation, including Faculties and Departments. Furthermore the university has created in 2006 its Continuous Improvement Service with the goal of planning, supporting and controlling an inclusive quality assurance system, in which all university members are responsible for quality, independently of where and when they do their job.

How does the policy address the involvement of students?

Students' participation is a reality in all four institutions. Students are represented in several existent governance and management bodies (pedagogic councils, degree programmes committees, students' unions, evaluation committees) and as such they participate in the quality assurance system whenever the participation of these bodies occurs. Additionally students are asked to assess their teachers' performance, the teaching and learning process, and sometimes even the facilities and general conditions offered by the institution, having a voice in the detection of the institutions weak and strong points.

Regarding the participation of other stakeholders it was hard to find any reference to them in the HEIs surveyed.

How does the policy involve specification of the relationship between teaching and research?

All four institutions refer to teaching and research as their most important functions, although in the case of the polytechnic institutes research is mainly understood as applied research. In that way, their internal quality assurance systems reflect the concerns and will to improve both functions. The relation between both is reflected in things such as: i) the criteria used to assess teaching staff, including their scientific production (HEI β - university); ii) a question in the students satisfaction questionnaire asks about their contact with research activities (HEI α - university); iii) the action plans of the three institute schools include actions such as the identification of research areas at the master's level, the formation of research teams including students and researchers and the integration of research projects in the curricular units of project or internship (HEI δ - polytechnic). In HEI γ - polytechnic linkages between teaching and research were more difficult to grasp.

What are the ways of policy implementation, monitoring and revision?

Governance and management bodies (Rector; President; Evaluation Council; Directors of Organisational Units; etc.) have responsibilities in all four institutions regarding the implementation, monitoring and review of the institutions' quality assurance policy.

HEI δ (polytechnic) refers that the main mechanism is its strategic planning process, based on the internal diagnosis made by the organisational units and specialised services and linked to its matrix structure built around projects that underlie the Institute's way of functioning.

The PROQUAL program for quality, which underlies HEI α (university) quality assurance system, is monitored and revised by the university evaluation council periodically (including its self-evaluation guidelines, instruments to collect actors' opinions and quality indicators), being submitted to the Rector afterwards for approval in the competent bodies. It is up to the Rector the definition and communication of the strategic planning activities, as well as of the global programme for quality and the

creation of structures and procedures for quality continuous improvement at the institution's different levels.

HEI β (university) bases its mechanisms on its institutional evaluation that is conducted periodically and is based on the principle of academic audit. Its main goal is to assess the mechanisms the university and its organisational units have to assure the quality of their teaching and learning and research processes, verifying the effectiveness of the existent evaluation procedures. It is up to each organisational unit to decide about their quality management framework (ISO 9001:2008 standard; EFQM Excellence Model; EQUIS Model; ABET Model; etc.). Additionally the activities and goals set in the activities' plans are closely monitored by the governance and management bodies through a balanced scorecard.

In the case of HEI γ (polytechnic), as its quality management system is implemented according to the ISO 9001:2008 standard there are very well defined procedures for its revision. The Quality Manual is revised by the President of HEI γ (polytechnic) during the annual revision of the system, according to what is described in a documented procedure. The whole system is based on a documentary structure, constituted by the Quality Manual, the procedures and other system documents; only the electronic versions of these documents are considered to be original and these are subject to a rigorous control.

How does the policy involve the statement regarding the collaboration with the secondary education sector?

The institutions put a significant effort in their own marketing, including the degree programmes they offer, among secondary school students. They also offer a number of initiatives directed at these students, such as i) a "bridging course" in maths meant to improve 12th grade students mathematic competences so their integration in the university is facilitated (HEI α (university)); ii) the project UEscolas consisting basically in teaching and research activities addressed at basic and secondary level students (HEI α (university)); iii) the realisation of thematic seminars that intend to complement secondary students curricular training and to attract new students and new publics (HEI δ (polytechnic)).

HEI β (university) explicitly referred that this is a management concern, translated in several initiatives at curricular level and related to the development of support structures and actions. In the case of this decentralised institution, these actions tend to depend on each organisational unit's context and sometimes even on the degree programme's context.

In all institutions it seems that the preoccupations with the recruitment of new students exist, are translated in planned activities aimed at improving both the number and the quality of new students and go beyond the institutions' policy for quality assurance. Only HEI α (university) referred that a report is produced under the PROQUAL programme dealing with the profile of the students that enter the university, the main objective being to plan the actions and instruments to improve the quality of recruited students.

2.4. Conclusions

The analysis of the Portuguese case using the sample of four institutions is contributing to answer the research question focusing on 'What are the barriers to the implementation of ESG 1?' in what regards the ESG 1.1 – Policy procedures for quality assurance, as the questions of this Work Package only cover this aspect.

Regarding the second research question 'To what extent the implementation of ESG Part 1 impacts on the interrelationship between the secondary and higher education sector?', our analysis only remotely touched that issue. It was not possible to identify institutional policy statements on the collaboration with the secondary education sector. Neither was there empirical evidence that secondary education institutions know about policy procedures for quality assurance. and what that policy impact is on secondary education institutions, by focusing on the surveyed higher education institutions (see section 3 of this report). One reason might be related to the fact that the transition of students from secondary education to higher education is a problematic issue associated with the massification of higher education, but the success of students is probably dealt

with at Faculty or Department level, and not specifically at strategic management and central level.

The implementation of policy procedures for quality assurance taking into consideration the theoretical underpinnings of the IBAR project, using the instrument-context approach, highlights the use of policy instruments associated to authority and learning tools. At system level, the changes of the legal framework promoted by the State are contributing to raise the awareness about policy procedures for quality assurance (1.1 ESG). And the learning tools advanced at supranational level are thus contributing to influence the Portuguese legal framework.

Therefore, the legal framework in the Portuguese context acts as a facilitator to implement policy procedures for quality assurance. By the same token, A3ES by promoting the certification of internal quality assurance systems also operates with the same objective. Hence in the Portuguese case the external environment is apparently favouring the implementation of ESG in what concerns the policy and procedures for quality assurance (ESG 1.1).

Barriers to the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance

Internally barriers to the implementation of ESG are associated to possible outcomes of the implementation of policy procedures for quality assurance. The analysis of possible outcomes related to the impact of institutional environment on higher education institutions is associated to the emergence of a centralising logic with possible consequences in the loss of collegiality. The increased centralisation and the development of control mechanisms by the institutional leadership favour the hierarchy of processes. Therefore, internal barriers stem from undesirable consequences of the implementation of the ESG that may favour a strongly top-down decision-making culture in the institution.

Another potential barrier to the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance is related to the lack of evidence in the higher education institutions surveyed about publicly available policy, procedures and strategies. This aspect is related to a

formal guideline prescribed at supranational level but that is difficult to discern at institutional level.

Last but not least, in what concerns potential barriers to the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance there is the difficulty to assume or prescribe the concept of a 'real' quality management system in spite of the guidelines produced at supranational level. The awareness about those supranational guidelines and its applicability in the daily life of higher education institutions is difficult to grasp at shop floor or at unit base level. For that reason its implementation is better seen as a continuous and flexible process contributing to build an ongoing framework across different contexts of implementation.

Good practices for implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance

Within higher education institutions it was also possible to observe the creation of support structures that could be seen as a 'good practice'. As the legal framework leaves to higher education institutions the responsibility to assure their own quality these structures can be seen as a good practice. However this touches the borderline of an undesirable development focusing on formal and even bureaucratic quality assurance. This raises concerns about guidelines by ignoring "[...] 'good' traditional quality assurance practices" and that "An overemphasis on compliance with the standards [...] may lead to a tick-box mentality" (Harvey 2008: 82). For that reason, implicit and informal practices within higher education institutions should be encouraged to guarantee the "balance between the development of a quality culture and the predictably formalisation required by external stakeholders" (Documento orientador sobre o Sistema de Gestão da Qualidade, 2011: 3) At supranational level formal policies and procedures are explicitly referred, challenging higher education institutions to demonstrate that informal and implicit procedures are necessary and important for quality assurance.

Practices seen as good examples for implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance concern, for example, the application of surveys to measure students and other actors' perceptions about the institutions and their core functions: these are a

way to identify weaknesses that need to be overcome in order to continuously improve quality.

The identification of barriers and good practices stemming from the higher education institutions surveyed is indicating that the implementation of a quality assurance system in each institution seems to be a unique process belonging to that institution and in accordance with its mission, goals and institutional culture. This is in line with the Portuguese legal framework and fulfils the autonomy granted to higher education institutions. However, the borderline between good practices and internal barriers is blurred. The development of the linkage between quality assurance and strategic management, for instance, that could be seen as a good practice might be very close to create unexpected outcomes if not dealt carefully, as much as quality assurance and quality management are interconnected. This challenges the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance at supranational, national and institutional levels.

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