

**INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE CIENCIAS DA SAUDE NORTE (ISCS-N)**

***EVALUATION REPORT***

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme**

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Instituto Superior de Ciencias da Saude – Norte. The evaluation visits took place in October and December 2009.

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture.

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes, internal communication processes, institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- 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.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a ‘fitness for (and of) purpose’ approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

### **1.2 The evaluation process**

At the invitation of Professor Dr. Proença, Director of the Higher Institute of Health Sciences (ISCS-N), the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) conducted a peer review. The evaluation included several steps.

The first and the most important step was the self-evaluation report (SER) undertaken by the participating institution. The way the self-evaluation report was prepared is a good example of how this institution is able to deliver real team work. Different perspectives from different departments were taken into account. The report has been widely spread for comments. Demand for participation

was even advertised on the walls. The process made teachers and staffs reflect on how they function and how they know it works.

The next step consisted of two site visits to the Institute. In the case of the Higher Institute of Health Sciences (ISCS-N), the team convened by IEP consisted of:

- Professor Dr. Henrik Toft Jensen, former Rector of the University of Roskilde (Denmark), team chair
- Professor Dr. Gintautas Bražiūnas, Rector of Vilniaus Kolegija (Lithuania)
- Mr. Thomas Ziehmer, Student at the University of Twente (The Netherlands), Member of the University Council and the European Students Union
- Mrs. Anne-Marie De Jonghe, Senior Research Fellow University of Southampton (United Kingdom), Former Director of the Flemish Rector's Conference (Belgium), team coordinator.

The IEP team came to the university institute for a first visit from 14 to 16 October 2009, asked for supplementary information and came back for a second visit from 1 to 4 December 2009.

Meetings took place with the leadership of the institution, with academic department heads and administrative department heads, as well as with academics and students. These meetings were conducted in a cooperative spirit. The IEP team met many enthusiastic students, staff and leadership. The visits were well prepared, partly through the self evaluation report and partly through the preparation for the meetings.

The evaluation team visited the premises on the Gandra campus, the sites of the dental units run and staffed by the institution in public hospitals and the buildings of another hospital run and staffed by the institution. The team noticed the reality behind the words. The units were well organised and students and teachers were present in the health service entities.

The team hopes that this institutional evaluation report will assist the university as it plans and executes its strategy.

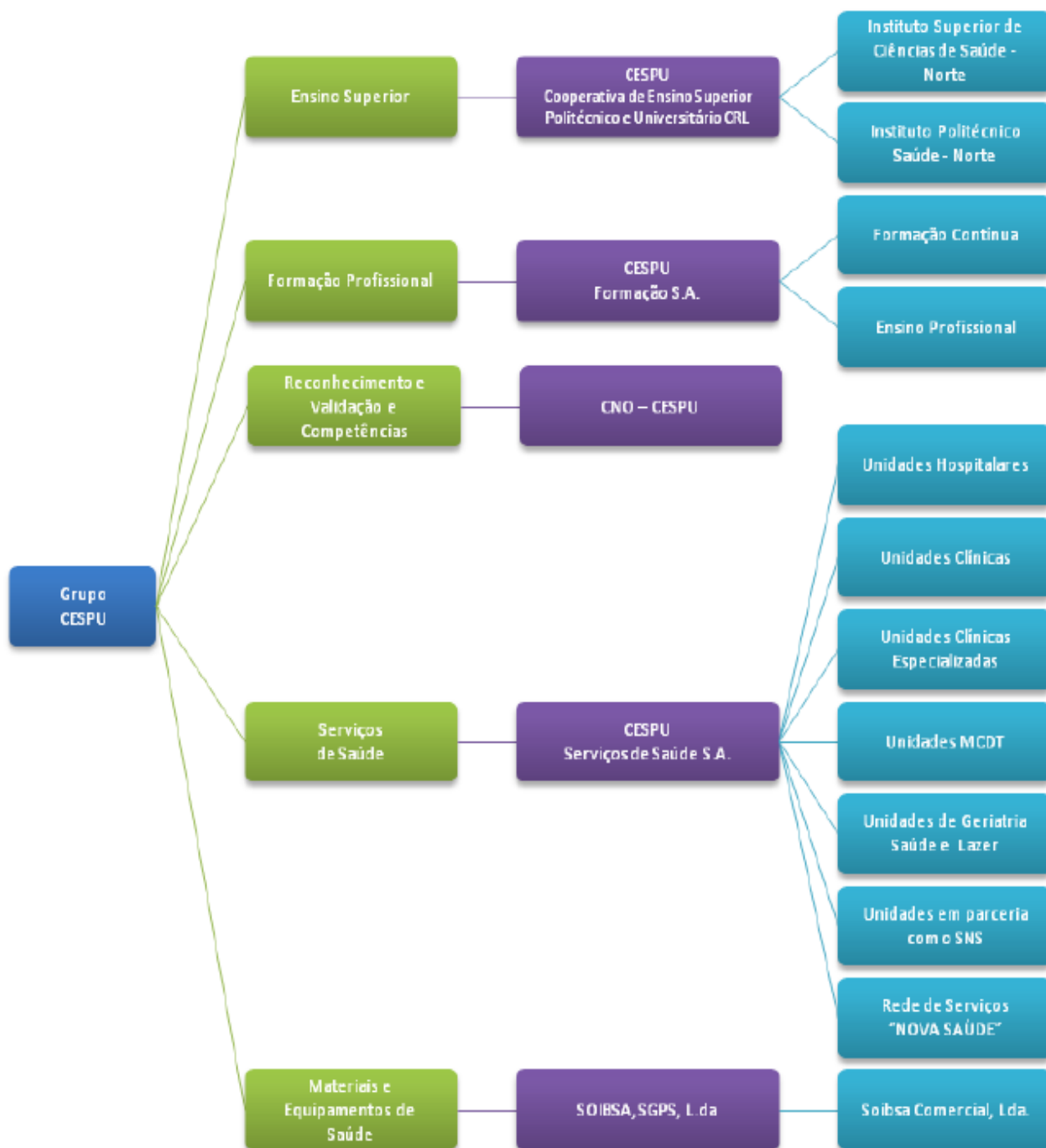
### **1.3 The Higher Institute of Health Sciences**

“Instituto Superior de Ciencias da Saude - Norte”, called ISCS-N hereafter, is a part of a broader entity, the “Cooperativa de Ensino Superior Politécnico e Universitário”, called CESPU hereafter. CESPU also runs a polytechnic institute organising education at the polytechnic level at two localities. One of these is an integrated part of the Gandra Campus. The polytechnic institutes have been previously (2008) evaluated by the Institutional Evaluation Programme.

Besides organising higher education, the CESPU group also organises continuing and adult education in addition to setting up health care units in public hospitals, which are providing dental care services and other health services to the benefit of the region.

Furthermore CESPU owns and runs hospitals and clinics, which are mostly public-private partnerships. Although these activities are not the focus of this evaluation we feel it necessary to mention them to understand how the university institute works.

Diagram of the organisation



Source: Self evaluation report by ISCS-N, September 2009.

This diagram presents the entrepreneurial activities of the CESPU Group as well as the activities related to higher education. The research centres, CICS and IINFACTS, which are mentioned

in section 2.2. of this report (pp. 13 and 14) are not included in this diagram. They are related to “Ensino Superior”.

#### 1.4 The university institute in its context

In this section and the following two sections the report focuses on the mission of the university institute, its particular features, its organisational structure and the staff.

ISCS-N is an institution of higher education organising higher education related to health. It carries out research related to its teaching areas and it provides health services to the region. ISCS-N has 1250 Bachelor and Master students and a teaching staff of 200 teachers. 70 are full time teachers and researchers and 130 are part time teachers. In addition, there is an administrative staff of around 40, who also take care of the administration of the polytechnics.

The team observed four particular features of ISCS-N:

- **The Institute is small:**

Therefore it is possible to have a close relationship between teachers and students in small classes. A small specialised institution can experience problems with critical mass. However, the collaboration with the polytechnic reduces the problem because teachers can teach in both institutions and students can transfer from one to the other. The combined staff at the institute and at the polytechnics has better possibilities of forming a critical mass.

- **The Institute is local:**

This creates opportunities to generate services for the local area in education and in health services.

A relationship exists between the teaching and learning mission of ISCS-N and the mission of providing health services by CESPU. These, first of all, provide plenty of possibilities for the practical training and internships for the students, which is part of their education. Alongside these training opportunities, the health services and hospitals of CESPU offer good job opportunities for masters and other graduates from ISCS-N.

As practical training is an important element of the education at ISCS –N and as jobs after graduation are important, especially for graduates who want to stay in the region, these CESPU activities can be regarded as a support activity to ISCS-N improving the attraction of an education at ISCS-N. This is important in an educational market with a growing competition. At the same time it is obvious that ISCS-N contributes through its activities to the functioning of CESPU. There are several transactions between CESPU and the different entities of the organisation.

The team observed that ISCS-N is trying to develop international mobility - especially concerning the staff- through participation in international congresses and international partnerships for teaching and research. But, notably for students, the level of

internationalisation is low. It could well be that the local focus has led to the problems with internationalisation for students as well as staff.

▪ ***The Institute is providing health education:***

Health professions are bound to a specific locus and are needed in the local area. The strong connection with the area is important and it generates very good possibilities for practice and internship.

On the other hand this connection can threaten innovation. Internationalisation is also important with respect to curricula in the sense that it is necessary to follow international developments concerning content and treatments. Despite the financial restrictions of the local population preventing access to expensive up-to-date treatments, which are not always reimbursed in the Portuguese healthcare system, students should be aware of the latest developments and improvements in their field.

▪ ***The Institute is a private institution of higher education with a public interest:***

Since only a little funding is received from the government, income must be secured through other means such as student fees. Compared to public universities the legal statute allows entrepreneurial activities and more flexible management methods in order to reach specific goals. However, Portuguese legislation concerning the statutes of private universities includes special restrictions which these institutions must abide by.

### Conclusion

The team noticed the particular features of ISCS-N: small, local, health related education and a private institution of public interest. These features create strengths as well as weaknesses for the institute:

- Being small creates a close relationship between staff and students. Awareness of critical mass is important here.
- The local focus brings about good possibilities for practice and internship but can lead to disadvantages such as less focus on internationalisation and on innovation.
- The focus on health creates opportunities to deliver services to the local area through the CESPU organisation.
- The ability of ISCS-N to undertake entrepreneurial activities leads to advantages in the competitive educational environment such as training and job opportunities.
- The different entrepreneurial activities which provide support to the teaching and learning activity also imply economic transactions within CESPU.

### **1.5 The organisational structures**

At ISCS-N the structures differ from those of public universities, because it is a cooperative structure. The cooperative superstructure delivers all the management and financial services to the educational institutions as well as to the health care units.

Stakeholders are not represented in the board of CESPU. There are regular contacts with stakeholders. The evaluation team was able to talk to some stakeholders as indicated in section 2.3.

In terms of academic projects, content and staffing, ISCS-N seems to have sufficient autonomy. ISCS-N is in a good position to make proposals to CESPU for its further development with regard to the three aspects of its mission. Within the ISCS-N, departments can make proposals to the director; the proposals are then presented to CESPU. For each department there is a coordinator who discusses the projects (e.g. a new master degree), also with other departments, and then proposes it to the administration. The proposal is assessed, the costs calculated and the benefits evaluated. This bottom up approach seems to work. The strategic planning of CESPU does not seem to restrict proposals from ISCS-N.

The scientific council (4 meetings a year) and the pedagogical council (4 meetings a year) are required by law. The former gives advice on new programmes and analyses the content of the programmes and ensures that the content meets the needs of the degrees. The advice of the pedagogical council goes to the scientific council. The latter also discusses the pedagogical methods and the student evaluation of the institution, the teachers and the programmes (2 times a year, 50 % response rate). The feedback in the form of a report goes to the different departments.

The excessive number of members in these councils makes it difficult to work with. This will be changed by the upcoming new statutes. However, many informal meetings take place. Students are represented in the pedagogical council, not in the scientific council. As the new statutes seem to state, students are involved at most other levels of the institution.

According to students and most of the staff, a certain openness regarding communication exists at the institution. However, this seems to contradict another comment received by the evaluation team. A few teachers stressed that the organisation and decision-making procedures are difficult to understand and that there is a lack of communication concerning the strategic direction or planning at corporate level.

Students and staff of the ISCS-N can be active in the strategic and decision-making process at CESPU if they become members of the CESPU cooperative. Indeed, membership in the CESPU cooperative entitles them to vote. The membership fee of about 2.000 € also gives the students the right to a reduced enrolment fee as well as some other advantages. The student membership amounts to 35% of the student body. The percentage used to be higher but with the economic crisis many students do not want to make this investment.

## **1.6 Staff**

The academic staff members have the required qualifications to help achieve the mission and goals of the institution. Full time academic staff members usually have a PhD, some are working towards one. However, since this institution has not had the authorisation to deliver PhD's so far, PhD students have to work together with another university in Portugal (e.g. Oporto) or abroad (e.g.

Barcelona, Santiago de Compostela, New York, London, Lille) to get their PhD degree. There is no funding available at ISCS-N for these studies. Some finance their PhD personally.

The age distribution of the staff members seems to be balanced. Several academics have an international experience since they obtained their PhD abroad. A few retired professors, from the public sector, still deliver their much appreciated services to ISCS-N (e.g. cardiologist, sport psychologist).

In general the team got the impression that a positive attitude prevails with the staff about the way ISCS-N is being managed. The team noticed however that the staff is wondering how to deal with the expanding mission and the increasing workload. This issue will be elaborated further when the strategic management and capacity for change will be discussed.

## **2 Academic activities**

In this section the activities related to teaching, research, service to the community and internationalisation are discussed.

### **2.1 Teaching**

ISCS-N offers courses in the field of dental sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, sports education also related to health, sciences (biochemistry) and psychology, including innovative programmes. A strong science component exists in most programmes, including a minor component in psychology.

The final approval of a new programme lies with the government. Initially this applied only to private universities, but now it also applies to all programmes at public universities. The team was informed about the difficulties in getting permission from the government (and more recently from the new accreditation agency) for new programmes. The change in the Portuguese law has made the conditions of public and private education institutes more equal. All new and existing programmes have to be accredited. Private institutes are still in reality excluded from offering medicine, which stays a privilege for the public universities.

#### ***Students***

Although a private institution is often the second choice for a student who cannot get into the public system in Portugal, the competence level of the students at ISCS-N is still sufficient. Some students claim ISCS-N to be the best place in the country to study health sciences due to the possibilities of extended practical work and internships.

The change to the Bologna cycles has reduced the time for practical training. ISCS-N is trying to overcome this problem partly through its interactive teaching methods and partly through giving some students the opportunity to stay at ISCS-N to do laboratory work after obtaining the bachelor degree. This work is also used as a part of the bridge-building making it possible to qualify for the master programme.

In general, teachers stated that entrants from secondary school are not sufficiently prepared to write and to do research. However, they do notice that quick progress is made in these areas over the years of study. The team observed that the link with the secondary school system could be better developed and that communication about mutual expectations is lacking. The team encourages projects such as “the science education project for secondary school teachers”.

Students as well as teachers mentioned the close relationship between them as one of the strengths of the institution. The relationship with the teachers, the competencies of the teachers (combining practical and theoretical competencies), teaching in smaller groups, the preparation for the labour market, possibilities to be integrated in research early on, good practical training, interaction with the community and the opportunity to have this university in the region where most of the students live with their family, are all cited as reasons to study here. Some students also

mention the fact that the marks from secondary school are too low to allow them to go to the nearest public university.

Students acknowledge that their evaluations and comments are taken seriously by university staff (e.g. students were asked to comment on the self-evaluation report by advertisements on the wall). The university is considered to be an open place.

The institution is private and its funding is mainly based on student fees. It depends on students for whom paying a fee is not easy in the current circumstances. Scholarships for students are the only form of government support. The level of students asking for a scholarship has been gradually increasing. The institute has started to offer scholarships since recent years, and CESPU has recently set up a fund to support students.

### **Facilities**

The rooms for practical training and the laboratories are well equipped and well maintained. During our visit of the campus the team observed that new offices had been built for the staff and that the library had been expanded. The size of the latter had been the subject of a recommendation from the IEP evaluation team which evaluated the polytechnic in 2008. The library is still rather small but students are expected to do only library work there, as other spaces are being provided for the students to work and study in teams.

Better access to scientific databases, enhanced IT facilities and systems at the campus are important if the study facilities are to be improved.

### **Methods used by teachers**

The university institute has a specific type of matrix organisation which entails that the academics of the specific departments contribute to several educational programmes at the university institute. There are advantages and disadvantages with this form of organisation. One of the strengths of this organisation is that in order to create critical mass, the departments provide the teaching in their field to the different study programmes.

The teaching of basic subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry etc.) in different programmes should be adapted to the needs of the programme and to the needs of the students in the programme. Those needs are directly related to the planned learning outcome of the programme. One version of a basic course in mathematics does not fit all the programmes. The evaluation team recommends to be aware of this aspect.

When confronted with the question “How do they know it works?” ISCS-N asserted that this had been an important question during the preparation of the SER for all the teachers. The team learned that the SER made teachers reflect on their teaching practices, which they have been improving for many years. Many comments and examples were given of ISCS-N’s effort to use innovative pedagogy.

The teaching is organised in a student-centred way. ISCS-N’s pedagogical model seems to include: early integration of students in laboratory work and research, problem-based teaching and

learning and continuous evaluation. A lot of attention goes to the practical training of the students, which happens in small groups and makes sure that the instructions are problem-based. In general students are encouraged to participate in research projects and their progression based on the integration of more theoretical lessons and field work can be observed.

The teachers did not give a clear answer with respect to “if and how” they organised their courses according to “learning outcomes”. They answered the question in terms of “competencies and skills to be acquired”, which they consider came to the same thing.

ISCS-N points out that students learn a lot because they face concrete cases of serious pathology in the university institute and in the dental care units in the hospitals. Every month 900 patients are treated in their clinics. Since the dental health in the region is not considered to be good, they usually keep their patients for a longer period of time and this allows them to measure good treatment.

ICT systems could be better developed and supported financially. A platform for collaborative learning is being studied. Currently only e-mail is available for students.

#### ***Link with polytechnic institute***

Although a link exists between the polytechnic institute (two schools) and the university institute, it could be further reinforced. Teachers teach in both sections to carry out their mission. Some student transfers take place. Recognition procedures for transfers should be aimed at increasing horizontal and vertical mobility in order to improve the connection between the two types of institutions.

This can result in more students from the polytechnic continue studying at master level after finalising their degree from the polytechnic and at the same time result in an increase of the attractiveness of the polytechnic education at CESPU, due to the fact that students will have two possibilities after finalising their degree from the polytechnic school: either continuing at the university institute to the master level or going directly to the labour market. The choice can be made after finalising the degree at the polytechnic. This means that the decision can be taken after three years of study and not when starting higher education. This visible extra possibility could be good marketing for the polytechnic.

The team learned that there are projects which will allow a polytechnic degree to be combined with a university degree (e.g., dentistry with dental prosthesis, sport with physiotherapy). The team encourages this type of initiative as another potential for reinforcing the link.

#### ***Teaching staff***

In general teachers appreciate the internal staff relationships and the work in team in their departments and with the community. Compared to the public sector, the salaries of academics at ISCS-N seem to be more interesting in the beginning of their career. Later on in their career, professors who work in the public sector seem to be earning more.

More recognition and rewards for good teachers will be important in the future.

Staff development and staff support should be developed. At the moment there seems to be too much paper work: too many forms, which could be shortened. The implementation of quality assurance according to ISO 9001 often turns out to be too demanding and too formal. In general the team observes that a culture of quality improvement also requires an adaptation to change and not just long and time consuming procedures.

Currently CESPU human resources organises courses such as public speaking, ICT, student assessment and English language. The attendance is reasonable given the workload of the staff.

### **Conclusion**

The team noticed that a strong commitment to teaching, student learning and preparation of students for the labour market (including the academic research path) exists among the staff. The team also observed that there is a growing awareness of the Bologna requirements. Therefore it proposes the following actions:

- Pedagogical principles of ISCS-N could be more actively used and communicated as an important factor in the competitive environment.
- A closer link with the secondary school system could be developed, as well as improved communication about mutual expectations.
- A more effective and efficient organisation of the bridging programmes between the polytechnic and the university could be set up.
- ICT-based teaching materials, systems and E-learning in general do not seem to be well developed, this has to be addressed.

## **2.2 Research**

### **Structures**

Four years ago ISCS-N started to develop its research policy (2004-2009). The goal was to build research capacity in order to reach National Science Foundation Status. This initiative was partially funded by CESPU. Right from the beginning ISCS-N decided they would also foster external relationships with national and international research groups.

The ISCS-N research model is starting to take shape but more time is needed to build up capacity. One of the strengths is that ISCS-N has access to patients. This opportunity generates data which can be used for research.

Recently a Health Sciences Research Centre, CICS, was created, which includes the research centre in psychology. The other research groups are dental sciences, chemical and pharmaceutical sciences and cellular and molecular biology. The advantages of CICS are:

- It is interdisciplinary.
- It (almost) reaches national science foundation status (one National Science Foundation - registered R&D unit).
- It produces papers in priority research areas linked to the teaching areas.
- It focuses on technology (combination of basics and applied science).

The team learned that there is a need for support for research methods such as statistics, as well as a need for access to professional translation now that research results are presented at international congresses and published in international academic journals (list provided).

### **Funding needs**

The regrouping of the research in one centre allows researchers to participate in international alliances and to apply for funding in a more efficient and effective way.

For research, the institute can apply for competitive funding with the national science foundation. This is not easy since CICS does not have a sufficient research record to present. However in a few cases CICS managed to get this national science funding. CESPU has increased its own contribution to research, which now totals 2 % of the CESPU budget.

Alliances for research funding are set up. International funding is sought after by participating in the set up of European partnerships such as the European association for bereavement (grief and trauma) research (Utrecht, Zurich) and another partnership with Angola. One of the strategic goals is to set up spin offs, which will transfer the knowledge gathered through research into technological products for the health sector.

In general, diversified income streams could be used to solve some of the above mentioned funding problems. Projects are aiming at getting more funding through clinical trials and other applied research activities. They should be carefully studied in order to keep academic independence.

### **Staff**

Most professors have a PhD or are required to work towards one. Research is related and even intertwined with the teaching fields. All the full time engaged teaching staff is expected to do research and is considered part of the CICS research centre. Students are able to participate in research from early on. Research which can lead to innovative technology is incorporated in the practical classes.

### **Research strategy**

ISCS-N recently has been working hard to improve its research culture, for example through the CICS Seminars Programme delivered by internal and external scientists and the annual workshop where research results are presented. The aim of the CICS centre is to strengthen the research profile of ISCS-N in the eyes of the outside world. A stronger research profile will improve possibilities for national and international co-operation. Recognition and esteem for the growing research mission of ISCS-N could be further developed by these initiatives.

In general the team observed the emergence of different meanings for research within ISCS-N:

- Research-based teaching is considered important in order to support the scientific approach to teaching. Research methods and techniques are included in practical training and some courses. A research initiation programme funded by CESPU allows undergraduate students to participate in ongoing research.

- One of the aims is also to compete at an outstanding international level, through presentation of research results at international congresses and publication in international academic journals, which has taken off in the last two years as could be seen in the listing provided.
- Another aim is to transfer the knowledge gathered through research to practical applications and technological products for the health sector. IINFACTS, quite a new organisation set up by CESPU, has recently obtained a new building where it will host post graduate courses in emergency and trauma problems. It will also welcome some laboratories doing high level international research leading to technological products which can be used by professionals; a kind of a science park.

There is a need to articulate a clear research policy including:

- A specific focus (public health and community?)
- The contribution of CICS of IINFACTS and of other national and international connections
- An adapted work organisation (balance between teaching load and research activities) within ISCS-N
- Diversified funding strategies
- Infrastructure and staff support adapted to this research policy

The combination of tasks is considered stimulating. Communication about the strategy will be necessary to reach a broad understanding of the developments its implementation will entail.

### **Conclusion**

- There is a need to articulate a clear research policy with adapted support as stated above.
- Existing connections and collaborations with national and international universities (where academics of ISCS-N obtained their PhD) should indeed be fostered and could be more structured.
- Resources for research should be increased. Some researchers use the resources of the universities they are linked to (where some staff members obtained their PhD) or have their own resources or little library.
- With respect to the library, the team could recommend a plan to increase the bibliographical resources and the technological resources for research by subscribing to scientific databases. It would be good to be part of a larger network of libraries to be able to give access to the students to basic books. This is certainly advisable as long as the finances of CESPU do not allow for a further development of the basic collection of books and journals.

### **2.3 Service to society**

ISCS-N provides health services to the region by letting its students do practical training in the regional hospitals and clinics under supervision of teachers from the institute. During a meeting with hospital managers the team learned that ISCS-N's services are well appreciated. The main dental care activity takes place at the clinic at the Institute where many patients are treated. This activity provides also good training opportunities for the students

The team also learned that pharmacists who employ trainees from the institute find that students are well prepared when they come to the pharmacy to start their practical training. During a visit to the campus, the team saw the pharmacy practice laboratory and the industrial equipment (for making pills) where students can train.

In the public schools preventive dental care instructions are given. The representative from the municipality affirmed that the collaboration with ISCS-N has been growing and that mutual benefits are derived from that partnership.

Providing higher education to the local area seems to be the first and most important priority for ISCS-N.

## **2.4 Internationalisation**

### ***Mobility***

ISCS-N has a rather limited mobility of students. The office for student Erasmus mobility was recently reorganised, a consequence of the EUA recommendation in the evaluation report of the Polytechnic. The office also tries to promote mobility to and from *Lusófona* (Portuguese speaking) countries.

Language reasons seem to hinder incoming mobility from the non-Portuguese speaking countries. The team noticed that several members of the staff are able to speak English or French and Spanish. An English language centre provided its services for students on campus and CESPU organises English language courses for teachers.

Different practical preparation due to the differences in the health systems also forms a barrier to easy mobility in the bachelor courses. Mobility for internships or advanced curricular units is preferred because at this stage of education direct contact with the teacher takes place (in English for example).

The complementary information the team received gives a good overview of the challenges ISCS-N faces. Incoming mobility to Portugal is more interested in large universities. Outgoing students are confronted with the private fee they have to pay at home and the expenditures to stay abroad. The Erasmus grant is not sufficient to live and study abroad. The culture in the area where it is normal to stay at home until graduation is less favourable to early mobility in the bachelor years.

Teacher mobility takes place through the participation in international congresses, through an educational programme with universities mostly in Spain and through international research projects. This is one step in the right direction but mobility could be improved. Many teachers however have part time commitments in their private practice which limits their possibilities to stay abroad for longer periods.

### ***International alliances***

The mission of the IINFACTS centre, a newly created research and science park entity, is to develop further the international alliances of ISCC-N. Co-operation already exists with Lille II and with Barcelona.

The team learned:

- That together with CESPU projects in *Lusófona* countries are being undertaken (e. g. Cap Verde and Angola).
- That active participation takes place in European meetings with professional organisations such as the European dentist organisation. This allows them to update their curriculum according to European developments.

Generally speaking the team observed that the level of internationalisation of students and staff is low.

### **Conclusion**

Mobility could be improved.

### **3 Quality assessment practices**

An internal quality system has been set up. It covers the working of the entire institution and the formal aspects of all its activities. An internal auditors' team of about 20 people participates in the follow up. Procedures based on process efficiency are carefully observed and compliance is organised on the basis of performance indicators.

ISCS-N has ISO 9001 certification since December 2006 (recently renewed). It is clear that this has influenced the institution. ISCS-N was compelled to set up an internal quality system among others in its administration and to improve several aspects of their functioning in the teaching area and with regard to the satisfaction level of students, administration and society.

The team learned that the pedagogical and the scientific council play a role in approving the content of the curricula.

The team observed that in general teachers try to use innovative pedagogy which allows them to promote active learning. This aspect was elaborated upon in the discussion on the teaching methods. The heads of the teaching departments have a proactive attitude in solving problems related to teaching.

ISCS-N is in contact with the newly set up external quality assurance agency in Portugal. This agency will be in charge of accreditation and insists on compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines and will bring ISCS-N national (and international) recognition.

Teachers are systematically evaluated by students on the basis of satisfaction surveys, which are discussed in the pedagogical council. For every year in a specific programme there is also a student representative responsible for problem discussion. The department heads discuss matters with teachers who do not fulfil their tasks. These teachers are encouraged to take courses in pedagogics organised by CESPU to improve their approach. Some have had to leave the institution altogether.

Research is assessed by internal peer review. Clear criteria for the internal evaluation of research projects with measurable results are being put forward by the research centre. Every year an assessment report goes to the co-ordinator and to the CESPU administrator. CESPU has created the CESPU international prize, which is awarded by an international panel.

Some staff members stressed that, because of the importance of these quality activities, there was too much paper work as a result of the lengthy forms and other bureaucracy.

## **4 Strategic management and capacity for change**

ISCS-N is facing an expansion of the mission. Besides teaching, research has now also become important. The institution is also growing in terms of expanding the activities of CESPU. Changes can create more workload for the staff. It is important that this combination of teaching and research is discussed also in relation to the perceived workload

ISCS-N is aware of the demographic developments in the country. They realise that they are competing with the public universities where students pay a much lower fee. ISCS-N is confronted by a declining student market (in terms of the classic population in the 18-22 age group) and increasing regional needs for health services. The private sector has lost 23 % of its students in recent years. Other private universities are among the close competitors in the region. Its future strategy should take this into account.

It will be a challenge to find new student markets. The team observes that with the greying population in the region and the poor health situation of a good part of the population, ISCS-N could find niches of older students such as transfers from the polytechnic, who are willing to study further in these health fields. ISCS-N is also aiming to get more (working) students above 23 years old although they are more likely to be interested in polytechnic programmes. The organisation of night classes may be a problem to overcome. It is to be seen if the pedagogical methods of the Institute can be adapted to this age group.

ISCS-N can only make a difference if the education they offer is of a high standard. Provision of quality should remain an important part of the strategy. Other important aspects of the strategy are: offering innovative programmes, very good practical training, a preparation for research, and providing conditions for entering the labour market.

The Bologna process caused a lot of bureaucratic concerns but also provided a lot of useful information to build on. New courses will always be in competition with the public system because students' first choice is often based on the fee to be paid. ISCS-N is aiming for the third cycle. A long expected change in name ("University of Health sciences") and recognition of a new statute is expected and would entail the recognition of the first PhD programmes. A rationalisation including a reduction of the 61 programmes offered in first and second cycle has to be tackled.

The initiative in research could first of all be regarded as an improvement in the skills of the teachers and in the quality of the teaching. The team observed however, that different concepts of research are emerging: from practice based to research based teaching and finally to international competition through publication in academic journals and to technology transfer. This report cannot address in-depth all the challenges that the university institute is facing when expanding the mission in this domain, but it urges the institution to clarify the challenges in order to prevent future problems.

## **5 Recommendations**

### **Strategy**

- The future strategy of ISCS-N within CESPU needs to be clarified. A strong commitment to teaching, student learning and preparation for the labour market (including the academic research path) exists. The mission has been extended towards different meanings for research and services to the community: these two activities need to be clarified in the strategy.
- Necessary support structures and funding for this expanding mission should be made available.
- CESPU is also expanding its activities. A new equilibrium between the needs of the university institute and the needs of CESPU needs to be clarified.
- The future strategy of ISCS-N within CESPU should be discussed with and communicated to all the staff members

### **Teaching**

- Quality teaching and learning based on innovative methods should be stressed publicly as an important aspect of the ISCS-N strategy. The consolidation of pedagogical principles is to be made and described.
- Bridging programmes between the polytechnic and the university should be encouraged and made more attractive. A more effective and efficient organisation of the bridging programmes between the polytechnic and the university could be set up.
- Basic teaching could be better adapted to the specific needs of the students in the different programmes
- A closer link with the secondary school system could be developed, as well as improved communication about mutual expectations.
- ICT-based teaching materials and E-learning in general have to be developed in order to bring about new opportunities.
- There are systems in place for quality assurance, but the ISO formulas concerning teaching procedures could be shortened.

### **Research**

- There is a need to articulate a clear consolidated research policy.
- The focus of the research strategies has to be developed. It could be niche areas related to the teaching fields: e.g. public policy and health.

- The different concepts of research as currently applied need to be clarified in terms of:
  - Background for research based teaching
  - Participation in the competitive environment of international publications for niche areas
  - Research towards technological spin-off
- Existing connections and collaborations with national and international universities (where some staff members obtained their PhD) could be more structured in order to strengthen the research capacity.
- Based on the previous recommendation, it could be useful to create an international advisory board for research.
- Resources for research could be better developed. The necessary support structures and funding should be provided when expanding the research mission.
- With respect to the library the team would recommend a plan to increase the bibliographical resources and the technological resources for research by subscribing to scientific databases.
- Attention should be given to tensions caused by the perception that the workload is increasing; it will be necessary to improve the work organisation when broadening the mission.

#### ***Funding***

- Diversification of funding is necessary but new ventures and entrepreneurial activities need to be carefully studied.
- Recommendations related to new developments within ISCS-N will have funding implications.

#### ***Infrastructure***

- A strategic plan for the development of the library has to be made. It would be good to be part of a larger network of libraries to be able to give students access to basic texts. This is certainly advisable as long as the finances of CESPU do not allow for a further development of the basic collection of books and journals.
- A strategic plan for ICT development (distance learning) and research support and facilities could be made.
- Student services and facilities including student dormitories and sport facilities should be better developed.

#### ***Internationalisation***

- The local focus of health related education should not prevent internationalisation of the curricula.
- International mobility of students and staff should be further developed.
- For incoming mobility of students, the attractiveness of a package “intensive Portuguese language, dentistry degree and working for CESPU abroad” could be explored.

**Marketing**

- ISCS-N’s brand image should be nurtured by an improved online presence, which shows what is happening at CESPU and what the student experience looks like.
- ISCS-N’s innovative pedagogical principles could be more actively used as an important factor in the competitive environment.
- The particular features of ISCS-N: small, local, health related education and private institution of public interest should be used.
- The ability of ISCS-N to undertake entrepreneurial activities leads to advantages in the competitive educational environment such as training (including postgraduates) and job opportunities which should also be stressed as part of the student experience.

## **6 Envoi**

The evaluation team was impressed by the firm determination of the Director and the President to sustain and enhance the perception of ISCS-N as a distinguished private University Institute in Health Sciences. The team observed that there is common support given by a number of dedicated academics, administrators, managers and students at the Institute to such effort.

ISCS-N is implementing the changes needed to become a University of Health Sciences and to expand its mission. The evaluation team was impressed by the enthusiastic and open attitude of students and staff, ready for change if the proper environment is created and the necessary transparency about further developments for ISCS-N is created.

The evaluation team is convinced that ISCS-N is moving in the right direction and strengthening its position in the Portuguese higher education system. The team hopes that this report will help ISCS-N further develop its strategy to achieve a sustainable and promising future.

The evaluation team would like to express thanks to Professor Dr. Jorge Proença, Director of the Higher Institute of Health Sciences (ISCS-N), Professor Dr. Antonio Almeida Dias and Doctor Luis Silva, and all the staff and students who participated in the process. Special thanks are due to Ms. Claudia Ferreira for the efforts expended in ensuring good logistics and organisation during the visit.