

Funding Sources and Fostering of Educational Projects

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Abstract

The quest for unconventional solutions of funding sources and fostering of educational projects can be performed through observation of current projects or the ones already implemented by other institutions. Competing never meant guarantee of obtaining resources, but it is a different opportunity of diverse fundraising sources commonly used. Certainly the universities need to overcome inertia to ensure its sustainability and survival, but before that they need to do their homework in various sectors.

Keywords: fostering educational projects; funding sources; homework for universities; sustainable educational resources

Introduction

In many relevant areas Portugal have the latest technology.

Why not in technology-mediated learning?

In this paper I focus on analyzing the search for sources of funding for educational projects via observation of congeners and the main challenge that reaches the Portuguese higher education institutions in the face of economic crisis that, contrary to what we might think, does not lie in the lack of financial resources, but in doing homework.

The paper is based on findings from the research “Implementation Strategies and Development of an Open and Distance Education System for the University of the Azores” funded by the European Social Fund. The main objective of this research was to observe the recent events related to the probable paradigm shift in the educational area and propose to the UAC the adoption of solutions that can, at the same time, correct implementations already made, meet their internal demands and respond to these new challenges.

We may have available the most modern technological means, unlimited financial resources and still not produce anything - or something with quality.

Doing less with more resources any one can do. Doing more with more resources, most people can do. Doing less with fewer resources is a difficult task.

But the big challenge that presents itself to Portuguese universities and in the specific case, to the University of the Azores (UAC) is doing more with fewer resources.

R. Ribeiro (personal communication, September 10, 2012) recalls that in Portugal: “We have spent many years creating solutions to problems which did not exist with just a senseless waste of resources”.

People who do not want things to change are those that, for some reason, feel they have a disadvantage with the change. Probably effective changes will only be observed in Portugal through mechanisms of pressure, derived from the current situation where crisis, reducing costs and budget constraints have become watchwords.

At the same time that the UAC survives the expense of underfunding of the Portuguese state

and EU funds (public funds), little or even nothing is perceived as returning to communities, to those who through their taxes have generated these resources. The so called 'community services' provided in the creation of Azores University Institute. And this observation refers to non-profit services, but free of charge. After all, charging a product and/or service of who sustains the institution without giving anything in return does not seem to be something logical, but it is what actually occurs. There should be a mandatory compensation, actions of university extension, something to be offered free of charge to communities.

In addition to the growing dependence created in relation to the Regional Government, with the consequent loss of academic autonomy and independence that this fact can generate, the resources of Operational Programme of the Azores for Convergence depend on the ERDF which in turn originate in the EU, that is, remain public resources, related to structural funds which in addition are not forever, should be directed to create structures and not to the payment of salaries and operating expenses, principal demands of UAC.

Faced with a situation of difficulties the institution does not seem sensible or even committed to the pursuit of unorthodox solutions that could provide growth options outside their physical facilities. Since the beginning of the collapse of Republican Government (with the advent of tuition fees through the law No. 37/2003, of 22 August), no other sources of funds were identified diverse of the Regional Government and actions of the Gaspar Frutuoso Foundation. (<http://www.fgf.uac.pt/>)

The proliferation of private foundations to support public universities resulted from a strategy of survival of these institutions that sought, in this way, an instrument to overcome (bypass) the legal limitations and ensure sufficient resources for their maintenance and development. While such instruments provided a greater ease in asset management, financial and human resources, they also facilitated the dysfunctions such as scattering (divert) the funds received without proper (correct) accountability. They also provided to professors (public servers), under full-time positions, to accumulate academic and non-academic functions including administrative positions and advisory and/or consulting services, incompatible with exclusive dedication that should preclude the exercise of any such other office or public or private employment. This autonomy in reverse meant also a dangerous distancing of the institutions of control environment provided by the public accounting and traffic of public resources. The extinction of the foundations system to universities and the creation of a new enhanced autonomy system seeks to correct the distortions observed.

(<http://expresso.sapo.pt/universidades-desconheciam-extincao-das-suas-fundacoes=f744419>)

The observation of current projects and the ones already implemented in other institutions, not only in the national territory, allows the identification of different sources of funding. Allied to the information available on the internet it is possible to mount (and then maintain) a relevant database that should include significant details of the calls.

During his research, Roth (2013) identified some institutions:

- Knowledge Society Agency (UMIC): is the Portuguese public agency with the mission of coordinating information society policy and its mobilization through awareness, qualification and research activities, promoting the technological development and knowledge creation by the scientific and technological system and enterprises, and fostering the development of e-Science. (<http://www.english.umic.pt/>)

- European Research Council (ERC): can be described as the transnational analogue of FCT at EU level. Generate the IDEAS programme of the Seventh European Framework which provides an opportunity for the R&D centres, associated laboratories and state laboratories, to

improve the working conditions of resident researchers or to attract to Portugal talented researchers from around the world, bringing prestige and significant funds for the development and internationalization of Portuguese science. (<http://erc.europa.eu/>)

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. In short, the ERDF finances: direct aid to investments in companies (SMEs) to create sustainable jobs; infrastructures linked notably to research and innovation, telecommunications, environment, energy and transport; financial instruments (capital risk funds, local development funds, etc.) to support regional and local development and to foster cooperation between towns and regions; technical assistance measures. The ERDF can intervene in the three objectives of regional policy: Convergence; Regional Competitiveness and Employment; and European Territorial Cooperation. (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/regional/index_en.cfm)

- European Social Fund (ESF): the ESF operational programme for Portugal aims to anticipate the challenges of the country. In response to the weakening economy, an aging population and the unsuitability professional, the ESF funding concentrates on crucial measures of implementation of improvements. Training and education are essential, as well as the actions to combat social exclusion and inequalities between men and women. With a GDP per head below 75% of the EU-25 average, the Azores region is eligible under the convergence objective. (<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en>)

- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (FCG): promotes, directly or in partnership with other entities, a set of programs and projects in its four statutory areas: art, health and human development (beneficence), education and science. Contribute to the educational development in Portugal and the debate on the progress of education in the world, whether in the school or within the society are some guidelines of the Foundation's activity in the field of education, the statutory area in which they invest a little more than a third of its annual budget. Aside from the numerous scholarships that assigns annually, the Foundation supports projects and activities that emphasize lifelong learning and the acquisition of new skills and new knowledge to make more effective the education/training system. (<http://www.gulbenkian.pt/>)

- EDP Foundation: is a private institution, non-profit, created by EDP - Energias de Portugal. The constitution of EDP Foundation has consolidated the EDP Group's commitment with the imperative of citizenship that has taken throughout its existence, demonstrating a concern for affirmation of modernity and the strengthening of support for relevant causes. Particularly dedicated to the development and diffusion of energy and environmental issues, the EDP Foundation sponsors and, increasingly, also promotes initiatives of cultural, educational and social. (<http://www.fundacao.edp.pt/>)

- HC Foundation: is a non-profit entity whose purpose is to promote the realization of cultural activities, teaching, training, research, sports promotion, beneficial and other similar. (<http://www.hcenergia.com/>)

- Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD): is a private, financially independent Portuguese institution. Its main goal is to contribute towards Portugal's development by providing financial and strategic support for innovative projects by fostering cooperation between Portuguese and American civil society. Financially supports programs for the internationalization of Portuguese institutions and has a special program for the Azores. The Antero de Quental mobility program is conducted by the University of the Azores in partnership with a consortium of American universities based in regions where there are significant Portuguese communities, such as the University of Berkeley, Brown University, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and Bristol Community College. The agreement aims to promote the exchange of professors and students between

member universities. (<http://www.flad.pt/>)

- Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT): continually promotes the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge in Portugal, exploring opportunities that become available in all fields of science and technology in order to achieve the highest international standards of knowledge creation, and stimulate their diffusion and contribution to the improvement education, health and the environment, quality of life and welfare of the general public. This mission is mainly accomplished through the granting of funding according to the proposals merit assessment of institutions, research teams and individuals presented in public open calls, and also through cooperation agreements and other forms of support in partnership with universities and other public and private institutions, in Portugal and abroad. (<http://www.fct.pt/>)

- Foundation for National Scientific Computing (FCCN): is a private non-profit institution designated public utility that has contributed to the expansion of the Internet in Portugal with the support of universities and various national institutions of R&D. The main activity of FCCN is the planning, management and operation of the Science, Technology and Society Network (RCTS), a high-performance network for institutions with higher communication requirements, thus constituting a platform for experimentation to applications and advanced communications services. Beyond managing the RCTS, FCCN is responsible for managing the registration service of domains '.pt' and provides services mainly oriented to his community and is involved in national and international projects in their area of activity. (<http://www.fccn.pt/>)

- Portugal-Africa Foundation: has supported several initiatives. Such support can be categorized into: colloquia and seminars, social promotion, exhibitions, training, initiatives and publications. The activity of the Foundation is based, at this time, in seven projects covering diverse areas of intervention, among them culture and education. In this area are planned support under design of programs and teaching materials as well as teacher training in Mozambique. (<http://www.fportugalafrica.pt/>)

- Vodafone Portugal Foundation: is a non-profit organization with legal personality and own funds, set up to encourage the development of the information society and fight info-exclusion. In the area of scientific and technological research has supported postgraduate courses and the creation of infrastructures for higher education institutions, namely: Madan Park (creation of a Laboratory of Multimedia Technology and Telecommunications on the campus of the Faculty of Science and Technology of the New University of Lisbon), Catholic University Foundation, post-graduation course of Technical Higher Institute, post-graduation course of Higher Institute of Economics and Management, post-graduation course of Legal Institute of Communication, Law Faculty of the University of Coimbra. In the Azores, the Vodafone Portugal Foundation supported the installation of several GPS stations on the islands of the central group, an initiative of the University of Beira Interior which aims to study and quantify the risks arising from natural geodynamic processes. (<http://www.fundacaovodafone.pt/>)

- Azorean Regional Fund for Science (FRC): is a coordinating and management body within the financial resources available for scientific research and technological development in the Autonomous Region of the Azores (RAA). (<http://frct.azores.gov.pt/>)

- Promotion Office of the 7th Framework Program for RTD (GPPQ): was created by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCES) in order to promote and support the participation of scientific and business national communities in the 7th Framework Programme. The GPPQ connects researchers and Portuguese companies and FP7, through mutual coordination of delegates to committees, representatives in Technology Platforms, Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) and the network of National Contact Points (NCP). This network was created to: spread information and documentation on FP7, organize promotional activities

of FP7 (info-days, seminars, conferences), support the preparation and submission of applications to FP7, identify national strategic partners and other countries for collaboration in projects of the FP7 (partner search). (http://www.gppq.mctes.pt/_7pq/)

- Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance (IPAD): the IPAD aims to propose and execute the Portuguese co-operation policy and coordinate the cooperation activities undertaken by other public entities that participate in its implementation. Among other things, draws up Indicative plans of cooperation (PIC), the main instruments of action; promotes the implementation of various programmes and projects and prepares semi-annual reports; ensures a link with the authorities of the beneficiary countries; emits its prior opinion on the projects proposed by other entities; convenes the Interministerial Commission for Cooperation (CIC) and ensures the representation and participation of the Portuguese state in international organisations related to cooperation and public assistance to development, particularly in the European Union, the OECD/DAC and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), without prejudice to the competence of specialized sectoral representations. These organizations can submit applications for funding of projects of development cooperation (include the PALOP and East Timor), and during the second half of each calendar year for development education projects. (<http://www.ipad.mne.gov.pt/>)

- Proconvergence - Operational Programme of RAA (FEDER): the Azores operational programme for convergence falls within the 2007-2013 programming period of the European Union's regional policy, being provided by the ERDF Structural Fund. The Proconvergence was prepared summarizing the main proposals in the field of development policy for the near future, in compliance with the Community Strategic Guidelines and the National Strategic Reference Framework. The strategy defined is based on major strategic priorities that structure the programming, involving, respectively, within the economy, human resources and development of the territory. Also contemplated is a priority axis that includes specific assigned allocation programming in the context of support to compensate for additional costs in the outermost regions. (<http://www.proconvergencia.azores.gov.pt/>)

- Pro-employment - Operational Programme of RAA (ESF): this program, financed by the European Social Fund for the Azores (2007-2013), based on an increased diversity of objectives and types of project, which is supported not only by the inclusion of two general objectives: support the structuring of the science and technology system and create conditions for its growing approach to corporate sector; and promoting the employability of vulnerable groups from the promotion of their conditions of social inclusion. The program also bets on greater diversification of types of project oriented to the improvement of employability, inserting the component of education at all levels. (<http://proemprego.azores.gov.pt/>)

- National Strategic Reference Framework (QREN): takes as main strategic design the qualification of Portuguese, enhancing the knowledge, science, technology and innovation, and the promotion of high and sustained levels of economic and socio-cultural development and territorial qualification within a framework of equal opportunities, as well as increasing the efficiency and quality of public institutions. The pursuit of this great strategic plan, essential to ensure the overcoming of the most significant constraints to the consolidation of a dynamic of sustained success in the process of economic, social and territorial development of Portugal, is ensured by the implementation, with the support of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, for all Operational Programmes for the period 2007-2013, three large thematic operational agendas, which focus on three main areas of intervention, the human potential, the factors of competitiveness of the economy and the development of the territory: Operational Agenda for Human Potential, Operational Agenda for Competitiveness Factors; and Operational Agenda for Territorial Development. (<http://www.qren.pt/>)

- The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7): the 7th Framework Program for RTD (2007-

2013) funded by the European Commission, has as main objective to increase the potential for economic growth and enhance European competitiveness through an ambitious investment in knowledge, innovation and human capital. It is the opportunity for the EU to put its research policy to match its economic and social ambitions by consolidating the European Research Area (ERA). The Seventh Framework Programme is organized into four main programs (Cooperation, Ideas, People and Capacities). (<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/>)

- Visegrad Fund: this international fund was created by the Visegrad Group (V4), an alliance of four Central European countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) for the purpose of cooperation. It aims to facilitate and promote the development of closer cooperation among citizens and institutions in the region as well as between the V4 region and other countries, especially the Western Balkans and countries of the Eastern Partnership. The Fund does so through grant support of common cultural, scientific and educational projects, youth exchanges, cross-border projects and tourism promotion, and through individual mobility programs (scholarships, residencies). (<http://visegradfund.org/>)

The paper argues that the consequences of the UAC's immobility are perceived in face of the difficulties of articulation to participate in calls as FP7-INFRASTRUCTURES that could allow obtaining a high-speed backbone, between all islands, connected to the network GÉAN. Competing never meant guarantee of obtaining resources, but it is an opportunity of access to different sources of funding from the ones commonly used. No one wins the lottery without playing.

Marquis (2012) recognizes that is not to say, however, that the situation is beyond hope. He suggests that the output lies in an innovative new solution and points out some alternatives that are already in operation or are in the process to provide a sustainable solution. The spectrum of possibilities can then be expanded taking as starting point a variety of the funding models currently in use, suggested by Downes (2006): endowment, membership, donations, conversion, contributor-pay, sponsorship, institutional, governmental, partnerships and exchanges; lessons from projects Free/Libre/Open Source Software (FLOSS), the new social networks for collective funding (transfunding), collective fundraising (cofundraising), frequent flyer programs, customer programs, mileage programs, loyalty programs, reward and recognition programs; and the work of Anderson (2010).

I conclude by suggesting that certainly Portuguese universities need to overcome inertia to ensure its sustainability and survival, but before that they need to do their homework in several sectors including the lack of professional managers with management training, combating the national incentive spending spree at the expense of savings (resources must be fully consumed in the budget of that year) and the lack of a crisis office, namely, a team focused on troubleshooting and supporting new projects...

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