INsPIRE

Innovative Governance Practices in
the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq

Working package 2

Virtual Training on University Management
Interviews to University of Évora Leaders and Managers

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University of Évora

Interviewed Leader:

Valentina Castro.
Responsible for the Innovation, Cooperation, Entrepreneurship and Employability Division (ICE-Div)
A division from Rectorate Services
On dependency of Vice-Rector for Innovation, Cooperation, and Entrepreneurship

Interview realised on January 4, 2022.

Structural position of the ICE-Div:

Looking for the Mintzberg Professional Bureaucracy (see image), the Vice-Rector are in Strategic apex, is a top-level management and the Rectorate service is a support high level service.

Professional bureaucracy
Henry Mintzberg
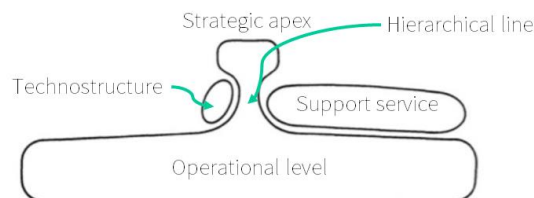
The main role of the service is supporting the strategic orientation of the University, defined on there strategic plan and oriented and leader by the Vice-Rector for Innovation, Cooperation, and Entrepreneurship.

The mandate of the Vice-Rector is defined by the Rector, according two key orientations:
1. The Rector vision for the definition of the Vice-Rectorate; and
2. The delegation responsibility from Rector to Vice-Rector to accomplish the mission of the University and implement the strategy for this business area.

Conversation between Paulo and Valentina

A SHORT PRESENTATION: Name, graduation, the Service/Division that you are leader and how many years in this position:

First, I would like to thank Professor Paulo Resende da Silva for this opportunity to talk about the Innovation Division I am representing.

My name is Valentina Castro, I have been in U. Évora since 1995, where I worked in a Research Unit, in a support office for the management of research projects. Since its creation in June 29 of 2021, I'm the Head of the Innovation, Cooperation, Entrepreneurship and Employability Division, which I will call ICE from now on to facilitate the long designation.

I have a degree in History of Art and a postgraduate degree in History of the 20th Century, both from FCSH (Faculty of Social Science and Humanities) in New Lisbon University.

1.Which is the mission of the Division?

Universities have three major missions: Teaching and Research, that produce values that are well known to all. And a third mission, related with the extension and interaction with society that can enhance those values. The transfer of knowledge at the University of Évora is facilitated by ICE, whose mission is to be a bridge of contact between the university and society.

In this sense, some important activities are being consolidated. I would like to highlight three different examples:

- the remodelling of Casa Cordovil, a space open to citizens and entrepreneurs who want to be in contact with the university, and where a museum entirely dedicated to innovation will take place, with spaces that will enhance co-working and ideation;
- the construction of a "Knowledge Platform", to map the knowledge produced at the university, in order to enhance it; and
- the Spin-off U.Évora seal, a brand that will serve as an indicator of success cases, and whose regulations strengthen our institution's position in this area;

In addition to this, 2022 will be very important to our activities with the development of two projects:
- the alumni program will be implemented this year, with a new strategy and a massive campaign to build a strong network of alumni; and
- the reorganization and management of the laboratory spaces with the project UÉLAB will increase the efficacy and the utilization of material resources.

2. How is organized? Who decided this structure and you are comfortable with them (If not comfortable why and what do you propose to improve the structure of the division?

ICE succeeded to GAITEC, the Support Office for innovation, transfer, entrepreneurship, and cooperation. Since 2018, this office was guided through seven main pillars (IP; Startups and Spinoffs, Cooperation, Internships; Employability; Projects and Applied R&D.)

Two more areas were associated to this structure - UÉLab (in 2019) and alumni (in 2021).

The structure was defined by the Vice-Rector and had a team, at that time with 5 technicians, a Pro-Rector, and a coordinator (myself).

Now there are 9 people working together, besides the 6 previous technicians, a design fellow and two Highly qualified human resources, with specific responsibilities linked to knowledge transfer, work with us.

With such a wide range of areas of expertise and a substantial part of the team with responsibilities of more administrative nature, the remaining elements must unfold to be able to give response in other aspects, and the focus sometimes strays.

As it was proposed at a certain point to the Rectory, perhaps the Division could be provided with an organizational structure of intermediate leadership and in its subdivision into three distinct support units:

1. The innovation, transfer and valorization of knowledge unit that included IP and spinoffs, the "Knowledge Platform"; applied R&D Projects, and EIT Health Consortium, that could be constituted by the RHAQ elements and for at least 6 more collaborators.
2. The employability and alumni unit which will comprise all activities/initiatives and events related to employability and training of students; the employability portal, alumni, internships, and national and international cooperation, which could be made up 5 or more elements.
3. UÉLab, as a third support unit, but due to its very specific goals, it could have and intermediate leadership, given that it will have a vast set of human resources to manage in the future.

As a conclusion and given experience, for the Division response to be done efficiently, it could be divided into three support units, one of which would have a middle manager and the ideal number of team members could never be less than 12. I think this is a good way to consolidate the Division and eventually make it grow.

3. Wich role they have on the university? A support service or a principal activity in the university business"?

From my point of view, we are still a support service, due to our still short lifespan/acting within the academy.

However, we are gaining our space and I think that over time we can aim to become an essential element in the future strategy of the University, so this 3rd mission becomes strategic and essential.

Knowledge transfer cannot be an option anymore. We must be differentiators in the training of our professors, researchers and our students and in the dissemination of what is done in the academy, otherwise the goal of a high education institute is not completed.

4.The most important processes (or activities) of the Division?

ICE works simultaneously as a facilitator and intermediary of processes and procedures that put Academia in contact with its crucial stakeholders, increasing the chances of transferring knowledge across the boarding.

Bureaucratic management of internships, intermediating the provision of university services to industry, or increasing student contact with potential employers are part of our functions.

Furthermore, the organization of events, the development of training programs and the management of international projects (such as the BLUE project, POCTEP program or EIT Health) are part of our competences.

5. How are the division integrated on the University?

Within the organizational structure of UÉ, we are part of the Rectory Services, as we are under the direct supervision of a Vice-Rector, Professor Dr. Soumodip Sarkar, Vice-Rector for Innovation, Cooperation and Entrepreneurship.

Also, we have a Pro-Rector, responsible for the Internships and for the implementation of the unit of reorganization and management of UÉ Laboratories "UÉLab".

6. In terms of management of the Division, which are the key aspects?

I would like to highlight three crucial points for an effective management of the Division:
1. The development of specific and measurable goals and objectives for our activities.
2. An effective articulation between the vice-rector's office and the members of the Division, sharing relevant information.
3. And the development of a personalized activity plan for each member, without forgetting the need to be able to balance quick response activities and longer response activities, to maintain motivation and focus.

7. Which are the key resources to have a good management of your division?

Contact time with all Division members, careful planning of activities and impact measurement are essential resources.

In addition, we must not forget the encouragement of teamwork and the spirit of mutual help, which are true saviors of the most pressing and urgent actions that we often must resolve.

8. Which is the most important division that you need connect in the university to have a better management service and a better work quality?

Considering the Division's areas of activity, I would say that there are several and each one with its own importance in relation to the processes in which we work together.

For example:
- in the area of Applied R&D, the Project Management Division;
- in the area of Intellectual Property and Spinoffs, the legal Office;
- in the area of internships, the student support office (GAE) and the academic services (SAC) through the support office;
- the IT services in the invaluable support they have given in the development of management platforms and in the virtual initiatives and events that we have been developing over these two years; and
- then there are others that are also important, the office of the administrator and the rectory, helping in the processing of administrative proceedings with the administrator and the rector, and the DIVCOM (Communication Division) in disseminating the contents we produce and activities for the community that we carry out.

In fact, I have to say that they are all important in each of their competences and that no service can perform its functions effectively if it does not have the help of others.

9. Which management tools do you use to plan and organize the Division? (With some adicional explanation)

The Division's general strategy was designed by the Vice-Rector, given the different areas of action that he is responsible for. Based on this strategy, we use several tools to plan the Division's work which I now list:
1. Key Performance Indicators/Organization chart:

- Each employee has a work plan based on Kip's that were discussed individually and that are ongoing on an experimental basis until May this year. As this tool has not been used so far, by the end of the period indicated, the proposed KPI will be evaluated by all parties (employees, Head of Division, Rectory) and amended or adapted if necessary; and

- This chart was created with a view to consolidating the team and to ensure greater efficiency in the Division's response to various requests. Thus, it was established that for all areas there is a person in charge and someone in the back office who provides support when necessary.

2. Team /individual meetings for work distribution:
   - We have implemented the rule of having meetings frequently and with the whole team, so that everyone knows what others are doing, to feel involved in the work of the Division, so that everyone could talk about what they do and how they do it, to listen to others and gather opinions and suggestions for improvement, so that they can collaborate in decision-making and in the proposals presented to the Vice-Rector.

3. Activity plans with very detailed timelines are done for every semester (what to do, who does what and when). The definition of an activity plan as detailed as possible has been essential for a balanced work management.

4. Definition of internal procedure flows always with a view to optimizing the work; using an email group that everyone has access to so that the response time is short; and

5. Every week there is a meeting with the Vice-Rector and the head of Division to talk about the work carried out and to gather input from it.

10. In your opinion, which added value your division brings to university?

Regarding to the administrative work that was developed, procedures were standardized so that it becomes more effective:

- the internships, for example, it was achieved that almost all internships that university students do are registered on the SIUUE platform.

- regarding employability, the set of initiatives developed with students (such as the two editions of the virtual recruitment day – a virtual recruitment fair that was developed to replace the fair in full pandemic that was planned and had to be postponed), the soft skills career counseling and job market workshops that had numerous participants; the contact we made with a wide range of companies to publicize what they are, what they do and who they are looking for in the university, which has led to a growing demand for the support of our Division for the promotion of recruitment sessions in the most varied areas;

- still in the area of employability, the launch of an employment Portal centralized numerous of job offers available to the academy in one single repository; and

- we are currently the only repository regarding the protocols carried out at the university. In this context, we are standardizing these procedures. We have developed a set of keywords that in the future will allow a more intuitive search of documents in SIIUE.

11.Some final comments (open)

If I had been able to talk to you about ICE in Portuguese, this podcast would have a much longer duration, because talking about what we have already managed to do in such a short space of time would be easier.

Still, I just want to point out that despite what we've done, we still have a long way to go ("muita estrada para andar") a Portuguese expression that I think we all know.

In some areas of the Division, we have major goals that we hope to achieve soon – transforming administrative processes that still use paper into fully digital processes, such as internships, Applied R&D and protocols.

Regarding entrepreneurship and innovation, these are some of the goals we want to achieve: the consolidation of our workspace that will become everyone's workspace, the continuous mapping of what is done and increasing its dissemination abroad the increase of innovation partnerships, the increase of talent beyond the doors of the academy.

Regarding employability, in the future we would like also be a career counseling unit, in addition to empowering and prepare our students to the market.

Maximize partnerships with companies in our regional ecosystem to leverage the region and help it grow is also one of our priorities

Last but not the least, we also aim to implement in the best way possible our new Unit, the UÉLab.

The future will tell us whether this vision was the right one, but we are sure that if we manage to implement some of the things we are trying to do, some in conjunction with other UÉ services, the safety of people and the better management of dangerous goods, centralize resource management will in many ways be very positive for the academy.

Thank you so much for listening to me. I thank again to Professor Paulo Resende da Silva and the Inspire project for this opportunity.