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CIPES CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO DE POLÍTICAS DO ENSINO SUPERIOR
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES

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ESG and IQA from Portuguese Academics' Perspective

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EIQAS – Enhancing Internal Quality Assurance Systems
Erasmus Plus Project
Training Event 1

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Topics to Cover

- Context
 - ✓ The rise and development of IQA
 - ✓ Academics and QA: resistance and support
- The A3ES standards for IQAS implementation
- Portuguese academics perceptions on the A3ES standards
 - ✓ Their importance and degree of implementation
 - ✓ Are perceptions different for different academics' groups?
- Concluding remarks

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Context
The rise and development of IQA

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- Concerns with quality in HEIs have always existed (internal vision – improvement)
- Until the 80s this **Intrinsic dimension** was dominant.
- 80s: the emergence of an **extrinsic dimension** as a new form of public concern.
- Change of approach due to the emergence of some new issues:
 - HE massification
 - change in the relationship between governments and HEIs
 - increasing role of the market
 - lost of trust in HEIs

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Context
The rise and development of IQA

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- Movement from QA with the main goal of **improving quality** to QA with the main goal of **external accountability**
- In the last three decades Europe has been paying more attention to the **extrinsic quality of HE**, developing quality models and systems that allow HEIs to demonstrate to society their relevance

The diagram consists of three interlocking gears. The top gear is labeled 'The loss of trust in HEIs and academic professionals'. The bottom-left gear is labeled 'The market emerging role'. The bottom-right gear is labeled 'The rhetoric of new public management'. Blue arrows indicate a clockwise flow of influence between the gears.

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Context
The rise and development of IQA

- More recently... developments towards the idea that HEIs should be responsible for assuring their own quality – *Quality Enhancement*, with an emphasis on IQAS
- **ESG** development as a reference model providing guidance and assistance to **HEIs** in their efforts to **implement IQAS** and to **agencies** in their **external quality evaluations** (Prikulis, Rauhvargers, & Rusakova, 2011).
- The ESG establish the **areas that should be covered** by institutional QA arrangements, specifically in teaching and learning, but **do not define how these arrangements should be implemented** (Loukkola & Zhang, 2010: 40).
- Existing research has found **no evidence of an effective implementation of the ESG** in HEIs

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Context
Academics and QA: resistance and support

Still a relatively **underdeveloped subject** in the research devoted to QA

Different degrees of acceptance/resistance, support and adaptation to the QA idea, policies and implementation procedures

Translating (Newton 2002):

- ‘intransigency’ (involvement in a minimum degree)
- ‘colonisation’ (involvement as a routine)
- ‘conversion’ (conversion rather than mere compliance)
- ‘rational’ adaptation (engagement while trying to gain from it)
- ‘pragmatic’ scepticism (scepticism but adaptation)
- ‘sinking’ (confusion but resignation)
- ‘coping’ (dealing well with it although there is a sense of burden)
- ‘reconstructing’ (assumption of an active role)

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Context
Academics and QA: resistance and support

Assessment as an **imposition** and **prescription**, **clashing** with the values characterising **academic culture** (academic freedom, self and collegial accountability and self-improvement)

Concerns regarding **QA implementation**

- bureaucratic, time consuming, administrative and cost burden
- not aligned with the 'academic endeavour' and diverting attention from teaching and research
- academics 'distance': less positive idea of its purposes

Perceived **impact** on the HE system

- unintended consequences upon personal and organisational behaviour
- stimulus to inspection, regulation and standardisation
- mainly related to monitoring and control and less to enhancement, transformation or even excellence

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Context
Academics and QA: resistance and support

Grasping the '**academic world**' through the **language and ideology of managerialism** and its business ethos

- new orthodoxy (business values, accomplishment of aims and goals)
- altering the traditional relations between academics ('managers' and 'managed')
- instrumental and ritual strategies: 'system running' rather than truly engagement

Dissatisfaction with assessment **procedures** and **results**

- not entirely reliable and incapable of grasping the 'essence' of the educational process
- not inducing improvements in academics working environment
- results not entirely truthful and artificially influencing organic units or HEIs performance (elitist bias within the HE system?)

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Context
Academics and QA: resistance and support

Higher adhesion when assessment processes and procedures are more directed at **institutions as a whole**

Agreement with accreditation - an opportunity for HEIs to **reflect** on their mission and purpose, as well as to 'join an elite club'

QA contributing to **increase** decision making processes **transparency**, developing **teaching** and benefiting **students**

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The A3ES Standards for Portuguese HEIs

European Developments

Bologna Process and the consequent development of the **ESG** for QA in the European area of HE

In Portugal

A3ES Standards for the certification of HEIs internal QA systems

In Portuguese HEIs

IQAS development

- more or less systematics
- more or less broad in terms of scope
- degrees of consolidation significantly different
- the goal is to assure the quality of their processes, namely teaching & learning



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The A3ES Standards for Portuguese HEIs

The A3ES Standards = ESG Part 1 + 3 Additional Standards

- R1 Definition of a quality policy and objectives (ESG 1.1)
- R2 Definition and quality assurance of educational offer (ESG 1.2)
- R3 Quality assurance of learning and student support (ESG 1.3)
- R4 *Research and development/target research and high level professional development*
- R5 *External relations*
- R6 Human resources (ESG 1,4)
- R7 Material resources and services (ESG 1.5)
- R8 Information systems (ESG 1.6)
- R9 Public information (ESG 1.7)
- R10 *Internationalisation*



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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

- Understanding the **importance** of the A3ES standards as a framework for IQAS implementation in HEIs
- Assessing the **degree of implementation** of A3ES standards in Portuguese HEIs
- Are different academics' characteristics relevant for these analysis (e.g. *disciplinary affiliation, sex, age, type of institution, with or without management functions and degree of involvement in QA activities*)?

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

- Empirical data collected with an **online questionnaire** – academics' perceptions on the importance and degree of implementation of A3ES standards
- Set of sentences for which a degree of agreement was asked from respondents, in a scale from *1-Totally Disagree* to *7-Totally Agree*. **Three groups**:
 - Awareness of the ESG and A3ES standards
 - Importance of the A3ES standards for IQAS implementation
 - Degree of implementation of the A3ES standards in the respondent institution
- Final sample of 2099 academics, representative of the population in terms of sex, type of HEI and scientific area

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		No. of academics	% of academics
Gender	Male	1158	55.2
	Female	941	44.8
Sub-sector	Public university	700	33.3
	Public polytechnic	791	37.7
	Private university	381	18.2
Research area	Private polytechnic	227	10.8
	Natural sciences	197	9.4
	Engineering and technology	428	20.4
	Medical and health sciences	349	16.6
	Agriculture	60	2.9
	Social sciences	797	38.0
Age	Humanities	268	12.8
	<46	955	46.0
Performance of management roles	>=46	1118	54.0
	Yes	707	33.9
Involvement in QM activities	No	1379	66.1
	Low involvement	347	17.4
	Medium involvement	725	36.3
	High involvement	925	46.3

Data Analysis
 Descriptive Statistics
 T-tests and ANOVA

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

Portuguese Academics Awareness about the ESG and A3ES standards is **not very high** (medians of 4 and 5, respectively)

A3ES standards are considered as **important** or **very important** (medians of 6 and 7), which represents a favourable environment to the implementation of IQAS in HEIs – more important than the **explicit knowledge** about the standards is their **implicit acceptance**

The **degree of implementation** of the A3ES standards, despite being **lower than the importance** given to them, is nevertheless **quite significant** (medians around 6)

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

Portuguese Academics QA practices **less implemented in HEIs** are related to issues such as (medians of 4 and 5):

- QA of human resources
- listening and taking into account external stakeholders perspectives
- adequate policies for the QA of research and development
- development of an information system sufficiently broad and capable of driving a truly institutional self-assessment

The **subsystem** to which academics belong, their **age, sex, scientific affiliation**, the fact of performing or not a **management role**, as well as their **degree of involvement in quality management activities** are relevant both for the **importance** they give to the different standards and for the standards **degree of implementation** they consider to exist in their institutions

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

Sex determines differences between responses on the awareness, importance and degree of implementation of A3ES standards – female academics tend to show a higher agreement position

- Quality connected with caring?
- Appropriation of quality as a way to enhance their rights and power?
- The idea of QA as a process promoting fairer, more equitable institutions?

Differences emerge between academics belonging to different types of institutions – more positive positions are assumed by academics from private institutions (especially polytechnics)

- A way to achieve recognition, credibility and reputation? (which public universities already have...)

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

Disciplinary affiliation also determines differences in academics perceptions – in the majority of cases academics from Medical and Health Sciences are those presenting a higher agreement level

- The discipline, rather than the institution, may indeed be the dominant force in the working lives of academics (Clark, 1983)

More awareness, importance and degree of implementation were found in the answers of academics with a management role and that consider themselves as being highly involved in QM activities

- Experience in management, namely in QM seems to matter, contributing to more optimistic views of it

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The Importance and Degree of Implementation of A3ES standards for Portuguese HEIs

Regarding age, while **younger academics tend to agree more with the standards implementation** in their institutions, in the case of the **awareness** about the standards and their **importance, older academics are the ones presenting a more positive opinion**

These **differences** point to some work that needs to be done with **different groups of academics** in order to **involve them more in quality management activities**, because those more involved are also the ones that better know the standards, give them more importance and have a higher perception of their implementation.

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Concluding Remarks

- Increasing number of national QA systems based on accreditation
- Move to ranking systems
- Move towards Quality Enhancement as a way to reinstate trust in HEIs
- IQAS implementation in HEIs





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Concluding Remarks

- The available literature indicates academics' preferences towards Quality Enhancement...
- Our results show that Portuguese academics positively “welcomed” the A3ES standards. In general they think:
 - o the standards are important for both HE and their institutions;
 - o and believe they are implemented to a certain extent in their institutions
- Nevertheless there are gaps between what academics perceive as important for QA and what is actually being implemented in their institutions



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Concluding Remarks

Academics' support is essential for QA systems adequate implementation...

So... governments, QA agencies and HEIs need to think about:

- How to get academics support?
- How to go from academics as mere “passive recipients” of QA to academics as engaged and effective participants in QA?
- Which standards need more effort in order to improve their degree of implementation?
- Is it necessary to work more closely with specific groups of academics?

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TRADIZÃO INOVACÃO

Thank You!

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