



IPAD SCHOLARSHIPS POLICY EVALUATION (1995-2003)

SUMMARY

The Educational Grant Programme represents an important instrument in responding to one of the key aspects of cooperation – raising human resource competences.

There has been a reduction in the overall number of educational grants made available to the African Countries of Portuguese Official Language (PALOP) for attending educational establishments located in Portugal. This is explained by the replacement of the internal grants, the gradual concentration of resources in East Timor and by the reduction in already existing grants rather than any actual cut in the total number of new grants. Grants for attending higher education institutions made up over two thirds of the total grants attributed to the PALOP in the 1995-2003 period.

The attribution of grants administrative process demonstrates a certain fragility deriving particularly from delays in the sending out of available places and in the response to visa requests. This, collectively, results not only in delays to the arrival of the grant holder in Portugal, generally after the beginning of the academic year, but also in his or her receiving their first grant payments.

Of the main inefficiencies identified within the grant management process, the following are worthy of particular emphasis: (i) the negative evaluation attributed to the bureaucratic process, its procedures and regulations, the deadlines and lack of interaction between the participants that manage and implement this process, (ii) the poor service quality provided by states of origin participating in the grant candidacy process, (iii) the lack of transparency in selection and implementation criteria, and (iv) the low level of support provided in the reception and integration of grant holders in Portugal.

The analysis of academic performance results, covering 55% of graduate student grant recipients funded by the IPAD over the reference period, demonstrate that the average rate of student degree course completion is 40%. On average, grant holders required 1.3 additional years to complete their respective planned level of study in relation to the expected study time of each respective course.

On return to their country of origin, grant holders experience a wide ranging boost to their professional opportunities given that education and training acquired in Portugal is deemed prestigious in nature. To this end, it may be considered that individual levels of competence, given the education undertaken, did contribute to the organisations' capacity of the respective countries involved (and can contribute to the improvement of the surrounding economic context if these grant recipients promote higher levels of entrepreneurship) and did contribute to the intervention's sustainability.

Among the key strategic evaluation recommendations, the following are particularly worthy of mention:

- ▶ Strengthening the correspondence between areas eligible for grants and the strategic development of recipients through higher levels of interaction between the recipient and donor states in terms of defining priority fields and the number of grants to be attributed while always respecting principles of attributing responsibilities to the appropriate decision making entity.
- ▶ Programme sustainability after completion of the respective educational programme may be raised if better directed at certain types of organisation, for example, universities, scientific and technological research centres in addition to possibly including the public administration, thereby creating a push effect resulting in greater institutional capacities and skills and a greater rate of investment return.
- ▶ Organising grant strategies in accordance with a “cycle of life” perspective, this is, a medium term framework involving the balance between supply and demand, the multi-annual nature of education and training and subsequent professional integration in the recipient state.
- ▶ Support provided towards improving higher education in recipient countries and the attribution of local study grants, while important, should serve to complement and not replace study grants in Portugal. Furthermore, while always taking into account the specific needs of each respective state, priority investment in masters and doctoral degrees should not overwhelm the concession of study grants for degrees in Portugal in study areas not locally available. At the same time, cooperation in the field of education should serve to strengthen the commitment provided to professional training and to mid-level education in the recipient states while further exploring the possibility of e-learning techniques usage, combining distance and presence forms of education and training.
- ▶ In summary, strategic options should target the greater interaction and interrelationship, in terms of level and structure, between demand for education among recipient countries and the grants made available by the Portuguese state. This in turn requires greater co-ordination between the local and national peer institutions and a more effective conjugation of efforts in Portugal, particularly between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Science and Higher Education, and at the same time (within a progressive logic of limiting the scope of the grant policy, well framed under the global cooperation policy and, in particular, under the APD for the sector of education) increasing qualification, differentiation and specialisation of the education and training on offer in national universities.

In more operational terms, the following recommended guidelines should be adopted:

- ▶ Promoting an evaluation culture able to consider the complete cycle - ex-ante, on-going and ex-post – in a lighter and more operational approach.
- ▶ Adopting a management model in which decision making processes are rooted in information and promoting greater integration of information held by the respective services particularly through the adoption of new information and communication technologies and the sharing of data bases.
- ▶ Strengthening the competences of supervisory commissions.

- ▶ Distributing degree certificates might be carried out through the Portuguese embassy in the grant recipient's country of origin in order to encourage their return to their state of origin.
- ▶ The anticipation of student numbers and distribution of vacancies in higher education should not remain dependent on national candidacy processes.
- ▶ Improving the institutional ties with the Borders and Foreigners Service (SEF) and with the respective consulates in order to ensure quicker approval of entry visas into Portugal.
- ▶ Ensuring a better level of reception and supervision of grant recipients.