



ACADEMIC SUCCESS PROMOTION OFFICE

PROJECT

2009, June

Elisa Chaleta

1 – INTRODUCTION

The change of paradigm in the Higher Education suggests that the focus on the teacher's work must be directed to the work of the student himself, which represents another challenge both to undergraduates and to their teachers. Nowadays we are facing new curriculum structures but with the same constraints of the education of masses, with reduced public financing and few resources. Promoting learning quality in this context appears more difficult than ever, especially if we have in account the fact that the academic results in Higher Education get to dramatic proportions, overcoming, in many cases, percentages above 50%. Though the difficulties enunciated and the impact of those in the teaching and learning process, we can, nowadays, reunite a set of scientific knowledge about the involved components and, through that, build a new way, creating new opportunities to improve quality and innovation.

We perspective this change of paradigm not as a depreciation of the teachers' work, which function continues to be determinative to the students' learning process, but as a way of incite the students to a bigger participation, responsibility and freedom in the construction of their own learning process. On the other hand, this learning and teaching model, that conceives the individual as his own knowledge builder, has respect for his own individuality, which allows us to respond, within other aspects, to a new reality with which higher education institutions are being confronted and that shows the existence of a bigger diversity of students (in terms of age, prior training, experiences, socio-cultural history,...) and, also, a bigger profusion of students coming from many different cultures and nationalities (international mobility).

The perspective of centrality on the educational process of the student learning has emerged in the 70's and has evolved within the framework of phenomenography and the constructivism reuniting, already today, a significant set of investigations. The fundamental constructs of the learning conceptions and the profound/superficial approaches, which means, the necessity of the students to conceptualize meanings and basing their learning

process in processes of comprehension by contrast with the traditional view of learning as centred in mere memorization processes, has been supporting, successfully, some experiences and changes in the field of teaching and learning in some European and Asiatic universities.

To this construct we associate another one, the self-regulated learning, which intends to give some conceptual tools to students (cognitive, metacognitive and affective tools) that are fundamental to them to walk with autonomy and success in the enormous territory that is the learning process both through University and through our whole life. These investigations firstly created specifically to the field of Higher Education have invaded prior levels of teaching (such as basic compulsory education and secondary education). Their results show that their application leads students to higher levels of quality in terms of the learning process and also leads them towards a bigger academic success. It is through this constructs, that have been exposed, that we intend and suggest building a platform under which a set of knowledge and activities directed to reflection, dissemination, knowledge sharing and experiences will emerge, expecting that, in the future, they will work as a base to change and innovation necessary to a more efficient and qualitatively better answers.

Then, the structure that we now suggest (GPSA) intends: i) to give the students the conceptual and procedural tools that allows them to manage from a more efficient way their own learning process, and, in consequence, their academic success and ii) give the teachers a better access to some instruments considered as the most efficient for the students to accomplish the learning activities provided and to obtain qualitatively higher results on those tasks.

2- SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENCION PROPOSALS

Having in account that it is not possible to create a global answer to the whole university since the dimension of resources that that would require, and that the development of the project assumes a function of experimental

implementation, we have chosen to make an intervention separated in two phases, structured in this way:

First Fase – Empowerment of the students' learning process –
(supporting/formation/mentoring pairs)

In this first phase, we intend to direct our action towards the students of the 1st grade of graduation (1st degree - graduation) in the next scholar period (2009/2010) and to the students that are in the 3rd grade on that year of each course giving them the conceptual and procedural tools considered more fundamental to the development of profound learning approaches and to the optimization of academic results, having always in account the self-regulated learning principles. It will be given, in September, a "training package" built specifically to about a 150 students that will participated in the project as volunteers (3 to 4 students that are in the 3rd grade on this scholar year of each course will be offered this 2009/2010 training). These students will have, during the period of the initiation practices (October), the mission of transmitting, to the younger students that get in the first year to University, the knowledge that they achieved with this training they had in September. To become possible the execution of this action, we will appeal to the cooperation of the various student structures of the University (such as the "Notáveis" or Notables, the Students' Association and to the Nuclei) since their involvement is considered as essential to execute this activities: i) the creation of the financing aid to the volunteers and ii) the formation of some consensus in relation to the time spent in one hand with traditional initiation practices and on the other hand giving some part of that time (half of the time) to "a new way of executing the initiation practices" (with the training/formation that will be given). Such action will promote, and help to become feasible and develop the training program designed for the 1st grade students. The training program dated to September will directed to students from more advanced grades (the volunteers) and to the Notables that will have the mission of supervising, under orientation, the training hat must e given to the 1st grade students of all the courses of the University. The obtained and ministered training by the students will be credited and will appear in a supplement of their diploma (or free credits, ECT'S, in some courses that have free credits set in their curriculum planning). In a couple of

years, all the students that are now in the 1st grade will have participated in this training process.

For a bigger understanding, near the academic community, of the present work that is intended to be developed, there is the intention to organize, in October, an International Seminary about Learning in Higher Education directed to students and teachers with the special participation of national and international experts.

Second Fase – *Empowerment of the teaching and the teaching practice qualities’.*

In this phase, we intend to create an informative collection to the teaching activity and promote the discussion on the academy about the teaching activity and also to promote the discussion on the academy about the more relevant themes of this field of investigation. We also intend to create one kind of study circles that will allow the sharing of knowledge and good teaching practices, having, simultaneously, in account the “know how” that already exists within the University.

It will also be solicited to the various Organisms of the University (Schools, Pedagogic Councils, Departments), that promote the discussion and give their contributes in this domain. To a bigger dissemination in the academy we will also create a forum (on the internet) that will allow the participation of everyone that will consider as relevant the debate about these subjects. It will be built, additionally, a “training package” to teachers, which will be offered with priority to the directors of each course of graduation and, in the future, to the teachers who show some interest to deepen their knowledge in this domain.

With the goal of knowing and disseminate what has been recently produced by the investigation about the teaching process in the higher education context we will also organize an International Seminary about this theme that will take place in February.

During this period, we intend to study, develop and, if possible, put into practice, within other aspects, the mentoring model among all teachers.

3 – Objectives

- To offer information to students and teachers about the results of investigation in the learning and teaching in Higher Education domain
- To promote the debate and reflection about teaching, the quality of learning and the academic success of the students and try to elaborate concrete measures that can, in the future, be implemented in the University
- To promote the development of personal, studying and learning competences in the Évora University students that will facilitate their learning processes and, in consequence, their academic success
- To organize study/training to reflection, share of knowledge and acquisition of new competences that consolidate and/or innovate the teaching practices in Évora University
- To build pedagogic materials to support the students' process of learning and to teachers.

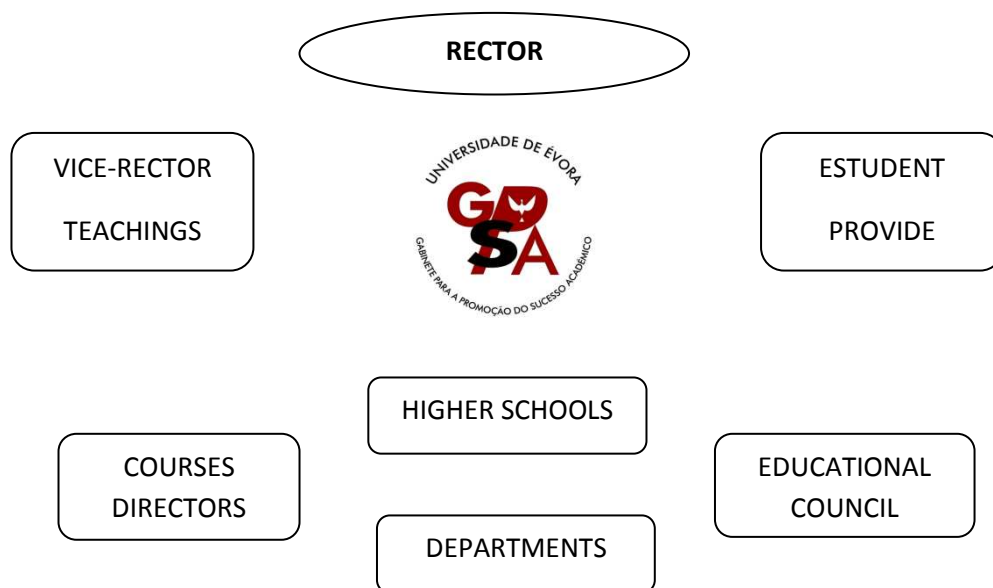
4 – Activities Planning

a) July to December of 2009

Date	Directed to	Action	Supervisors
July	Students	Formation of the volunteers financing aid	Notables
		Planning of the "training package" for the students	Elisa Chaleta Luisa Grácio (+ 3 guests)
		Meetings with the course directors (of graduation degree)	
		Elaboration of the students' brochure	
September	Students	Volunteers training (150 students)	
October	Students	1st grade students training (+/-1000)	Elisa Chaleta Luisa Grácio Notables Volunteers
	Students and teachers	International Seminary – Learning in Higher Education	Organizing Committee
Nov/Dec		Preparation of the 2nd phase	Elisa Chaleta

b) January to July of 2010

Date	Directed to	Actions	Supervisors
January	Teachers	Planning of the training package to teachers	Elisa Chaleta Luisa Grácio
March/April		Study Circles Teachers' training	Elisa Chaleta Luisa Grácio Trainers
		Meetings with the course directors (graduation degree)	Elisa Chaleta
April		International Seminary – <i>Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.</i>	Organizing Committee
June/July	Students	Volunteers training (120-150)	Elisa Chaleta Luisa Grácio

6 – Organizational Structure Office**6.1. Placement****6.2. Constitution**

- **Scientific Coordinator** – Prof^a Dra. Maria Elisa Chaleta

- **Advisory Council:**

- Teachers:
 - Prof Dr Carlos Vieira

- Profª Dra Isabel Vieira
- Prof Dr Luís Sebastião.
- Profª Dra Luísa Grácio

➤ Students:

- Notables Representative – Paulo Filipe Rosado Cabido
- Students Association Representative – Helder Ricardo Ribeiro Martins

➤ Out-University Member (University of Minho): Prof. Dr. Pedro Rosário

- Office (permanent centre)

- Superior Technical – Antónia Olívia Matos (Psychologist)
- Assistant – Carla Almeida
- 1 Intern of Psychology
- 17 volunteers (students of the 2nd cycle who volunteered to work in activities development by GPSA during this year).