

Third mission activities in quality assurance systems

Do theory and practice match?

SOFIA BRUCKMANN, MARIA J. ROSA & LORAINÉ NAZARÉ

14TH EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FORUM - SUPPORTING SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

TU BERLIN, 21 – 23 NOVEMBER 2019

Presentation outline



- Research aims
- Background of the study
- Methodological approach
- Main findings
- Final remarks

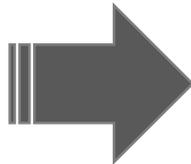
Research aims



Case study of a public Portuguese university

- How far along is it in terms of integrating performance indicators (PIs) for Third Mission (TM) activities in its Quality Assurance System (QAS)?
- Proposal of a set of relevant PIs that could enhance the assurance of TM activities at this institution.

Background



greater attention to quality issues and to data gathering



basis for the creation of internal quality assurance systems (QAS)

Background



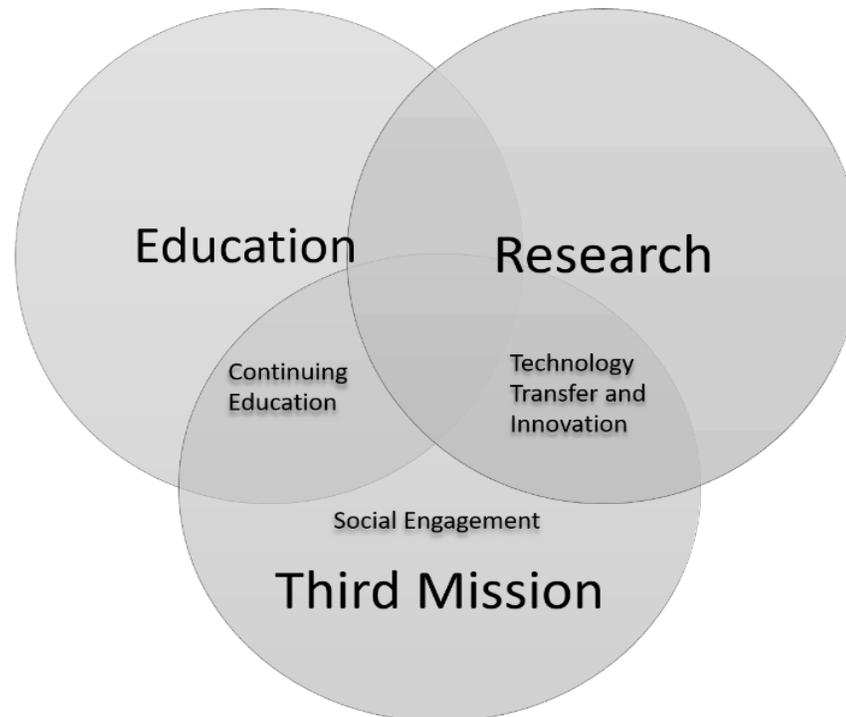
Background



Background



Third mission should not be conceptualised as a separate mission
It 'entails a good deal of mission overlap' (Enders and Salerno (2008))



Background



What about third mission in quality assurance systems?

- definition of indicators and methodologies for measuring TM activities is still underdeveloped in most HEIs

Background



Nevertheless, there are already some approaches to analysing TM activities and defining a set of indicators to measure them just as with education and research.

E3M-Project – European Indicators and Ranking Methodology for University Third Mission

Three main dimensions:

- Continuing Education,
- Technology Transfer and Innovation, and
- Social Engagement

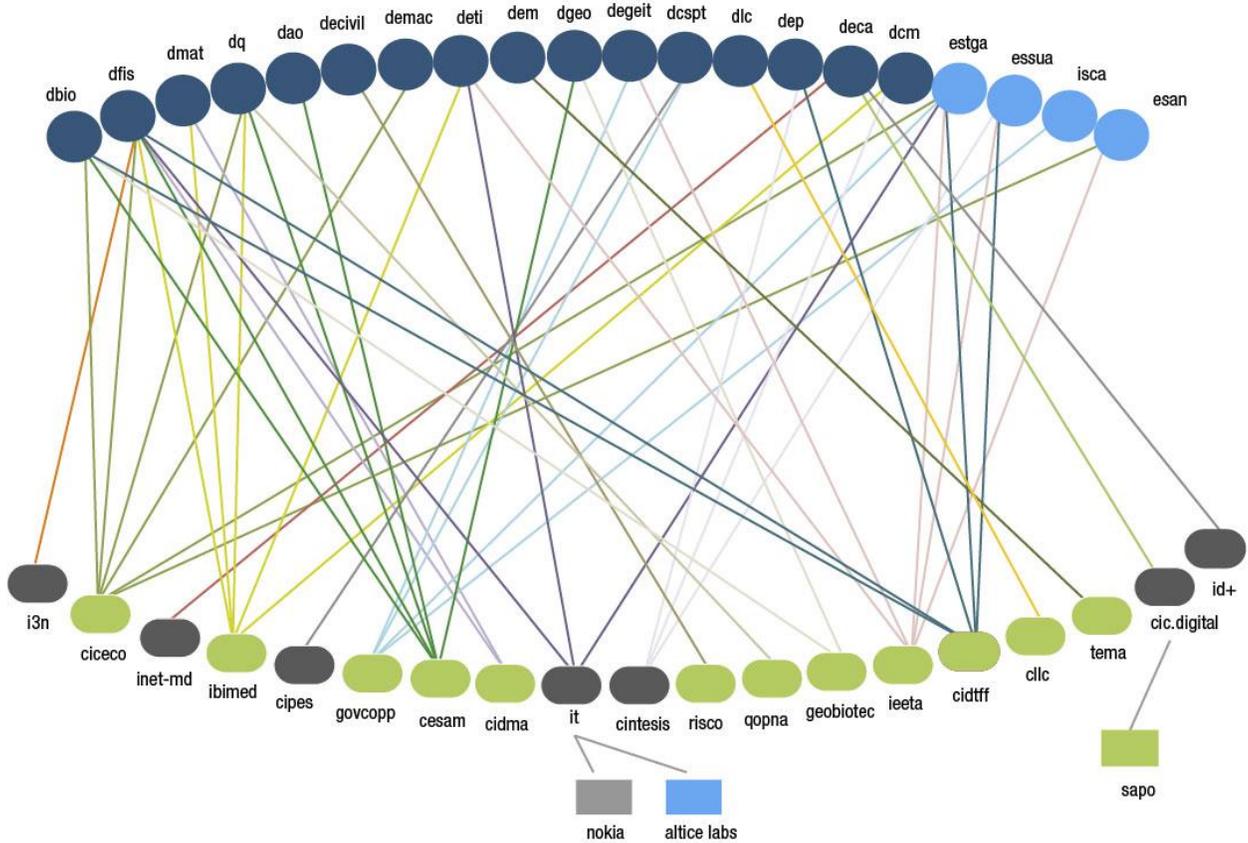
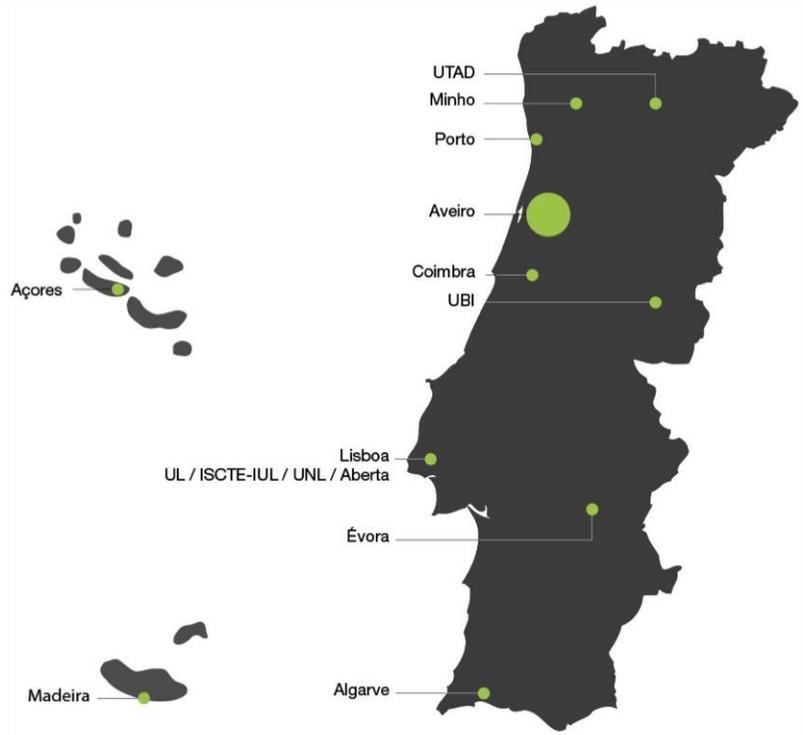
Final set of 54 indicators

(Carrión, García-Gutiérrez, Bas and Carot, 2012)

Methodological approach



Case study of a Portuguese public university



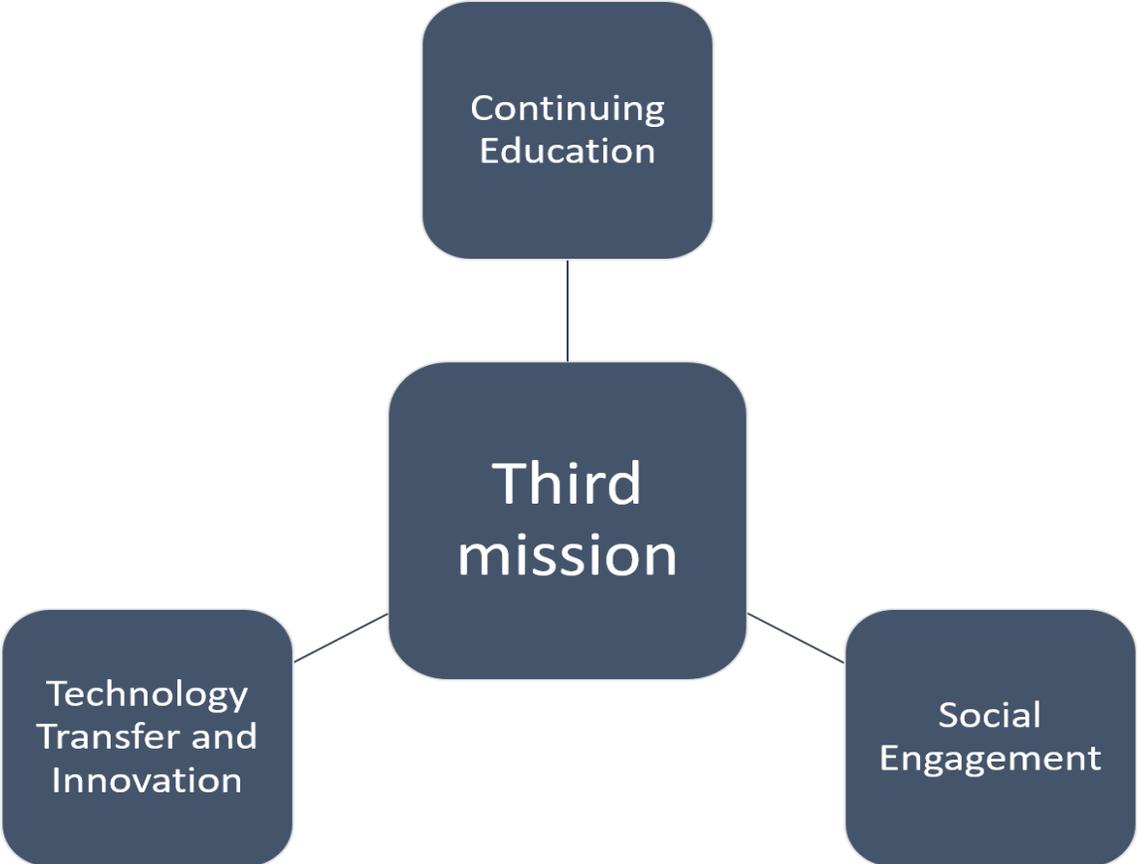


Methodological approach

Methodological options include:

- a thorough review of relevant literature on this topic
- content analysis of internal and external documents
 - university's strategic plan
 - quality manual
 - self-assessment report for certification of the institution's QAS
 - guidelines from the Portuguese assessment and accreditation agency (A3ES)
 - European standards guidelines (ESG)
- analysis of the university's QAS for an identification of possible PIs that address third mission activities' assessment

Methodological approach



Main findings



The university has fully embraced TM activities as a core mission

The [university's] mission is to create, share and apply knowledge, involving the whole community through teaching, research and cooperation with the surrounding environment, in order to make a clear difference for individuals and society. (Mission statement)

Main findings



The university's **strategic plan** argues for:

- a strong commitment to TM activities by referring to an institutional strategy geared to boosting income, which is then related to cooperation,
- an active contribution to regional development, to strengthen entrepreneurship, as well as knowledge and technology transfer

The [university] must have a leading role in the economic and social development of the region, based on an innovation and scientific and technological model that promotes cooperation (...).

It must also train qualified technical staff for sectors expected to have an increasing presence in the region, with special attention to lifelong learning programmes (...) (Strategic plan)

Main findings



The university's **strategic plan** further refers to the creation of an Institute for Cooperation meant to be the organisational structure where all activities associated to TM will be concentrated.

It defines the goal of incorporating the subsystems of research and cooperation with society in the institution's internal quality assurance system (IQAS) and of specifically developing internal performance indicators for cooperation.

Main findings



Where does this institution stand in terms of integrating TM in its QAS?

Analysis of the university's **Quality Manual** (2016) reinforces the argument for a commitment to cooperation with society as a core mission of the institution.

There is a set of indicators for cooperation with society, which are already identified in the Quality Manual, defined in association with specific goals that the university has set out to achieve.

The indicators defined are mostly addressed to financial issues, number of contracts, number of patents, number of new incubated companies, employability issues, and number of initiatives.

Main findings



A3ES reference framework for IQAS (Reference 7 – External relations)

- The Agency considers the inclusion of TM activities in QA mechanisms as part of ‘a sound and well developed internal quality assurance system’

The institution adopts mechanisms to promote, assess and enhance collaboration with other institutions and with the community, namely regarding its contribution to regional and national development.

In the ambit of its external relations policy, the institution has in place procedures to promote, monitor, assess and enhance interface and external action activities (...)

(A3ES Reference Framework for Internal Quality Assurance Systems)

Main findings



The **university's Self-assessment Report** acknowledges that its IQAS is more developed in the area of teaching & learning. However, it also argues for an incorporation of other quality assurance procedures, as established by national institutions.

The internal quality assurance procedures are executed in a global way (...), and there is evidence of the existence of strategies and policy supported in documents (...).

In these documents relevant indicators for this area are defined, for example: the value of external contracts (in mil. Euros) included in the Contract-Programme, and representing the funds raised through protocols, doctoral fees and research projects.

(University's Self-assessment Report)

Main findings



The final report by the External Evaluation Committee (CAE) acknowledges that:

- the university has an institutional policy for cooperation
- it has developed a set of indicators for the assessment of the impact and monitoring of regional development policies



The CAE classifies the degree of development of the institution's IQAS, both in terms of its third mission activities and globally, as **substantial**

Main findings



CAE agrees with the university on the need for further development of specific instruments and mechanisms in the area of cooperation with society, acknowledging the need to ‘overcome shortages in relevant indicators for the assessment of the impact and monitoring of policies of regional development.’



This university’s IQAS has been certified by A3ES, which means it complies with A3ES criteria for certification, as well as its set of reference points, in spite of the shortages identified.

Main findings



Set of possible indicators for TM activities that could be considered as specifically appropriate for this university, considering:

- the university's strategic options
- the three dimensions previously identified and that we consider apply to this university (Continuing education, Technology transfer and innovation, and Social engagement)
- the indicators identified in the E3M Project

Continuing education	Technology transfer and innovation	Social engagement
Existence of a strategy for continuing education, included in the mission statement and/or in the strategic plan	Existence of a strategy for technology transfer and innovation, included in the mission statement and/or in the strategic plan	Existence of a strategy for social engagement activities, included in the mission statement and/or in the strategic plan
Degree of development of quality assurance procedures for continuing education activities	Degree of development of quality assurance procedures for technology transfer and innovation activities	Degree of development of quality assurance procedures for social engagement activities
Number of lifelong learning programmes delivered	Number of incubated spin-off and start-up companies / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of sports events held at the university's infrastructures
Number of vacancies for lifelong learning programmes	Number of patents and prototypes / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of athletes involved in sports events held at the university's infrastructures
Number of participants in lifelong learning programmes	Number of interinstitutional partnerships / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of university athletes who participate in national and international sports competitions / Number of students
Number of lifelong programmes in partnership with public and private business organizations	Number of research projects with public and private business organizations / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of cultural events promoted by the university open to community
Lifelong learning students' degree of satisfaction	Number of traineeships in companies / Number of students	Number of participants in cultural events promoted by the university
	Existence of entrepreneurship fostering initiatives	Number of events organized by external organizations held at university's infrastructures
	Physical areas made available for entrepreneurial actions	Number of participants in events organized by external organizations held at university's infrastructures
	Number of R&D contracts with non-academic partners / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of university members (staff and students) engaged in civic projects for the community / Number of university members
	Number of consultancy contracts / Number of teaching staff FTE	Number of academic staff participating in professional bodies, networks, organizations and boards outside academia

Main findings



An interesting future exercise would be to look at these indicators and for each one ask the following two questions:

- Degree of relevancy. How relevant is this indicator for the university?
- Degree of data collection. Is the university already collecting the necessary data to calculate each of these indicators?

Indicator	Degree of relevancy			Degree of data collection		
	Highly relevant	Relevant	Not relevant	Systematically collected	Partially collected	Not collected

Final remarks



- the Portuguese public university of our case study clearly embraces TM activities as one of its core missions
- although present to a certain degree in QA mechanisms, it still lacks full integration with specific performance indicators in its QAS
- in terms of QA, TM activities are still at an embryonic stage



We can therefore speak of a mismatch between theory and practice

It was possible to establish a set of PIs that could be appropriate for this institution, suggesting a future exercise of testing their degree of relevance and data collection.

Thank you!

SOFIA BRUCKMANN, MARIA J. ROSA & LORAINÉ NAZARÉ

SOFIASB@UA.PT | M.JOAO@UA.PT | LNAZARE@UA.PT