

Higher Education in Portugal

[workshop: “Structural Changes in the Context of the Adjustment Programme”. Lisbon 19-21 January 2012.]

**José Ferreira Gomes,
Universidade do Porto**

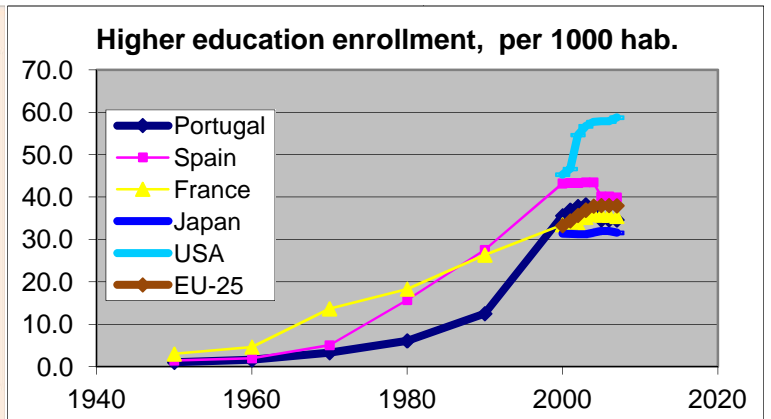
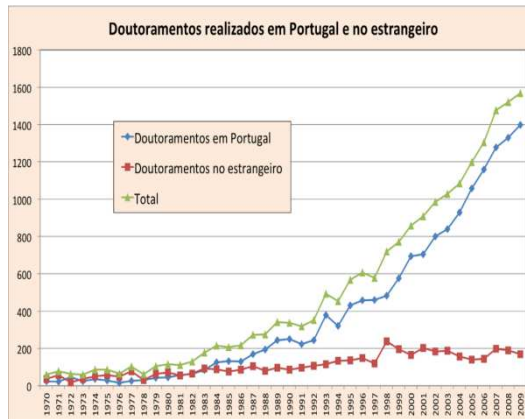
1. Massification of higher education occurred in Portugal with a delay of 10 to 20 years by comparison with other European countries. The rapid growth of demand between 1985 and 1995 led to the development of a private sector that reached 30% of the total enrollment but has been losing weight ever since 1995.
2. University autonomy was introduced in the Constitution of 1976 and led to one of the less regulated higher education systems in Europe. Financial dependence is the ever present discussion point.
3. The public direct contribution to universities and polytechnics has decreased by 40% since 2000 (in €/student), this being explained by the introduction of fees, by salary reductions and by other cuts, particularly through the increase of the student/staff ratio.
4. The private system tends to receive the less well-off students and works without public subsidies. Public support to students is available but insufficient to compensate the higher costs.
5. There is some evidence that students failing to get a scholarship in the public system have a higher probability to dropout. Most scholarships just cover fees.
6. A loan system (based on mutual guarantee and some public funding) is in place but the impact is limited.
7. When compared with polytechnics, access to universities is biased towards children from more educated and wealthier families.
8. For 2012, fees (€1000 for 1st cycle and higher for 2nd and 3rd cycle students) represent almost 1/3 of the public subsidy. (€1000 vs €3188.)
9. The requirement of research in universities (now assessed by the accreditation agency A3ES) may induce the rebranding of some private universities and many of their programs into the “polytechnic” category.
10. Most private universities have a not-for-profit status but a strict analysis might show that a charity status fits well just to the Catholic University (academically, the best among the non-public institutions).
11. Research performance has been growing steadily in the last decades with our indicators approaching those of other European countries. We overtook Italy (in the number of papers per million inhabitants) in 2010!
12. Transfer of knowledge is now part of the core mission of universities but this was assumed very recently (some 5 to 10 years after Spain). There is a lot of anecdotal evidence of success but no good national comparative studies. The number of joint papers (HE + companies) is rather small, suggesting a long way to go to achieve a fruitful cooperation.
13. The Accreditation Agency, A3ES, was established in 2007 but it is only now starting to work fully. (In 2005 all work on evaluation had been suspended.) So far, the action of the A3ES is that of clearing away marginal situations but its effect has not yet been felt in terms of major limitations to institutions.
14. Participation is close to 40% of the relevant cohort but a large number of unconventional students (older than 23 years of age and going through technological programs, CET) are being taken in by public polytechnics and many private institutions.
15. From around 2000, the public system was forced to stop the rapid growth it had gotten used to and this is still stressful for many institutions outside the more populated coastal areas around Lisbon and Porto.

16. Without the quota system at the access, many polytechnics and smaller universities would have to close down immediately.
17. The polytechnic system was created in 1980 with two major goals, teacher training to respond the need for many teachers at all levels and short engineering degrees built from highly respected older institutions.
18. Many see an academic drift in the evolution of polytechnics when they were allowed to provide master degrees (2nd cycle) and fighting for the right to grant PhDs.
19. Officially, polytechnics are required to perform applied (oriented) research but no public program was ever set up to support and develop this goal. A few high performing research groups exist that compete with university groups for funding.

Policy points to be discussed

- A. Reinforce differentiation between university degrees, polytechnic degrees and CET programs (non-higher education tertiary short programs of typically 18 months).
 - a. With a participation of about 40% of the youngsters in HE, it may be assumed that the system will now grow only very slowly but a diversion of students away from universities into polytechnic and CET programs may be advisable.
 - b. The Germanic way: The alternative of streaming high school pupils into these different lines by establishing topics (e.g. Mathematics) with more academic or more technical orientation should be considered.
 - c. The transfer of students between sub-systems (polytechnic and university or polytechnic and CET) should be organized into well defined pathways to facilitate students success without lowering standards.
 - d. Academic standards in the Portuguese higher education system are very uneven as a consequence of the fast growth around 1990 and the tough competition for students. This may have positive aspects but some sort of learning achievement measure might guarantee that learning standards are not lost.
 - e. Induce cooperation at regional level among institutions of different type to avoid duplications and to assure a balanced offer of CET, polytechnic and university programs.
- B. Should we discuss the possibility of further differentiation to establish a few research universities (or research strong areas in a larger number of universities)?
- C. The normal societal changes in demand of higher education leave some university departments well staffed but with no students. This may have been made worse by aggressive tactics of student attraction by the creation of trendier degrees with no long-term success. The cost of these under-used staff may be high in some cases but no mobility inducements are in place.
- D. Current financial restrictions are inducing a response from most universities and polytechnics that reduce the already small staff mobility. New openings are being allowed only if they end up in the promotion of local people!
- E. During the long period of growth of the educational system, teacher training was centered more in numbers than quality. It should now be possible to create conditions to select only the best for a teaching career.
- F. Ageing of academic staff.
 - a. The academic staff of many universities is aging (with an average close to 50) and the hope that this would be attenuated by the contracts of young and very competitive researchers in temporary positions is now fading away!
 - b. There are signs that young and more competitive academics are planning to leave Portugal after the reduction of their direct salary by around 23%.

Late Massification of HE

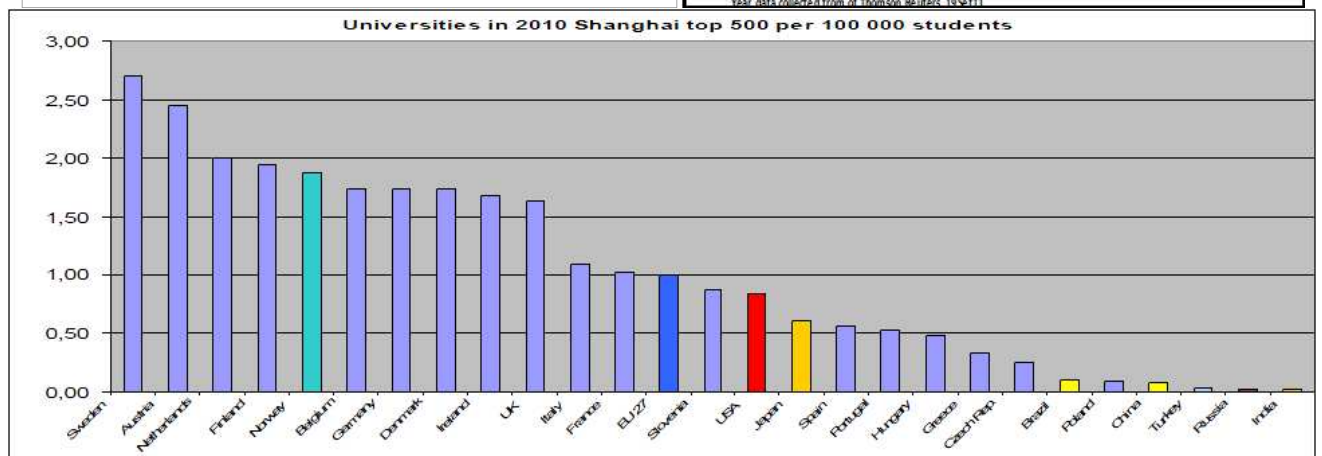
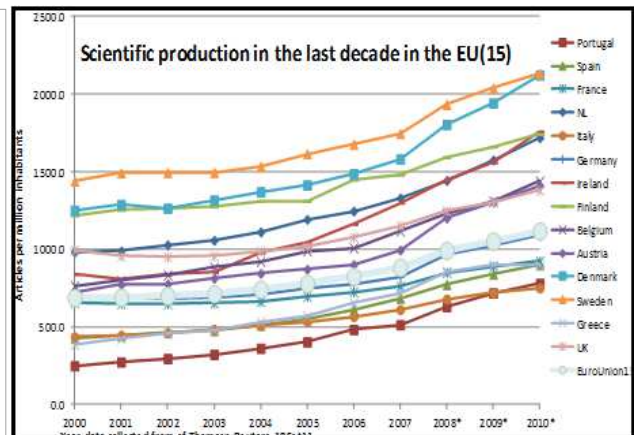
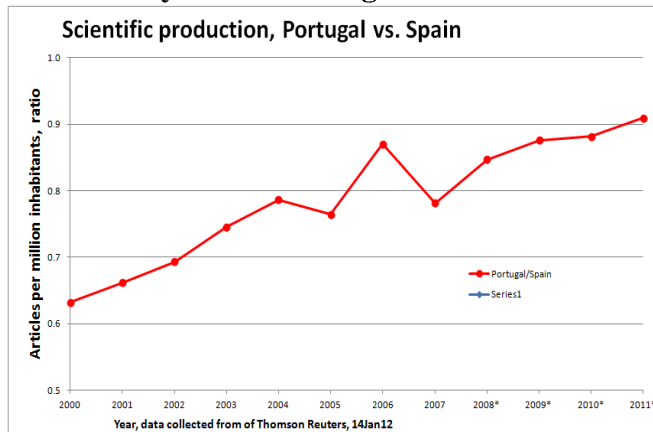


In 2011, 42 716 new students were given places in public universities and polytechnics.

	2009/10	Enrollment	(of which non-nationals)	CET	Entry 2010	Entry 2011 National system
Universities, public		183 806	(11 482)	438	35 236	28 025
Polytechnic, public		110 022	(2 872)	4 806	28 679	18 162
Total, public		293 828	(14 354)	5 244	63 915	46 187
Universities, private		60 174	(4 184)	773	13 888	-----
Polytechnic, private		29 625	(680)	197	5 830	-----
Total, private		89 799	(4 869)	970	19 718	-----
Grand Total		383 627	(19 425)	6 214	83 633	46 187

Cohort	110 000
(15-24years 1 145 770)	
Openings (public)	53 500
Placed	46 187
Placed (and not placed in 2010)	42 716
Entry in Polytechnics by other channels	7 854

A scientific system maturing fast



Major reduction of public funding in the last decade

Public funding per student in 2012: €3 188

Fees for 1st cycle: €1 000

2. Funding: direct subsidies and student support

Public direct funding to institutions

2000: M€1.463 €5,958 per student

in 2010 euro incl. Gov. retirem. plan

2012: M€840. €3,584 per student

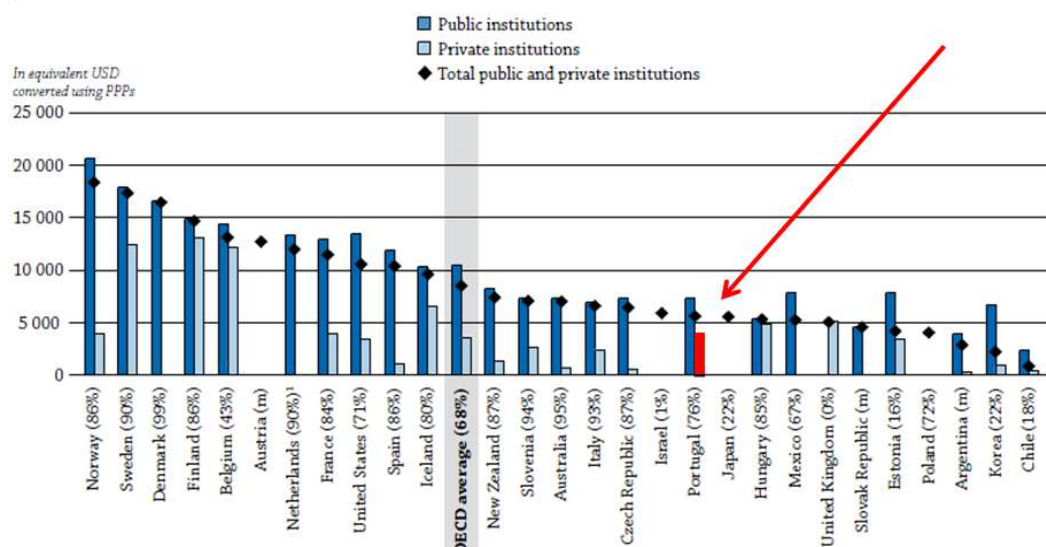
2012: M€747. €3,188 per student

Corrected for salary reduction in 2012

Change : -40%

Including student fees: €1000: €4188 Change: -30%
 (24% of the total cost) Salary reductions: 16%
 Other savings: 14%

Chart B3.4. Annual public expenditure on educational institutions per student in tertiary education, by type of institution (2008)



Some imbalance in the regional distribution of public HE, university and polytechnic degrees

Population	per million inhabitants	Univ	Poli	BA graduates	Total, Univ+Poli		Matr/1 ^o opç	BAgrad/Matr		
		MatricAc	MatricAc	MatricOt	Univ	Poly			MatricA	BA graduates
3 743 333	Norte	2180	1487	497	1561	949	3667	2510	85%	68%
2 378 485	Centro	2532	2689	1466	1727	1759	5221	3486	123%	67%
2 835 387	Lisboa &	3993	1602	692	2518	1050	5595	3568	94%	64%
751 231	Alentejo	1241	1088	724	724	732	2328	1456	147%	63%
435 833	Algarve	1264	1705	0	987	1411	2969	2398	132%	81%
247 483	Madeira	2259	77	0	1952	150	2336	2101	80%	90%
245 592	Açores	1942	322	0	672	419	2264	1091	116%	48%
10 637 344	Total	2635	1707	738	1759	1130	4342	2889	99%	99%

The table gives the number of new students in public HE per million population, for each NUT II region for universities and polytechnics; additionally, the number of 1st cycle graduates; “Matr/1^oopç” gives de ratio between the new students and those applying in 1st option in the same region, a measure of the regional demand; the last column gives the ratio between 1st cycle graduates and entrants. In green, the number of students entering polytechnics through other channels is given.