



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE

ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA



European Union
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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of PRIMARY EDUCATION at the UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Associate Professor, Dr. Timothy C. Papadopoulos (Coordinator)
Department of Psychology, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
2. Professor, Dr. Mary Koutselini
Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
3. Professor, Dr. Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes
Centre for Hellenic Studies/Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication,
King's College London, United Kingdom
4. Professor, Dr. John Spiridakis
The School of Education, St. John's University, New York, USA

N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

This is the Report of the External Evaluation Committee for the Department of Primary Education at the University of Ioannina in Greece. The on-site visit took place from Monday, 18 November 2013 to Wednesday, 20 November 2013. Professor George Stamelos, Member of the Board of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA), in a letter dated 25 July 2013, informed the following evaluators of their appointment by the HQA as members of the External Evaluation Committee for the Department of Primary Education, at the University of Ioannina. The members of the committee are the following: Dr. Timothy Papadopoulos, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus (Coordinator); Professor Mary Koutselini, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus; Professor Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes, King's College London, United Kingdom; and Dr. John Spiridakis, Professor, The School of Education, St. John's University, New York, USA. The Committee closely followed the schedule provided by HQA and the University of Ioannina. A detailed plan with a list of participants was delivered to the committee by HQA, which also scheduled site visits to the various facilities, including the Department's laboratories, the University Library, The Centre for the Study of Hellenic Language & Culture, and the Social Activities Building. The Committee had fruitful discussions with the Rector of the University, the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, the Dean of the School of Education, the Chair of the Department, the faculty, students, and the administrative staff. The evaluation reported herein is based on the internal evaluation report prepared by the Department of Primary Education for the years 2008-2013. Furthermore, the Rector of the University of Ioannina presented and made available to the Committee the strategic plan for the University of Ioannina for the years 2007-2013. Finally, the Committee was provided with the curriculum of the five programs of study (1 Undergraduate and 4 Graduate programs), a description of the doctoral program and a set of presentations pertaining to all aspects of the evaluation.

The Committee had useful meetings with staff, students associated with the three levels of programs (Undergraduate, Graduate, and Ph.D.) in the Department, as well as alumni during which a careful examination of the programs, research activities, and other scholarly work that is undertaken to further enhance the professional and scientific pursuits of the Department took place.

The Committee visited the facilities of the Department in the University Campus, and inspected all classroom and lab spaces.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The information and material provided to the External Evaluation Committee by the Department of Primary Education, which was used during the evaluation of the Department, was of high quality. A statement of intent prefaced all materials submitted in support of the evaluation. The statement delineated factors relevant to the review, including philosophy of teaching, research and innovation objectives, and when appropriate, any circumstances that would lead to consideration of future development. Finally, material that was important to the Committee but which was not directly available in the initial report became accessible to the Committee in a timely manner.

After a detailed quality assessment, the Committee concludes that the internal evaluation

process was met by the Department in terms of both content and objectives.

Finally, with no exception, all members of the Department had a positive attitude toward the evaluation and participated in the process in a cooperative manner, responding to data needs in a timely manner. This also applies to the administrative staff, students, and alumni of the Department. In short, every member of the Department perceived the evaluation procedure as (a) a framework that helped assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and the programs offered by the Department, and (b) an approach to assist the Department in documenting its work—for themselves and for others who are interested in issues relevant to the educational and research impact and societal outcomes of the Department.

Overall, the External Evaluation Committee concluded that the Department maintains a strong sense of its mission, a commitment for improvement and the expertise to achieve its mission.

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral program.

1. Undergraduate program

APPROACH

The new undergraduate curriculum was put into implementation in 2010. The Department is aware of the issues deriving from this transition period, i.e., the coexistence of subject matters of the previous and the new curricula, courses that are included in the curriculum as electives without any possibility to be offered because of the lack of teaching staff. The curriculum approach is mostly content- and skill-oriented. There is a positive attitude towards evaluation of and reflection on Departmental actions and initiatives and a concern with the institutional obstacles (i.e., bureaucracy, restricting framework of laws and regulations, the economic crisis and the imposed limitations, the reduction of staff numbers) that prevent changes.

- What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?

The goals and objectives aim at the holistic development of students and they include the construction of knowledge (i.e., concepts, procedures, and theories), the development of skills (for example teaching and research skills), and the cultivation of values and attitudes (e.g. cooperative attitudes, pedagogy as child caring). It would be better if the philosophy, the aims and the objectives of the Curriculum were articulated in writing, e.g. in programs of study available to students. The general aim of the undergraduate studies, as defined in the internal evaluation report, is the development of effective teachers and educated pedagogues (p. 15). Therefore the main question is whether the structure, the sequence, and the content of the Curriculum support the fulfilment of the aim. The Committee members are concerned about the criteria employed for both sequencing courses in different semesters and course selection. Introductory courses such as DEE 080, DEE 107, DEE 407 or DEE 196 and courses of the subject matter content, DEE 056 or DEE 183, such as are expected to precede the didactics and the courses that are structured on prerequisites.

- How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?

It is clear that the curriculum takes into account the school program, and it includes almost all the subject matters being taught in the primary school program. It is also obvious that decisions concerning the content of the Curriculum, namely the courses that should be included in the curriculum, were taken on the basis of the areas of specialization of the academics of the Department. It is suggested that both the pedagogical and methodological courses as well as didactics to be further enhanced supporting stances underlying teaching as inquiry, teaching as curriculum making, and teaching for social justice. The overarching intention of the program ought to be to assist educators who expect to exert leadership in their school settings and with their colleagues.

- Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

The Department has set up a committee for the revision of the curriculum, which meets regularly. Scientific criteria used for the revision of the Curriculum and the inclusion of applicable international standards of teacher competence could be further articulated.

2. Graduate program

The admission procedures of postgraduate students are clear, trustworthy and based on academic criteria, i.e., written exams, an interview, BA degree results. The postgraduate studies include four programs with two pathways in each program. The aims and objectives refer to specialization in Pedagogy and Administration in Education, Greek Language and Social Sciences in Education, Psychology-Counselling, Special Needs and Intercultural

Studies, and Positive Sciences.

The fact that all programs include both Pedagogy and Educational Research as core courses safeguards the pedagogical basis of specialization. The members of the Evaluation Committee share some concerns regarding the division in four separate programs without any provision for integration and interdisciplinary approaches amongst programs. The Department could consider the revision of the structure of the postgraduate programs with the aim of reforming the groupings of specializations, and of promoting flexibility to the students for choosing courses from other pathways. A system of sharing modules amongst different specializations in the MA programs would give a much more cohesive perspective and help the Department to form a strategic plan for achieving their aims.

Technology and research are extensively used, and the Department is aware of the need to periodically update the content and bibliography of the courses. There is also a commitment to keeping postgraduate students up to date with both the application of technology to education and the use of application programs (i.e., SPSS, EQS, ATLAS, NVIVO).

It is noteworthy that the laboratories of the Department support the effectiveness of the postgraduate programs, and contribute to the cultivation of research culture, since students have the opportunity for active engagement in a number of cutting edge activities, such as designing virtual environments for educational purposes, promoting intercultural research and writing, experimentation and participation in research programs.

3. Doctoral program

The Doctorate program does not require taking any courses and the progress of doctorate dissertation, which is usually the sole requirement for the doctorate degree, depends mainly on the supervisor. Academic Writing, Statistics, and Advanced Research Methods courses that are usually included in the curricula or training portfolios of doctorate studies are not offered.

The PhD students are satisfied with the interaction with their advisor, and the support they are given. The research competencies are acquired through independent study and personal tutoring.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Undergraduate program

- How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?

The information provided about the fulfillment of the Department's goal and the implementation of the curricula derive from students' answers in specifically designed questionnaires, which are anonymously filled in at the end of each course. According to the Department's Internal Evaluation Report a great percentage of students have the perception that the curriculum is implemented effectively. However, the students' opinions during the meetings with the Evaluation Committee afforded some additional insights for potential improvement: for example, about the necessity for more practical experience of teaching at schools, the enhancement of educational theories with practical implications, the improvement of the interaction between academics and students during the lectures, the reduction of the huge classes of 200 and 300 attendants.

Moreover, the Committee feels that without upgrading and extending the Practical Experience Program, it is difficult for the Department to meet its aims and objectives. A better mentoring system and increase of the time that students spend at schools are needed. This observation is in line with the 4th year students' expectations, as explicitly expressed during the evaluation process. Students expressed the desire for more coursework to include more explicit practices and for more extensive classroom teaching experiences and training.

The School Experience could be improved by offering students the opportunity to teach at

least three days per week during the 7th and 8th semester of studies, as reflected in 'best practices' in many countries. However, more support is needed from additional special personnel (e.g. seconded = *apospasmenoi* teachers) and for a more effective mentoring system. The fact that schools seem reluctant to accept students in their classrooms and to function as mentors must be the central issue in a continuous dialogue on the strategic planning of the Department, among the members of the academic staff during regular Departmental meetings. Good practices for promoting the collaboration with schools should be identified, for example the dissemination of Leaflets with information about the advantages for schools and their teachers, Certificates issued by the Ministry for efficient mentoring, Collaboration with the school Counsellors/ supervisors for promoting the collaboration in the School Experience Program.

- Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

The Department has qualified academic staff, but the scientific, technical, and administrative personnel has been diminished, a situation that could result in a number of difficulties, such as malfunction of the laboratories, reduction of students' supervision, interaction, and support. The central library, the Centre for the Study of Hellenic Language & Culture, and the Departments' laboratories are ideal educational places that could promote the culture of educated pedagogues and teachers. Additionally, the embedded in the curricula and the courses technology and research promote the updating of the curriculum.

2. Graduate programs

It is important to be stated that the staff commitment to the delivery and effective implementation of undergraduate and graduate programs transcends the ordinary duties of an academic Department's members.

In this context, it would be good for postgraduate students to contribute to the teaching and support of the undergraduate programs. "Good practices" refer to the mentoring of graduate and doctorate students in the subjects of undergraduate programs, by offering them opportunities to implement the theory (e.g. through tutorial sessions) and to reflect on micro-teaching practices.

The lack of funding for postgraduate studies (including scholarships) restricts the capability of the Department to employ postgraduate and doctorate students and to offer scholarships. The Committee shares the perception that funding for postgraduate studies should not be viewed as counteracting education as a social good. The Committee therefore hopes that the Department will seek to explore the possibility of offering studentships and other services, particularly to students who really need them.

The Department recognizes the need to enrich the international bibliography in all the postgraduate and doctorate programs (Internal Evaluation Report, p. 97). The Committee members second this and also recommend that all postgraduate students be able to read the bibliography written in English.

RESULTS

1. Undergraduate program

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department's predefined goals and objectives?

Observations concerning the implementation of the Undergraduate Program are offered in the above sections of the report. The curriculum is implemented well, and the Department is aware of the changes and improvements needed.

The Internal Evaluation Report refers to some important indicators of efficiency in the curriculum implementation as evident by the students' course evaluations. Moreover, the

ICT courses, along with e-courses and the system of asynchronous tele-communication could be considered as adequate indicators of a process of curriculum update.

The Head of the Department, the Rector of Academic affairs, and the Rector of the University along with the academic, technical and administrative staff of the Department are all dedicated to the fulfilment of the Departments' mission. Nevertheless, the very centralised and bureaucratic structure of the Greek higher education system, especially the central services of the Ministry of Education concerning the revision of programs and innovations, restrict the possibilities for change.

In sum, our proposed improvements concern: the restructuring of the Curriculum; the reforming of the School Experience Program and the written identification of the School Experience as a compulsory program in the undergraduate curriculum. Moreover, the Department should establish the practice of the Academic Advisor for supporting each student's academic progress.

2. Doctoral program

The quality of the doctorate dissertations is satisfactory. In some programs, students are encouraged to present their work in national and international conferences as well as in Education journals. The fact that all doctorate dissertations must be approved by a scientific committee of seven internal and external members of the university and the broader academic community, along with the practice to upload the final dissertation into a depository open web page, contribute to the gradual raising of the standards of the dissertations.

IMPROVEMENT

1. Doctoral program

In terms of strategic planning, the Department needs to articulate, clearly and in writing, the doctorate students' obligations and duties and to define the structure and the standards of their dissertations, by developing a regulatory framework of procedures, duties, obligations, and expected outcomes. It is also important that the procedures for progression and completion of the doctorate program are clear, for example, by specifying minimum and maximum length of studies for full- and part-time study.

The Department should reflect on international practices according to which the curricula of postgraduate and doctorate studies include advanced quantitative and qualitative research methodology and courses in Statistics. Doctoral students advocate the adoption of this practice in addition to the establishment of monthly meetings of all doctorate students of each program in order to share experiences, difficulties, and knowledge. Thus, the improvement of the research training provision at postgraduate and doctorate level must be re-examined especially in the cases of doctorate students coming from other departments.

Moreover, the practice of the presentation of students' work in national and international conferences and in education journals should become compulsory for all doctorate students. Also, a rewarding practice could be used for doctoral students engaged in teaching in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs, as part of their duties during their studies.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

The Department of Primary Education has embraced course evaluations for all courses in order to determine the efficacy of the course and the delivery method of course content. The External Evaluation Committee ascertained the dynamic and effective approaches the Department of Primary Education has put into place. For example, during the past several years, as the Department noted in its Internal Evaluation Report and, as our interviews and document review verified, student course evaluation data was collected and analyzed. This data collection initiative was structured and implemented to help the Department faculty identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in course content and delivery, for the most part, as perceived by their students. Faculty members were expected to modify their courses, as needed, based on the results of the course evaluation data and analysis.

Another Department-wide expansive approach for improving the teaching experience of faculty members as well as the concomitant enhancement of student learning is the Department's integration of technology for most courses. The technology integration reflected one branch of the Department's expansive foray into the new terrain of technology that has become so pervasive in social networking as well as in the delivery of instruction.

The Department's reiterated its own report in confirming the variety of methods and approaches used for delivery of instruction in the classroom: lecture, group work and e-learning approaches and strategies.

In addition to the variety of methods of instruction, several required content area courses included a two week field experience for the students. According to the faculty interviewed, the two weeks were divided into one week of observation and one week of practice teaching in the classroom.

There is a wide array of laboratories that help facilitate the pedagogical components of several content subjects such as science, technology in education, mathematics, environmental education, and Greek language education. These well-equipped laboratories provide research and educational experiences to undergraduate and graduate students who are encouraged to participate or conduct experiments in educational science, technology, pedagogy, language arts, and mathematics (to name a few) at the Department of Primary Education. For example, the Pedagogy (Didactics) and School Teaching included a two section mini classroom and observation deck section, somewhat akin to a medical amphitheater for the observation of surgical demonstrations. This laboratory facilitates the observation of various teaching approaches that can later be discussed by both observers and performers.

The capstone practical experience training involved two weeks of classroom teaching for the student. Students have the opportunity to teach all of the subjects associated with the primary school classroom. Afterwards, these practicum students discuss their experiences with one another and their professor. No formal written observation report or evaluations of the student's teaching experience are taken up during this final semester.

Currently, due to the lack of funding there are no mentors (supporting teachers) dedicated to structuring observations and mentoring each of the approximately two hundred students spread out at the various school sites involved in the culminating School Experience component.

Another effective vehicle for the professional development of faculty teaching and student teaching practices is the attendance at conferences sponsored by professional education organizations, the District Educational Authorities, the University, and the Department.

The Department's initiating conferences dealing with issues such as how teachers can deal

with “bullying” both in-person and on the internet are important.

Methods of teaching Greek as a second language, as well as other than Greek languages such as French, German and English are well served.

The conferences were initiated, structured and implemented by the faculty of the Department of Primary Education and often with partners from other universities, schools and community agencies.

The faculty on their own and through such organizations organized by Department faculty, also structured and implemented numerous seminars for students, fellow faculty members and the community.

An example of the deep commitment of the Department faculty members to teaching and their students is the fact that so many of the faculty members routinely teach additional courses without compensation. While the reason and need for this phenomenon to occur could possibly be obviated by a different organizational structure and/or scheduling issues, it is quite remarkable.

The Department faculty members value and seek to strengthen the field experience, components of teaching, including but not limited to the structuring and implementation of practical seminars.

Students interviewed have noted the availability of faculty members to discuss course assignments and issues that may arise.

IMPLEMENTATION

Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

The University of Ioannina’s Department of Primary Education Chair, Dean of the School of Education, the Vice Rector, and Rector clarified the Quality Assurance mission of using data collection and analysis approaches.

The Course evaluation analysis approach has been implemented as a core aspect of the Department’s Quality Assurance during the past few years. The data collection included the student responses to the content, teaching, and pedagogy subsumed by their courses. The Internal Evaluation committee had collected and analyzed the course evaluation data with an eye on modifying, as appropriate, undergraduate or graduate curriculum courses in terms of content and teaching practices.

As their Internal Evaluation Report noted, several teaching methods are used by the faculty. Methods noted include the traditional lecture style, groups for discussion, and use of e-learn and Blackboard for resources. During the Internal Evaluation Committee’s presentation, we observed the use of online videos of various faculty members teaching their course. Our discussions with faculty also confirmed that e-learning had become part of the faculty member’s teaching culture.

Faculty teaching practices rely on excellent laboratory experiences for the students. The inclusion of additional mandatory two-week school field experiences for each of the several of the core content area courses enhances the chance for students to develop early confidence in teaching the subject of their experience.

Then Intercultural related coursework as well as the Greek literacy courses encompass the pedagogy of teaching immigrant students found in today’s schools in Greece.

The Greek language laboratory, for example, has excellent resources for teaching Albanian students.

Courses with smaller class sizes enable more faculty-student interaction, and enable the

possibility for small group activities that help make learning effective.

Faculty members teaching large classes, sometimes 200 and more students, expressed frustration with the challenge of achieving large classes, however, make such interaction and engagement especially daunting.

The course evaluations indicated the general overall satisfaction of the undergraduate and graduate students in terms of the delivery of instruction. The students interviewed also noted their overall satisfaction with the course content, although there were some students who expressed a desire for more pedagogy related to the teaching of the rich course content of their diverse curriculum. The students interviewed expressed their satisfaction with their teachers who were available to answer questions that arose during their practical and field experiences. The alumni also averred that the faculty was available to meet with them to answer questions and discuss pedagogical applications during their various field experiences and student teaching capstone experience during the final semester of study. Many alumni were also encouraged and felt prepared to further their education at the Master's and Doctoral level of academic studies.

Undergraduates felt prepared to enter the Master's program, while some of the graduates of the Master's degree program felt prepared to continue with their doctoral studies.

Faculty teaching practices seem also to have been enhanced through the help of online resources that summarize course objectives, methods, and certain rubrics.

RESULTS

There is an extremely good response rate to the course evaluations. The Department has the evaluations done in class rather than online. This is an excellent approach, given the fact that students are less responsive to online evaluations. Faculty and course evaluations by students are promulgated.

Even though Greek tertiary education does not make course attendance mandatory, Department courses are often standing room only because of the level of student motivation and engagement. Faculty members were also available to assist and advise students outside of class.

The survey of graduates of the undergraduate program has also revealed an overall satisfaction with the experience of the graduates.

The alarming lack of financial and human resources has exacted an onerous burden on the Department's goal of providing competent field experiences and student teaching teacher preparation.

Faculty are already teaching at the various academic levels, are advising hundreds of Undergraduate, Master's and Doctoral level students, and are mentoring theses. The loss of mentor teachers for undergraduate primary student teachers is a major detriment to the entire curriculum.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department has noted the need for funding to implement the School Experience component of the undergraduate program. The need to expand the current level of pedagogical applications and School Experience (professional development) for the undergraduate students is extremely dire. The Committee members concur with the Department's recommendation to be granted additional faculty, including the mentors who were previously part of the School Experience structure.

Over two hundred undergraduate students are scheduled each year to complete the culminating or capstone School Experience. This training experience is a critical one for prospective teachers. Given the significant cuts in budgets for in-service training of teachers,

the importance of graduating professional, competent teachers who are confident in their ability to teach the various subject of primary education becomes more crucial.

Based on standards for School Experience associated with quality student teaching, the Department should consider extending the periods of time for students to practice and observe teaching. It would appear that a period of at least eight to twelve weeks would make sense. Also, there should be one or more faculty members dedicated to supervising the implementation of the School Experience component, including weekly seminars, which is scheduled in the student's final semester of study for a two week period.

Moreover, the inclusion of mentors and/or faculty who conduct observations and provide written as well as oral feedback to the students is recommended.

The use of associate teachers, the teachers whose classroom is used for the School Experience, should also be incentivized to report on his or her observations of the student teacher and have discussions for improvement of the student teacher's performance with the teacher. The associate teacher should also provide written feedback to the faculty member conducting seminars associated with the School Experience.

Hiring additional faculty members whose time and purpose would be dedicated to this pursuit of strengthening and improving the teaching practices of faculty members at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Department's report noted the need to find ways to achieve this goal of faculty improvement, especially in connecting research by faculty and from the field to teaching and learning in the university classroom.

Such practical preparation of the students requires the dynamic involvement of mentors and associate teachers who can model effective teaching practices for the students in the classroom. These mentors and associate teachers should provide regular feedback in oral and written form. The mentors and associate teachers should have similar evaluation forms to document the progress of the student teacher's performance growth. In addition, weekly seminars should enable the School Experience students to share and discuss the feedback they receive as well as to explore their own reflections on their teaching. Such an exploration of the ramifications of the positive and negative experiences during the School Experience should take place in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

In short, pre-service and in-service teachers need written feedback and evaluations related to their School Experience performance in the classroom, including the preparation of lesson plans, in order to attain the level of teaching competence, and confidence to become exemplary teachers.

Finding a way to have smaller class sizes would enable faculty members to more fully motivate and engage students. The instruction of pedagogical knowledge without concurrent "modeling" misses an opportunity for students to gain a deeper understanding of the many subjects they must teach in their capacity as primary education teachers.

Consider structured and organized faculty development seminars, lectures, and presentations. A special committee can organize regular, structured monthly meetings where faculty members can introduce their teaching practices and research related to teaching. Conferences and seminars available to entire school and faculty continue to be important and should be supported and encouraged.

The large scale analysis of course evaluations for the department indicates a positive experience of the students for the course content and applicable pedagogy. Interviews with alumni who have become teachers also revealed the strength of the pedagogical branch of the Department's coursework.

The Department could set up a "faculty forum" in which interested new and veteran faculty could meet to explore and discuss current research, including faculty research. This forum could also explore on a monthly basis innovative strategies for student engagement in the classroom. Peer review of faculty teaching could involve observations of teaching with an eye

on sharing new pedagogy. Innovative approaches such as co-teaching could also be explored. Post tenure review of teaching practices has also become popular in some circles of academia. Tenured faculty are observed and evaluated by the Chair and another faculty member of their choosing. The tenured faculty member also prepares a statement of his or her philosophy of teaching, approaches to teaching, documents indicating recognition of teaching practices by peers and students.

Research indicates that effective faculty teaching enhances student learning as well as student achievement. Faculty members should continue to explore the many varied pedagogical strategies relevant to their coursework.

Many courses already subsume pedagogical applications from a theoretical perspective. The challenge is to incorporate more research-based applied pedagogy and instructional practices and modules, if possible, in the many traditional theoretically-based courses. Prospective teachers and in-service teachers need an ample amount of explicit instructional practices they can confidently apply in their childhood education classroom.

Faculty development for improving the instructional repertoire of faculty as well as students cannot be overemphasized. Such faculty development is accessible through a plenitude of online websites. On these websites, faculty members share their successful teaching approaches and strategies for engaging students. There are blogs, as well, where new and veteran faculty members can share ideas and issues, such as how to obtain engagement of students in large lecture hall style classes.

The Department is painfully aware of the current obstacles to implementing effective and necessary School Experience. An immediate pressing issue is the current two-week time period for the culminating or capstone School Experience. Students are not afforded an adequate time frame to hone their skills and to become confident in teaching the many subjects required in the childhood level classroom. This capstone Training should involve a minimum of eight weeks of actual classroom teaching experience.

Finally, the Department is extremely vulnerable in respect to its Foreign Language Teaching staff or coordinators. These individuals perform key functions in relation to foreign language studies (in English, French, and German) at both departmental and university levels. We were advised that these individuals are employed on short-term contracts and that their contracts are administrative ones without the possibility of tenure. We regard this as matter requiring urgent consideration by the University and we recommend that alternative and more appropriate employment arrangements are considered for these individuals. A range of possibilities should be considered including appointment to standard faculty positions, part time academic positions combined with part time administrative roles, or teaching contracts with an appropriate level of status and permanence.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

APPROACH

The Department's policy and main objectives in research

The Department of Primary Education is dedicated to the excellence in research. The priorities of the Department of Primary Education at the University of Ioannina are to contribute new knowledge to the field of education and to translate research findings into practice. This mind-set is clearly reflected in the development, design, and implementation of nine well-equipped and conscientiously designed labs that reflect the multifaceted aspects of the educational discipline itself. These research laboratories help advance and support research work and facilitate effective learning through workshops and intensive training. The labs are also used as a venue for students to develop and present their own research projects developing their potential through interactive activities.

Furthermore, research priorities are reflected mainly in national and – to a lesser extent – in international publication records, some international research collaborations and a great number of national collaborations, external and internal research funding (33 programs over the last five years, almost 20% of which internationally funded), and collaborations with the public and private sectors for the advancement of educational and social initiatives. Research in the Department of Primary Education covers a broad range of projects from basic to applied research.

Taken together, these actions have resulted in a considerable level of productivity across multiple domains, including research and teaching. It is noteworthy that since 2007, the Department of Primary Education has successfully secured competitive national and international research funds, with the Department being ranked 5th among the 21 Departments of the University of Ioannina (with a total budget of 4.5 million euro).

Internal standards for assessing research

It appears that no internal funds are included in the annual budget of the Department for the support of research related activities. It is deemed necessary for the University to provide opportunities for internal funding on a competitive basis, contributing to the required growth of scientific research in Social Sciences, in general, and Educational Sciences, in particular. This will guarantee the quality of the research activities conducted, and support the strategic decision of the Department for research-oriented programs and collaborations, enhancing the Department's visibility and contribution to international research.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Department of Primary Education is engaged in systematic, ongoing, integrated, and research-based planning, developing and maintaining, in turn, a number of research activities focusing on science, mathematics, literacy, and special education. The Department is placing a major emphasis on graduate education, and the presence of graduate students is an important part of the environment. In a seemingly endless period of financial stringency and uncertainty, both the strategic and operational roles and value of research-related activities in the Department are more pertinent and pointed.

The faculty members receive the necessary guidance from the University regarding the available calls or grants, at both national and international level. However, with perhaps some notable exceptions, the Department does not get the required support from the University in developing competitive grant and fellowship applications. Faculty who wish to undertake a survey as part of their proposed projects need to take special measures when preparing their application, as the assistance to researchers submitting proposals for a

research grant is somewhat limited. It is of primary importance for the University to further assist researchers at all stages of the proposal development process by matching researchers with appropriate funding opportunities, providing editing support and feedback on draft proposals, developing knowledge mobilization strategies, and helping researchers convey the significance of their research. It is suggested that the existing service team of the Research Committee of the University, to help the Faculty more systematically obtain external funding, building capacity and awareness about grant funding, and encouraging research and scholarly endeavours. This service team could also function as a key mediator for conducting and promoting better communication within and between the various research units of the Department and the School as a whole.

Finally, no merit-based scholarships are offered by the Department. At the very least, it is important to introduce some scholarships at the doctoral level, as scholarships are important on several levels. Not only do they provide additional financial support to the best of the students, but winning a scholarship brings with it a powerful and justified sense of accomplishment and serves as an incentive to pursue further academic goals.

Scientific publications

Faculty devotes considerable effort in the creation and dissemination of knowledge for the local society through seminars, colloquia, and conferences. The connections with the District Educational Authorities are strong and this is reflected in how the Department contributes to knowledge in various areas of education as a discipline at the District level. However, in spite of the strong connection and the dissemination of research findings to the local society, the scientific output of the Department is not equally impressive, of course, with some notable exceptions. Currently, the faculty places more emphasis on monographs and edited volumes published in Greek and conference proceedings – among which a notable example is the annually published ‘Hepetirida’, which provides a platform for academics and researchers to present their research results and development activities on a wide areas and topics in education. Also, some collective publications in English are in progress or completed. Although these publications are important, less attention is paid to publications in referred and top-tier journals. Since the Department prioritizes quality over quantity, it is recommended that the faculty should strive to send manuscripts more often to high impact journals. This will not only foster the faculty in doing an even better job with analyses and manuscript writing, but probably further increase the number of top publications during the next years, increasing, in turn, the visibility of the Department in the scientific community.

Research projects

The research produced by the faculty members of the Department falls into five research groupings with rather distinct areas of interest and research projects. This is somewhat expected given the diversity of the subjects in the field. However, it is important to ensure that research activities and objectives do not discriminate against any individuals or groups within the Department. The Department should reinforce a tradition of research collaboration that brings students and researchers together across traditional boundaries (e.g., pedagogy, literacy, science, mathematics, special education, and psychology). The existing research teams should constitute neither concentrations nor organizational divisions within the Department, but awareness of them should help develop more comprehensive research projects across disciplines.

Research collaborations

The culture of the Department is developing towards being research oriented and this not only extends towards the staff but also students, particularly at the graduate and doctoral level. Some faculty and student mobility is in place, but it is important for the Department to keep exploring opportunities that will assure high-quality collaborations and valuable learning experiences.

RESULTS

Faculty members have secured a considerable amount of funding from 26 national and 7 international agencies, with the vast majority of them being undertaken by faculty members as principal investigators.

Regarding scientific publications, the faculty members have a satisfactory research record, but more could be achieved in terms of publishing in quality refereed journals in their respective fields. The Department is generating most publications in monographs and edited volumes in Greek, in some international edited collections, and in a large number of conference proceedings. It is strongly suggested that faculty members continue to strive for more publications in refereed and top-tier journals. This will provide the necessary groundwork for competitive research proposals at the national and, most importantly, at the international level.

In regards to the research projects undertaken, the faculty members fall into four research groupings which seem to create some barriers for collaboration and intellectual exchanges. As the Department grows, it should carefully consider not making these groupings excessively formalized and should encourage the groups to remain flexible in their intellectual character in order to avoid creating any hindrances to collaboration. Especially, when considering budget constraints, the faculty members of the Department have to aim for collaborative research applications, in order to be successful in securing sustainable grant funding. The University aspires to a strong research agenda and faculty members need to allocate appropriate time for conducting research. Also, it is recommended that young faculty members receive release time from some administrative duties in order to concentrate on their research productivity.

As far as research collaborations are concerned, there are a few instances in which faculty members participate in large consortiums. It is very important to seek for opportunities to participate in consortiums that include partners who have a long experience in the relevant fields and application areas, and, thus, facilitate the process of securing sufficient international funding for research. In addition, only a small proportion of faculty members spent time in overseas research environments to their benefit. Faculty members are encouraged to apply for ERASMUS Staff Mobility grants for training purposes and for building up cooperation with colleagues from other higher education institutions, in their respective fields.

Regarding the efficacy of research work, the citation analysis provided in the report shows that there is a gradual increase of the number of citations for the work published by the faculty. Although this might be promising, there is only a small portion of the published work of the faculty that is cited in international citation indices that calculate the scientific value of a researcher (e.g., Web of Science, Scopus, or Google Scholar). It is important for the faculty to aim for more publications in referred and top-tier journals to improve the visibility of the individual researchers and the Department accordingly. This becomes necessary, as books and monographs do not get similar attention. Impact measures such as the *h*-index should be gradually used to value the quality of the faculty's output at individual level.

IMPROVEMENT

The Committee's suggestions for improvement are as follows:

(a) For young researchers to be aspired to be employed in the Department of Primary Education, faculty members need to continuously seek alternative ways for funding Departmental research by external (European or international) grant programs, and also in terms of allocating a proportion of its annual budget for the support of student researchers. Particularly, collaborative international research projects have to be further pursued as they represent excellent opportunities for students to obtain unique and life-altering educational and research experiences. These practices will result in aspiring young researchers to pursue research within the Department in a variety of research positions (graduate, doctoral, or post-doctoral level).

(b) Also, it is considered necessary that faculty members in the Department of Primary

Education run research that facilitates interdisciplinary efforts. Dynamic interactions among faculty members from different dimensions will also provide students with new perspectives, encourage them to operate in a multidisciplinary environment, and facilitate, in turn, real-world problem solving.

- (c) It is also important to put emphasis on recruiting Ph.D. students who have typically spent time abroad, instead of recruiting mainly doctoral students who have been graduates of the Department or other similar departments in the country.
- (d) The Committee strongly recommends that the faculty members in the Department remain vigilant for securing external funding for their graduate students. The Committee also recommends that the Department considers the possibility of creating a small number of graduate scholarships.
- (e) The Committee recommends that the Department explores ways to involve and collaborate with faculty members from other Departments (e.g., Department of Early Childhood Education or Department of Philosophy, Education, and Psychology) who are interested in conducting international projects and research.
- (f) The Committee commends that the University supports administratively the Department with a well-trained team of officers from the Research Office of the University of Ioannina, who will give advice and assistance in the preparation and submission of proposals at Department and School level, ensuring full compliance and helping to increase success rates.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

APPROACH

During the external evaluation visit, there were continuing problems with the proposed administrative restructuring of University institutions by the Ministry of Education: on account of the industrial action of some of the administration staff and of the occupation of administration premises by students, we were unable to access certain premises. However, we did meet 5 out of the 6 administration staff attached to the Department (we were told that this number had been reduced from an initial total of 9 staff). The Department felt that this reduction in services has clearly placed a burden on the remaining staff, particularly the IT personnel, and especially in the light of the integral role of ICT in the curriculum of the Department. The internal evaluation report made reference to insufficiency of IT support staff and this was confirmed by the two members of IT support, during our meeting with the administrative personnel. It also emerged that certain administration problems and some of the increased workload of the staff could be alleviated with a full digitization of material and documents related to student enrolments as well as of other documents that need to be produced on a regular basis. Moving to having as many documents as is possible in electronic form (in some cases even in scanned form) would facilitate the administrative day to day running of the Department. Even with this provision, both academic and administrative members of staff highlighted the difficulties associated with budget limitations, which have a negative effect on the services provided.

We also noted that more efficient communication between the Department's administrative staff and the institution's central administration services could improve the effectiveness of administrative and managerial practices and potentially ease the workload of individual member of staff.

The Campus offers a range of excellent facilities that were praised highly by students at our meetings with them: these include a library which houses a large and properly catalogued collection (300.000 titles) in a state of the art building and is therefore a major asset for the Institution; a very well-resourced sports centre that often hosts PanHellenic sports events; a refectory/dining hall that – exceptionally for Greek universities – offers all students, regardless of family income, very good quality, freshly prepared food for free; two halls of residence, one older and one recently built, that nonetheless appear to have limited capacity so as to house the large numbers of students.

The provision of services is overall impressive but the numbers of students seem to put a strain on it. This applies to teaching rooms. There are 4 large teaching rooms in the Department that cannot fulfill the needs of students effectively, particularly in the light of the exceptionally high levels of student attendance and presence in the Department. The Department's labs are well resourced, beautifully arranged spaces but lack of open access to some of them due to budget limitations and space constraints means that they mainly serve the needs of postgraduate students, rather than of the large cohorts of undergraduates. There also seems to be a concentration of lectures in mid-week.

There is good provision of centralized counselling services but no designated tutor from within the Department. However, great pastoral care from staff who are praised highly by students for their availability and for 'having their office doors open to them' seems to ensure that students in need of counselling services are properly channelled.

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on a rough organizational chart included in the internal evaluation report, the

Department includes the following:

1. Head of Department
2. Departmental Council consisting of staff members and sub-divided into academic committees for the delivery of the curriculum.
3. Secretariat of the Department

Led by an exceptionally active Head of Department, the Department's academic management committees consist of highly committed, enthusiastic and efficient members of staff that often go beyond the line of duty in order to ensure the smooth running of the Department and the continuing provision of services for the students, particularly in these fiscally adverse times. The involvement of key members of staff in high-level administration in the University (particularly in the posts of Head of School and Vice-Rector currently held by two members of the Department) ensures the representation of the Department's needs at a high level of decision making.

Through the longstanding research interests and commitment of key members of staff, the Department is very heavily involved in the provision of teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language through Erasmus programs and students who self-fund their tuition. The School is housed in exceptionally beautiful and well-equipped premises, of international standards, thanks to the generosity of donors. Classes attract a genuinely multi-cultural student population, as we were able to attest at the time of our visit.

The Department is clearly invested in the extensive integration of new technologies into the Department's teaching as well as provision of all other services. The increasing provision of e-courses and the planned provision of online courses with no restriction to access form strategically well thought out moves to the direction of a full range of uses of ICT.

The Department's participation in the EU lifelong project on Practical Exercises that involve two-month funded placements in schools as well as other organizations is a way of enhancing students' practical experience. The program, currently available to all Departments of Education in Greece, appears to be run very efficiently by the host Department.

RESULTS

In general, the provision of administrative and other services seems to be of a very high standard and both staff members and students evaluate it very positively. However, recent changes and financial difficulties mean that the IT services are rapidly becoming understaffed. In addition, the loss, as of this year, of primary school teachers attached to the Department who offered help with the setting up and running of the students' practical exercises is further compromising the practical element of the Department's program of study.

Other problem areas recognized by the Department include the difficulty of maintaining the security of premises with the recent redundancies of security guards and the lack of adequate central heating provision due to increasing fuel costs.

One area of good commendable practice that needs to be singled out involves the Department's exciting provision to students of numerous opportunities for participation in cultural and creative activities, ranging from choir and other musical events to poetry evenings and theatre plays. These activities are well supported by music and arts posts as well as labs in the Department and by individual members of staff who dedicate time and energy to the organization of big public events for the benefit of the local community and with the participation of students. Further collaboration with schools, especially in the School Experience Program, must be sought.

IMPROVEMENTS

The legacy of a longstanding tradition in excellence of facilities and services related to the experience of a campus study needs to be preserved at all costs in these financially adverse times. So far, preservation and expansion of services has benefited from active and highly committed academic management and individual members of staff who have taken on high administrative roles in the institution. Ensuring continuity in those initiatives is key and it presupposes succession plans, a culture of mentorship and mechanisms of ensuring the involvement in the academic administration of all staff.

The Department's participation in funded research projects is one way of effecting organizational and administrative improvement, e.g. by increasing the functionality of labs and further integrating them into the undergraduate program of study. The sustainability of such research enterprises with the increased participation in bids from staff from all fields with a stake in the Department should be ensured.

The problems associated with teaching space should be addressed. Central timetabling seems to be an obvious and much needed step to take, in order to streamline some of the administrative services and make the most of the Campus facilities on offer for the students.

The Department has identified the further integration of ICT into the curriculum and the Department's activities as one area for improvement. At the level of services, full digitization of material should be achieved in the near future. Ideally, the IT staff of the Department should be increased and/or it should be explored how the University's central IT administration can facilitate the IT provision of services in the Department.

Finally, services that allow the Department to improve on its liaison with schools for setting up practical exercises for the students should be sought. The existing excellent links with educational authorities and the developing links with the alumni should be activated as much as possible with the aim of establishing good connections with local schools as facilitators in the practical exercises.

Collaboration with social, cultural, and production organizations

The Department showcases an impressive list of active collaborations with high profile national and local educational and cultural organizations. With the number of students of local origin on the increase, the Department is duly aware of its added responsibility to connect with the local community and is commendably responsive to emerging needs. So far, both at the level of research projects and at the level of more informal participation of individual members of staff in relevant networks and societies, the Department has done extremely well to develop activities of impact and outreach for a range of social-educational issues of relevance in the prefecture of Epirus, including bullying, learning difficulties, and intercultural relations. The longstanding commitment of the Department to the teaching of Greek language as a foreign/second language is attested to in close collaborations with educational and cultural authorities inside and outside of Greece, including with the Greek minority in neighbouring country Albania. Cultivating links with national and international research networks of linguists could enhance these activities, particularly given the absence of linguistic posts in the Department.

The Department is very forward looking in its collaborations and there are two good practices in pace with the current priorities of top ranking institutions abroad: the first involves the pursuit of close links with cultural and creative industries. There is scope there for developing initiatives that can link the Department's programs of study with such industries, e.g. at the level of doctoral and post-doctoral programs with the undertaking of research projects that are (partially) funded by such industries and include job placements. The second practice involves the strengthening of the Department's links with its alumni, several of whom are in high ranking positions in the administration of education.

The Department's academic management should ensure that all staff members are encouraged to and given the opportunities to be involved in all initiatives for collaborations with social and cultural organizations to the greatest possible extent. Any new undertakings should be planned consultatively and as part of the Department's strategic planning for the

next 5 years.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

In this section, some of the key issues that are considered important for the Department's continuous development are summarized. The period since 2008 has been marked by rapid and significant changes in the Department of Primary Education. Indeed, the Department has exhibited a continuous improvement through self-reflection and faculty collaboration. There is a culture of conviviality from the administration to the faculty members. Both through the Internal Evaluation Report and the interviews with the administrators, faculty, and students, the Committee members recognized the dedication to the mission of needed change to achieve higher quality programs and training. This culture is important for a Department that strives to reach international standards.

In doing so, generally, it is important for the Department to consider teaching, research, and community factors that can either foster or inhibit the productive exchange of ideas, teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and societal activities and try to address continuous improvement activities, the facilitation of creativity and innovation or of change in general.

There are several factors at the Institutional and Departmental level that can potentially inhibit the productivity and the functioning of the day to day Departmental operations. These inhibiting factors are related to the following:

- (a) The potentially negative outcomes relating to the abrogated practical (school experience) training to the Curriculum mission and aim, in light of changes in schools and society.
- (b) Support services offered by the University in terms of helping faculty members to prepare research proposals and receive professional development in teaching practices.
- (c) Internal funding for which faculty members can apply for at a competitive basis.
- (d) Paucity of collaborative research that could provide the potential to invigorate and innovate research and teaching work with beneficial implications for the faculty across the Department.
- (e) No merit-based scholarships offered by the Department.
- (f) Adequate IT and administrative support offered within the Department.
- (g) A robust research-oriented culture across faculty members in the Department.
- (h) An electronic system that can ensure a systematic way of handling student registration and other student-related issues.

While it is unlikely that the Department will be able to undertake all of the above as short term goals, it is important to deal with the following urgent matters, leaving behind stereotypes that can limit effectiveness and make it difficult for the Department to do its job. Continue to improve the image of the Department is something that will not be only beneficial to the faculty members of the department but also the University as a whole.

- (a) Reflect on European and International 'best practices' for the improvement of the structure of programs and their expected results. Faculty teaching practices should be reflected upon and modified, as appropriate, to promote student engagement in large and small classes.
- (b) Maintain a proper balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of the courses

offered. In this context, the expansion of the School Experience program in addition to implementation of practical activities, regular written feedback for teaching performance, and micro-teaching is recommended.

- (c) Rethink Teaching Practice on the basis of re-engaging supporting personnel or engaging faculty members in a more effective mentoring system, in terms of both increasing its duration as well as improving its quality. The loss, as of this year, of supporting primary school teachers who offered help with the setting up and running of the students' practical exercises is severely compromising the practical element of the Department's programme of study. As the Committee has noted in Sections A & B, it is imperative that the practical exercises element of the BA curriculum is enhanced and the Department be supported by the Institution as well as by the Ministry of Education to this effect. At the same time, on its part, the Department needs to seek ways of strengthen collaboration with schools that will facilitate the School Experience Program in the face of the lack of required financial support and the resources of field personnel.
- (d) Engage graduate students in teaching and in activities supporting the undergraduate program and the practical teaching exercise.
- (e) Introduce some scholarships at the doctoral level, as scholarships are important on several levels.
- (f) Strive for more publications to high impact journals and give priority to quality over quantity in publicizing the research outcomes emerging from the projects carried out in the Department, to increase the visibility of the Department in the scientific community.
- (g) Reinforce a tradition of research collaboration that brings researchers and students together across traditional boundaries within the Department.
- (h) Clarify and sort out the duties of the secretarial staff so that smooth daily operations are ensured without delays, risks, and mistakes. The current adverse climate of imposed cuts in administrative staff is a clear inhibiting factor for the Department's strategic planning that has to do with the maintenance as well as the increase of services provision to staff and students.
- (i) Secure the IT services provision, as it is vital for the Department's strategic planning of teaching and curriculum development. Any further development of e-courses and on the planned provision of online courses hinge on adequate IT staff and it would be deplorable if the innovative uses and integration of technologies into the curriculum were to be hindered due to budget limitations.
- (j) Ensure that all staff members are encouraged to and given the opportunities to be involved in all initiatives for collaborations with social and cultural organizations to the greatest possible extent. Any new undertakings should be planned consultatively and as part of the Department's strategic planning for the next 5 years.
- (k) Strengthen the links with the Department's alumni and the local community's cultural, educational, and creative organisations as these links can help to consolidate and enhance Department's outreach, impact, and reputation.

In general, the Department needs to articulate through fair, transparent, and inclusive consultation with all major stakeholders (members of staff, students, and identified user-groups) a clear strategic plan about subject areas in need of development, support, and investment in (e.g. with hiring of new staff), and, where applicable, disinvestment from. It appears that there are certain under-representations of areas and lack of academic staff in areas of study considered integral to major Anglo-American Education departments: e.g. (new) literacy studies, new technologies and literacy studies, (socio) linguistic and communication studies, and school psychology studies. Furthermore, there is a need for the formation of inter-disciplinary alliances and collaborations amongst the different fields of study of the Department, which are currently developing somewhat independently of one

another. To this effect, there is much scope for cross-fertilization and synergies of pedagogical with technological subjects and of science subject areas with social and psychological approaches to pedagogy, both at the level of programs of study and at the level of research. The Committee urges the Department to consider the design of interdisciplinary modules with joint input from members of staff of different specialization and the drafting of collaborative research bids.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate levels, if necessary.

The Department of Primary Education is located within the Faculty of Education, one of the seven Faculties at the University of Ioannina. The Department serves the academic goal of contributing new knowledge to the field of education and training of future generations of teachers-researchers. It also serves the professional goal of translating research findings into practice and training professionals to meet the needs of the broader community and provide professional service. It is important to stress once again that the staff commitment to both the delivery and effective implementation of the Department's programs and the fulfillment of the University's vision goes beyond the ordinary duties of an academic as evident by the fact that faculty members teach additional courses without compensation.

The Department has developed an Undergraduate and four Graduate programs that reflect the full range of education, with staff research and teaching spanning areas of pedagogy, educational administration and measurement, science and mathematics education, Greek language and social sciences in education, psychology, school counselling, special needs and intercultural studies.

Consistent with Faculty and University-wide goals, the Department aspires to excellence in research while maintaining high standards in teaching and learning at undergraduate and graduate levels. Department faculty members work efficiently to balance undergraduate and graduate involvements, professional and academic strands of the curriculum, research, and students' supervision, community outreach, and administrative work on departmental, faculty, and university committees.

The Department houses 9 officially established Research Centers, committed to high quality research, many of which attract significant national research funding, placing the Department at the 5th position in University rankings relating to research funding.

The purpose of the Department is to cover a broad range of leadership, resourcing, and engagement activities to the local community.

The Department, therefore, is well-positioned to play an important role in realizing the vision of the University of Ioannina, as this is well-articulated by the Rectorship of the University.

The following is a summary of specific recommendations:

Faculty and Staff Development

- (a) A number of factors usually influence the recruitment of new academic staff members. These include teaching needs, potential areas of research excellence, and strategic links with allied Departments and Universities. The Department needs to carefully and strategically plan new appointments, such as in Research and Methods, and Faculty Teaching, achieving a balance between subject directions and academic levels.
- (b) The collegial and supportive atmosphere we sensed in the Department was very much appreciated. However, neither the University nor the Department has a program of annual appraisal of academic staff. The Department has to develop systematic ways for mentoring junior staff and ensuring that they have extensive guidance in relation to grant applications, publications, and research. It is important for all department members to sustain an active program of research.
- (c) The Department's preservation and recent expansion of services has benefited from active and highly committed academic management and individual members of staff who

have taken on high administrative roles in the institution. Ensuring continuity in those initiatives is key and it requires putting in place succession plans.

Curriculum and Teaching

- (d) The goal of graduating a competent, professional, and confident primary educator is paramount. The curriculum, courses, teaching practices, and School Experience Program need to be further reviewed and modifications, if any, recommended, to assure that students graduate with the requisite skills and knowledge. This effort has already begun and should be continued. The steps taken thus far by the administration and faculty augur well for continued success in this endeavor.
- (e) The introduction of a framework which defines the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of graduate and doctorate students should be treated as priority.
- (f) The Primary Education is a large teaching Department, and considering annual enrollments by undergraduate and post-graduate students, the student-staff ratio is high. This places considerable pressure on staff members to devote a large proportion of time to teaching and learning. The Department must take steps to reduce number of students enrolled.
- (g) The problems associated with teaching space should be addressed. Central timetabling seems to be an obvious and much needed step to take.

Research and Innovation

- (h) Research accomplishments are important and the Department ought to keep a systematic record of research achievements. It is recommended that the Department develops a Research Committee that will meet at least twice a year and discuss comparative data regarding faculty's research performance in relation to the goal set by the Department as a whole. It is very important to measure research performance against esteem factors. Monitoring more systematically the full range of research accomplishments will contribute significantly to academic and professional development of all staff members.
- (i) The sustainability of research enterprises and projects with the increased participation in bids from staff from all fields with a stake in the Department should be ensured.
- (j) The Department should also aim at helping foster student engagement in research programs. Research assistant and postdoctoral positions linked to external grants should be offered. Particularly, the involvement of postdoctoral fellows will encourage submission of even more competitive grant applications, thereby boosting Department's success rate.
- (k) The Department could also consider offering a small number of graduate internships. These interns (paid for 100 hours) could be able to work with staff to develop small projects or assist them in publishing existing data in order to make subsequent grant applications more competitive. This strategy could also meet important teaching and learning objectives through integrating teaching with research.

Administration

- (l) With the recent budget cuts and the administrative restructuring underway, the administrative services need to be streamlined so that the Department can rely on and not replicate centrally available administrative services, where applicable.
- (m) The streamlining of administrative services presupposes a full digitization of material and the wide availability of electronic processing for all services.
- (n) The IT staff of the Department should be increased and/or it should be explored how the

University's central IT administration can facilitate the IT provision of services in the Department.

Closing, we are very grateful for the openness and enthusiasm shown by the Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean, Chair, and the entire faculty, administration members, and students we met in the Department and University to engage with the review process. The dynamism and dedication of the faculty and administration in a time of deplorable financial constraints is most commendable.

The Members of the Committee

| Name and Surname | Signature |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Timothy C. Papadopoulos, Coordinator | |
| 2. Mary Koutselini | |
| 3. Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes | |
| 4. John Spiridakis | |