


# Chapter 4

## Internationalization and Higher Education: The Case of the University of Aveiro

**Rosa Nogueira**

*University of Aveiro, Portugal*

**António Carrizo Moreira**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6613-8796>  
*University of Aveiro, Portugal*

### ABSTRACT

*Education is the most successful strategy for a country's growth and development. It is widely agreed that it is the most effective means that society possesses for dealing with the challenges of the future. Nevertheless, higher education has been confronted and needs, therefore, to redefine its historic role as the center of universal knowledge and understanding. This chapter analyzes the importance of internationalization on higher education institutions and enable us to better understand how they are changing as a consequence of the globalization process. Using the University of Aveiro as a case study, we will be studying what internationalization is in a higher education context and which rationales, approaches, and activities are associated with the internationalization process. Furthermore, the appropriateness of theories of internationalization specifically developed for business contexts will be portrayed at the end of the chapter.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) is expected to play a leading role in attaining equity, development, justice and democracy, in fostering the values of democracy, creating critical citizens, as well as in shaping new generations of thinkers and actors. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1997: 40): “the goal of (higher) education is to make people wiser, more knowledgeable, better informed, ethical, responsible, critical and capable of continuing to learn (...) Education, in short, is humanity’s best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development.”

Pressured by demanding needs to endure and improve their competence, higher education institutions (HEIs) have found in internationalization strategies their way to progress and survive. Internationalization is widely understood to be good and to improve higher education quality, competitiveness and development. However, internationalization cannot be understood as an end in itself but rather as a means to develop and sustain higher education.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, internationalization became an interesting study phenomenon, and deeply developed in the 1980s with European mobility programs. However, the literature reviewed, the documentary data and reports analyzed have shown that most of what is produced is related to information that explains the phenomena of internationalization in higher education contexts. Most studies focused their conclusions in *why* and *how* internationalization in higher education is conceived. An inner look at the Portuguese reality allows us to understand that there is not much study produced on this theme.

Using a case study, the aim of this chapter is to analyze in depth and with particular attention the example of the University of Aveiro (UA) in order to find out more about *what* internationalization is to Portuguese HEIs.

The purpose of this chapter is to comprehend the term internationalization applied to the higher education context, to analyze the existing internationalization activities in the University of Aveiro and to understand whether business strategies and models could also be applied to services, namely in a HEI. Despite extensive studies about higher education, it was interesting to discover that there are few evidences of interconnection of managerial ideas and models between private and public institutions. Through the comprehension of their rationales, activities, extension and actors, we should be able to understand the evolution and the importance of internationalization in HEIs.

Considering that most of the literature produced is focused on the background of internationalization, our purpose is to find out more about the importance of internationalization in HEIs, by getting to know their activities in this field better. In order to understand the importance given by institutions to internationalization,

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

a case study will be analyzed so that the following question might be answered: what is internationalization in Higher Education Institutions?

To understand and explore the research problem, as well as take into account our case study, other succeeding questions are defined in order to comprehend and give an oriented design to our work:

- How is internationalization understood in higher education contexts?
- How are internationalization activities in HEIs characterized, particularly in UA?
- What are the main rationales to the internationalization of UA?
- What are the main strategies being adopted by UA in order to be internationalized?
- How has internationalization activities in UA changed?
- What is expected for UA's future strategy?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Internalization, Globalization and Europeanization**

Internalization, globalization and Europeanization are complex terms and difficult to define, even more when they are used by different players in diverse contexts.

Although related, the concepts internationalization, globalization and Europeanization in a managerial context assume a rather diverse meaning when used in a higher education context. According to this perspective, internationalization is a term frequently used by HEIs when referring to their international activities. Despite being more focused on the international dimension of higher education, due to its influence and/or relations, the terms globalization and Europeanization are also used. However, although related, it is useful to distinguish the terms as they reflect phenomena with different rationales, objectives and effects (Yang, 2002).

There are countless numbers of interpretations and definitions on what internationalization might be. Calof and Beamish (1995) present internationalization as the process of adaptation to organizational processes such as resources, strategies or structures in international contexts. For Meyer (2006) internationalization involves the deployment of the organization's main strategic added-value activities abroad. As such, internationalization involves the process whereby an organization increases its level of valuable activities out of its country of origin.

As internationalization is conditioned and influenced by the opportunities that external markets present, many researchers consider internationalization a response from a country or its institutions to external economic features.

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

On a diverse context such as HEIs, internationalization might be defined as “*the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the university or institution of higher education*” (Knight, 1993: 21).

Understanding the term internationalization implies in this sense the consideration of a process that involves all the intervening parties, functions, resources, plans and willingness to achieve goals defined and clearly understood by all.

Internationalization has also a dimension of cooperation and integration, meaning it is well comprised in the institution’s mission, vision and strategic values. It includes both an intercultural and international dimension that underlines the diversity and similarities between nations and also includes and highlights the cultural and ethnic characteristics of all the members of a country. It is assumed that nations get together and share their cultural, political, economic and social characteristics but there is a strict line signaling nations’ borders that is not trespassed. It foresees that nation-states continue to function within bounded economic, social and cultural systems. Finally, these considerations about internationalization imply that this institutional goal exists to fulfil other basic functions of HEIs, such as the teaching and learning process, research and service to society.

For a university internationalization means “the awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders. For a national higher education system, internationalization refers to dialogue with those in other countries” Yang (2002: 83).

Globalization is a phenomenon related to the development of global inter-relationships that brought about closer ties among countries of the world. Globalization means that differences and borders are gradually disappearing. As such, one can define strategies based on a global, world-wide perspective, as globalization emphasizes the increasing convergence and interdependence of economies, countries and societies.

Concerning its economic character, globalization, which is in fact a process that transcends national borders, has facilitated and quickened the process of internationalization of HEIs. As Knight (2001) explains, globalization effects are conditioned to each country due to its nation individual history, traditions, culture and priorities. In this way, globalization means a flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas across borders.

When referring to higher education, it is very clear that we are also referring to standardized and global sciences and understandings. Despite some fundamentalisms of religion, politics or culture, knowledge is becoming uniform and generalized. HEIs determine the educational level of a population and this is the most determinant factor for competitive enterprises and countries.

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

The main difference between internationalization and globalization lies precisely on the dissimilarity between the amalgam of unity, resemblance and homogenization (globalization) and the respect and preservation of each actor's individuality and unique characteristics (internationalization). Globalization challenges the power of the nation state; internationalization assumes that states still play a crucial role. Globalization is primarily associated with increased interdependence and convergence and an ethos of competition, while internationalization tends to be mainly associated with an ethos of mutuality and practices geared at strengthening cooperation (Kreber, 2009).

To several researchers globalization is seen as the catalyst element, whereas internationalization is the response – a proactive response to globalization – distinct from the globalization process itself. Internationalization is faced as an adaptation process of universities to the globalization process (Knight, 2001; Yang, 2002; Bartell, 2003).

Whereas to business researchers globalization is a result of internationalization, to higher education researchers the globalization is the impulse to internationalization activities. As will be referred soon, HEIs internationalization activities are a response and a reaction to a globalized world and must be all-compassing of institutional dimensions. This is a different approach from business as we are referring to a services context, particularly a public service in which internationalization process is already late and cannot be in any other way rather than originally responding to already globalized markets, cultures and peoples.

Europeanization is a term that often refers to internationalization on a “regional” scale, where markets are actually seen as regions. This position is frequently associated to standardization within a geographical area that limits the institution's role (Viana & Hortinha, 2002).

Regionalization of higher education is the cross-border cooperation between two or more neighboring countries, as it frequently happens with Iberian countries or Nordic countries. Here, as van der Wende (1998) points out, the emphasis is not so much on exchange but on structural co-operation at the educational and administrative level, with the aim to make the systems on both sides of the border more responsive to the needs of the regional labor market and to enhance mutual access and complementarity.

At an Europeanization extent, cooperation and joint agreements are seen as necessary actions to the empowerment of all nations involved. Also intending a cooperation to be competitive and endure a response to globalization, Europeanization is simultaneously a de-nationalization in search of unification, and an integration of supra-national regulatory norms.

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

Whilst internationalization is recognized as nation States' activities with an emphasis on cooperation and exchange, the role of nation States in globalization has become blurred, with globalization being associated more with economic-related activities, focusing on competition. Europeanization is a phase of internationalization, which contains common cultural values on a regional basis, and, in the process of internationalization, nation States play an important part where cooperation is emphasized (Toyoshima, 2007).

## **Internationalization of Higher Education**

Internationalization is a very broad topic that has evolved over time, under various perspectives, based on well-differentiated theories and different understandings (Moreira, 2009; Ribau, Moreira, & Raposo, 2015, 2018). Over time, not only the globalization of business activity has evolved, but scholars' interpretations have also changed (Ribau et al., 2015, 2018).

Internationalization represents the development and improvement of institutions skills and competences that seek to exploit their competitive advantages in international markets. By extending its area of activity geographically, the competitiveness factor becomes increasingly complex and attractive, challenging the business base and forcing institutions to face challenges at an international level (Moreira, 2009).

Notwithstanding the importance of a historical analysis of universities, the main challenge of this chapter is to understand and reflect over the conceptions of higher education and its development towards internationalization.

The term "University"<sup>1</sup> was first applied to the idea of a community of masters and students that joined together to pass on knowledge. The basic concept was to help extend knowledge to all men who aspired to the universalism of Latin and Christian culture.

HEIs are amongst the oldest organizations in the world and are certainly the biggest of all monuments left to us by the Medieval Age. Paris (1160), Bologna (1150), Oxford (1160) and Salamanca (1218) were the first universities that, gathering all the four main studies (theology, civil rights, canonical and arts), joined students and lecturers from all over Europe.

As Serrão (1983) points out, in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the growth of universities is a representation of the profound change in the ecumenical spirit of that time. On the other hand, with the Renaissance period and the egocentric spirit that characterized this era, national universities were reinforced and started gaining importance in contrast to foreign institutions. Besides clerical masters, we find evidence of the birth of other lecturers, coming from the nobility and the bourgeoisie (Serrão, 1983).

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the maritime expansion opened new dimensions of geography and astronomy, which led to new ideas and ambitions for men of all races and continents. With *classicism* and the *enlightenment*, human and natural subjects lead the new studies at universities.

Universities have always been the center of discussion and innovation. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Newman and Humboldt were relevant university thinkers in the narration of Modern University. Newman categorized universities as a place suitable for the transmission of knowledge, not for its creation or the development of human minds (Magalhães, 2001). To Humboldt, the mission of the university should lie on teaching, investigation and services, all advocating the status of liberty.

Besides being among the oldest institutions, HEIs are organizations with endurance, as a result of their ability to constantly adapt to changing conditions (Kelo, 2006). “In a knowledge-based society which depends crucially for its economic wealth and social well-being on science, technology and innovation (and also a society in which mass participation in higher education has become a civic, or even a democratic, right) the university clearly has a very big – and very bright – future” (Scott, 2006: 37).

The population at HEIs has been gradually growing throughout time and the percentage of the population graduated increased everywhere in the world. Today higher education is understood as a normal right to be used by all the population and not only by a group of privileged people.

As Gornitzka et al. (2007) describe, HEIs have been playing an increasing role in the socio-economic and technological development of our societies. That is an indication that the public interest in influencing higher education has yet many years to come and universities have yet many years to innovate and change.

Kelo (2006) identifies three main challenges which are deemed as central for today’s higher education: funding; governance; and global attractiveness.

Huisman and van der Wende (2004) have identified three other essential factors in the origin of HEIs challenges:

- The development towards a knowledge-based economy and society;
- The Europeanization, internationalization and globalization of the economic, social, political and cultural setting in which HEIs have to act;
- The development and impact of new information and communication technologies.

Larsen, Maassen, and Stensaker (2006) identify the major dilemmas respecting institutional governance of HEIs: democracy or effectiveness, external or internal orientation and representation, integration or separation and centralization or decentralization.

### *Internationalization and Higher Education*

Although our focus is on the institutional level, we still need to pay attention to national and international policy developments concerning internationalization. As we may notice from Table 1 in 2009, 3.7 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship.

Given the importance of internationalization as a policy issue throughout the world, our work emphasis in this chapter will focus mainly on Europe. The concept of internationalization goes back to the origin of universities in the Medieval Era, as people had to travel and move to urban centers known as the cities of knowledge. From the very beginning of the conceptualization of HEIs, learning has met no barriers or boundaries.

The consciousness of internationalization movements encounters a rapidly growing demand for higher education, in the mid-1980s and 1990s (Knight, 2001) when a new reality emerged with countries exporting higher education and others importing educational programs or services. During the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many experts observed a trend towards an increase in the international dimensions of higher education (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004).

In 1987/88 the Erasmus program, which remains the most popular, vivid and well-known of all mobility programs, was formalized. In that year alone, the Erasmus program was responsible for the exchange of over 3,200 students, which later launched the necessary promotion and support for the European Credits Transfer System (ECTs) (Huisman & van der Wende (2004).

Accordingly to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011), the United States receive the largest number of foreign students (in absolute terms), with 18% of all foreign students worldwide, followed by the

*Table 1. Growth of internationalization of tertiary education (1975-2015)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>International Students (Million)</b>
1975	0.8
1980	1.1
1985	1.1
1990	1.3
1995	1.7
2000	2.1
2005	3.0
2009	3.7
2015	3.3

Source: OECD (2011; 2017)

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

United Kingdom (10%), Australia (7%), Germany (7%) and France (7%). The largest numbers of international students are from China, India and Korea. Asian students represent 52% of foreign students enrolled worldwide.

Haug (2006) reports that despite enormous efforts on the enrolment of all higher education actors and intervenient parties, the truth, still, is that European universities are falling (too) far behind from American (and even Asian) universities. Some HEIs, and especially European institutions, are nowadays threatened as they have shown great difficulties to grow and innovate. Many universities are not prepared for the increasing challenges and this has resulted in significant performance gaps with respect to their foreign competitors.

As pointed out by Machado and Taylor (1995), the increasing volatility of the environment has forced institutions to adapt to ever changing external forces. To improve their international standing, there are some areas that HEIs need to focus on in order to enhance their attractiveness to international publics, namely those related to the quality of education and research, quality assurance, services, employment and immigration, funding, marketing and internationalization (Hoffmann, 2006).

The increasing significance of internationalization relies on the importance of its activities, rationales and outcomes, but also very particularly on the increasing outcome of internationalization in national and international policy making and institutional decisions.

## **Higher Education in Portugal: Overview of Its Evolution**

The origin of Portuguese universities dates back to the year 1288 with the expression of interest in the creation of the university of Lisbon-Coimbra (Serrão, 1983). This manifestation of interest was made by D. Dinis and confirmed by Pope Nicholas IV in 1290, and its aim was to educate the intellectual elite of the bourgeoisie and to consolidate the state.

Higher education in Portugal is highly connected to its political history and social developments. Reporting back to 1910, when the Republic was proclaimed, higher education still accentuated the social strata as there was a lack of an adequate structure to promote social mobility (Arroteia, 1996). This condition was intensified afterwards, when universities became in a certain way an instrument for political and ideological control.

Generally speaking, the access to HEIs was elitist and with a small participation rate of the total population (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2004).

In 1974, the Revolution marks a turnaround in Portuguese life. Subsequently, the (higher) education system was also significantly changed due to a conjunction that implied the loss of all forms of authority faced by HEIs, combined with a substantial increase in demand for access to higher education (Amaral & Magalhães, 2007).

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

Moreover, at that time Portugal shifted to values focused on development, freedom and democracy and “universities were asked to help in the search for answers to national problems while making their technical and scientific capacity available to other public services. On the one hand, higher education was supposed to expand and provide training or retraining courses, and to increase its offer of specialized services to the community. On the other hand, it was supposed to diversify either by creating new schools and new courses or by the differentiation of some already established courses” (Amaral & Magalhães, 2007: 119).

In 1976, the new Constitution recognized the right of all Portuguese to education. As a result, the participation rate of students in higher education increased from 7% in 1974 to 40% in 1998 (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2004).

Different motivations have forced HEIs to progress, innovate and transform. As presented ahead these motivations are related to political, cultural, economic and scientific contexts.

### **Internationalization of Higher Education in Portuguese Universities**

We might assume the beginning of the internationalization process of Portuguese HEIs to have been in 1960s, when there were cultural, political and intellectual movements from the metropolis to former colonies and vice versa. Summer courses were promoted in former colonies with the aim: “To bring higher education regularly and periodically to colonies in order that lecturers may contact directly with local realities so that the university knows and evaluates in a better way the Portuguese problems, wherever they are” (Caetano, 1960: 114).

In the final years 1970s, Portugal made some contacts with important European universities, since university excellence was seen as a symbol of the country’s prestige and modernity (Caetano, 1974). However, only the adhesion of Portugal to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 truly marks the beginning of the internationalization process of Portuguese HEIs.

Portuguese (like other European) universities today look across national borders for collaborative partnerships to benefit from the knowledge and experience of each other (Kerklann et al., 2008). However, Veiga, Rosa, and Amaral (2006) conclude that the degree of internationalization of the Portuguese higher education market is low or does not exist at all. They identify several factors to explain the lack of an internationalization strategy in Portuguese HEIs: “lack of a coherent strategy for internationalization of the higher education system (including an appropriate legal framework) and of financial support, given to the internationalization of research and education, internationalization is not seen as a development key factor by the organizations themselves; lack of central co-ordination of research activities; lack of

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

incentives in the academic career; sustaining student mobility demands a coherent strategy and an attractive offer to foreign students; lack of proficiency in English of both academic staff and students” (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2006: 121).

The approaches to internationalization made by HEIs have been mainly focused on the exchange of students/academics and the participation in networks and research programs (at a European level) and in the enrolment of a significant number of students from Portuguese speaking countries: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, East Timor, Macau and Brazil (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2006).

Portugal is in fact the first choice for an international experience for students from those countries. However, the opposite situation is also true, since Portugal is one of last choices for students of countries other than the ones mentioned above.

Cited by Veiga, Rosa, and Amaral (2004), Graça Carvalho, as director of the International Office for Science and Higher Education, identifies 5 main barriers to the mobility and internationalization of Portuguese higher education:

- Low internal mobility of Portuguese students due to the difficulty in establishing cooperation links among Portuguese institutions;
- Low mobility of international students due to the lack of attractiveness of Portugal in the European context;
- Administrative and legal instruments that hamper the free circulation of people (foreign services, social services);
- Need to reform the fiscal system in order to create incentives for investments in higher education and research;
- Insufficient funding of higher education and research.

Most of the above-identified restrictions are related to concrete actions that would make internationalization activities in Portuguese HEIs more trustfully understood. However, they also have much to do with a cultural consciousness that dominates the Portuguese main intervening parties which might still be a sign of old colonialism and expatriation. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of arguments, Portuguese actors have a conspicuous lack of confidence, a deficiency in communication and, most of all, an enormous complex of inferiority that frequently impedes more audacious actions outside national borders (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2004).

Despite national efforts mainly based on quality criteria to develop Portuguese higher education and overthrow these restrictions, Portuguese higher education policy is mainly defined by the guidelines specified at the European level. In this respect, European programs and reforms are an opportunity to reform and improve a system that needs to be better formalized under the norms of growth and quality.

### *Internationalization and Higher Education*

Veiga, Rosa, and Amaral (2004) conclude that the process of internationalization, globalization and Europeanization of Portuguese higher education is more one of reaction than of anticipation.

## **The Rationales for Internationalization of Higher Education**

It is very important to understand the reasons and motivations behind the definition of a strategy based or focused on internationalization. In the business sector the motivations for internationalization are related to the possible development provided by the access to new and more potential markets.

Depending on mutual factors of the HEIs such as their needs, characteristics or resources, rationales might be of several natures. However, it is important to know the motivations behind the internationalization of HEIs so that one can indirectly understand how dedicated the institution is to their internationalization commitments.

To understand the rationales for the internationalization of HEIs it is important to understand the institutional context. There are many different rationales to consider and they might be opposite, complementary and of very different natures, ranging from educational, cultural, social, political, ethical and economic, among any others one might consider influent in the definition of a HEI strategy.

Knight and de Witt (1995) categorized the reasons to internationalization into four major rationales, as presented in Table 2. While political and economic rationales usually demand an adaptation of the institutions to external forces, the academic and socio-cultural rationales are institution specific and internal in nature. In general, the former reasons are identified as “new” forms of internationalization, while the latter are usually associated with “old” forms of internationalization (Stensaker et al., 2008). However, and understandably, old forms of internationalization do not disappear as new forms emerge.

During the cold war period, the political rationale was dominant. It frequently functioned as a reactive force for internationalization at a national level, rather than at an institutional level. The exportation and importation of higher education normally works at the national level as a prestige reflection of a country’s policy of quality, hegemony and innovation. The political rationale was considered to be one

*Table 2. Rationales to internationalization in HEIs context*

<b>“Old” forms of internationalization</b>	<b>“New” forms of internationalization</b>
Academic	Political
Socio-cultural	Economic

Source: own elaboration

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

of the most important in the internationalization of HEIs, since internationalizing higher education was seen as a beneficial tool in foreign policy and it was directly concerned to the country's position and role as a nation in the world.

The academic rationale should in theory be the most relevant motivation for the internationalization of higher education. This rationale is historically connected to the HEIs' history and cooperation. Rather more significant at an institutional level than at the national level, the academic rationale assimilates all the advantages from the teaching and learning process, the research and service functions of a HEI. The academic imperative is directly connected to the educational objectives, aims and functions of higher education.

There is a close relationship between internationalization and the social-cultural rationale, since the promotion of one's culture and the respect for its peculiarities differentiates internationalization from the global act of homogenization. In fact, notwithstanding the impact of globalization on social-cultural issues, the promotion of cultural values and their preservation is in fact what distinguishes internationalization from globalization. The social-cultural rationale is also considered by many to be one of the strongest rationales for internationalization, since we are referring to developed and experienced individuals in a mutual awareness of intercultural relations and communications.

After the cold war, the emphasis has increasingly shifted from the political to the economic rationale. Two decades later, prompted by the global knowledge economy, the internationalization of HEIs is even more market oriented. As a result of the globalization of economy, nations and their institutions are struggling to assert themselves in a world that is more competitive every day. Among the multiple causes for the commercialization of higher education, Bok (2003) identifies some of them: financial cutbacks, the spirit of private enterprise and entrepreneurship that became so prominent in the 1980s, a lack of clarity about academic values, keener competition and the rapid growth of money-making opportunities provided by a more technologically sophisticated, knowledge-based economy.

In a wiser context, higher education stands as a country's proactive response to the domination of economy and technology. Xiang (2008: 352) argues that today's internationalization of higher education is shifted to narrower economic objectives *“as the internationalization of higher education is further increasingly characterized by the new dimension of commodification and marketization, an economic rationale for pursuing higher education dominates over political, academic or cultural/social rationales.”*

Both at national and institutional level, the economic rationales have been highly taken into consideration. Given that their funding is prominent, HEIs are forced to diversify their fund sources and decrease their financial dependence on

### *Internationalization and Higher Education*

the government. Many are looking to the exportation of services and products as an important source of revenue and an emblematic struggle to survive.

As easily perceived, the rationales are not exclusive and, even less, static. Commonly, rationales are complementary, dynamic and adaptable to each country and institution, over time and in response to changing needs and priorities (Knight, 2001).

Despite the fact that the internationalization of Portuguese HEIs is based on different rationales, which are conditioned by the nature of the countries involved in international exchange activities, Veiga, Rosa & Amaral (2006) consider that, in the Portuguese case, the predominant rationales are basically the political, cultural and more recently the economic rationale.

HEIs' approaches to internationalization are also contingent, independent, not mutually exclusive and variable. Approaches are the postures adopted by leaderships towards promotion and implementation of programs aimed at internationalization.

According to van der Wende (2007), approaches to internationalization in HEIs are pressured by globalization and internationalization and can be differentiated between competition and cooperation. Competition is often associated with globalization and involves the increasing integration of processes over and across borders, it is more economically driven and market-oriented whereas cooperation is more associated with the proposal of internationalization, is more academically and culturally driven.

Knight (2004) identifies different approaches to a national or education sector level (programs, rationales, ad hoc, policy, strategic) and at the institutional level (activity, outcomes, rationales, process, at home, abroad). As Knight (2004) highlights, the activity approach is probably the most common approach as it outlines the actual program initiatives that form part of the internationalization efforts. The approaches outcomes and rationales are related to the motivations and expected results of internationalization rather than the activities or strategies themselves. The process and at-home approaches are focused in primary functions of a HEI such as curricular, extracurricular and organizational aspects. The abroad or cross-border approach relates to linkages with other countries and is focused on the mobility of education across borders.

This standardization is useful not only to understand the features of current approaches and activities at different levels, but also to help institutions understand and reflect in the dominant features of current situation, whether is consistent and complementary to rationales and values defined in the organization and help to design which approach they would like to adopt in the future.

Knight (2007) used the term "internationalization strategies" to go beyond the interpretation of internationalization activities, as this expression represents a more planned, integrated and strategic approach. Knight (2007) lists an amount of

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

information and examples of program and organizational strategies at the institutional level grouped into program strategies (academic programs, research and scholarly collaboration, external relations and extra-curricular) and organizational strategies (governance, operations, services and human resources).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter was prepared taking into account a qualitative research method involving content analysis and interviews. As a result, a case study was prepared.

As one of the most recent and qualified universities in Portugal, the University of Aveiro was found to be a very interesting case to study and look into further detail. It was founded in 1973 and is one of Portugal's 14 public universities. It has almost 15,000 students working across 16 departments, four polytechnic schools, 18 research centers, more than 900 lecturers/professors, 57 undergraduate programs and 127 post-graduate programs (UA, 2018). The University of Aveiro is a medium-sized university, located in a medium-sized city in Portugal's central region, a well-developed industrial region and a prosperous center for commerce and services. According to the scimago institution rankings, the University of Aveiro is in the 403<sup>rd</sup> place among 741 institutions (Scimago, 2017). It has been considered by the Ranking of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan the best Portuguese university, the 50th European university and the 172nd world university.

The reason to use qualitative methodology that combines document analysis, content analysis and semi-structured interviews, lays on the extensive assortment and the non-pragmatic nature of the theme.

The argument for selecting academic leadership is related to an assumption that they possess more information on internationalization issues *vis-à-vis* other groups in HEIs and they are central in the interpretation and evaluation of the internationalization of HEIs (Stensaker et al., 2008). These were considered appropriate interviewees as they were key actors to provide information on the way HEIs responded to the new challenges. Another important issue for the selection of the academic leaders is that, as the University of Aveiro is a young and dynamic institution, it could be possible to assess the evolution of its internationalization process and assess how influential or influenced it was from the changes implemented in Europe in recent years. This dynamic perspective could be of added value when assessing the validity of "classical" internationalization strategies.

In this case, interviews that were recorded and then transcribed were conducted with the following rectors of the University of Aveiro from 1973 to 2010:

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

- Professor Victor Gil (1973-1978);
- Professor Fernandes Thomaz<sup>2</sup> (1978-1986);
- Professor Joaquim Renato Araújo (1986-1994);
- Professor Júlio Pedrosa (1994-2001);
- Professor Isabel Alarcão (2001-2002);
- Professor Maria Helena Nazaré (2002-2010).

The interview guideline was divided into the following main sections:

- Reporting the most important characteristics of the period when the interviewee was rector;
- Defining the term internationalization in HEIs context;
- Describing the level of internationalization of the institution and its organization;
- Characterizing national politics concerning the motivation of HEIs internationalization and their awareness of competitions' positioning;
- Understanding the rector's perceptions on the evolution, rationales and advantages of internationalization procedures as well as their desires to the future.

To explore, to describe and to comprehend the internationalization dimension in HEIs context are the main aims of this exploratory work.

## **RESULTS**

### **Internationalization and UA's Important Milestones**

Taking into consideration our interviewees' opinions, there is a combination of interpretations associated with internationalization and with UA's evolution.

Internationalization in HEIs assumes a very particular meaning and a singular dimension. Believing that the university is the base of knowledge creation and diffusion – and considering knowledge to be universal – there cannot be limits in its activity. It requires constant comparison and learning. Learning with similar organizations – how are they structured, how do they work, what do they know – and bring that knowledge inside our organization. Important inward and outward movements of knowledge, experiences and cultures are brought to and from our HEIs.

According to one of our interviewees (IA), internationalization “*is to get in the universal world of knowledge. Therefore, it is about sharing our knowledge with*

### **Internationalization and Higher Education**

*others, as well as seeing, learning and understanding the knowledge that is produced by others and produce all together”.*

To some interviewees internationalization in HEIs represents a very pragmatic number traduced in the amount of non-national members among the academic population. A comparison with the business context was also made by a former rector: *“Internationalization (in HEIs) allows products to get to international market. It is a transaction that is made to win something. When there’s an exchange of students in Erasmus or any other PhD program, if we think carefully, we are looking to improve our products so that they can be better and be known among others.(...) The product is enriched in this internationalization circle and a market is created.*

All respondents have mentioned internationalization as a natural and inherent dimension of HEIs’ life. Signals about the interpretation of internationalization issues on several moments or descriptions on UA’s evolution may also be found. The first and most important topic associated with the process of internationalization of the University of Aveiro is related to the intervention of World Bank when UA was created. Very focused on lecture’s training, the World Bank was decisive to UAs’ development particularly in this area, but also with its natural extensions to other areas.

Generically, it is interesting to note that respondents easily relate internationalization to research rather than to the learning process. There are several international research programs, there are relationships already created and therefore international networks are easily established.

Since the beginning, the absence of PhD programs in Portugal forced many people to study abroad. This “forced” movement progressively induced an internationalization dimension in every project or activity in which they would be later involved. Since the beginning of UA until nowadays, this dimension of internationalization is always present and mentioned by all respondents. As stated before, this effort was also complemented with a strong motivation of UA’s academic leaders to receive international lecturers and researchers at the university. Evidence of this effort is very clear in the list of professors of many departments that still keep contracts with renewed international lecturers and researcher, known all around the world.

At the beginning of its creation, UA also benefited from inward movement of lecturers returning from (Portuguese-speaking African countries) PALOP. This relation with PALOP is still today nurtured by a desire to help those countries to develop and to preserve already created relations. Additionally, the PALOP represent an interesting market niche to be explored.

An important feature must be pointed out in relation to internationalization activities: for several years UA kept an agent in Brussels, the center of all decision making. This contact was determinant to UA’s relations and fund raising. In our

### *Internationalization and Higher Education*

opinion, this agent represents an extraordinary vision of UA's development and commitment to expansion, affirmation and internationalization.

The launching of ERASMUS program was made for the first time in Portugal at University of Aveiro in 1987. This presentation represents the beginning of official student and lecturer's mobility and is an important high point in UA's internationalization activities.

This dedication is also visible in the enthusiasm of constantly receiving or promoting the realization of congresses, colloquiums, seminars with specialists from all over the world. There is evidence of several meetings that represented an opportunity to bring known people, lecturers and researchers to university. Knowledge and learning from those visitors contributed to UA's staff development. Important evidence on the sharing of knowledge and of the learning process of the University of Aveiro with experts was the teaching model applied to the School of Technology and Management of Águeda. The Problem-based Learning was a model imported from Aalborg that resulted from contacts with Aalborg's University and the consequent experience, stimulus and preparation of our staff process learning with that university. According to one interviewee (JP), "we were always in favor of this international permeability. Internationalization was an opportunity created for us to learn what was of our own interest."

Considering its importance, there are two more actions that we would like to highlight in this phase: the adhesion of UA to the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and the evaluation of European University Association (EUA). ECIU represents a consortium committed to innovation in teaching and learning fostering economic and social development of regions in transition. The fact that UA was invited to take part of this Consortium represents the high status and the prestigious image of UA outside national borders. The evaluation made by the EUA in 1995, 1998 and 2007 as well as the self-evaluation report written to these assessments show the openness of UA leaders towards international standards.

All personal accounts provided on internationalization activities carried out thought the years are broad and abstract and cannot be defined in one sentence or in a list of activities. Clearly, the internationalization of HEIs is a response to a globalized world and a need to grow and be known within the context of international HEIs. Internationalization is the combination of all activities related to this issue and is essentially the awareness of a mission focused on development, knowledge sharing and universalism. Internationalization of HEIs translated into assorted activities must include a national and institutional dimension and requires a combination of motivations and approaches defined according to HEIs' resources, priorities and contexts.

## *Internationalization and Higher Education*

### **Definition of HEIs internationalization Policies and Its Evolution**

There were always people – governments, directors and technicians – who were truly interested in the internationalization of universities. Therefore they stimulated and encouraged HE but a clearly policy towards internationalization was absent. References on discourses and political programs were abundant, but were not implemented.

Despite most of the activities resulted from personal relationships, networks and knowledge, UA was always a very attentive institution to national and international opportunities of funding. It had always a proactive attitude and looked for financial support as reported one interviewee (HN): “after defining what we wanted to do, UA looked around and pursued for financial support (...) we have always taken the first step, we asked for funding to institutions. And we made it! There was funding even from the town hall! There was support regionally, nationally and internationally. There were cases in which we succeeded; there were cases in which we did not succeed.”

In addition to the already mentioned World Bank, in recent years we may also consider the influence of the Science and Technology Foundation (FCT) in the process of internationalization of HEIs. Guidelines referring to European research projects were always defined very clearly. FCT promoted in HEIs a dynamic perspective that all research should occur according to international standards and should be published in respected international journals.

All interviewees were unanimous when referring to the evolution of internationalization policy in recent years. Besides national development, most interviewees associate this development to the adhesion of Portugal to the European Union in 1986. Participating in the European Union (EU) not only enables fostering international contacts, but also the strengthening of relationships.

This adhesion to the EU was considered very important and still is decisive today. The European programs were and still are essential and decisive in the internationalization of Portuguese HEIs, and in this case – in UA’s development. They represent the most meaningful signal of participation and evolution of all involved institutions.

Despite truthfully positive evolutions in the past 20 years, when compared to the past, an evolutionary perspective is still in high demand. The divergences between defined objectives, politic discourse and legislation still limit HEIs performance. The omission of adequate legislation that would allow free movement of academic people is limited and short. It was mentioned the lack of appropriate legislation concerning education, health, insurance and economic systems. UA had already in 1999 the movement *Repensar os currícula* (Rethinking Curricula), and consequently was better prepared to implement the Bologna process directives than other universities, as most of the work concerning the curricula was already done.

## **The Rationales for the Internationalization of UA**

According to our respondents, the rationales for the internationalization of UA stem from several natures. Some interviewees claim that the internationalization of UA has external and internal motivations.

Even though we are referring to new student's recruitment processes, external motivations are related to the income and profits. Although not recognized clearly, the economic perspective associated to internationalization has to be taken into consideration. International (foreign) students, lecturers and staff mean different revenues to the institution.

The need to be part of universal research and knowledge is also identified as a fundamental external motivation. The possibility of having access to knowledge allows HEIs to do better research and improve students' learning process. Quality research is only possible in a universe without frontiers. Being internationally known and having access to materials and resources of other institutions are some of the main advantages pointed out by our interviewees. Moreover, there is a clear convergence of markets, cultures, societies and individuals. Every aspect of our life takes place in a globalized world characterized by increasing movements of exchange and cooperation. According to JP, "*students are aware that when leaving university they will be working in a world without frontiers.*"

Internal motivations are directly related to HEIs' mission and vision.

If we take into consideration the rationales for the internationalization of HEIs, according to Knight and de Witt (1995), and based on the responses of our interviewees, we can conclude academic and economic perspectives are the main rationales to the internationalization of the University of Aveiro. It is interesting to note that the differentiation made between internal and external rationales can be associated to Stensaker et al.'s (2008) "old" and "new" forms of internationalization. According to Stensaker et al. (2008), academic and socio-cultural rationales are institution-specific and internal in nature, political and economic reasons usually demand an adaptation of the institution to external forces.

In this particular case, the most relevant rationale for the internationalization of UA is the academic rationale. Every interviewee outlined the relation of UA's mission to the benefits of internationalization processes of producing and sharing knowledge and taking part in qualified research. The emphasis is on producing and sharing knowledge, student and staff development, the establishment of strategic alliances and networks and the consequent reputation of teaching and research. According to FT, "*internationalization contributes in great scale for the prestige of an institution and there is no institution that does not aspire to be known.*" The possibility of giving more opportunities to UA's own students and to attract international talents should be the core mission of all internationalization strategies.

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

Although not so relevant as the former, economic motivations play a significant role in UA's strategies. Associated with a "new" form of internationalization the economic rationale must be in fact identified as a dominant rationale as HEIs are becoming much more market oriented. Financial restrictions, growing competition and new forms of funding are some of the reasons that force institutions to become focused on economic objectives. The importance of generating alternative income mainly through the enhancement of international brand and profile is of fundamental importance to UA's survival.

According to our interviewees to this specific topic, academic and economic rationales are identified as the main motivations for the internationalization of UA. However, if we take into consideration all the answers of the interview, socio-cultural rationale must also be pointed out. In fact, networks and alliances with PALOP are referred by all respondents when asked about specific activities. Intercultural development, social and community development or human resources development are taken into consideration since the creation of the University of Aveiro.

### **Strategic Features on UA's Internationalization**

At the beginning, internationalization activities, processes and responsibilities were generally attributed to vice-rectors, usually chosen to this area due to their personal international experiences and contacts. Considering the context, at that time, internationalization was assumed as inherent to academic activities. In the 1980s particular human resources were allocated to an international office that has been steadily growing. The idea of university communion continued up until now.

Examples given by interviewees to illustrate the level of internationalization of the university are diverse and multiple: relations and networks nurtured through research, participation in European meetings, promotion of international colloquiums, meetings, seminars, international congresses, launching of mobility and cooperation programs with multiple universities, among others.

Strategically, internationalization has always figured in rectors' programs and annual strategic plans of the university. Objectives such as declaring the internationalization of the university as a main purpose are clearly stated in many documents of running for elections.

Browsing UA's website on international area and analyzing some of UA institutional documents it is clearly stated that the University of Aveiro assumes the challenge of highlighting its international position. UA's strategy includes: knowledge production in collaboration with foreigner partners; definition of a policy of alliances and identification of priority geographical areas with foreigner partners; the recruitment of international talents (lecturers, researchers and students);

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

the growing cross border visibility through events promotions or reinforcement of UA's international presence in supranational organizations.

Besides Erasmus Program, the most well-known and succeed program of student exchange, UA's students might study abroad through other programs such as Campus Europae, ECIU network or Erasmus mundus. As a result from UA's institutional relations with socioeconomic partners, UA's students have also the opportunity to study in one of more than thirty institutions of Portuguese Speaking Countries Community countries. UA students have also the opportunity to do European internships in Europe through programs such as Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, or Comenius or in Japan through programs such as Vulcanus in Japan. UA has also several development projects in straight cooperation between its offices and other institutions. An enormous evidence of this cooperation is the PmatE project that has at the moment two different projects with the PALOP: the OUTclass that created a virtual academic community to students from basic education and the PENSAS@moz that promotes teaching through new technologies.

Exchange students receive language training during their exchange and assistance concerning accommodation. There are a limited number of rooms at the halls of residence, but help to find accommodation in the private sector is provided.

The Erasmus Buddy is a University of Aveiro student who works with International Office ensuring that exchange students feel welcome within the UA's academic community and who will offer support and assistance if needed to exchange students.

UA international office provides immigration support and promotes cultural travels with the initiative "Discover Portugal with us". This allows exchange students to better know Portugal and take closer contact with Portuguese reality and people. There is also evidence of student's structures such as International Students Association of Economic and Entrepreneurial Sciences Students (AISEC).

UA is part of several networks and international forums such as European University Association (EUA), European University Foundation (EUF) – Campus Europae, European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), European Chemistry Thematic Network Association (ECTN) among many others.

Besides being involved in several European Union projects UA participates in several international master's joint degrees.

### **Labelling UA's Internationalization Activities**

According to Knight's (2007) classification, the categorization of UA's internationalization activities is focused on the following aspects: academic programs, research and scholarly collaboration, external relations: domestic and cross-border and governance activities.

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

According to our interviewees, academic programs and research and scholarly collaboration seems to be the most important and relevant categories of internationalization activities. Internationalization activities have in fact an immediate association to academic programs such as student exchange programs (Erasmus, Socrates, Tempus, among others), foreign language study, work/study abroad, international students, learning/teaching process, joint double degree projects, visiting lecturers and scholars or cross-cultural training. In the category of research and scholarly collaboration, evidences are also in joint research projects, international conferences and seminars, published articles and papers, international research agreements or research exchange programs.

External relations are evident in UA's activities translated in community service and intercultural project-work (diverse programs with PALOP), customized education and training programs for international partners and clients (UA services portfolio), international development assistance projects and cross-border delivery education programs (PmatE), international linkages, partnerships and networks (ECIU), contract based training and research programs and services and alumni abroad programs.

Extracurricular activities are present with student clubs and associations (AISEC) and peer support groups and programs exist in the initiative Erasmus buddy.

Government activities are also identified in UA's internationalization actions. Evidence of some of its activities is in organizational strategic documents consulted. This involves expressed commitment by senior leaders, articulated rationale and goals for internationalization, recognition of international dimension in institutional mandate statements and in planning as well as integrated into institution-wide and department/college level planning. We could not find evidence of international dimension evaluation policy documents. Bearing in mind that some respondents considered the inexistence of formal evaluation, this issue is pointed out as a failure in activities scheme.

Concerning UA's operation activities we can only find evidence of informal systems for communication (through Internet). No evidence is found in appropriate organizational structures, formal systems for communication, liaison and co-ordination, balance between centralized and decentralized promotion and management of internationalization and adequate financial support and resource allocation system. Furthermore, responses confirm the insufficient allocation of financial resources to internationalization and a carefully analysis of 2017's organic structure with internationalization divided by three vice-rectors without confirmed connection to international office are supportive issues of this evaluation.

Support from institution-wide services units such as student housing, registrar, information technology and library resources are relevant to UA, as well as student support services for incoming and outgoing students with programs such as orientation programs, counselling, among others. Although we may find some evidence of the

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

involvement of academic support units such as library, teaching and learning and research services, we could not find evidence of curriculum development or faculty or staff training.

Despite references in interviews to human resources activities supporting for international assignments and sabbaticals, no evidence was found to recruitment and selection procedures that recognize international expertise, reward and promotion policies to reinforce faculty and staff contributions.

Taking into consideration the results of the case study, Table 3 summarizes the main findings.

### **Presentation of Scenarios to Future Developments**

Despite its valuable contribution to poor national outcomes in terms of international standards, UA needs to reinforce its position, take advantage from its international image and reputation and improve some internal aspects. An international dimension is already included in UA intentional directions exposed in its mission, objectives and strategic documents but quantitative data as well as formal evaluation systems should be added. International ambitions and intentions although present in every strategic document are generally vague and broad. The EU has established in Leuven Communiqué the quantitative aim of 20% of mobility by 2020. Therefore, by 2020, one in each five students should participate at least once in a mobility program out of its origin country. To UA achieve this goal, it would be important that intermediary goals are established, assessed and achieved.

There is no evidence of evaluation processes to assess internationalization activities. Despite a constant concern on the evaluation, there was not a clear and defined formal process to evaluate internationalization activities. Considering the amount of protocols, networks and programs involved an evaluation of the feedback, revenue or consequences should be made in any circumstance.

The communication system is also deficiently presented. According to OECD (2011), underlying factors in students' choice of a country of study include at first scale its language of instruction. Countries whose language of instruction is widely spoken and read are therefore leading destinations of foreign students. Quality of programs based on the perceived quality from a wide array of information on and rankings of higher education programs is also an underlying factor in students' choice. UA has been recently considered the best Portuguese university by Ranking of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan. An excellent promotion and communication should be in fact taken out of this classification. Tuition fees, cost of living, immigration policy and other factors such as recognition

**Internationalization and Higher Education**

*Table 3. Summary of main findings*

<b>Definitions</b>		
<i>Business contexts</i>	<i>HEIs contexts</i>	<i>UA</i>
Increasing process involvement in international operations and valuable activities.	Increasing process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension in HEIs' activities (Knight, 1993).	Natural and inherent process to HEIs' activities; Mission statements; Knowledge sharing, comparing and learning; Product enrichment; Amount of international members in the community.
Adaptation to organizational processes in international contexts.	Awareness, interaction and dialogue with other countries (Yang, 2002).	
<b>Rationales</b>		
<i>Business contexts</i>	<i>HEIs contexts</i>	<i>UA</i>
Endogenous; Market characteristics; Relational motivations; Access to exogenous resources; Governmental incentives.	Academic.	Access and take part in global knowledge; Having access to materials and resources.
	Socio-cultural.	Networks and alliances with PALOP.
	Political.	
	Economic.	Search for new forms of revenue.
<b>Activities</b>		
<i>HEIs contexts (Knight, 2007)</i>	<i>UA</i>	
Academic programs	e.g.: Mobility programs (Erasmus, Campus Europae, Erasmus Mundus...); Work / study abroad; Internships in Europe; Lecturers PhD trainings; Investigation projects; International networks and forums; European Union projects; International master's degree; Foreign language study; Internationalized curricula; Visiting lecturers and scholars.	
Research and scholarly collaboration	Colloquiums, meetings, seminars, international congresses of world dimension; International networks and forums; Joint research projects; Published articles and papers; International research partners in academic and other sectors.	
External relations: Domestic	Associations with community partner; Customized education and training programs for international partners and clients.	
External relations: Cross-border	Cross-border delivery education programs (PALOP); International development assistance projects (PmatE); International linkages, partnerships and networks (World Bank intervention); Representation in Brussels, ECIU, EUA).	
Extra-curricular	Student clubs and associations (AISEC); International and intercultural campus events (Discover Portugal with us); Peer support groups and programs (Erasmus Buddy).	
Governance	Expressed commitment by senior leaders; (Documents for running elections); Active involvement of faculty and staff (Relation departments and rectory); Recognition of international dimension in institutional mission/mandate statements, and in planning (Mission statements and objectives).	
Operations	Appropriate organizational structures (International office);	
Services	Support from institution-wide services units (accommodation); Student support services for incoming and outgoing students; Portuguese classes to foreigner students.	
Human resources	Recruitment and selection procedures which recognize international expertise.	

Source: Self elaboration

### *Internationalization and Higher Education*

of foreign degrees, restrictive university admission policies at home, geographical, trade or historical links between countries, future job and cultural aspirations and government policies to facilitate transfer of credits between home and host institutions are also underlying factors in students' choice that are now widely available at the university of Aveiro.

UA as well as HEIs in general should recognize existing political, economic, social, cultural and educational conditions, evaluate their impact on the organization context and potentiate their best conditions and competencies. The desire of internationalization meaning universities fusion, international enterprises association, campus expansion must be taken into account. In fact, these aspirations should be taken into consideration if HEIs desire to evolve, to progress and to advance.

UA has been growing nationally and internationally throughout the years. Quality, excellence and prestige are immediately associated to UA's image and its contribution to the internationalization of Portuguese higher education is significant. However, a process of reflection in order to analyze the necessity, opportunities and challenges of integrating its teaching and research within a higher international level should be questioned. Therefore, there are only two possible scenarios to UA's future: either assumes internationalization as a priority area to its development or sustains the actual internationalization level.

Maintaining today's level of internationalization could be associated to a scenario of survival or decadency and will be clearly overwhelmed by other institutions, either nationally or internationally. Defining internationalization as a priority area implies deeply structuring some of its main activities and deepening their contacts, relations and partnerships. Enormous decisions concerning tuition fees, campus expansion or assuming English as the language of instruction are decisive to the future of UA international development and affirmation. Considering UA's ambitions clearly stated in its official documents, national borders and limitations are not enough to university desirable and expected development.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter aimed at understanding the importance of HEIs, namely using the case of the University of Aveiro. Taking into account the summary presented in Table 4 one can conclude that UA's Internationalization strategy has evolved over timer.

If at the beginning of the internationalization process the UA sought after the internationalization of their teaching staff to internalize foreign practices, national policies concerning the internationalization of higher education has been sought after proactively. However, one can also claim that the main reasons behind the

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

internationalization process are the search for moneymaking profits, according to Bok's (2003) typology. UA's internationalization strategy in what pertains to the internationalization of their students has been proactive, although it is still tuned to PALOP countries and relies extensively on international programs that are accessible to European HEIs. However, one can state that we could not find evidence of the international dimension evaluation in public documents.

Although there are plenty of international academic programs, as referred in Table 4, one can argue that the internationalization has been reactive, according to Veiga, Rosa, and Amaral (2004), as international experience, and international research collaboration depend on that availability of international programs. However, it is important to claim that this international research experience and collaboration is important to underpin an international research career.

Internationalization is comprehended as a natural and inherent activity of university's mission. It is understood as the process of sharing and producing knowledge and can be accounted considering its relations, partners or non-national members among the academic community.

The academic, economic and cultural rationales are the main motivations to the internationalization of UA. The academic rationale is intrinsically related to both research and education pillars of the university. The economic rationale concerns the financial and profitable outcomes also important to UA's international development. The cultural rationale regards the close relation with PALOP. Although all the rationales are present, one can claim that the economic rationale is the most prominent one as it concerns tuition fees, campus expansion and influences many money-making opportunities among students and universities alike.

Participation in European networks and partnerships with foreign universities and student mobility are the main UA internationalization activities. They are seen as a tool to further develop research and postgraduate studies, attract international stakeholders, increase incoming and outgoing students and consolidate quality practices. Cooperation with Portuguese speaking nations is a particular area of interest in UA policy. Despite its considerably relevant contribution to national outcomes, considering international and mobility students' results, UA is still far from the reference numbers established by the European Union. This is a clear challenge the UA has to overcome in order to abandon a reactive strategy, based on Veiga, Rosa, and Amaral's (2004) typology.

Considered by the ranking of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan the best Portuguese university, UA has an interesting image of innovation and quality. Assumed by many to be better known outside national borders, a considerable and consistent path must be made to ensure UA's international position. An investment by the Rectorate in order to meet the demands of an internationally-

### ***Internationalization and Higher Education***

oriented university must go further than intentions and need to be materialized. Tangible goals must be defined and assessed and important decisions concerning tuition fees, campus expansion or language of instruction should be considered to further developments.

A relation between theories of internationalization developed to business contexts and their applicability to HEIs contexts in particular to UA case study is in fact very interesting. Although one cannot assume the appropriateness of only one theory to explain UA process of internationalization, one can conclude that is closer to “cross-border education” than to “transnational education”, according to Knight (2004).

This is easily explained as even in the presence of countless international partnerships, the University of Aveiro seeks to exert local responsiveness to foreign students and research staff and rarely seeks to implement a global integration strategy.

The same applies to decision regarding English as a language of instruction, assessment of internationalization activities, or the creation of an international brand seeking for gaining a world-wide reputation and positioning the brand as an international one.

## **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The main limitation in this work is related to the fact that is an exploratory study based on a single case study. As such, this research needs to be complemented with further studies addressing for example, internationally oriented departments *vis-à-vis* less international oriented departments.

There are some interesting areas which are under-researched such as the impact of twin higher education systems, the influence of supra national institutions and associations and the impact of national policy making.

## **Internationalization and Higher Education**

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***Internationalization and Higher Education***

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*Internationalization and Higher Education*

**ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> In order to respond to the increasing demand for higher education, new providers, delivery methods and new types of programs have appeared in recent years. Notwithstanding their importance, in this work the reference to higher education will have its higher and most considerable representation in the term “university.”
- <sup>2</sup> Between 1978 and 1986 the rector was Professor José Ernesto de Mesquita Rodrigues who died in 1998. Conducting the interview with Professor Fernandes Thomaz was a personal choice considering the pertinence of the period, the consistency on the evolution and the relevant paper performed by Professor Fernandes Thomaz as vice-rector as well as in his subsequent experience in HEIs context.