

Resultado Global da Unidade:

Excellent

Unit Name: Instituto de Estudos de Literatura Tradicional (LIT-LVT-Lisboa-657)

Evaluation Panel (Unidade I&D visitada em: 15-02-2008)

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Legenda: (c) Coordinator; (r) Reviewer

General Comments*

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The idea for this research group emerged at the end of the 1970s, took shape in the 80s with the creation of an informally constituted institute with a clear awareness of its mission, namely the recovery and dissemination of (popular) cultural heritage, including traditional literature, subject areas hitherto relegated to the margins of academia. 2003 saw a formal application to the FCT for funding, which they began to receive in 2004. Activities are divided across 3 lines of research: 1. Songs, Tales And What's More; 2. Tradition And Modernity; 3. Speeches From The Earth.

2. DECLARED OBJECTIVES

The Institute has 13 inter-related, interdependent objectives, which combine to give critical mass and coherence to the work of the research lines. The overarching objective may be summed up as re-thinking and redefining traditional literature and popular culture in both social and academic terms. This objective then branches out into a series of strands and activities, which

include examining the intertextual relationship between individual works and traditional elements, or works and their predecessors. The recovery and preservation of traditional literary genres such as songs, ballads, tales, riddles, legends, etc) sets up a dialogue with other academic disciplines (ethnology, anthropology, sociology, history biology, environmental sciences, maths). The Institute intends to pursue their transdisciplinary approach, and enrich their academic work with the added value of artistic, popular, oral and traditional elements. To this end their research extends beyond the European context to the wider Portuguese speaking world, thus introducing a multicultural dimension. The Institute disseminate its work through publications in Portuguese and other European languages, as well as exhibitions, CDs, DVDs, documentaries and performances. Outreach activities are also a key objective, at local, national and international level. The Institute's objectives also incorporate a cultural studies dimension, where popular culture is flagged up as a valid alternative to mass culture. Traditional literature is not just for the library or museum, but should be worked with. The Institute also has a commitment to lifelong learning through training in the community and doctoral and postdoctoral research in Portugal and abroad.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Institute has a Director, Vice-Director, and Scientific Adviser. Each of the three research lines has its own principal researcher. Altogether the Institute has 47 members with PhD, and 30 collaborators (4 with PhD), distributed across 3 research lines. Because of the deliberately transversal strategy, all of the researchers are listed together. Many of the researchers are not directly based in the area of folklore or traditional literature, but have joined the Institute because of a shared interest in one or more of the strands: the ethos of the Institute is one of transdisciplinary cooperation.

4. PRODUCTIVITY

4.1 PUBLICATIONS

Details of publications, conference organization and participation are listed in

the Centre's report to the FCT and also on the Institute website. Members of the Institute publish their scholarly research in books and journals, internationally and nationally. Some have been awarded prizes. There is also significant multimedia output, part of the strategy to recover and disseminate lost folkloric or traditional heritage. The Institute has also invested in publications designed to reinforce their outreach objective.

4.2 TRAINING

For the period 2003-2006, the Institute had a completion rate of 14 Masters and 7 PhDs in the report submitted to FCT. Other Masters and PhD candidates are working through the system, though the documentation makes it difficult to quantify these. However, the number of 26 non PhD collaborators points very clearly to an environment in which young scholars are able to take part in academic events and contribute to projects that feed into their own research and professionalisation.

4.3 ACADEMIC EVENTS

A series of conferences and seminars have been hosted or organised by the Institute. These include the highly prestigious international Proverb conference, and a series of meetings on traditional literature held in various locations in continental Portugal and the Azores. Members of the Institute have delivered papers or performed at numerous international conferences and cultural events (USA), South Africa, France, Brazil, Holland, Germany, Croatia, etc.

4.4 OUTREACH

This should be flagged up as one of the great strengths of the Institute, and encompasses a considerable range of social and educational activities, under the broad heading of lifelong learning. Members of the Institute take their work into the wider community, promoting literacy and learning, in Portugal and abroad. Involvement in reading schemes fulfils one of the objectives, namely building bridges between the academic/scientific and the social.

5. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Since it first came into being, the Institute has developed a clear sense of its mission and priorities, and, according to the documentation and the feedback gathered during the site visit, will remain focused on the stated objectives. The main work of the Institute is concentrated within the three research lines, which are overseen by the Director and managed by the Director, Vice-Director and principal researchers, but incorporating the views of the researchers. Coherence and cohesion is achieved across the research lines, through transparency and consensus.

6. FUTURE PLANNING

(i) The Institute will continue to pursue the stated objectives, articulated with members' individual research into literature and its relationship with traditional/oral literature and manifestations of popular culture.

(ii) The Management Team is aware of the continuing need to internationalize. This objective is already partially enshrined in the Institute's practices and programme of activities. More emphasis will be placed on publishing in languages other than Portuguese, or in bilingual editions, and extending projects beyond the European space and playing a more visible role in international networks.

(iii) Members of the Institute will continue to publish in their core areas: fields of music, legends, tales, ballads, folklore, and disseminate their work through books, articles, conferences, the internet, audio recordings, DVDs, radio and television and documentaries.

(iv) The coherence of the Institute comes from its commitment to adhere to and strengthen the three lines of research.

(v) To guarantee continuity in these research areas, the Institute will create a PhD Seminar on Tradition and Modernity, a Postgraduate Course in

Traditional Literature Studies as well as Masters seminars, thus enhancing their postgraduate training provision.

7. REGIONAL ROLE

Although the Institute is based in a Lisbon university, members of the Institute are strongly networked with colleagues and institutions in continental Portugal and the Azores. The Institute therefore acts as a focal point for a series of initiatives and undertakings within the field of Traditional Literature.

8. NATIONAL INTEREST

The Institute is the leading Portuguese centre for research into Traditional Literature and related subjects. Given the quality of their outputs and the clarity of their objectives, the FCT should continue to support their endeavors.

9. INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

The Institute already enjoys an international reputation for members' work on Traditional Literature and related subjects. Members collaborate in international events and publications, have already built up networks and joint projects, and plan to develop this strategy more fully by disseminating their publications in languages other than Portuguese, continuing to host international conferences, and seeking further partnerships with foreign institutions.

10. DISTINCTIVE FUTURES AND ADDED VALUE

The Institute occupies a unique position in the Portuguese academic constellation, and undertakes research into areas, which have, in the past, been unjustly relegated to the margins. Their contribution to the recovery and reevaluation of Traditional Literature and its ongoing relationship to the wider socio-cultural context, both as foundation and force for innovation,

cannot be overstated. The added value of the Institute derives from their inter/multi and transdisciplinary approach, the clarity and attainability of their objectives, as well as the commitment to outreach and disseminatory activities.

11. GRADING OF CENTRE AND EVALUATIVE STATEMENT

The Institute of Traditional Literature Studies has developed in accordance with the research interests and commitments of its members. These are drawn from various departments within the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and from other Institutions of Higher Education in Portugal. One of the several strengths of this research unit is the sense of a common purpose, thus it seems appropriate to quote the Portuguese proverb “a união faz a força”, roughly translated as “strength in unity”. The achievements of the Institute extend far beyond the study of folklore or ballads, touching on crucial questions of cultural heritage, national identity, literacy, social inclusion and the dignity of the individual. They unequivocally merit a classification of excellent.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) The research lines should continue to receive support from the FCT and other sponsoring institutions.

(ii) While the management structures function efficiently in terms of results, these could be described more explicitly in future documentation.

(iii) Leadership to date has led to the development and consolidation of the research lines, and there are sufficient non PhD collaborators coming through to guarantee the continuity and renewal.

(iv) The Management Team may wish, at some time in the future, to review the totality of the projects and research undertaken under the umbrella heading of Traditional Literature, in order to ensure continued coherence, and eliminate any future possibility of dispersion.