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ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

DECEMBER 2013



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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 of the University of Crete consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. ***Dr Loucas Petronicolos***, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy, College of Education & Human Services, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, USA
(Coordinator)

2. ***Prof Marcie Boucouvalas***, Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA

3. ***Prof Maria Pagoni***, Prof in Sciences of Education, University Lille III, France.

INTRODUCTION

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The present report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Law 3374/2005 and the instructions and guidelines provided by the HQA.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the Department of Primary Education (the Department) of the University of Crete, based in Rethymno from 16 to 18 of December, 2013. The visit took place in a very cooperative and collegial spirit, as regards the Faculty, the staff and the students. Moreover, the visit was completed in accordance with a detailed plan, prepared in advance by the Head of Department and her Deputy, although in some points, because of delays beyond their control, it had to be slightly modified.

The EEC met with the following individuals and groups:

- The Vice Rector and Chair of the Quality Assurance Unit of the University of Crete (MODIP) Dr. Eleni Papadaki
- The Head of the Department Dr. Eleni Vasilaki and her Deputy Dr. Konstantinos Tzanakis
- The Dean of the Faculty of Education Dr. Antonis Chourdakis
- The members of the Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC), Drs. Pela Kalogiannaki, Vasilis Makrakis, and Konstantinos Tzanakis, and Ioannis Spandidakis
- The Directors of five Divisions (tomeis) within the Department
 - Dr. Pela Kalogiannaki, Director of Division A, Theory and Sociology of Education
 - Dr. Ilias Kourkoutas, Director of Division B, Educational Psychology and Research Methods
 - Dr. Vasilis Makrakis, Director of Division C, Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Technology.
 - Dr. Alexandra Zervou, Director of Division D, Humanities and Social Studies
 - Dr. Marianna Kalaitzidaki, Director of Division E, Science and Mathematics
- All members of the teaching staff
- Groups of graduate and undergraduate students
- Administrative staff

In addition, individual members of the EEC had some unplanned visits to classes where they had the opportunity to observe faculty members interacting with their students.

The Department provided the members of the Committee with hard copies of the internal evaluation report, exhibits that included the research products of students and faculty, doctoral dissertations, master's and undergraduate theses, course syllabi, and a meticulously prepared DVD that, among other things, contained:

- CV files of all faculty members
- all the data used to prepare and support the conclusions of the internal evaluation report
- power point files of all presentations made during the visit of the EEC
- pdf files of academic bulletins, guidebooks of studies, and departmental policies
- photos of the physical layout for each exhibit

- files of relevant documents such as, the minutes from several faculty meetings, letters documenting policies of the Department, the Greek law framework for the operation of the higher education system, etc.

The EEC members were particularly impressed by the detailed presentations made by the faculty members of the Department. We were also very pleased by the readiness of everyone to respond with clear honesty when we asked clarifying questions. Our work is based on the Internal Evaluation Report as well as on the information given to us during our visit to the site. It is also based on such evidence that the EEC has been able to collect and which demonstrates the quality and quantity of the work in the Department. We interviewed groups of teaching and administrative staff and students. The EEC interviewed separately the following groups: (a) teaching staff in the Department; (b) groups of the undergraduate and postgraduate students; and (c) members of the administrative staff.

The EEC visited those facilities that are within the department and those within the Rethymno Campus that are related to the work of the Department. Particularly, we inspected some classrooms, some professors' offices, meeting rooms, the offices of the administration staff, science and mathematics Labs, the IT Lab, the Campus Library, the Collection of Glykatzi-Arveler located in the Home of Culture Center (Spiti tou Politismou), the School Museum (Center for the Study of the History of Education), and the Students' Dining Facility.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The ECC considers the sources and documentation used as appropriate. The following sections elaborate more on this matter.

To the extent that the objectives of the internal evaluation have been to offer the EEC a clear picture of the activities of the Department, it can be said that they have succeeded to a high degree.

A. CURRICULUM

Approach, Implementation, and Results: An overview and integrated practice

The Department seems to be exceeding its pre-defined goals and objectives, but all is not evident if one restricts the analysis and report just to the goals. One might miss the nuances of navigation. With that thought in mind we introduce this first section as an integrated overview, followed by a discussion that conforms to the four-fold categories of the template.

Beyond the internal evaluation report generated by the Department of Primary Education, we experienced a very rich array of materials and a team that was well prepared in helping us understand the depth and breadth of their past and present efforts, as well as those planned for the immediate and long term future. As with most universities in Greece, the ongoing “crisis” has impacted the availability of both human and material resources thus potentially limiting the implementation of viable and innovative visions (e.g., reduction in salaries, elimination of “scholarships” for graduate students, and with mandatory retirements at age 67, such positions are frozen and not filled, etc.). Under these circumstances, however, the University of Crete, Department of Primary Education has risen to such challenges and found ways to survive and even thrive, modeling some of the best that the human spirit has to offer. Also, as a tribute to the learning community that they have established, retired faculty, current and former students, and community members volunteer their time and energy to ensure a quality program. These observations in no way suggest that they are not in need of human and material resources. In fact, if and when resources become available it is clear to us that investment in this Department would yield bountiful return both to Greece and the international community.

The scope of their activities in curriculum matters far transcends their geographical locale, offering a highly valued and respected set of curriculum materials to the diaspora Greeks in learning the Greek language, culture, history and through Memoranda of both Understanding and Agreement with other countries.

Throughout our visit we repeatedly heard about and observed the manner in which balancing and integrating theory and practice provided a compelling and guiding framework for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum. Moreover, efforts produced by students often result in practical value for the Department as well as for the larger context. For example, an anemometer built in the physics lab is in use; a doctoral dissertation was instrumental in guiding curriculum evaluation, etc. Finally, another guiding framework for all efforts is what was referred to as the four Cs: collaboration, critical reflection, communication, and creativity, which is actually part of the “21st century skills for a global society movement” spearheaded by the NEA (National Education Association) of the USA. It was most clear to us that the Department is committed to developing global thinkers and has a procedure for regularly conducting a critical review of the curriculum in April of every year.

Attention to a very comprehensively crafted past-present-future lens is also apparent. An underlying thesis of such an approach is fueled by the position that understanding the history of education in Crete and in the country of Greece provides a springboard to appreciating the present as well as learning from the past in order to improve the future. Consistent with their

commitment to balancing theory and practice, the Department has spearheaded an ever-growing hands-on museum on the history of education that fosters discovery learning (for further information and a “tour” see www.thranio.org). The site and the activities form an integral part of the curriculum, an aim of which is to educate prospective educators matriculating for degrees, to tend to the professional development of current educators, provide experiential learning for primary school students, and others. The Center is also open to the public during specific hours and days. Entitled the Centre for Study and Research of the History of Education and the Teaching Profession (KEMEIEDE, after the Greek acronym), the effort integrates research with practical application and international collaboration. In addition, planned for the forthcoming year are two professional development efforts: (a) A Master of Arts degree in the Science of Education that focuses on the “History of Education and Educational Intervention,” scheduled for launching during 2014-2015, (b) A certificate program in “Teaching and Educational Attainment,” consistent with Law 3848/2010. Moreover, Memoranda of Cooperation have been signed with an array of countries for collaborative research and educational exchanges in this topical area. These processes and products are introduced as part of the curriculum to the matriculating students in the Department. A first International Conference was launched in May of 2013 and summer schools will begin functioning in July of 2014 geared to both students and faculty.

In addition, a clearly implicit goal is to meet not just the present but the future needs of the greater context: of Crete, Greece and our planet. This aim is laudatory and sorely needed in today’s interconnected world. We would recommend making it more explicit.

Similarities abound for undergraduate, graduate, and the doctoral program; however, we will distill at the end the unique matters characterizing the graduate (master’s) and doctoral programs.

Approach, Implementation, Results: A discrete response to the template

APPROACH

The aims and stated goals of the curriculum and the objectives to meet those goals are both content and process driven. In addition to the specific content (knowledge and skills) inherent in each course, a common aim of the curriculum is to develop globally oriented lifelong learners who can in turn nurture learning as a lifelong process in their students, embracing as well the frameworks noted above (integration of theory and practice, and the design and formatting of the curriculum with the 4 Cs in mind). In terms of learning transfer, faculty aim to model everything they teach and formats are in place to enable that goal.

Goals stated in the form of mission and aims are as follows:

- Cultivate in the learner and future teacher a spirit of free investigation of knowledge, collaborative effort, and democratic behavior.
- Help the learner become aware of and embrace human values.
- Motivate the learner to develop the needed abilities for the understanding and resolution of contemporary social issues.

- Foster an attitude of critical analysis of societal structures (in the sociological sense) and the institutions that form the current social order.
- Cultivate learners into agents of social change.
- Afford all the necessary tools to make learners independent autonomous self-directing individuals and foster the development of independent, critical expression.
- Develop an environment in which one may exercise a spirit of friendship and cooperation that promotes mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence of people on earth.

The process by which the curriculum was established began with a review, discussion, and thorough understanding by the original faculty of the Public Law that established the University. After the program commenced, such review and discussion involved students as well. Given the breadth and depth of the Department's involvement in international venues and collaborations they are able to keep their antennae tuned to appropriate standards not just for implementation but also for improvement of the curriculum and the relevance and applicability of data based "best practices" to their context. Moreover, their close involvement with the local community affords an opportunity to understand local needs as well. Accordingly, the objectives are quite consistent with the curriculum and the curriculum with the ever-evolving needs of society and professional standards.

The Department has a very clear procedure for revision of the curriculum. In fact, they have a yearly meeting in April of each year to discuss findings collected during the year as to what to retain, modify, augment, etc. During the year data are gathered from various stakeholders such as students, the schools in which they do their practice teaching, etc. and they keep an eye on global trends and issues as they may impinge upon Crete and the national context of Greece.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

All five Divisions of the Department of Primary Education have very well qualified and educated faculty to implement the curriculum. Their publications and international involvement and connections contribute to the cosmopolitan nature of the environment. Among them are editors of Journals, a UNESCO chair, and consultants recognized locally and abroad for their specific areas of expertise. Despite the diminishing resources there continues to be a goodness of fit with regard to how the Department's explicit and implicit goals are implemented by the curriculum. Both the content of the curriculum and the multi-faceted methods of delivery bode well with regard to universally accepted standards. Moreover, the syllabi we were able to review seemed to evidence a good balance between enough structure and enough flexibility so as to meet the goals of developing knowledgeable independent thinkers. In addition, the groups of students we were able to observe and visit with seemed to evidence many of the stated goals such as displaying cooperative spirit and peaceful co-existence while simultaneously navigating as self-directing autonomous thinkers.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department is aware of the dynamic as opposed to static nature of the Curriculum, keeps a continuous eye on its pulse and has developed a collaborative community continually seeking feedback from each other, from students, schools, and the community, along with maintaining

vital relationships with colleagues abroad through their many projects and ventures. Accordingly, they tend to have a keen sense of how the curriculum should be improved. A specific improvement that the Department plans for the forthcoming year is to fix the sequence of courses in order to enable the introduction of prerequisites before taking more advanced courses, thus improving the process and product of learning. An initiative, under discussion, is the organization of courses and any other requirements that might lead to what amounts to a “minor” in universities of other countries. A key aim is to focus more on the uses of technology to catalyze more efficiency and to address the issues and problems of diminishing resources and tight budgets.

While the next sections of the report will address teaching and research (followed by “other services”), it is important to stay mindful of our observation that the functions of curriculum, teaching, research, and service at the University of Crete, Department of Primary Education, tend to form a seamless web, both in thought and action.

Post Graduate and Doctoral Studies

At the graduate level, we met with both master’s and doctoral level students for approximately an hour and a half with no faculty present. Most are working professionally and pursuing their graduate degree simultaneously on a part time basis, a situation seemingly made necessary by the elimination of the previous support offered to professional teachers for a two year paid leave in order to pursue and complete their Master’s degree. The doctoral students present are also juggling multiple life demands. In spite of, or perhaps because of, such a situation the students presented as a group who were very supportive of each other’s plight. They seem to be taking longer to complete their degrees but are experiencing a meaningful interface between their professional practice and their academic studies.

In addition to the graduate path led by individual interests, a newly established graduate program for both master’s and doctoral pursuits focuses on ICT-enabled Education for Sustainable Development, which is financially self-supporting, and which is complementary to the location of the UNESCO Chair on ICT in Education for Sustainable Development, within the Department of Primary Education. Also, as noted above, two additional initiatives are forthcoming: (a) A Master of Arts degree in the Science of Education that focuses on the “History of Education and Educational Intervention,” scheduled for launching during 2014-2015, (b) A certificate program in “Teaching and Educational Attainment,” consistent with Law 3848/2010

APPROACH

As with any graduate program, the goal is to develop independent scholars who understand and are able to pursue and produce original research – a thesis or dissertation – that meets quality scholarly standards. The Master’s program has specific required course work while the Doctorate program focuses primarily on one’s research, guided by faculty mentoring. We were afforded an opportunity to review completed student theses and dissertations and in many instances talk with the student’s advisor/chair of the research. The material reviewed was found to be of high quality both with regard to content and process. Moreover, literature reviews of the

ones reviewed were well done by generally accepted academic standards of depth, breadth, and relevance.

While the curriculum is regularly reviewed, consistent with Law 3658 of 2008 the Department is cognizant of the need to await an evaluation prior to any modification of structures and frameworks for graduate education.

IMPLEMENTATION

Faculty availability and support structures, including the extensive library structure and online databases available create an environment in which good scholarship is possible, The intensity of the involvement in working well with graduate students, however, has the potential problem of overtaxing a very competent faculty, especially where positions are now frozen due to retirements or those vacating the position for other reasons.

Students, eager to support each other, are searching for a place to meet on a spontaneous drop-in basis in order to feel connected to others engaged in individual inquiries. While that kind of availability can be accessed in the library, we would recommend further consideration of such an opportunity in the geographical locale of the Department.

RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT

Students are graduating with excellent research accomplished but some are taking longer than others. It has come to the attention of the faculty that personal health, family matters, and lack of financial resources are at issue. Currently the Department is conforming to the requirements of Law 3658/2008 that disallows modification of structures and frameworks until after external evaluation.

B. TEACHING

APPROACH

The Department's defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology aims to nurture the development of independent lifelong learners who are also able to work collaboratively in teams. The educational policy is focused on the effort to maintain teaching methods' quality despite the resource reduction imposed by the Ministry. According to data presented during our visit, this department maintains one among the highest student enrollments in the University of Crete. Since 1997 the number of students entering the university rose 302.7% . On the other hand, the number of staff is currently back at the 1997 level, as a result of the retirement of several faculty members and the open lines not filled afterwards. Thus, we observe that since 1997 teacher/student ratio has evolved as follows:

1997-1998	1: 13,5
2000-2001	1: 17,0
2005-2006	1: 24,4
2010-2011	1: 32,9
2011-2012	1: 45,6
2013-2014	1: 52,6

There are three categories of courses: theoretical lessons, practical exercises and seminars. We must also add the very well organized practical application of teaching in primary schools, beginning in the sixth semester and continuing in three progressive levels completing students' professionalization. The relationship that students have with teachers seems to be characterized by trust, but also by expectations for a high quality work and support of students with learning difficulties.

Faculty members are available during specified office hours at least twice a week as announced on the university website. They can also develop some specific supplements for struggling students or some tutoring offered by doctoral students. We also observed that students can realize voluntary participation in working groups or projects proposed by faculty members (service learning) such as the organisation of the Department's history of education museum we visited.

Teaching methods are rich and diverse and adapted to modern tools of information and communication. The department features a computer lab where students can work in small groups. Computers are also equipped with software for use in learning to analyse data, such as SPSS for quantitative and Ethnograph or ATLAS for qualitative data. We also visited a classroom dedicated to science experiments (physics and chemistry) and a classroom dedicated to technology and robotics. As part of their theses, students can be involved in the production of audio-visual tools for primary school classes. These productions are most often linked to research projects developed by each of the five Divisions of the department.

The examination system is designed to assess not only acquisition of knowledge but also critical and reflexive thinking. Thus, as we have seen in the course syllabi, most exams take place with

open books and manuals. It is also important that students realize several types of personal writing assignments: development of a theoretical issue for the seminar, an experience report concerning observation and teaching in classes and a thesis. It should be noted that, because of the increasing number of students and the lack of sufficient staff, theses became optional the last two years (students can choose between a thesis or three additional courses).

IMPLEMENTATION

Overall, media, methods and effects of teaching are characterized by a very high quality. The teaching manuals are written by teachers or by other researchers (sometimes translated from other languages) and students have a choice and different possibilities. The high quality of manuals is based on the fact that they are in accordance with both the international scientific literature and the research projects developed locally in the five major Divisions of the department.

The department ensures very important international mobility opportunities both for teachers and students. For example, within the Erasmus program, agreements have been established with 35 higher education institutions in 16 European countries. Since 2008, 64 students have gone to other countries (40 of them in the last two years) and 52 students have been received in the Department of Primary Education of Crete. Seven students realized their placement (experience teaching and observation in primary schools) in a foreign country (Denmark, Belgium, Portugal and Poland). During the same period, 30 staff members have been received in foreign countries and many professors of Erasmus member European institutions have been invited to the Department of Primary Education at the University of Crete in connection with each Division's research projects.

Concerning students' opinions about teaching, course content and study material / resources, a questionnaire has been realized two times, the first in 2009-2010 (403 students) and the second in 2011-2012 (311 students). The positive points very much appreciated by students are as follows: the organisation of practical experience in primary schools classes, the teaching requirements, the variety of matters, the adequacy of the curriculum with the educational objectives of the department, the quality of relations with teachers characterized by transparency, communication, collaboration and consistency, the library equipment availability and relevance, the contemporary methods of teaching used.

Students are less satisfied with some elements concerning material conditions of teaching as: the staff / student ratio and the classroom availability, the lack of adequate technical staff accompanying students in some practical exercises and workshops. Students also question the criteria and objectivity of professors' evaluation. For the latter, such a student impression can be explained by the fact that the requirement of critical and reflexive thought is not very clear for some students, especially the younger among them.

RESULTS

Efficacy of teaching can be evaluated by the success of students' studies. The great majority of students finish their studies in four years (154 / 170 in 2011-2012, 162 /184 in 2010-2011, 177 / 202 in 2009 – 2010). The average duration of studies is 4 years (compared to 4,8 years for the University of Crete) and the minimal variation of studies' duration is of 0,4 years. There are no discrepancies in the success or the failure between courses, but we can observe some differences among students in the time to graduation. These differences are explained by staff members by the great heterogeneity of the student population – for example, a significant percentage of first year students is now coming from sciences' school sections. As mentioned below, staff members assure some specific courses in order to support struggling students. Finally, the department has an important attractiveness at a national level. Statistics show that 7% of students entering the university, and placing this department as their first choice, do not originate from Crete.

Some specifics about the post-graduate level students

We met students from post-graduate level and dialogued with them. Most of them have full time jobs and combine both work and studies. That is why they are likely to complete their master's degree in three years or even more. They are very satisfied with the structure and content of courses offered as part of this master's degree. The only problem that seems to arise for them is that they would like to follow some specific courses adapted to their research topics. This is difficult however given the limited number of staff members.

Students seemed to be satisfied by the close working relationships with faculty members. They would just like to be better integrated into a collective whole, so it would be desirable that research seminars are put in place for them. Such activities would not need to be credit-bearing, but an opportunity to gather as part of a learning community and share their research topics, progress, concerns, and approaches. In this regard, it is very helpful that the Department has provided students with space and other resources (for example, the Laboratory of Post-Graduate Studies).

IMPROVEMENTS

The department is going to develop some strategies in order to cope with material difficulties and maintain the quality of studies. Some projected strategies are as follows:

- Development of e-learning in order to diffuse teaching materials more easily and for all students in accordance with research projects like TEMPUS concerning sustainable development by tools of information and communication.
- Development of tutoring and service learning in order to facilitate students' virtual interaction and social participation experience.
- Externalization of some innovative pedagogical practices and products both on the local level, as a workshop realization for primary school students with special needs and to the national or international level as the diffusion of mother language teaching tools elaborated by the first Division laboratory to the expatriate teachers of primary schools.

Otherwise, the department aims to arrive at the re-functioning of Didaskaleio, recently closed by the Ministry, intended to continuing teachers' development and education.

Concerning the post-graduate level and Doctoral Studies, the Department decided to pursue an active modification of its structure and content since 2008 under the new legal framework (n.3658/08). This reform has begun but is not yet completed for two reasons: (a) From 2008 there has been a constant change in the legal framework; and (b) According to the legislation (n.3658/08, Article 1, Paragraph 2), a Department can submit a new post-graduated diploma or reform the current one only after the completion of its evaluation process by the Ministry. This project includes a greater regulation of students' flow according to their thematic areas in order to facilitate theoretical and methodological monitoring of their thesis in the current difficult material conditions.

C. RESEARCH

APPROACH

We observed that high quality work has been done in all five areas (identified as Divisions or fields within the Department). There is also evidence of research collaboration among the members of the Department and with scholars from abroad. A healthy research diversity exists and the research environment is establishing a cohesive and interconnected whole. Furthermore, research products are pursuant to the area of expertise of each researcher and the overall mission and activities of the Department. In particular, we would like to commend the members of the Department for their efforts to use the products of their research to benefit disadvantaged groups in the immediate communities and take an interest in investigating issues that are of both local and international significance – for example, students at risk, equality of educational opportunity, social justice, multicultural education, bilingual education, etc.

Currently, the Department has a research policy that is consistent with standards set by Greek law and policies of the Ministry of Education. For hiring, promotion and tenure purposes, faculty members are expected to have a record and an active research agenda consistent with the research culture in the Department, which is characterized by standards much higher than those set by the Ministry.

IMPLEMENTATION

How does the Department promote and support research?

Overall, the recent increases of an already heavy workload have created an inexorable situation for the teaching and administrative staff. But in spite serious challenges, which all higher education institutions in Greece face these days, the Department continues to promote and support faculty and student research through a variety of avenues including, but not limited to:

- The maintenance of a Ph.D. and a two year graduate program
- The establishment and regular publication of two scientific journals.
- The sponsorship and hosting of an international conference
- The support of faculty in doing research and applying for grants, both internal and external
- The collaboration with schools of the Greek diaspora and the development of curricular material for teaching the Greek language (see, for example, the web site on the education of expatriates at <http://www.ediamme.edc.uoc.gr/diaspora/index.php?yliko>).
- The allocation of funds for traveling to attend and present at national and international conferences.
- The invitation of scholars from abroad to give public or university lectures and interact with faculty and students
- The establishment of a Summer University

In addition, the Department is very eager to keep the content of the curriculum up to date and promote a research culture among its student body by:

- Teaching a variety of research courses

- Advising undergraduate and graduate students for the completion of their theses
- Encouraging the involvement of students in various stages of the completion of research grants
- Operation of labs where students and faculty interact in a cooperative environment to produce scientific work
- Frequent and close interaction of students with faculty in an environment of safety and mutual respect.

RESULTS

During our stay, we visited various sites (i.e., three book and journal exhibits, two laboratories, and one exhibit with course syllabi, student assignments, and course textbooks). There we had the opportunity to discuss with the faculty their work and examine hard copies of scientific publications, final results of research projects, student dissertations, and other student artifacts that were the outcome of student collaboration with faculty. We observed that on different occasions, the Department's research has deservedly received recognition within Greece as well as internationally. There some evidence of patent activity (two in 2005). This rather low number is expected since most of the above research products were supported with state funds and are open to public uses. We also observed that the Department has established a large network of national and international links through participation in collaborative initiatives in exciting areas of educational research and innovation. Based on these experiences, we concluded that the Department's research objectives were successfully implemented.

More specifically, we found evidence which is consistent with the internal evaluation report (see Table 21, of the 2013 update of the Quality Assurance Unit of the University of Crete). This evidence backs our conclusion that faculty members of the Department have a very good research record of:

- Books (as reported, four in 2013, one in 2012, ten in 2011, etc.)
- Publications in peer reviewed journals (for example, five in 2013, thirteen in 2012, sixteen in 2011)
- Chapters in books (three in 2013, three in 2012, twenty six in 2011, fifteen in 2010, etc.)
- Many conference presentations

Finally, a good number of faculty members have been the editors of books (twenty since 2008), invited speakers at conferences and the editors, co-editors, and members of editorial boards of academic journals.

In addition to these scientific scholarly publications and presentations, faculty members are actively seeking collaboration with other European and international institutions (institutions in Africa, Asia, the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia). It is important to note that the Department is trying to carry out these projects with funds that are generated through grants and internal funding.

The department has also developed a Center of Excellence in Research and several research labs with particular emphasis on family and child development, educational research and educational practices, environmental education and its implementation. These research units try to develop a research and educational mindset amongst students and faculty, one whose aim is the promotion

of research procedures, innovative practice and the dissemination of research findings amongst the academic and student community.

IMPROVEMENT

The engagement of the faculty members and students in scholarly activities and the production of high quality results are impressive. The EEC would only recommend for the Department to develop a written policy that outlines the research requirements for faculty hiring, promotion and tenure purposes.

D. ALL OTHER SERVICES

APPROACH & IMPLEMENTATION

It is clear that the Department considers most of the services provided to the academic community to be satisfactory. One serious concern is the lack of classrooms large enough to accommodate all registered students. Also, all in the academic community highlighted the difficulties associated with budget limitations, which have a negative effect on the services provided.

The Department has a policy to simplify administrative procedures. In an attempt to improve the effectiveness of administrative practices, they have begun to use an on-line service (named “student web”) through which students can register for classes, find out about their grades, etc.

The presence of students on campus is determined to a great extent by the policy on student attendance. For undergraduate students, attendance to special seminars, clinical and lab exercises as well as participation in student teaching are mandatory. Attendance to lectures is optional. Ironically, and for the time being, the latter solves the problem about the lack of large classroom. But the presence of students on campus is positively affected by other institutional policies and services – for example, the services the University Library offers, which will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph. The student restaurant is another service that makes the campus more student-friendly. There is also a well-equipped gym that is open to both students and faculty. Bus service from Rethymno town to campus and back is frequent and inexpensive.

The University Library has a service oriented staff and offers to students a rich national and international collection of books, journals, and electronic databases. Many of the journals are electronically accessible. There are also several personal library collections donated by well-known Greek intellectuals and political figures. The collections help students, faculty, and other interested individuals in their research. Finally, adjacent to the collection, there is a preservation laboratory for rare books and other printed artifacts.

IMPROVEMENTS

Initiatives have already been undertaken towards this direction.

COLLABORATION WITH SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND PRODUCTION ORGANIZATIONS

The University of Crete Department of Primary Education is deeply involved with an array of collaborative efforts at local, regional, national, and international levels. Since initiatives are too numerous to be inclusive we offer a sampling.

Local and Regional

Transmitting and preserving cultural heritage at the primary school level is of increasing concern. Accordingly, an initiative has been implemented in which the Department collaborates with schools and local villages to educate students (university and primary school) as well as parents and faculty in traditions such as weaving. A deep involvement with both schools and the

community is evident and manifests in programs such as “Integration of Roma children in school” (in Crete), ongoing for 15 years now.

Art and music education are also receiving the benefits of collaborative endeavors as evidenced by programs and projects with the Museum “Nikos Kazantzakis” in Crete, the Historic and Folkloric Society of Rethymnon, and the National Theatre of Rethymnon with production of several pieces of theatre (in Greek and subtitles in French), and with the VIVI theatre company created by Thélémachos Moudatsakis.

Science education is also a top priority and in this regard the Department collaborates with other departments of the University of Crete. Such collaboration has also resulted with the Museum of Natural History of the University of Crete.

A key and very significant collaboration with the municipality of Rethymnon is ongoing in order to organize the library collection of Dr. Eleni Glykatzi-Arveler, who has donated her entire library and artefact collection to the University and the municipality has provided a building, a home to display the extensive materials. Acquisition of this treasure is a result of the efforts and good reputation of the Department. As we understand it, the collection was highly sought after by others.

National collaborations and productions

Beyond Crete, several productions (books, dictionary, manuals, CD-ROM, Studies, etc.) concerning mother language learning for Greek children and teachers of diaspora have been produced, which resulted from collaborations with the University of Thessaloniki and the University of Thraki. Also developed are 21 educational websites concerning learning process and difficulties. For teachers’ education see websites : <http://elearn.edc.uoc.gr/>, www.epimorfosi.edu.gr.

International collaborations

Collaborations with schools in South Africa, Uganda and Taiwan (2011-2012-2013) with the aim to organise a Summer School in summer 2014. This effort includes video-taping of retired teachers about the experience and history of the teaching profession. Faculty have travelled to South Africa and have already conducted several sessions. Possible exchange programs are under discussion.

With regard to art and literature education, collaborations have been effected with several countries.

- In France: Institute Charles Perrault in France, University Stendhal II, Centre CRL Lyon.
- In U.K.:Centre of Research and Teaching Children’s Literature (Homerton College, University of Cambridge)

Collaborations with other European countries for educational projects such as:

- PriSciNet. *Networking Primary Science Education* (with funding from EU) with 15 other partners throughout Europe as a means to provide inquiry based science engagement for

children and training and professional development for educators in Inquiry Based Teaching – coordinated with Malta Council for Science and Technology Inquiry Based Approach to Science Education (ISBE). See www.prisci.net

- RISK. *Risk Management via an Innovative System based on Knowledge*—a European based project addressed to global issues such as climate change and disaster preparedness, but regionalized according to the needs of each area. University of Crete, Department of Primary Education is a key partner See <http://www.clab.edc.uoc.gr/RISK>
- IRRESISTIBLE. *Including Responsible Research and innovation in cutting Edge Science and Inquiry-based Science education to improve Teacher's Ability of Bridging Learning Environments*. See http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/111388_en.html

Collaborations concerning a periodical: *Hellenic Studies / Etudes Helléniques*, in two languages (English / French) in collaboration with the National Center of Hellenic Studies of Canada and the Aegean University : 2 issues for year, 90 subscriptions.

Many collaborative projects catalysed by the UNESCO Chair for ICT in Education for Sustainable Development, including the Regional Center of Expertise (RCE) a collaborative effort by institutions to promote Education for Sustainable Development. See www.edc.uoc.gr/unescochair/recrete

A new program, soon to begin, TEMPUS *CLIMASP*: Development of an interdisciplinary program on climate change and sustainability policy (see <http://www.tempus-lb.org/sites/default/files/3.pdf>)

Worth mentioning here is also the past collaboration with schools of the Greek diaspora and the development of curricular material for teaching the Greek language (see, for example, the web site on the education of expatriates at <http://www.ediamme.edc.uoc.gr/diaspora/index.php?yliko>).

E. STRATEGIC PLANNING, PERSPECTIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEALING WITH POTENTIAL INHIBITING FACTORS

The Committee was very pleased to meet with a large number of faculty members and students, both in small group sessions and in larger meetings. The overall impression from these meetings was that (1) students were highly motivated to learn and pleased by the quality of the services provided in the Department and (2) the teaching and administrative staff were committed to their work and often went beyond the line of duty in order to rise above serious challenges that are beyond their control.

The relatively small number of the permanent members of staff called upon to cover the needs of distinct programs with exceptionally diverse student populations in terms of educational backgrounds, experiences and needs seems to be an issue that should be addressed at the institutional and state levels. The Department offers a high value added for a low resource cost. It has excellent potential to further improve its infrastructure and services. All administrative and academic staff have a strong commitment to provide students in the Department with the best possible educational experiences. These are important strengths that should not be diminished.

Within the existing framework of constraints (i.e., state bureaucracy and decline of state financial support), the Department is currently able to look critically through all of its resources and processes and draw plans that can achieve the best possible results. The overarching strategy in the Department is to meet the current financial challenges with (1) generation of revenues from services provided to professionals within a framework of lifelong learning; and (2) increase of the efficiency in teaching with the use of instructional technologies.

As mentioned earlier (in Section A), planned for the forthcoming year are two professional development efforts: (a) A Master of Arts degree in the Science of Education that focuses on the “History of Education and Educational Intervention,” scheduled for launching during 2014-2015, (b) A certificate program in “Teaching and Educational Attainment,” consistent with Law 3848/2010. Moreover Memoranda of Cooperation have been signed with an array of countries for collaborative research and educational exchanges in this topical area.

A curricular improvement that the Department plans for the forthcoming year is to fix the sequence of undergraduate courses in order to enable the introduction of prerequisites before taking more advanced courses, thus improving the process and product of learning.

Finally, there are some thoughts for the potential of organizing courses and requirements that might lead to what amounts to a “minor” in universities of other countries. A key aim is to focus more on the uses of technology to catalyze more efficiency and to address the issues and problems of diminishing resources and tight budgets.

To maintain quality of studies and other services, the department is also planning:

- Development of e-learning in order to diffuse teaching materials more easily and for all students in accordance with research projects like TEMPUS concerning sustainable development by tools of information and communication.
- Development of tutoring and service learning in order to facilitate students’ virtual interaction and social participation experience.

- Externalization of some innovative pedagogical practices and products both on the local level, as a workshop realization for primary school students with special needs and to the national or international level as the diffusion of mother language teaching tools elaborated by the first Division laboratory to the expatriate teachers of primary schools.

Otherwise, the department aims to restart the Teacher Development Center (Didaskaleio), recently closed by the Ministry. Concerning the post-graduate level and Doctoral Studies, the Department has been trying to pursue an active modification of its structure and content since 2008, under the new legal framework (Public Law 3658/08). This reform has begun but is not yet completed, first because there is a constant change in the legal framework and second reforms cannot be implemented until the completion of the external evaluation (Public Law 3658/08, Article 1, Paragraph 2).

Finally, the Department has established a Center of Excellence in Research and other research labs with the goal to help in family and child development, educational research and educational practices, and environmental education.

F. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EEC

The Rethymno Campus of the University of Crete is located in a very pleasant site, with an ambient atmosphere. The teaching and administrative staff are commendable for high levels of commitment to the longstanding culture of the Department of service to students, educators, and the local community. Despite all the existing difficulties and limitations, faculty in the Department have succeeded in maintaining high quality of service to the student body and research in the discipline. The relationships both between staff and between staff and students are excellent. The impact of such commitments and spirit of collegiality extend to the larger society and the international community of scholars through a variety of outreach and programs. The level of obtained external funding is significant by any measure, and the extent and quality of on-going national and international research collaborations are more than satisfactory.

During our visit we experienced a very rich array of materials and a team that was well prepared in helping us understand the depth and breadth of their past and present efforts, as well as those planned for the immediate and long term future. We found that the teaching methods are rich and diverse and adapted to modern tools of information and communication. The engagement of the faculty members and students in scholarly activities and the production of high quality results are impressive. The Department has also clear strategies to revise the sequence of courses in order to enable the introduction of prerequisites and organize courses and any other requirements that might lead to what amounts to a “minor” in universities of other countries.

Areas where there is some room for improvements are as follows:

- (a) An effort must be made to stimulate the doctoral students to complete their studies within a reasonably prescribed period of time, keeping mindful that they are juggling multiple life demands as adult learners.
- (b) Develop a written policy that outlines the research requirements for faculty hiring, promotion and tenure purposes.
- (c) Given their very strong infrastructure that could support e-learning we would recommend the further consideration of offering on line classes or learning experience and/or blended efforts. If possible, virtual office hours might also be considered and would be helpful for both students and faculty living at more of a distance.