

UDI-A External Evaluation UDI-A Third & Final Report

April 2020

1. Introduction

The UDI-A project is an initiative of four universities from Angola and Mozambique and their European counterparts in Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and UK aiming at enhancing teaching, research and innovation capacity of the African partners.

UDI-A has all the features of a capacity building project, including an elaborated, well-calibrated internal quality assurance system, set up and executed by project partner EFMD that has accompanied the project from its inception.

The external evaluation has looked at the main outcomes of the project during its final phase. As a result, the external evaluation takes an outside, journalistic, future-oriented perspective.

The overall intention of the external evaluation was not to monitor and review the implementation of the project, but to gain insights in its deliverables and to come up with pointers for future development. This report describes the process of evaluation, our evaluation hypothesis, the evaluation focus, evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Process of evaluation

The external evaluators have carried out desk research on the basis of documents available on the website of the project and the moodle e.g. project proposal, produced deliverables, quality assurance reports, etc.

The findings of the desktop research would create a basis for a series of interview with a range of African and European partner representatives in the form of questionnaires to be send by email and in-person talks during the project's final conference in Brussels 17-19 March 2020. An External Evaluation Workshop was scheduled to take place during the conference. Interviews would be initiated before the conference, held during and followed-up and finalised after.

The outbreak, though, of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the project coordinator to cancel the final conference and end prematurely the activities of the project. As a result, the external evaluation process could not be followed as planned. In view of this unforeseen situation the external evaluation planning and timing had to be adapted in order to cover as much as possible the initial planning and activities. For this reason, the External evaluation provides:

- Evaluation findings as regards the main outcomes of the project (CADIs, learning experience and learning gain of academic and support staff) in this short report (mid April 2020).

- Addendum to the Report to confirm, nuance and enrich the Evaluation findings, resulting from a small number of targeted short interviews with EU and African partners (mid May 2020).

3. Evaluation hypotheses

The UDI-A project, as we observe it, is based on a **four-step approach**: 1) Training Champions (collectively and through partner twinning) who 2) set up CADIS and 3) train juniors (local twinning) 4) network with each other, with stakeholders locally and partners in Africa and Europe) e.g. through workshops at all levels. The project thus sets out a **cascade** of learning and capacity building.

The UDI-A project has a **direct impact** on partners and participants (and stakeholders) both during project (e.g. learning gain) and potentially after (e.g. research proposal writing) .The project can continued at the partner institutions and serve as pilot for the UDI-A approach, to be replicated by similar and other networks in future and thus ensure a **wider impact**.

We have looked for **evidence** that the UDI-A approach has been thoroughly piloted in the past three years, how fruitful it was and under what conditions it could endure and be replicated.

Evidence can be found in **reports**, on web sites and in certain **key documents** produced by partners to execute the tasks listed in the work packages e.g. course descriptions and strategic plans.

Our **evaluation hypothesis** was that by the end of the pilot four CADIs are fully operational, that the envisaged numbers of staff members have gained learning outcomes that suit their personal development and career and & entrepreneurship and innovation courses served the intended audiences.

We have matched these working hypotheses against **ambition** laid down in the project proposal and the **data** we have looked for in reports, on web sites, in key documents and in interviews.

4. Evaluation focus

The external evaluation has focussed on two main outcomes of the project:

- 1) Four Centres for Academic Development and Innovation (CADIs) set up at the partner institutions in Angola and Mozambique.
- 2) Training provided to academic and support staff of the four institutions: e.g. research skills pedagogical skills and knowledge in academic and non-academic priority areas problem-based learning, social entrepreneurship & innovation and student affairs.

The External evaluators concentrated on the outcomes of the project in terms of **impact** and not in terms of the processes behind. The evaluators were particularly interested in relevance of results for sustainability, in the sense of potential future use by similar and other networks. The interviews had the same focus.

5. The four CADIS

Working hypothesis

Our working hypothesis is that early 2020, the four CADIs are up and running, that they have the necessary **infrastructure** and carry out the envisaged **activities**.

Ambition

The project proposal provides a clear overview of what is expected of the CADIS in terms of infrastructure, activities, governance and forward planning.

Infrastructure

As regards infrastructure we would expect easily accessible information demonstrating that the following features are in place and being used by the relevant communities:

- Location, office and meeting facilities
- Equipment
- Governance
- Contact points reachable by phone, email and social media
- Accessible informative interactive web sites
- Work programmes and reports
- Strategic plan

Evaluation findings

The available information on the website of the project and also the documents in the moodle online tool clearly demonstrate the dedicated effort but also the challenges met in working for the establishment of the CADIS. As far as we could see from the documentation, all 4 CADIS have been set up in terms of their physical infrastructure, equipment and organisational structure and management.

Nevertheless, information such as concrete contact points of the CADIs and how to reach them, work programme, activities and sustainability plan is not available neither on the website or on the documents checked in the moodle.

Furthermore, strategic documents such as the vision/mission of the CADIs, their objectives and functional and organisational models should be available for all CADIs. But this strategic documentation does not appear to be complete and/or final for all CADIs.

It should be noted that having a more complete online profile would help further the visibility of the CADIs and would better facilitate the involvement of external stakeholders in the activities of the CADIs. A more complete and visible profile would better showcase the structure, plans and activities.

In that sense, the (according to the latest internal quality report) strategic information for the CADIs which is still to be finalised and completed, is to the external evaluator's opinion of

great importance for the further maintenance, content enrichment and sustainability of this important output of the project.

Persons interviewed confirmed that the CADIs are up and running with the necessary infrastructure. They do fulfil the network function envisaged in the project proposal. Spin-off effects have taken place like follow-up projects funded through other sources, the preparation of a journal and an academic network: REALP Rede de Estudos Sobre Africa da Lingua Portuguesa. Some interviewees had contributed to the design of CADI Strategic Plans.

Activities

As regards activities we would expect easily accessible information demonstrating that the activities are being organised and serving by the relevant communities. We have looked for:

- Number and type of activities organised
- Number and type of participants
- Local, regional and national outreach
- Cooperation within Africa
- Cooperation with European and global partners

Evaluation findings

Each CADI has taken initiatives to interact and involve the community in their activities. Various kinds of activities have taken place involving local stakeholders and also policy makers in some cases. A formalization and standardisation of activities and events should have by now taken place in order to interact further with the local community and involve external stakeholders.

However, at this moment it is not clear on whether this further systematisation and development of the CADIs has taken place with regard to their work with external stakeholders. Whilst it is clear that activities have taken place and have created interest around knowledge exchange on entrepreneurship & innovation practices and have contributed to training of teachers and local community actors etc.; there is no comprehensive and organised overview of these events. Their layout, content, scope and target groups are not clearly available. It is also not possible to have a clear picture who has done which activity and when.

In that sense, not all aspects listed can be directly evaluated. Information is only partially available and not easily accessible. The external evaluators are of the opinion that activities related to the CADIs should be systematically organised and be kept as source of information and inspiration for their further development.

The evaluators will combine information from the desk research and interviews held with some of the project's actors in order to shed more light on this aspect and come with more concrete action points.

Persons interviewed testified local, regional and national and international outreach activities undertaken through the CADIs. Next to twinning, trilateral and multilateral activities were undertaken in a positive atmosphere of cooperation. Participants that left university, to work in industry for example, maintained contacts.

6. Learning experience and learning gain of academic and support staff

Working hypothesis

Our working hypothesis was that early 2020 a series of trainings have taken place, based on learning outcomes and leading to learning gains. We expected the learning to be documented in key documents, notable course descriptions, certificates (with ECTS) and Personal Development Plans (PDPs). Champions and juniors created contest winning teams.

Ambition

The project proposal provides a clear overview of what is expected of partners in terms of training activities through courses, seminars, workshops and conferences, including the trainings for support staff and the trainings social innovation & entrepreneurship. All participants were expected to have Personal Development Plans (PDP) drawn up.

Evaluation findings

Based on the testimonials and also results of the internal surveys the impressions of the academic and support staff are definitely positive as regards the added value of the activities and trainings organised. Online surveys have been organised internally by the project to evaluate various aspects. Respondents show that UDI-A activities have given inspiration to change/adapt teaching methods and approaches. In particular, the implementation of the pilot module on PBL (Problem Based Learning) in each partner has been successful in providing new ideas and approaches.

The evaluators will combine these positive impressions with evidence selected through discussions with main actors of the project in order to find more concrete aspects that have led to this positive experience and identify elements that need to be developed and/or further maintained in the future.

The **Personal Development Plans** (PDP) may not be a success as a document, but individual coaching and tailor-made guidance was much appreciated.

Persons interviewed confirmed that series of trainings have taken place. They concerned Research skills and knowledge in academic and non-academic priority areas e.g. pedagogical skills, problem-based learning, social entrepreneurship & innovation and student affairs. Participants expressed clear learning gains, including admission to a PhD programme.

7. Conclusions

- UDI-A is an ambitious project of twelve organizations (partners and associated partners) in six countries in Africa and Europe, involving a large number of individuals, many of whom travelled and stayed abroad in the course of the project. This has made UDI-A an organisational, **logistical challenge**.

- Challenging issues relates to a turnover in the coordinating team and delays in the delivery of visas. Our impression is that, despite difficulties in organisation, which are probably inherent to projects of such scope, **activities did take place as planned content-wise** with great flexibility when needed.
- The project was very **well structured**, with straightforward outcomes and with responsibilities clearly assigned at the level of the Project Coordinator and the Partners. The Quality Plan Work Package provided a roadmap for Internal and External Evaluation.
- The **funding** was often too tight, not leaving buffers, for example, for unforeseen complication when travelling to destinations outside capital cities.
- Most successful are actions with involvement and **buy-in of university leadership**.
- The project is presenting an interesting **model of capacity building** through cascade whereby trainees become trainers (local twinning) and build an infrastructure, the CADIs, that to serve as a hub for future capacity building and networking.
- The **twinning** of African and European partners and local twinning between Champions and Juniors enabled exchanges of duration and depth.
- The use of **Personal Development Plans** (PDPs) may be considered as too top down and may need to be broadened to all partners to preserve equality in partnership.
- The project proofed its success also through the example of promising **spin-off activities** launched and some already funded already during the lifetime of the project.
- The actions of the project seem to be **under-documented** at least as far as project reporting, intranet (moodle) and web site are concerned. Evaluators expected more easy access to accessible course descriptions, certificates (with ECTS) and Personal Development Plans (PDPs) as well as institutionally embedded Strategic Plans for CADIs.

8. Recommendations

- Strategic Plans of CADIs as Centres should be part of **Institutional Plans** of the University as a whole for academic development and innovation. University leadership should be directly involved in the CADIs to ensure visibility and effective take-up.
- Training courses organised through CADIs should ideally have all the **features of higher education**: learning outcomes, level (fitting the national qualification framework), credits (cf. ECTS or African equivalent), fair assessment, certificate (cf. Diploma Supplement; Digitally Signed Credential, Personal Learning Account) and accreditation.
- Short stand-alone courses should be **stackable** and count towards full degrees, if so wished by the learner and agreed by a degree awarding institution.
- **Personal Development Plans** (PDPs) could in future to be broadened to all partners.

- Future projects of this size and scope need **more robust funding** allowing for more flexibility and reserves to deal with the unforeseen
- The CADI approach could help to trigger a debate on **national agendas** academic development and innovation national research funding priorities.
- A well-documented UDI-A can **serve as a model** for similar and other networks in future in Africa and other world regions.
- The partners could consider setting up a growing **network of CADIs** for mutual support and development.
- Better **internet access** remains a priority for project success.

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