

INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL MARKET: PROMOTING INTERNATIONALIZATION BY CURRICULA DESIGN

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ABSTRACT: The BA in Language Management for International Business and the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business, both accredited by A3es (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education in Portugal) for 6 academic years, were conceptually designed to enhance the international vocation of the training provided at ISCAP, intending to deepen the successful international mobility programs within and outside the EU, by being ETP's (English taught programmes), which regard the English Language as a *lingua franca*. In a strategic move toward internationalization, many international enterprises are changing the language of work in all or part of their activities. A great number of documents are being published in English, which has become an official language in meetings, teleconferences, or video conferences. This poses obvious questions of language management and of intercultural communication that these study programmes intend to answer. In times of financial difficulties, especially in Higher Education Institutions, these new study programme represent an opportunity and, simultaneously, a challenge. It is an opportunity to attract foreign students and national students, aiming to develop their internationalization skills in a global market, fostering employability. It is also a challenge because it provides the opportunity to meet the market's demand for internationalization, while providing a completely new framework for teaching how languages and cultures operate in a global world and of their relevance for business, networking and the development of the digital world. Thus, we present and reflect upon the design of a curriculum that weaves Digital Humanities and Business Studies.

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RESUMO: A Licenciatura em *Language Management for International Business* e o Mestrado em *Intercultural Studies for Business*, ambos recentemente acreditados pela A3ES (Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior) por 6 anos letivos, foram conceptualmente concebidos para reforçar a vocação internacional da formação oferecida pelo ISCAP. Com o intuito de aprofundar os bem-sucedidos programas de mobilidade internacional dentro e fora da UE, são ambos ETPs (*English Taught programmes*) ie, programas lecionados em inglês, que consideram a língua inglesa como língua franca. Como estratégia de internacionalização, muitas empresas estão a mudar a sua língua de trabalho parcial ou totalmente. Um grande número de documentos é publicado em inglês, que se tornou a língua oficial em reuniões, teleconferências ou videoconferências. Isso coloca questões óbvias de gestão linguística e intercultural a que estes dois ciclos de estudos pretendem responder. Em tempos de dificuldades financeiras, especialmente em Instituições de Ensino Superior, estes novos dois ciclos de estudo representam uma oportunidade e, ao mesmo tempo, um desafio. Representam a oportunidade de atrair estudantes estrangeiros e estudantes nacionais, com o objetivo de desenvolver suas competências de internacionalização num mercado global, promovendo a empregabilidade. Representam também um desafio, porque permitem a internacionalização das IES, ao mesmo tempo em que fornecem uma estrutura completamente nova para o ensino de como as línguas e as culturas operam num mundo global e qual a sua relevância para os negócios o *networking* e o desenvolvimento do mundo digital.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Internacionalização IES, Estudos interculturais, Gestão linguística, Ensino, Desenho de curricula, Humanidades Digitais

1. Introduction

The Porto Accounting and Business School (ISCAP-P.PORTO) belongs to one of Portugal's largest and most prestigious public Polytechnic Institutes, the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (P.Porto). ISCAP is located in S. Mamede de Infesta (Matosinhos), very close to P.Porto Campus, and offers its 4,000-student population a range of innovative

undergraduate and graduate programmes in Accounting, International Commerce, Marketing, Business Communication, Administrative Assistance and Translation, Creativity and Business Innovations (Joint Programme), Human Resources and Library and Information Sciences and Technologies.

ISCAP also offers Master Programmes in Accounting and Finance, Auditing, Organizational Management, Digital Marketing, Logistics, Entrepreneurship and Internationalization, Organizational Management, Logistics, Administrative Assistance, Digital Marketing, Business Information, Human Resources and Finance.

It is a national reference as far as business sciences are concerned, namely due to the its Enterprise Simulation courses which, besides exempting students from the internship required to access the Chamber of Chartered Accountants in Portugal, aims to provide a demanding, complex, universal and technologically advanced business environment. Apart from this, ISCAP is equipped with modern and technologically advanced Multimedia and Marketing Centers.

Over the years ISCAP has tried to increase its international experience and has developed a broad network of partnerships, in Europe, in Brazil in Mexico and in the USA, and has been a partner in several international networks, such as AFECA, SPACE, and EdiNeb.

The new BA in Language Management for International Business (LMIB) and the Master in Intercultural Studies for Business (MISB), both recently accredited by A3es (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education) for 6 academic years, were conceptually designed to enhance the international vocation of the training provided at ISCAP, intending to deepen the successful international mobility programmes within and outside the EU. Furthermore, the importance of Language Management and of Intercultural Communication has never been greater than today (Welch, Welch, & Piekkari, 2005; Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze, 2014). Multinationals are becoming more conscious than ever of the importance of global coordination as a source of competitive advantage, and language and culture remain the ultimate barrier to international harmonization (Feely and Harzing, 2003). As Nekvapil and Nekula (2006) have stated over ten years ago, organized language and intercultural management no longer have an *ad hoc* character; it is directed and systematic. The organization of language and intercultural management contemplates multiple levels (Grzeszczyk, 2015). The mounting complexity that characterizes social networks is mirrored in the rising

organization of language management. Nonetheless, and similarly to other countries and despite the innumerable studies, which concur with Nekvapil and Nekula's findings, there have been no clearly defined specific language policies implemented in Portuguese Higher Education.

Thus, the BA in Language Management for International Business and the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business are pioneers in Portugal, which acknowledge a long tradition in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, and still accomplish three of the main scientific, cultural and teaching goals of its HEI:

- 1) to provide training excellence and innovation;
- 2) to apply traditional classic knowledge to technology enhanced contexts;
- 3) to develop and enhance entrepreneurial skills.

2. Language Management: context and findings

Over the years studies have shown the importance of the adoption of language management strategies to enhance business performance in a global market and have reported on the economic benefits of such strategies. The ELAN study (2006), for example, produced the first significant quantitative correlation between the adoption of language and cultural management strategies and improved trade. The ELAN survey on SME's reported that a significant amount of business is being lost due to the lack of language and cultural skills. Some of the conclusions are as follows:

- ▶ Within a sample of nearly 2000 businesses, 11% of the respondents (195 SMEs) had lost a contract as a result of lack of language skills.
- ▶ Many were unable or unwilling to admit size, but 37 businesses had lost actual contracts, valued between €8 million and €13.5 million.
- ▶ 54 businesses had lost potential contracts, worth between €16.5 million and €25.3 million. At least 10 businesses had lost contracts worth over €1 million.
- ▶ The survey only identified those situations where companies were, in fact, aware of the business lost or potentially lost. Thus, the real figures may be much greater.

- ▶ Over 11% of the samples declare they had lost actual or potential contracts.
- ▶ 48% of businesses have ‘language management strategies’.
- ▶ 40% recruit staff with specific language skills.
- ▶ 22% recruit native speakers.
- ▶ 62% adapt their websites to local potential target.
- ▶ Practice regarding the use of translators and interpreters is varied.
- ▶ 31% use local agents.
- ▶ The most effective SMEs that export their products tend to have a language management strategy, or a communication strategy, in place.

More recently and in the same line as the ELAN report, the PIMLICO Survey (Brandt, 2011), designed to promote the greater use of language management strategies by European SMEs, identifies and describes best-practice models, which derive from 40 European SMEs. These companies were selected “for their significant trade growth thanks to formulating and employing language management strategies”. These reports, commissioned by the EU, highlight the need to develop and implement language management strategies and procedures to increase international trade and foster growth in foreign markets, often hindered by language barriers. As such, this knowledge field should be implemented and explored in order to provide future professionals with the skills and competences foreseen.

The survey results reveal that the economic impact of a language management strategy on export performance is irrefutable. Brandt (2011, p. 57) concludes that languages are not only needed to boost sales and marketing. “Effective international HR strategies are increasingly valuable to deal with the wide variety of business interfaces where language skills are needed”.

Additionally, and despite the controversies, English is the default language of international business. However, the author contends that the knowledge of several languages can make the difference between an average and an exceptional performance and thus, provide the much needed competitive edge.

In addition, the AIM Strategies Virtual Teams Trends Report, released in 2010, collected and analysed data from interviews with 150 virtual team managers, members, CEOs, leaders and clients from diverse businesses and countries. One of the main conclusions drawn from this report is that culture and language are the most common communication barriers:

The mix of cultures in international collaboration can cause various obstacles for VT members if they lack the tools to manage it (Figure 8). The most common difficulty pertains to differences in the understanding of the English language (47%). This includes different levels of competency as well as different interpretations. For example, words such as “yes” or “done” often have different meanings, depending on the culture. Surprisingly, we found that content is more important than verbal styles, as only 10% of members have concerns with understanding accents. (...)Understanding and being aware of cultural differences can alleviate conflict and improve relationships. An additional challenge facing virtual members who collaborate across the globe is being mindful of teammates’ time zones (40%).Another big challenge stems from cultural differences (45%), which included diversity of conversation and relationship building styles. (AIM Report, 2010: 9).

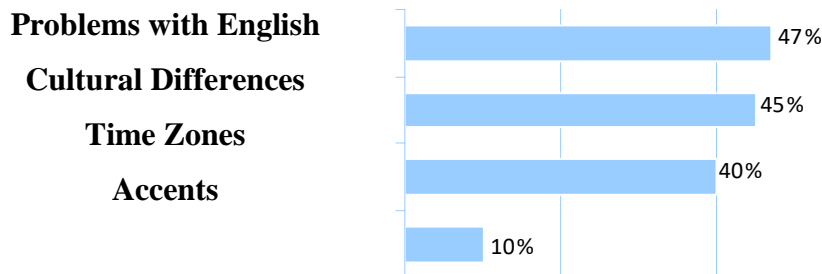


Fig. 1: Global obstacles to communication (AIM Strategies. Virtual Team Trends Report, 2010)

The implementation of Language Management strategies can, therefore, produce positive results, as shown by Brandt (2011):

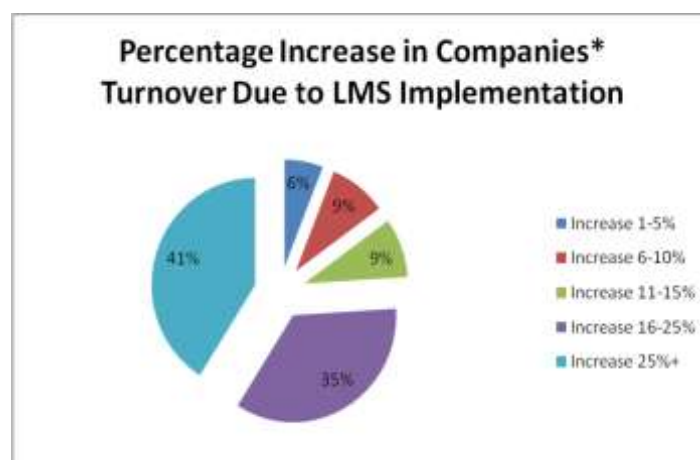


Fig. 2: Increase in Companies’ Turnover Due to LMS implementation (Brandt, 2011: 22).

3. Intercultural Studies for Business

Pioneer study programme, with new curricular units that open new horizons for the ISCAP - Chinese (Mandarin) and Arabic Languages and Cultures for Business, Culture and Development, Entrepreneurship in Culture, Intercultural Communication Technologies and 4 Cultures for Business – the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business, enhances cooperation and international mobility.

This Master intends to develop the sensitivity of students to the importance of culture and the understanding of 'other' cultures, contributing to the construction of socially responsible companies, in addition to humanizing the business landscape and making it able to integrate (and be integrated into the) multiple cultures of the global economy. In line with a policy of self-employment, the study programme conceives the knowledge of culture as a lucrative field, indispensable to any company, as well as a tool and subject to business and economic growth. The comparative study of cultures enables graduates to adapt and develop professionally in different work contexts. The Master is especially attentive to post-colonial cultures and the current movement of business and decision-making centers to China, Maghreb, Middle East, Hispano-America, Commonwealth, etc. It articulates intercultural studies with other areas of knowledge (economics, communication, politics, history, management, media arts, etc.), to create a professional profile with growing demand in business, publishing, communication, cultural management and political and administrative organization, in different fields and institutions, in a global context.

The Masters in Intercultural Studies for Business – MISB - proposes an in-depth training focused in the business world, in order to develop practical, analytical and critical skills for an effective communication between cultures, the profitability of knowledge and entrepreneurship in the field of culture. This study programme proposes an innovative approach to the Humanities, in line with the corporate job market, based on an interdisciplinary approach and the application of new technologies. It train professionals capable of an autonomous, efficient and integrated performance in intercultural contexts, able to introduce in the business practice initiatives for the understanding between cultures, in line with the new epicenters of economic flows and their agents. In line with the OU mission, the objectives and competencies of the Master address the need to design highly specialized output profiles, able to respond to the demands of the global market, and to be incorporated in multinationals, expanding domestic and foreign companies, creative and cultural industries, NGOs, local and

national public services, international organizations, e-business and e-commerce, educational institutions, tourism enterprises and international marketing, with a focus on self-employment by providing services, consulting, mediation, coaching and training.

The Master allows students training in line with research activities that create and disseminate knowledge with different audiences, in projects useful for the community – the Google Art&Culture Project, or StreetArtCEI (<https://www.streetartcei.com/>), to name just a few. It also allows immersion in the world of work through the option Internship, in the last semester.

Integrated in the Center for Intercultural Studies of ISCAP (https://iscap.pt/cei/index_EN.html) MISB participates in collaborative networks with national and international higher education institutions in order to enhance the acquisition of techniques, methodologies, practices and innovative knowledge, which will then be applied at the study programme. MISB promotes students training in close contact with foreign partners, benefiting from a highly qualified faculty and international reputation, which nevertheless maintains a close relationship and continuous supervision of the students.

MISB benefits from the activities of the UO's Centre for Intercultural Studies (CEI) which develops basic and applied research on interculturalism and multiculturalism, with a renewed focus on business studies. CEI is a research associate of the New University of Lisbon and keeps collaboration with numerous universities in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, as well as with companies, networks and international entities based in Portugal. Finally, MISB provides a cultural preparation attentive to the new routes of global economic expansion, granting equal importance to the centers from which cultural matrixes once emanated and to the contemporary postcolonial peripheries (or new centers), aware that center and periphery are now interchangeable concepts, in a constant renegotiation. In order to form graduates with high potential for employment in the country and abroad, and also able to create their own employment, MISB understands the knowledge of culture as a profitable commodity, as added value to any company with expansion ambitions, as a tool and subject for business and economic growth.

4. Objectives and learning outcomes

The BA in Language Management for International Business and the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business were conceptually designed to enhance the international vocation of the training provided at ISCAP. Additionally, they intend to broaden the already successful international mobility programmes within and outside the EU. We aim to attract students from different countries and, therefore the study programme is taught exclusively in English. ISCAP's strong international experience combined with its primary mission - the training in management sciences -, as well as the undeniable importance of mastering several languages and the respective worldview, in globalized society, makes this study programme strategic to the school in particular, but also to the Polytechnic Institute in general.

Language Management could be defined as *“the extent to which the company is able to satisfy its language needs through prudent deployment of a variety of language management tools including for example language training and expatriation”* (Feely – Winslow 2006: 13).

Basically it consists in satisfying the needs of people who speak multiple different languages. These may be in the same country, in companies, and in cultural or international organizations, where one must use multiple languages. In a strategic move toward internationalization, many international enterprises are changing the language of work in all or part of their activities. In a majority of cases, the chosen language is English – often called the *'lingua franca'* or vehicular language. Despite the controversy surrounding this issue, business wise, one's mother tongue, seems to be losing some of importance over this *lingua franca*. A great number of documents are being published in English, which has become an official language in meetings, teleconferences, or video conferences. This poses obvious questions of language management that this study programme addresses. How are workers educated in a new language for work, when English is not an official language of the country where they find themselves assigned? What is the pertinence of imposing a foreign language on workers in a company, when the use of this language is part of their competence and effects their productivity? What is the economic equation between the benefits (which may be more important) for internationalization and the disadvantages of this internationalization represented by the potentially high costs of language management: inefficiency, translation, and professional training?

Furthermore, these study programmes reflect upon the different language and intercultural management strategies used by companies and that were enlisted and reviewed by Grzeszczyk (2015: 145):

- “using local agents to solve language problems;
- creating culturally and/or linguistically adapted websites;
- using linguistic audits;
- using professional translators/interpreters;
- translating promotional, sales and/or technical material;
- offering language training and cultural briefing schemes, including online language learning;
- instituting a „polyglot“ employee selection and recruitment policy;
- encouraging cross-border staff mobility;
- adopting “buddying“ and secondment schemes;
- forging links with local universities, e.g. for taking on foreign students on placement;
- encouraging native-speaker recruitment;
- planning e-commerce underpinned by multilingual operations (e.g. local currency and language)” (Brandt 2011: 4).
- “Machine translation
- Expatriation
- Inpatriation
- Language Nodes
- Selective Recruitment” (Harzing, 2002: 11-17)

The graduate profile is that of an intercultural mediator, with strong experience in intercultural management and internationalization of companies, which can function as an analyst expert in intercultural, international markets and trade negotiations. The aim is to train competent professionals in several languages, able to manage the relationships between actors of various cultures. Additionally, they should be able to express their skills in the companies that have or intend to have an international activity or in international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

The overall aim of the programmes is to ensure that the graduates fully understand, analyze and apply specialized language and culture related issues, which impact the management and administration of international business communication in a global society. In addition, the graduates must have a reflective understanding of and abilities to challenge business in international settings, applying general management know-how to

practical business situations. The graduates will also be able to demonstrate skills in interdisciplinary analysis, drawing upon different empirical sources, analytical perspectives and sub-disciplines within management studies and to work autonomously using lifelong learning skills and personal development competencies.

In others words, these are some of the intended learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) to be developed by the students:

- (1) To communicate effectively and convincingly on a factual supported basis, both orally and in writing.
- (2) To understand the importance of language management for international business.
- (3) To use languages appropriately and proficiently in an international business context.
- (4) To analyze, evaluate and comprehend the relationship between language, culture and management in the development of language strategies for international business.
- (5) To conduct and apply Linguistic Auditing to an organization.
- (6) To manage language diversity in global business teams.
- (7) To research corporate and management issues, which may relate to overall strategy or a specific management function, that require familiarity with a range of data, research sources and appropriate methodologies
- (8) To identify the core requirements to successfully conduct international marketing activities.

In sum, the programmes intend to provide an intellectually challenging and relevant education to equip students with the analytical skills, knowledge bases, critical capabilities and personal skills and techniques required for the development of language management in multinational organizations. The teaching methodology derives from the need to reflect upon the dynamic nature of multicultural business, in order to provide a learning environment capable of surpassing the basic transfer of knowledge. Thus, the teaching approach contemplates interdisciplinary analyses, drawing upon different empirical sources, analytical perspectives and sub-disciplines within management studies, while working autonomously to develop lifelong learning skills and personal

development competencies. Our focus is on improving today's students' employability in English language related business areas.

According to a study published by the Academic Cooperation Association, written by Bernd Wächter and Friedhelm Maiworm in 2008, the number of English-Taught Programmes (ETPs) at universities in non-English-speaking European countries has more than tripled between 2007 and 2014. The ACA report surveyed over 1,000 Institutional Coordinators and Programme Directors at schools, which had established ETPs to understand the reasons for the drastic increase in these types of study programmes. The final report indicated 12 reasons, and their level of importance. These are:

1. To remove a major language barrier for potential international students.
2. To prepare domestic students for international markets.
3. To enrich the learning experience by increasing diversity of backgrounds and nationalities.
4. To enhance the institution's profile on the international stage and in comparison to domestic rivals.
5. To improve the intercultural understanding and relevant skills of domestic students.
6. To build partnerships with institutions from other countries (e.g. exchange programmes, double degrees).
7. To attract top international talent to the institution (e.g. PhD students).
8. To draw in international academic staff.
9. To attract foreign students as a future, well-qualified workforce.
10. To provide high-quality tertiary education for students from developing countries, possibly as a form of development aid.
11. To counterbalance a lack of enrolment from domestic students.
12. To improve the school's income base through international student fees.

As for Language Management for International Business, our research has showed that Scandinavian countries, the United States and UK have an extensive offer in language

management degrees and interrelated study programmes. Some similar degrees include: University of Sheffield (Languages and International Business); Kent University (Business Administration and English Language and Linguistics), Latvia University (Modern Languages and Business Studies), Heriot Watt University (International Business management and languages), Birmingham University (Modern Languages and Business), Bath University (International Management and Modern Languages), among others. In Portugal and as far as we are aware of, there is still no evidence of this trend at BA level. At a Masters level, our research has also shown that these programmes prevail in anglo-saxonian universities, like the MA Translation Studies with Intercultural Communication, at the University of Surrey, UK, the MA in Intercultural Communication of the University of Manchester, UK, or the MA in Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions of the University of Warwick, UK. At the Cologne University of Applied Sciences, in Germany, the MA in International Management and Intercultural Communication and at the Université d'Artois, Arras, France, the MA in Professional Languages and Intercultural Management, can be also named.

5. SWOT analysis of the Study Programmes

The BA Language Management for International Business and the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business, taught at ISCAP, IPP are a multifaceted and innovative degrees, taught in English. They foresee the needs of the labor market, connected to the growing internationalization of both national and international organizations and the internationalization needs of Portuguese HEIs. While part of these programmes addresses specialized training in languages and culture-related issues, essential for internationalization, it does not relegate to second plan the need for specialized training in functional aspects of business management. In general, it comprises the integration of Digital Humanities environments in business-related contexts.

The fact that it is fully taught in English, a strength worth noting, opens employment opportunities in English language-related business areas. Additionally, it facilitates networking due to the possible multinational composition of the students, which could later benefit them professionally.

Finally, embedded in ISCAP's spirit and teaching and learning experience is the knowledge that we are living and moving towards an ever-growing technological society. Technology-enhanced teaching and learning methodologies are already well

implemented. This results in an established and recognized support structure that promotes teaching activities and pedagogical innovation.

On the other hand, the study programme does present weaknesses that cannot be overlooked. The fact that it is a degree that is taught exclusively in English, may restrain national access. This may also result in heterogeneity in terms of the use of English by the students in the classroom. For foreign students, possible insufficient proficiency in Portuguese language is also a possibility that needs to be addressed by the administrative organs of the school.

Additionally, the possible lack of bilingual scientific literacy by teachers and students alike is also a pertinent issue that is currently being discussed by the Center for Intercultural Studies research center.

Finally, while the technological advances seem ideal for students, the innovative and highly technological degree requires mastering specific software and systematic training and learning by the teachers involved.

Despite the programme's weaknesses, they open the door to multiple opportunities. Portuguese Higher education in general, and ISCAP-IPP in particular, needs to increase internationalization. There is interest shown in international mobility that derives from requests for protocols and other partnerships, as well as participation in international networks.

Additionally, there is an increase in the number of national SMEs that are currently seeking to internationalize their companies. For this to be successfully accomplished, company staff needs to master Languages and Management skills simultaneously in international contexts. ISCAP is a successful and well-established business school thus, it's able to maximize its Return-On-Investment by reusing teaching staff and technological resources already available. Furthermore, these resources are assets that can be explored to foster the development of new professionals in the digital era, such as technical writers, writing and designing contents for the web, terminology managements and web and software localization, creativity and transcreation for marketing and Advertising.

Despite the positive overview, there are external threats that we are required to recognize. Portugal's current economic situation may have negative impact on families, which, in turn, may lead to partial enrolment or even dropouts. Furthermore, the government finances HEIs in Portugal. The decrease in public funding may have implications on the overall quality of the study cycle, technological equipment, resources and bibliography due to budgetary constraints. These constraints also have an impact on

teacher advanced training, teacher participation in conferences and seminars and on the collaboration of other qualified professionals.

Moreover, the Portuguese government establishes the first and second-cycle education curriculum but the available curricular options depend on variables that change yearly due to teacher allocation. This results in an unstable offer of options in foreign languages, with clear repercussions in HE language-related degrees.

Finally, the lack of societal awareness, by companies and candidates alike, regarding the relevance of language management, despite the clearly expressed necessity in European Reports and job advertisements, is still an unavoidable threat that we are working to manage and eliminate, relishing in what we view as a discovered opportunity

6. Conclusions

ISCAP has highly qualified teaching staff and it is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, equipment and teaching and learning materials to ensure the quality and sustainability of the new study cycle. However, in times of financial difficulties, especially in HEIs, the new BA in Language Management for International Business and the MA in Intercultural Studies for Business represent simultaneously an opportunity and a challenge. It is an opportunity to attract foreign students and national students, aiming to develop their internationalization skills in a global market, fostering employability. It is also a challenge, because it provides the opportunity to meet the market's demand for internationalization. Additionally, it offers a complete new framework for teachers on how languages and cultures operate in a global world and the importance of language in business-related areas, networking and the digital world. These study programmes blend two interdependent and complementary domains of skills, Languages and Cultures and International Management, within an extremely practical perspective, thus offering specialized training in languages and culture related issues, essential tools for internationalization, and strengthening the intercultural communication skills of future professionals.

This study programme does not intend to translate nor copy other study programmes taught at ISCAP. Its conception is embedded in the need to develop essential international skills and competencies for the changing labor market. Finally, and although being unique, it is still a controlled-costs study programme, that relies on a stable, highly-trained

teaching structure already in place, and thus, a very valuable asset for the institution and the region.

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