



THE IMPORTANCE OF NEED ASSESSMENT FOR ESTABLISHING MASTER OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION IN INSTITUTO SUPERIOR CRISTAL

Augusto da Costa (ID Scopus: 57210113813/ Orcid: 0000-0002-2150-2793)*¹, Jacinto de Oliveira Junior*², Jose Bareto Gonçalves*³, Manuel Brito*⁴, Luis Valentim dos Santos*⁵, Rafael Savio*⁶, Alexandre de Sousa Guterres*⁷, Natalino Pereira Parada*⁸, Domingos Maria Quintão Giterres*⁹, Augusto Olo Tome*¹⁰, Natalino Leonel Martins*¹¹, Zelio da Conceição*¹³, Zaque Antonio Freitas*¹³, Marçal Victor Soares*¹⁴, Sebastião Pereira*¹⁵, Agostinho dos Santos Gonçalves*¹⁶

*Master of Education Study Program, Instituto Superior Cristal*¹*

*Department of the Sociology of Education, Instituto Superior Cristal*²*

*Specialization of the Management of Education, Instituto Superior Cristal*³*

*Department of the Management, Faculty of Economy Universidade Catolica Timor*⁴*

*Department of Economy Faculty of Education, Instituto Superior Cristal*⁵*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 14-05-2024

Accepted: 04-06-2024

Published: 30-06-2024

Keyword:

importance, need assessment, establishing master of sociology of education

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to explore the perspectives of school leaders, university lecturers, and local authorities regarding the importance of need assessment for establishing a master of sociology of education in Instituto Superior Cristal. Researchers utilize mixed methods to collect and analyze the data. The Sample of this research is 48 people, and this is with interview techniques for 12 key informants. The questionnaire was distributed across four municipalities: Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili. The data collection for the qualitative study obtained from semi-structured interviews and Quantitative are questionnaires. The result of this research is that all participants (100%) responded "yes," indicating they trust that ISC can establish this course and ensure its success. Potential Candidates, educational stakeholders, and professionals support filling gaps in the education sector in Timor-Leste, especially in the absence of a master's program in sociology of education. It means ISC can establish a master sociology of education.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: acostas3bk2015@gmail.com (Augusto da Costa), britoinfordepe@gmail.com (Manuel Brito), oloagus12@gmail.com (Agusto Olo Tome),

ISSN: 2523-613X (Online) - ISCE: Journal of Innovative Studies on Character and Education is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

INTRODUCTION

Establishing a new study program at an institution requires meeting numerous requirements, such as conducting a feasibility study to justify whether to start the proposed study program (Setyawan, Kardiawan & Kusuma, 2020). This feasibility study serves as a basis and source of information regarding the prospects of opening or not opening the study program. Naturally, this activity will demonstrate the public's interest in attending the new course and assess the industry or user demand for the graduates. Heriyanto and Suntaro (2017) emphasize the importance of conducting a feasibility study for an institution before starting a new program.

Aligning with the regime established by Decree-Law No. 8/2009 of May 19 regarding the "Legal Framework for Higher Education Institutions," particularly Article 33 concerning the creation, accreditation, registration of study cycles, and graduation. Article 33, point 1, grants higher education institutions in Timor-Leste the right to establish new study cycles to award academic titles. Even though institutions have the privilege to open new courses, point 5 of Article 33 mandates that universities must comply with the registration requirements for a new study cycle, which states, that requests for the registration of study cycles must meet the requirements laid out by the Ministry responsible for higher education (Flanz, 2002).

One of the additional requirements for the registration request for a new course is to present a feasibility study report for the intended course. In compliance with this decree, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Culture (MESCC), through the National Agency for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation I.P., defines a criterion for the evaluation of new course registration requests, which is the feasibility study or "needs assessment. Establishing a new study program at an institution must meet numerous requirements, such as conducting a feasibility study to justify whether to initiate the proposed study program (Setyawan, et al., 2020). Heriyanto and Suntaro (2017), emphasize the importance of conducting a feasibility study for an institution before starting a new program. Considering the importance of education for all citizens, the role of higher education institutions in contributing to development is indisputable. Education is a crucial necessity for every citizen as it can contribute to the availability of knowledgeable human resources who possess skills and good citizenship to face a globalized, competitive, and uncertain world in sociology.

Sociology is a branch of social science that addresses social behavior at the

interpersonal level, between groups, individuals, and groups. Here, one focuses on and discusses questions such as what is society? Why does it exist, and how does it exist? Referring to these fundamental questions, sociology will lead readers to explore social phenomena within society, particularly understanding the structure and character of society, social problems, and social movements within the community. Sociology will help us understand the social system, social institutions, social problems, dynamic social processes, etc. At the micro level, sociology also helps individuals to better understand their families, social structure and functions, and the nature of social relations and interactions among and family.

Considering the importance of sociological science and the real needs of Timor-Leste, Instituto Superior Cristal (ISC) comes with a mission and ambition to prepare qualified and competent human resources in this field to contribute to the resolution of social problems and social dynamics in Timor-Leste society. To concretize this intention, ISC has taken the initiative to open a Master's course in Sociology of Education. Initiating a feasibility study to explore the possibility of launching this program by presenting the following key questions: (1) What is the interest of graduates in continuing their studies in a Master's in Sociology? (2) What is the interest and demand from stakeholders for graduates of a Master's in Sociology?; and (3) What are the conditions or capacities of ISC to conduct and manage the Master's program in Sociology?

METHOD

This research is a feasibility study aimed at contributing to the development of the education sector in Timor-Leste, particularly at the higher education level. This research initiative is also an institutional effort by ISC Cristal to realize and achieve its institutional mission and vision to contribute to the development of the education sector in Timor-Leste.

Considering these reasons, ISC has conducted a feasibility study in secondary schools, higher education institutions, and public institutions in the municipalities of Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili, from April to May 2024. The study population consists of school principals and teachers, university lecturers, local authorities, public institution officials, and sociology graduates. As for the sample, this study involves a total of 60 participants, defined using the intentional or purposive

sampling technique.

The research method used in this study is a survey, which involves 60 participants by collecting opinions through the application of questionnaires to 48 people and combining this with interview techniques for 12 key informants. The questionnaire applied in this study combines closed and open statements, thereby allowing the subjects involved in this study to provide detailed information on the possibility of opening a Master's study program in the field of Sociology. Additionally, the intention is to conduct semi-structured interviews with key informants to further elaborate and strengthen the information from respondents regarding the feasibility of opening a Master's program in Sociology in Timor-Leste.

The questionnaire survey is subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS version 22. Primarily utilizing descriptive analysis to facilitate the data becoming more summarized and communicative (Brito & da Costa, 2024). Descriptive statistics are methods used in statistics in a visual form to produce conclusions (Dhartikasari, 2020). Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews are submitted to content analysis, which groups the opinions of key informants into categories and subcategories.

The qualitative study results were obtained from semi-structured interviews. This study attempts to explore the perspectives of school principals and teachers, higher education lecturers, and local authorities regarding the implementation of the ISC Sociology Master's of Education program. Information obtained from interviews with participants was presented in a structure based on categories, focusing on the input, process, and output.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Profile of Participant Interviewee Profile

The interviews were conducted with 12 school principals and teachers, university administrators and lecturers, municipal authorities, and other professionals in public and private institutions in the municipalities of Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili in Timor-Leste. The intention was to explore their perspectives on the plan to open a Sociology Master's program at ISC Cristal. The table below describes the profile of the interviewees.

Instituição			Entrevistados						Entrevista		
Nome	Estatuto	Localidade	Kódigo	Idade	Sexo	Nível Ed.	Posição	Estatuto	Data entr.	Local	Dur.
Instituto Superior Aileu	Privado	Aileu	E1	43	M	Mestrado	Director ISC polo	Permanente	2/05/2024	ISC Aileu	21:10
Cogno Global Australia	Agencia Internacional	Aileu	E2	44	M	Lisensia tura	Assessor	Kontratadu	2/05/2024	Adimistador Municipio Aileu	20:15
Auroridade Municipio Aileu	Públiku	Aileu	E3	41	F	Mestradu	Presidente Interina Autoridade Municipio Aileu	Permanente	2/05/2024	Adimistador Municipio Aileu	20:23
Educação Municipio Aileu	Público	Aileu	E4	55	M	Lisensia tura	Chefe Dep. RH	Permanente	2/05/2024	Educação Municipio Aileu	21:18
EBF Mantane	Públiku	Aileu	E5	52	M	Lisensia tura	Coordenador RB Matane	Permanente	2/04/2024	EBF Mantane	23:00
Instituto Católico For. de Professores (ICFP)	Privado	Baucau	E6	35	M	Mestradu	Director ICFP	Permanente	26/04/2024	Baucau	19:12
ESG 01 Baucau	Públiku	Baucau	E7	55	M	Lisensit aura	Director da Escola	Permanente	26/04/2024	Baucau	18:20
ESG 01 Baucau	Públoku	Baucau	E8	45	M	Mestradu	Adjunto Diretor	Permanente	26/04/2024	Baucau	17:10
ESGP Cristal Maliana	Prvada	Maliana	E9	43	M	Mestradu	Adjuntu coordenar	Kontratadu	06/06/2024	Maliana	16:20
Escola Catolica Colegio infante de Sagres Maliana	Privada	Maliana	E10	31	M	Lisensia tura	Adjunto Diretor	Kontratadu	06/06/2024	Maliana	18:19
ESG. 04 de Setembro Dili	UNAMET Publiku	Dili	E11	45	M	Lisensia tura	Director Eskola	Publiku	06/06/2024	Dili	19:10
ESG Cristal	Privada	Dili	E12	40	M	Lisensia tura	Funsunáriu	Kontratada	06/06/2024	Dili	20:01

Table 1: The Profile of the Participant

Source: Data Analysis Results of the Feasibility Study

Based on Table 1 the characteristics of the interviewees in terms of personal and professional aspects are described below. Out of 12 interviewees, 92% (9) are male, coming from private institutions with 58% (7) and public institutions with 42% (3). Regarding educational qualifications, 58% (7) hold a bachelor's degree, and 42% (3) hold a master's degree. The majority of participants (10 people or 83%) are leaders of public and private institutions, and only 2 (17%) are educators and professionals. Regarding age, 5 individuals (42%) are in the 41 to 50 age range, 3 (25%) are in the 31 to 40 age range, and 2 (17%) are over 50 years old. Additionally, most of the informants have the status of public officials, with only a few having the status of contracted employees in private institutions.

Respondent Profile

This feasibility study involves 48 respondents, distributed across four municipalities: Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili. Those characteristics are described in detail below. When viewed from the gender aspect, the respondents show a predominance of males (38 persons = 79.17%) and only a few females (10 or 20.83%). Among the 48 respondents, 26 individuals (54.17%) are aged between 41 to 50 years, 12 individuals (25%) are aged between 30 - 40 yrs, 7 individuals (14.58%) are over 50 yrs, and only 3 individuals (6.25%) are under 30 yrs.

Regarding marital status, the majority (83.33%) of respondents are married, and only 16.67% are still single. When looking at the level of education, out of the 48 respondents, the majority (62.5%) have a bachelor's degree, and respondents with a master's education 11 people (22.92%). Referring to specialization area, the majority of respondents (66.67%) are not specialized in sociology, while 33.33%

Figure 3: Workplace locations of respondents

Reasons for Opening a Sociology Master's Course

Regarding the rationale for establishing the course, participants interviewed in this study provide legitimacy for the initiative to open the course. Interviewees unanimously declare their appreciation for this initiative because it can fill gaps in the education sector in Timor-Leste, especially the absence of a Master's program in sociology. Following are their opinions related to this matter:"

"I (with experience) have worked in higher education, and I know many courses, especially Master's courses opened in the Timor context, but regarding sociology, there is no institution that has opened a course dedicated to sociology. As far as I know, only Cristal has opened a sociology course at the undergraduate level (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Aileu Authority Advisor). During this time, I haven't heard of any private or public institution opening a sociology master's program. A sociology master's program is not available here according to my knowledge (E1, 43 years old, Director ISC Polo Aileu)."

Another interviewee acknowledges having received information about the opening of a master's course in sociology, but according to them, this is the first time ISC is opening such a course. The following highlights the idea from our participant:

'There have been public statements about opening a master's program in sociology at the Cristal Institute; in general, I've heard this from Cristal.' (E8, 45 years old, Deputy Director ESG 01 Baucau). Today, for the first time, ISC signed its presence by opening other master's courses, but before today, ISC aimed to open a master's program in sociology (E5, 52 years Coordinator of EBF Mantane Aileu)

Referring to the opinions above, the idea of establishing a Master's program in Sociology, in the consultation phase, received positive reactions from the target audience. The interviewees greatly appreciated this initiative because ISC is a pioneer in starting a Master's course in Sociology in Timor-Leste, as there is no such course. Confirming the previous testimonies, as verified by the analysis of graphic 4, which shows that the majority of respondents (66.67%) recognize the absence of a Master's course in Sociology offered by any Higher Education Institution in Timor-Leste:

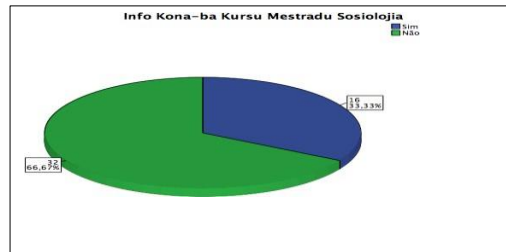


Figure 4: Information about the Sociology Master's Course

School leaders and higher education lecturers, as well as local authorities, recognize and attribute trust and legitimacy to ISC to start this course because they acknowledge that ISC has favorable conditions, especially in terms of infrastructure, facilities, and human resources to ensure the functioning of the course. Some of our interviewees prefer ISC to open a Master's in Sociology because there is already an accredited undergraduate level with excellent value and also alumni in the referred area as potential candidates for the Master's in Sociology, which will ensure the sustainability of the course in the future.

ISC has great potential to open this course because there are graduates in sociology at ISC (E9, 43 years old, Deputy Coordinator of ESG Cristal Maliana). One important thing I want to add is that we have received an A accreditation in the area of sociology, and we already have people and space for it. Additionally, we already have five people with doctorates in this area, so I have no doubt. (E5, 52 years old, Coordinator of EBF Mantane).

In another part, some Ministry of Education leaders and IES leadership recognize and trust ISC to start this Master's program in Sociology because of their experience in managing such courses and sufficient human resource conditions to ensure the functioning of teaching-learning activities. Here are their opinions:

"In my (...) observation during this time and my own experience in contact with ISC, I think this Institute has the capability and great potential, with an academic profile, especially with some highly qualified professors. We are opening the master's program, and I think ISC also has one doctor, and I received information from him about five doctors who are specialized in Sociology. With this in mind, I think the teaching staff can provide quality courses and contribute to our development in this country." (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Aileu Authority Advisor). "Now we have five people with doctorates in sociology, which is sufficient human resources to open a master's program in this area (E6, 35 years old, Director of ICFP). "I think ISC is not newly established, but has existed since Timor's independence and has established its programs that are running well and have received accreditation. Therefore, I believe ISC can establish a Master's course in Sociology. With the personnel who have completed their doctorates abroad, they can ensure that this program will run well (E4, 55 years old, Head of the HR Department of Education in Aileu Municipality).

Another participant acknowledges and believes that ISC can carry out this program because of the existing infrastructure and adequate facilities. Here's their perspective:

"As for facilities, I have no doubt because Cristal has sufficient facilities, but my recommendation is to pay close attention to the library part because master's students need to conduct extensive research." (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Aileu Authority Advisor).

To further reinforce the opinions of interviewees regarding ISC's feasibility to open a Master's program in sociology, as verified by Graphic 5, all participants (100%) responded "yes," indicating they trust that ISC can establish this course and ensure its success.

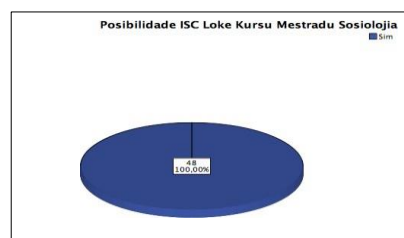


Figure 5: Possibility of ISC Establishing a Sociology Master's

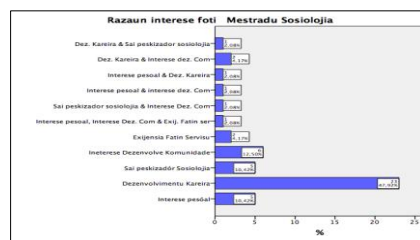
To further emphasize the reasons for opening a master's program in sociology, our interviews highlight the importance and necessity of establishing courses in sociology to greatly assist in the development of Timor-Leste, especially contributing to educational sector development and the development of Timorese communities. Some interviewees recognize the importance of sociology because it has a direct connection to communities, which greatly aids in developing and bringing about societal changes. Their opinions reflect this:

"In my opinion, a master's in sociology is very important because it becomes a good idea because sociology is sociology we learn about in society and develop our nation's important one needs a master's in (E11, 45 anos, Diretor ESG 4 Setembro Dili). The fact is the science of sociology is more effective when it directly serves the communities, providing a better understanding of them. So, without sociology, it is difficult to serve society (E1, 43 years old, Director of ISC Polo Aileu).

In another part, interviews dedicated to the education sector emphasize that sociology is important in helping to develop the education sector and improve the teaching-learning process in schools. Here are statements reflecting this situation:

"I think if we want to elevate the quality of education, it's very important to provide good opportunities for teachers to further enhance their knowledge and develop this country." (E4, 55 years old, Chief of Education HR Department, Municipality Aileu). "ISC has considered opening a master's program to provide better training for our sociology teachers so that they can run our institutions according to the standards we have. That's why I think sociology is very important." (E7, 55 years old, Director of ESG 01 Baucau). "We fully support the efforts that Cristal Institute is making to open a master's program because it brings great benefits to the education sector in Timor-Leste to develop sociology. (E11, 45 years old, Director of ESG 4 Setembro Dili).

Another evident form, as shown in the following graphic (cf. Graphic 6), verifies the reasons respondents want or recommend someone to continue studying at the master's level in sociology. The majority present reasons such as career development (49.92%) and contributing to community development (12.5%):



Graphic 6: Reasons for Interest in Taking Sociology Master's

Most of our interviewees highlight the attractiveness of the sociology master's program because it helps significantly in enhancing their knowledge in the field of sociology. Many professionals and educators' express interest and enthusiasm in continuing their studies in this master's program to deepen their knowledge and achieve higher educational levels to further develop their professional careers.

"I... initially wanted to deepen what I had learned in my undergraduate course. If possible, I would also follow this course because it is consistent with my previous area. This is a great opportunity for me to continue at the master's level." (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Aileu Authority Advisor). "I think this program is good; when I heard it, I also like this and this plan. I also like to learn." (E6, 35 years old, ICFP Director). "Yes, there is interest and no recommendation for others, but I am interested in attending this program. The reason for me to continue studying is to want to increase my abilities or knowledge." (E8, 45 years old, Deputy ESG 01 Baucau).

Furthermore, this initiative to start this course also attracts public education sector leaders and private leaders to unanimously recommend and support the establishment of this course. Here are their statements related to this issue:

"As for ISC to open a program, I ask professors with undergraduate specialization areas to be able to take this master's degree." (E4, 55 years old, Chief Dep. HR Education Municipality Aileu). "As a community in Aileu, I strongly support this initiative. I recommend all Aileu residents to go to ISC to take this master's degree in

sociology. I am very hopeful that ISC will be able to open this master's degree in sociology and I am 100% ready to help ISC Cristal. (E1, 43 years old, Director of ISC Polo Aileu).

To confirm these perspectives, according to the description from the following graphic, the majority of respondents (97.92%) are interested in or willing to recommend others to take the sociology Master's course from ISC Cristal, while only a small minority (2.08%) have no interest or reluctance to recommend others to take the course:

Graphic Description:

- The majority of respondents (97.92%) were interested or willing to recommend.
- A minority (2.08%) is not interested or reluctant to recommend.

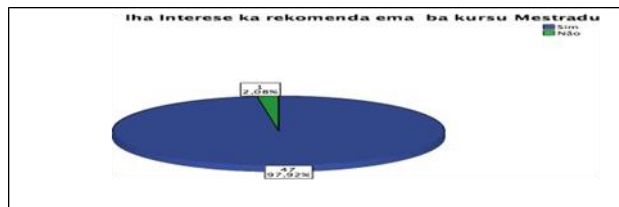


Figure 7: Interesa ba kursu ka rekomenda Kursu Mestradu sosiolojia

Another important piece of evidence, related to the financial aspect, justifies the respondents' commitment regarding their interest in pursuing a master's course in sociology through efforts to finance the course themselves. The following graphic demonstrates the respondents' commitment to self-finance (cf. Graphic 8).

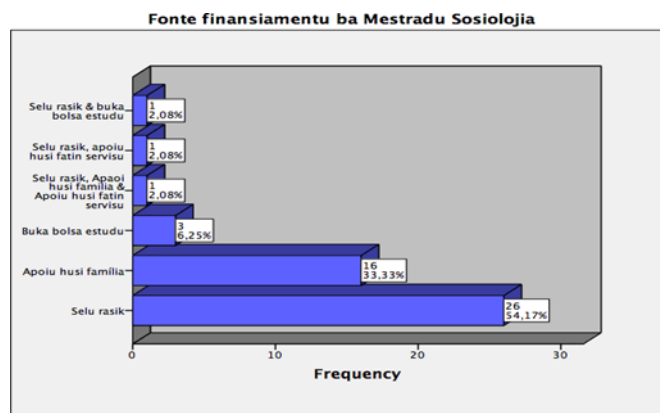


Figure 8: Possibility of Self-Financing for Sociology Master's Course

Preference for Entrance Tests and Preparation for Sociology Master's Course

Regarding preferences for entrance tests, our interviewees present a combined test model consisting of written tests, interviews, and potential academic tests (TPA) along with the TOEFL English test.

"Normally, the test that must be done is the academic test: written and oral tests, but

according to standard tests like TOEFL for English and Portuguese are important to raise knowledge about their language. Portuguese is provided for in the Constitution of the Republic as an official language. English is also important because it is an international language. The academic potential test is also important to improve the academic quality of the master's programs." (E1, 43 years old, Director ISC Polo Aileu). "A written test can also be an oral test. With these two tests, it is possible to identify and attract many of their thoughts. If interviews also allow you to express what you want and can speak directly." (E8, 45 years old, Deputy ESG 01 Baucau).

Another interviewee suggests that the admission test should not only focus on a model that merely assesses a person's memorization capacity but also on a method that can identify one's critical thinking abilities. Thus, this interviewee prefers an academic potential test. The following presents their testimony:

"I have seen many times that the tests our institutions conduct use a multiple-choice model, which only facilitates memorization and does not stimulate students' critical thinking. Therefore, if we can conduct an academic potential test, the individuals who pass will come with logical reasoning abilities, making it easier for them to follow the classes effectively" (E2, 42 years old, Advisor to the Municipality Authority of Aileu).

Other interviewees emphasize the importance of ISC implementing a preparation program for master's candidates in sociology before starting the initial semester. Interviewees suggest the importance of an enrollment program for those coming from a non-sociology undergraduate background, thus helping them to follow the classes effectively. Below are some excerpts referring to the importance of this preparatory phase:

"How to prepare, people say zero semester or preparatory year for those who do not come from a sociology background, focusing more on introductory sociology subjects. This will facilitate their understanding of more advanced theories" (E2, 42 years old, Advisor to the Municipality Authority of Aileu). "I think they need to have basic knowledge before delving deeper into what they will learn at the Master's level" (E3, 41 years old, Acting President of the Municipality Authority of Aileu).

The following graphic reinforces the previous statements that 79.16% of respondents prefer written tests and academic potential tests with 39.58% suggesting written tests and 39.58% favoring TPA. A small portion (8.33%) prefers a combination of written tests and interviews.

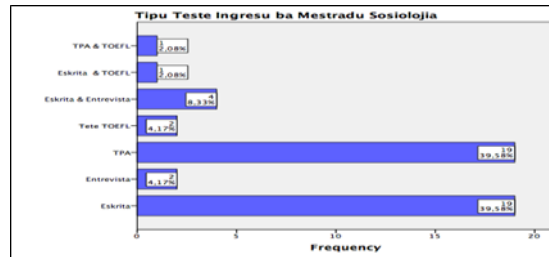


Figure 9: Preference for Entrance Tests and Academic Potential Tests

Other interviews highlight the importance of ISC conducting a preparation program for sociology master's candidates before the start of the initial semester. Interviewees suggest the importance of a matriculation program for those who come from non-sociology backgrounds, thus helping them to follow classes effectively. Some excerpts emphasize the importance of this preparatory phase:

"How can we prepare? Some say a zero semester or preparatory year for those who do not come from a sociology background, especially focusing on introductory disciplines in sociology. This will facilitate their full understanding of advanced theories." (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Authority Advisor Aileu). "I think they need basic knowledge before diving deeper into what they will learn at the master's level." (E3, 41 years old, Interim President Municipality Authority Aileu). The following graphic, it further reinforces previous statements that 79.16% (of respondents prefer written tests and academic potential tests (see Graphic 15), with 39.58% suggesting written tests and 39.58% preferring TPA. In a smaller part (8.33%) prefer a combination of written tests and interviews

Preference for Specialization Area in Sociology Master's

Based on interviews with participants, the majority prefer the specialization area "Sociology of Education" when ISC opens the Sociology Master's program. School leaders emphasize the importance of the sociology of education in society, especially in meeting the needs of teachers and students.

"Sociology education is very important or necessary to respond to students' concerns" (E11, 45 years old, Director of ESG 4 September, Dili). "In my opinion, the competence of sociology masters in this class is good, but it needs to further enhance their skills, especially in sociology education, to help our children learn better" (E7, 55 years old, Director of ESG 01, Baucau).

On the other hand, some participants prefer ISC to open a master's course in political sociology specialization.

"I think the area I want to focus on is sociology of law. Because in Timor's context, legal issues are significant, but people look at the legal side rather than the social." efforts?? "The area I want to focus on is sociology of law. Because in the Timorese context, legal issues are huge, and people look at the law but not at the social context or issue. If I continue, I will focus on sociology of law." (E2, 42 years old, Municipality Authority Advisor Aileu).

Furthermore, a director of a higher education institution (E6, 35 years old,

Director ICFP) expresses a preference for a Sociology Master's program in development sociology, which refers to a "career path for sociology masters focusing on human development, including NGOs." A basic school director and a potential candidate (E5, 52 years old, Coordinator of EBF Mantane) also emphasize, "I think the most interesting sociology area for our country is rural sociology. From the smallest level, from the village level, and then to education. Then we can move on to political sociology, which allows us to understand the law." Based on these perspectives in mind, our interests, the majority (83.22%) prefer specialization in "Sociology of Education," followed by nearly 4.17% respectively preferring specialization in political sociology and development sociology (See Graphic 10).

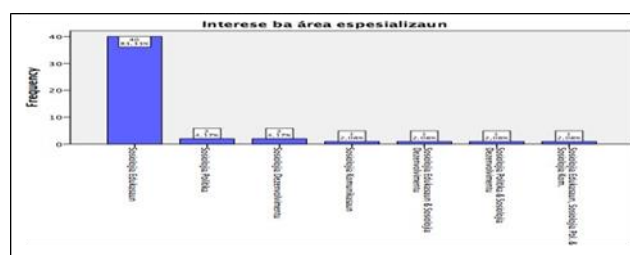


Figure 10: Preference for Specialization Areas in Master's in Sociology

Projection of Demand for Graduates by User Stakeholders

Regarding the demand for graduates, municipal authorities and professionals recognize a shortage of master's graduates in their areas. Therefore, they acknowledge the importance of increasing the number of master's programs in sociology to respond to the decentralization process in Timor-Leste.

"I think in Aileu, a master's program could easily succeed. This course helps increase the number of human resources available. With the decentralization program to come, people need good education levels." (E3, 41 years old, Acting President of Aileu Municipality Authority). "In my opinion, this program should go ahead because we see that we have a lot of poor education, especially in the master's degree area." (E4, 55 years old, Head of HR Department, Aileu Municipality Education).

On the other hand, a school leader (E5, 52 years old, Coordinator of EBF Mantane) highlights the importance of increasing the number of leaders with master's degrees to contribute effectively to local development, stating, "If today many people in Aileu learn sociology, especially at the master's level, there will be good leaders for development, especially in the Aileu Municipality."

Expectations for Minimum Competencies and Graduate Profile

Regarding the minimum competency standards for the master's program,

according to interviewees, there should be a focus on conceptual competence, professionalism, research skills, and professional ethics, as well as other soft skills. One interviewee (E1, 43 years old, Director of ISC Polo Aileu) emphasized the importance of both hard and soft skills in national, regional, and global contexts. They highlighted that a master's graduate in sociology should possess "minimum academic competence, globally with three competencies: teaching, research, and community service. Competence in Tetum, Portuguese, and English is necessary to engage with the ASEAN community." Another interviewee (E2, 42 years old, Advisor from Aileu Municipality Authority) mentioned the importance of technological competence, stating, "Competencies necessary in the 21st century, such as digital learning and cognitive thinking, are crucial. Therefore, curriculum design should align well with current contexts to meet national, regional, and international market demands."

In addition, municipal education leadership, professors, and university officials underscored the importance of mastering languages upon completing a master's degree in sociology as a requirement to compete at regional and global levels.

"Besides high-level competencies like language, professional ethics, science, and pedagogy, to be competitive, one must have international language competencies like English, Mandarin, and Indonesian. While universities can somewhat train people with knowledge, it's more about competing at ASEAN level" (E4, 55 years old, Head of HR Department, Aileu Municipality Education). "The minimum ability a master's graduate must have is proficiency in Tetum, English, and Portuguese; most students use Tetum" (E6, 35 years old, Director of ICFP Baucau). "Minimum abilidade ne'ebe mestradu tenke iha mak lingua: Tetum, English no Portugis, dalam barak liu estudante sira usa Tetum. Lingua Ingles mos importante ba kandidatu mestradu sira tamba sira tenke halo publikasaun artigu seiintifuku sira ho lingua English. Atu ema barak iha mundu tomak bele le'e (E12, 40 anos, profesor ESG Cristal Díli).

Entrevistadu balu subliña importansia depois finalize kursu mestradu sosiolojia la'os deit domina kestaun teóricu maibe mos tenki domina "know how" (oinsa tau iha pratika) no mós tenki iha kapasidade lideransa ne'ebe diak, visioner no iha sentimentu humanu, hodi bele ajusta-an iha mundu globalizadu ne'ebe komplexu no inserteza.

Hau hakarak hatete formandu sira tenki domina la'os deit hakerek maibe asaun prátika mos: em jeral, ema ne'e tenki iha visaun ida ne'be bo'ot para bele ajusta ninian ho ritmu globalizasaun (E3, 41 anos, Presidente Interina Autoridade Município Aileu). Buat ida (perfil) ne'e, ohin loron ita haree mak ita tenki sai líder ida ne'ebe diak no iha sentimentu humanidade (E5, 52 anos, Coordenador da EBF Mantane)

Another interviewee (E12, 40 years old, Professor at ISC Cristal Díli) outlined different criteria for the minimum competencies expected of Master's graduates. According to this interviewee, after completing their studies, a graduate must possess the ability to conduct research activities and master international languages

to contribute to the production of scientific works. The statement emphasizes:

"The minimum ability that a Master's graduate must have is proficiency in Tetum, English, and Portuguese; mostly, students use Tetum. English language proficiency is also important for Master's candidates because they need to publish scientific articles in English for a broader global readership." (E12, 40 anos, profesor ESG Cristal Díli)

Several other interviewees highlighted the importance, after completing a master's degree in sociology, not only of mastering theoretical issues but also of having practical "know-how" and strong leadership skills. They emphasized the need for graduates to be visionary and have a humanistic sense to adapt to the complex and uncertain globalized world.

"I want to say that graduates must master not only writing but also practical actions: in general, they must have a great vision to be able to adapt themselves to the rhythm of globalization" (E3, 41 years old, Acting President of Aileu Municipality Authority). "One thing (profile) that we see today is that we must become good leaders and have a sense of humanity" (E5, 52 years old, Coordinator of EBF Mantane).

With the minimum competencies expected, as described earlier, it will ensure that the graduate profile meets public expectations, especially in the field of sociology intervention. The interviews in this study unanimously express the expectation that the Master's program in sociology can complement graduates with competencies in "know what" (knowledge), "know-how" (skills), and "know how to be" (attitude). This will contribute to the development of Timor-Leste, create self-employment opportunities, and provide jobs for others. Here are some relevant opinions:

Expect that before two people graduate from a master's degree in sociology, they have three things: they have good knowledge, they have good habits, and they have good abilities. Under these conditions, they can contribute to Timor, and they can create work for themselves or give others the opportunity to work (E1, 43 years, Director of ISC Polo Aileu). This person must know about sociology to develop society (E10, 31 years, Assistant Director, Colegio Infante de Sagres Maliana). This person must become an expert who is good, as one must have a So even if was have unto who believe speak

On the other hand, a professional is also reinforced, but in a very large context, that a master's degree graduate, a domina theory integrates adjusts

"I expect (...) to produce a profile that truly answers the Timor context, especially in sociology. We need a profile that is not contextualized with the theories, but we can understand the reality of Timor and also be prepared to integrate into the ASEAN Community" (E2, 42 years old, Adviser to the Municipality Authority of Aileu).

Furthermore, an educational leader (E4, 55 years old, Head of the Education Department, Municipality of Aileu) also expresses his expectations from Sociology Master's degree graduates: "When professors complete their Master's degree in Sociology when they return, they must have good knowledge, be able to teach well, and enter a career regime with category A."

With perspectives like these, our respondents, with thoughts like our most interviewees (28%) with the expectation that the graduate profile from the completion of the sociology master's program should be one of the professionals that contribute to the development of society. Additionally, the respondents presenting the graduate profile must also be an academic who has mastered the theory and has analytical capabilities. The following graphic reflects this issue (cf. Graphic 11).

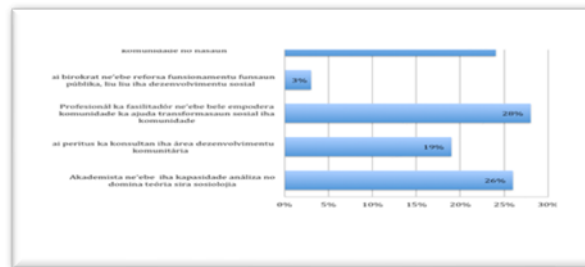


Figure 11: Graphic of Graduate Profile from Respondents' Perspective

Suggestions for Establishing the Sociology Master's Program

Regarding the suggestions provided, our participants suggest that ISC needs to create good conditions in three aspects: faculty resources, the selection process, and the learning process. To ensure the quality of establishing the Master's program, some interviewees suggest that ISC should prepare national human resources, emphasizing the importance of increasing the number of PhD holders in sociology.

"Regarding human resources, currently we have 5 PhD holders but we need to increase it to at least 10 to significantly assist this program" (E1, 43 years old, Director ISC Polo Aileu). "Another suggestion is to increase the number of PhD sociology lecturers" (E2, 42 years old, Advisor to the Municipality Authority of Aileu).

A professional, who is also a potential candidate, suggests that before launching, a feasibility study should be conducted and all requirements from the competent Ministry should be met. Under these conditions, the master's program will run smoothly.

"My recommendation is that we conduct a clean feasibility study to facilitate the team to evaluate the course. Following that, we must create the necessary conditions according to the required laws" (E2, 42 years old, Advisor to the Municipality Authority of Aileu).

Another suggestion from some interviewees is to be more selective in the entrance test process, particularly applying rigorous tests and admitting candidates who have a bachelor's degree in sociology.

"I ask ISC to implement rigorous tests" (E10, 31 years old, Deputy Director of Colegio Infante de Sagres Maliana). Another school leader (E9, 43 years old, Deputy Coordinator of ESCP Cristal Maliana) suggests that "those entering sociology must have studied sociology in order to learn effectively."

Moreover, some school leaders and administrators emphasize the importance of controlling the learning process once the Sociology Master's program is underway, particularly integrating learning processes with research activities and relevant scientific events within the Timor-Leste context. A school coordinator (E5, 52 years old, Coordinator of EBC Mantane Aileu) suggests, "In the future, ISC should reinforce or heavily invest in research areas so that everyone can discover what our society needs. It's also necessary to organize seminars, which many people like to invite guests from other countries, but I prefer local historians from our country so that they can reflect our context." Additionally, a secondary school teacher (E12, 40 years old, Professor at ESG Cristal) recommends that during the implementation of the master's program, "collaborate with the entire society so that this master's program can bring advantages to the development of the education process."

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the feasibility study analysis, the following specific conclusions are presented to address the key research questions of this study:

1) Potential Candidates, educational stakeholders, and professionals unanimously desire and support the establishment of the Sociology Education Master's program at ISC Cristal. They recognize that this initiative is favorable because there is currently no such course offered at any other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Timor-Leste.

2) Participants from the academic and professional communities admit and recognize the feasibility of ISC opening a Sociology Master's program. This is verified by their statements expressing confidence that ISC can establish and ensure the success of the program.

3) ISC has the institutional conditions and capacity viable to establish, manage, and run the Sociology Master's program. Internally, ISC already possesses sufficient infrastructure/facilities and human resources that meet the establishment standards for a master's program. Externally, this initiative receives support and legitimacy from stakeholders who acknowledge a significant demand for sociology graduates to support the implementation of decentralization policies.

This feasibility study serves as a reflective tool to identify and explore the needs and perspectives of the community from grassroots to important stakeholders in Timor-Leste. Considering the ongoing globalization characterized by constant change and uncertainty, HEIs, especially ISC, must continually align their vision, mission, and programs with these changes and demands. Regarding the Sociology Master's program, ISC emerges as a pioneer. It is crucial to socialize with all stakeholders and ensure thorough preparation to guarantee legitimacy and public confidence.

REFERÊNCIAS

- Balingbing, A. B. (2014). A Feasibility Study on Offering a Bachelor of Arts in Information Technology (With a Business Track on Business Processing Outsourcing). *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*, 1(1), 64-69.
- Brito, M. & da Costa, A. (2023). *Análiza estatística ho programa SPSS; SMART-PLS no AMOS*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Decreto-Lei nº. 8/2009. Regime jurídico dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior. *Jornal da República: I série, nº. 19* (19-05-2010), 4100-4112 (2010). RDTL: Díli. Disponível em https://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2010/serie_1/serie1_no19.pdf.
- Dhartikasari, E. (2020). Analisis kelayakan pembukaan program baru terintegrasi kebutuhan pasar di lingkungan Gresik dengan pendekatan statistik. *Jurnal INTECH*, 6(1), 132-140.
- Flanz, G. H. (2002). Timor-Leste s Constitution of Republic Democratic.
- Maaliw, R. I., Salvatierra-Bello, D., Placino-Seño, M., & Danganan, R. V. (2021). A Feasibility Study on the Program Offering of Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Web and Mobile Applications Development).
- Setyawan, I. M., Kardiawan, K. H. & Kusuma, K. C. A. (2020). Studi Kelayakan Pembentukan Program Studi Pendidikan Jasmani Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar (PJ PGSD) Tahun 2019. *Jurnal IKA*, 18(1), 73-84.