Higher Education in Portuguese Speaking African Countries

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1.1 Introduction

This study was commissioned by ADEA and funded by the African Development Bank to fill the existing gap in information and data in the production of research in higher education in the Portuguese speaking countries in Africa (PALOP). The study was conceived in July 2011, with Prof. Arlindo Chilundo, the deputy minister of education for Mozambique and Ms Alice Sena Lamptey, coordinator of the Working Group at ADEA, playing a critical role in this regard.

PALOP have been neglected in current literature on higher education studies. There has been a dearth of comprehensive studies which fully address the developments and dynamics of change in PALOP. The few studies available on higher education in PALOP tend to integrate some of these countries in their particular geopolitical and economic location predominantly on an economic comparative basis. Accordingly, Angola and Mozambique would be integrated in the Southern African Community Development (SADC) region and therefore be compared to some of the other members, such as South Africa and Namibia. Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe every so often would be regarded as small and insular states with their specificities integrated in their respective geopolitical and economic regions (Tolentino 2006).

This study examines some aspects of the historical development of higher education in these five countries and attempts to map the current dynamics of change in the field of higher education in these countries. It examines the process of establishing higher education institutions (HEIs), the regulatory framework and the governance structures of the system, and the information technology infrastructure in each of the five countries.
1.2 Objectives of the study

This study has three major objectives:

(i) to present an updated baseline study of the state of higher education in the five Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, focusing on the various elements that constitute a higher education system, viz., number of institutions, students, academics, regulatory framework, governance bodies etc.;

(ii) to analyse the current dynamics of change and the state of art of higher education in these countries; and

(iii) to create the basis for the establishment of a network for higher education research and advocacy in PALOP.

1.3 Methodology of the study

The methodological strategy for this study started with a desktop-based literature review to determine current trends in the development of higher education in PALOP. The objective is not to present a comparative analysis of the five countries, even if that were desirable and somehow achievable given the comparability of some of the data gathered. Rather, what we have in this document are five chapters each containing a case study mapping the development of higher education as a social institution in the five PALOP countries.

The methodology used to collect data is the following:

- Comprehensive desk research to gather the relevant documents about higher education in the five PALOP with emphasis on policy documents, research reports, academic papers, dissertations, conference proceedings, newspapers and magazines;
- Review of international literature on higher education;
- Site visits to capital cities of the five countries, namely Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. I restricted the visits to the capital cities due to constraints of time and finances.
- During the site visits to the PALOP countries, I held meetings and interviews with key informants such as top government official related to (higher) education, and reputable academics in the field of (higher) education. Time constraints did not allow extending the list of interviewees.
- I conducted open and semi-structured interviews on some of the following topics:
  (i) The extent to which higher education reforms in the PALOP countries have led to expansion, institutional diversification and differentiation.
  (ii) The extent to which higher education reforms have had an impact on the structure and content of institutional programmes.
  (iii) The extent to which higher education reforms in PALOP are characterised by geographical and institutional decentralisation or fragmented expansion.
  (iv) What governance structures and steering mechanisms (policy, market, financing, international best practices) are guiding higher education reforms in PALOP?
(v) What are the levels of system coordination and integration with other sectors in the larger society?

(vi) The extent to which higher education reforms in PALOP are guided by policies that encourage diversification and differentiation and a linkage with national economies and labour markets.

(vii) The extent to which higher education expansion in PALOP serves the diverse skills needs of students as well as the needs of the national economies and labour markets.

(viii) What are the existing quality assurance strategies and mechanisms, and what are the perspectives on quality by policy makers, students, parents, employers and external stakeholders?

(ix) What levels of research and research cooperation and collaborations exist in PALOP, particularly in science, technology, innovation and information and communication technologies (ICTs)?