Doctoral Education in Context

Perspectives from Africa

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CHAPTER 7

Agostinho Neto University: An appraisal of the contexts and processes of doctoral production

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Angola has a population of about 32 million. Higher education (HE) in Angola emerged a year after independence from Portugal in 1975 with the creation of the University of Angola. On 24 January 1985 the University of Angola was renamed Agostinho Neto University (UAN) in honour of the country's first president and the UAN's first chancellor. The country has 85 higher education institutions, 27 public and 58 private. In 2020, postgraduate courses were offered at 25 institutions, amounting to 141 master's and 11 doctoral programmes. In 2019, a total of 6 217 students were enrolled in these postgraduate programmes, including 187 doctoral candidates (GEPE/MESCTI, 2020).

1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the processes of doctoral production at the University Agostinho Neto (UAN) in Luanda. Particularly, it will assess the doctoral training processes in three faculties. This analysis requires a thorough understanding of the existing context and the research environment at the institution. This chapter acknowledges the connectivity between the university and the world of work outside universities, for instance, business, industry, government, NGOs, etc. Equally, it is aware that different countries have different trajectories, patterns and standards of development in higher education (HE), which can sometimes hinder or enable this connectivity. While this connectivity is of great importance for its potential to prompt empirically relevant studies, it is

paramount to pinpoint the differences between (a) the connectivity between the university and the existing spheres of productivity and (b) the university's internal context and processes. It is worth highlighting that "existing spheres of productivity" refers to the world of work outside universities, for instance, business, industry, government, NGOs, etc. So, the differences between the two lies in the fact that (a) refers to external considerations and (b) to internal considerations, that is, within the university. This chapter focuses on the latter to assess how context and processes influence doctoral production at the UAN.

As the oldest public university in Angola, UAN cannot be dissociated from a broader social and political milieu that presents two faces: on the one hand, it helps to define UAN as production source of cutting-edge knowledge, and on the other hand it functions as a stumbling-block for the achievement of this goal. In this Janus-like context, UAN currently faces a moment of reckoning and soul searching. It needs to reinvent itself from being a passive recipient of state revenue to a regional and internationally integrated institution taking action to unleash its human resources to the outside world, through joint research projects and through student mobility plans across African universities and elsewhere in the world. To achieve that, it would not just require networking and integration, but also a set of policies directed at bringing the best out of the UAN and to establish national authorities for national higher education like South Africa's Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Namibia's National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).

Although the chapter will also address the issue of the establishment of national authorities, my main purpose is to conduct a critical appraisal of the contexts and processes of doctoral production at the UAN. I do that in five sections. The first section gives a brief overview of the relevant literature. The second presents a critical account of the UAN research environment and identifies factors that are impacting negatively on the researcher's motivation. The third describes the UAN as a politically contested space, for it is often perceived more as a domain of power and control than a context conducive for the autonomous production of innovative and applicable knowledge. The fourth section surveys the key points in Angolan legislation that sustain the provision of doctoral education. The last section builds on information collected at the UAN's three faculties – social sciences (FCS), economics (FECUAN) and law (FDUAN) – to explain how context and process influence doctoral production.

2. National and institutional contexts for doctoral education in Angola

Contexts and research processes are the springboards of doctoral production. This often relies on two intertwined axes: doctoral training tailored towards the candidate's research needs and the role played by the supervisor. The supervisor is presented in the critical scholarship literature on doctoral supervision as no longer a distant master with sole responsibility for quality outcomes (Cloete et al., 2015), but above all a "facilitator of students' journey' from 'apprentice' or 'novice' to 'master'" (Bastalich, 2017, p. 1146; Kehm, 2007, p. 315). Seeing the doctoral student as a permanent learner makes sense when 'the student is expected to acquire knowledge of the research process, and supervisors and others facilitate the research process, and reflection on the research process, to ensure a "capacity" for future innovation' (Bastalich, 2017, p. 1146).

Thus, doctoral production becomes an integrated and ever increasingly evolving process, whereby the providers, beneficiaries, policymakers, government institutions and independent higher education bodies have a significant role to play in meeting five policy discourses which, according to Cloete et al. (2015:81ff), drive[s] and influence[s] the production of PhD in South Africa – quantity, transformation, efficiency, quality and internationalization.

The authors were careful to mention that trends in growth of doctoral enrolments and graduates co-exist in tension and contradictions (Cloete et al., 2015:178). The five policy discourse functions as a signpost for HE stakeholders and highlights the importance of getting the right balance between context, processes and expected outcomes. This should be taken as a conscious measure for avoiding or at least reducing the negative impacts of what MacGregor (2013:1) refers to as a 'conundrum', namely 'in order to produce more doctoral graduates, more PhD supervisors are needed, but in order to have more supervisors, more PhDs are needed'.

Where there seems to be an interplay between policies and practices, there is also an independent body established in many countries to audit and ascertain that the doctoral research regulations are adhered to coherently and harmoniously. This can work and makes sense in the South Africa context where one of the functions played by the CHE and Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) is to audit institutional policies. However, in the Angolan context there is currently no such independent national authority to assure quality of doctoral education provided across the universities and to check the soundness of the policies set by the ministry for HE.

Only in June 2022 was the National System for the Quality Assurance of the Higher Education (SNAES) in Angola launched by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. The goal is to foster a culture of quality in higher education by implementing assessments that drive the continuous improvement of expected quality standards across all components of the system, integrating rigor into institutional processes.

SNAES would conduct the assessment through four instruments or guides: (1) the guide for auto-assessment of the institutions of higher education and courses or programmes; (2) handbook for external assessment of higher education institutions, courses or graduate and postgraduate programmes; (3) handbook for the external assessment of courses or graduate and postgraduate programmes, and (4) handbook on the procedures for the accreditation of institutions of higher education, courses or graduate and postgraduate programmes (Cristovão, 2022).

The institution mandated to implement the SNAES was the National Institute for Assessment, Accreditation and Recognition of Higher Education Studies (INAREES). It is important to note that the legal framework that redefined the technical and organisation structures of INAREES and approved the regulations for the auto-assessment of courses or programmes and HEI was enshrined in the Presidential Executive Act 306 of 2020 and Presidential Decree Act 108 of 2020 (Republic of Angola, 2020a). This begs the question: why has it taken two years for the ministry to launch the SNAES? It is known that INAREES has been under intense public scrutiny for taking a year or more to issue recognition certificates to those who have completed any degree courses.

The normal waiting time to issue recognition certificates was 15 days for internal students and 60 days for those who had studied abroad. The main reason often echoed is related to lack of financial and human resources (Jornal de Angola, 2022, Editorial). The launching of the national system of quality assurance to all academic levels has the potential of becoming a trigger factor for change in HE, but the question is whether the INAREES will be strong enough to withstand the culture of impunity of powerful corporate entities who might deploy partisan influences in government or the incumbent party-state ranks to bend the regulations to protect business interests in HE.

Hence, the challenges related to the INAREES boil down to Bitzer's question, 'Who checks the checkers?' (Bitzer, 2016, p. 281), and this remains unanswered. Nevertheless, the Angolan context is ridden with a raft of legislation, presidential decrees and regulations. But it severely lacks a coherent system that serves the national interest and not a system that would just defend and work for the *status quo,* with higher tuition fees for profit-seekers.

There is a view that competitive advantage is more likely granted to those who undertake doctoral education. Yet, the main purpose of doctoral education is "to prepare students to become researchers" and therefore 'doctoral education structures' (Matas 2012, pp. 165–169) are paramount to assure "quality and efficiency in higher degree education" (Bastalich 2017, p. 1145). Two key principles can be derived from this discussion. First, the supervisor plays a role in the development of their doctoral candidates' talents. The second element lies in the recognition of the important role of institutional structures and processes in doctoral education. Here the idea of structures underlies the viewpoint that practices are rooted in a set of beliefs on how a chain of durable values, principles and procedures are applied and ultimately integrated within a given institutional setting as the cause and condition for HE stakeholders carrying out transformative action.

This points toward the fact that universities – particularly the case of UAN – are sometimes prone to absorb the authoritarian values of the dominant political structures under which they operate. Thus, if this structure is deviant, then the meaning and importance it might attribute to the five-policy discourse mentioned above diminishes, with the result that the university as a whole is sometimes likely to drift away from its core purposes and social responsibilities.

The need for structure in doctoral education and training calls for resources such as funding, expertise for taught components and supervision capacity and facilities available for research (Baptista et al., 2015, pp. 60–61; Frick et al., 2010). This view is held in most societies with advanced, autonomous and independent higher education systems. However, the supervisor's capacity to deliver on doctoral research outcomes can be compromised by the demands of the everyday struggle to meet all their responsibilities.

As for UAN, inefficient supervision is often the explanation for a lag in doctoral production. Judging from the existing data on doctoral enrolments and progression at UAN one can see the scale at which the situation is getting out of control with the increase in the number of doctoral enrolments versus the lower number of graduates who obtain their doctorates in the expected time. Besides insufficient duration of time allowed for doctoral studies, resources for research such as a library and internet access are a major barrier that doctoral candidates must learn to live with.

They tend to do so either by resorting to private means or face the risk of stagnation on the course of their doctoral studies. Doctoral training at the UAN is predominantly the professional doctorate combining course work and a supervised research project, as defined by Matas (2012, p. 165). Yet against the backdrop of IAU-ACUP optimism on the recognition of the PhD in Africa, one

would be more inclined to acknowledge that, unfortunately, the PhD has not yet been fully recognised as an essential asset to contributing to the 'knowledge economy' in Angola, nor does the Angolan government "know how to evaluate competencies of PhD holders as well as the relevance of what they can contribute to society" (AU-ACUP, 2012, p. 20). Why is this the case?

There are at least three pieces of evidence to support this claim. First, for access to the public sector, having a master's (MA) or PhD does not make the holders stand out above other competitors who only hold bachelor's degree (BA) because the ministry of work, pension and social security gives preference to holders of first degrees for access into the public sector. It is certainly a challenging reality which defies international practice. Nonetheless, both MA and PhD can still apply for jobs, but if they were admitted then they would not earn more than their BA colleagues. MA and PhD holders are expected to work in academia where they can earn a competitive wage, per section 9 (1) of the Executive Decree Act 140 of 2021 (Republic of Angola, 2021). This also seems to be a challenge in Europe and non-European countries where, according to Kehm, non-academic labour markets for PhD holders are still rather limited or non-existent (Kehm, 2007, p. 310).

Second, fluidity between the political sphere and university causes the university to be perceived as a nursery for ministerial careers in government. For example, under the administration of president João Lourenço from the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the president appointed the rectors and vice-rectors of public universities, in accordance with section 12 (g) of the Presidential Higher Education Executive Act 90 of 2009 (Republic of Angola, 2009). This happened with Maria do Rosário Bragança Sambo and Maria Antonieta Baptista, formerly the UAN's rector and vice-rector for scientific research, who were appointed as cabinet ministers for higher education, science, innovation and technology, and for fishery and sea, respectively, by the president of the republic and MPLA party.

Third, the party encroachment has seen the university turn into an arena for asserting political allegiances for the reward of social status and goods. Despite its pledge to offer quality education and promote meritocracy, the university is still lagging behind in its purpose to deliver on critical thinking and socially applied knowledge. In these circumstances it would be too optimistic to expect UAN to play its full role as a space that is able to "generate jobs by balancing and integrating three aims: first, meeting the practical demands of the labour market, second, producing new knowledge through research by more doctoral-level scientists and finally, producing well-rounded and engaged citizens through teaching" (Friesenhahn, 2014:1).

Nevertheless, there have been positive signals, as will be discussed later in this chapter. One such positive was the previous administration's resolve to foster significant reforms in the HE as expressed in the National Development Plan adopted in 2018 (Plano de Desenvolvimento Nacional, PDN). The PDN pledges four key objectives for higher education, namely, to (1) "improve the network of higher education institutions,

(2) increase the courses, graduates, (3) increase the offers of postgraduates and (4) better the quality of teaching provided by strengthening master's and doctorate results (PDN, 2018b, p. 74). To attain these objectives the government set as a main target "reinforcing higher education with 772 new masters and 125 new doctors trained abroad by 2022" (PDN, 2018b, p. 85).

The plan was ambitious, and its consequences were not free of contradictions. In early January 2019 the Angolan Council of Ministers, *Conselho de Ministros*, gave a green light for the government to send Angolan doctorate students to the, so to speak, 'most prestigious universities in the world'. The data on the implementation of the targets set in 2018 were presented in the Angolan Government National Report on the Mandate Review, RNBM, Relatório Nacional de Balanço do Mandato 2017-2022.

For the period between 2018 until the first semester of 2022, the RNBM shows that 433 students were selected as part of the implementation of the annual programme of sending 300 undergraduate and master's high academic achievers to the best universities around the world. A total of 153 students were sent to the best universities, mainly in Portugal, Brazil, the UK, USA, Russia and Canada. Nonetheless, the report highlights that it is yet to proceed with sending out candidates selected in 2021 as well as other scholarship recipients from previous years. Furthermore, the report listed the conditions for sending a group of 12 PhD candidates and 3 postdoctoral that were already created under the project of development of science and technology. There was a total of 183 PhD and 931 master's degree holders (Republic of Angola., 2022b , p. 43).

This raises several significant questions at first glance. The RNBM report does not state where these 183 PhD and 931 MA degree holders have been trained and how many years, they took to complete the degrees. The RNBM brings to light a host of major issues that affect Angola's higher education system, including the lack of coherent, objective and accessible information on enrolment and progression of candidates as will be shown below for the three UAN faculties. Moreover, doctorate programmes require more time for candidates to complete and in most cases, as highlighted in the three UAN faculties, the candidates can take twice as much as the normal time mandated by law. In general, MA courses have a duration of 4 semesters with a maximum completion period of 3 years, whereas the doctorate courses last for 4 to 5 years.

A report by Expertise France, a French organisation implementing the European Union-funded Program of Support of High Education in Angola (UNI.AO), paints a rather challenging context. It states that since 2020, among the 168 official postgraduate courses created and published in the *Official Gazette* of Angola, 11 (7%) courses were doctoral, 16 (9%) were professional courses and 141 (84%) courses were at master's level. What stands out here is the growing demand for MA courses, with noticeably lower offers for doctoral courses. The reason provided in the report is the shortage of PhDs with both the necessary skills and expertise required to teach at doctoral level (Expertise France, 2022, p. 18). The data also show that overall, offers of postgraduate courses are greater in public institutions, which account for 60% of 101 courses, compared to private institutions, which account for 40% of 67 courses (Expertise France, 2022, p. 20).

The report raises an interesting point which may help in further scrutinizing the reliability and accuracy of the government's triumphant announcement that it had produced 183 PhDs and 931 MAs supposedly in 4 years. This relates to the short period of time in which both PhD and MA holders were produced. Normally, doctoral courses offered either by 9 public institutions or by 2 private institutions struggle with an acute lack of trained PhD scholars to train new PhDs. In that case, one would expect this problem to have improved slightly as HE absorbs the newly graduated PhDs and MAs referred to in the RNBM report.

Nonetheless, the government could have sent 300 doctoral candidates abroad. However, one thing that reveals the government's wishful-thinking and misconceptions about the Angolan HE system's shortcomings lies in the difficulty of explaining how it met the target of producing 183 doctorates, let alone 931 MAs, from 2018 to 2022. Another issue emerging from the PDN was its silence regarding domestic doctoral candidates. They exist and they are clogging up the system at the UAN's FCS, FECUAN and FDUAN as shown in Tables 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5. The underlying challenges begin when policymakers presume that the formulation of new, HE training policy would necessarily lead to a system-wide reboot, as if there were no doctorate courses already being offered in the country.

In fact, the outlook of doctoral production at UAN faculties demonstrates a reality of institutional neglect and utilitarian measures that resort to making money from PhD candidates. One of these measures relates to the high tuition fees charged by the higher education institution (HEI). For instance, the results of an inquiry conducted by Expertise France with the 90 coordinators of post-doctoral courses shows that "annual costs of tuition fees are AKZ 1 521,500 that equates roughly USD 3,554 for the specialisation courses of minimum

duration of a year, AKZ 923,872.35 (USD 2,158) for the MA courses and AKZ 1 466,666.67 (USD 3,426) for doctorate courses. Nonetheless, the tuition fees are greater in private institutions, where the candidates are charged AKZ 2 730,000 (USD 6,377) for specialisation courses" (Expertise France, 2022:18).

The Angolan Catholic University (UCAN) offers three new MA courses for which each candidate must pay a tuition fee of AKZ 2 400 000 (USD 5 606) a year. The issue of fee discrepancy between public and private institutions results in a context charactarised by income generation opportunities and an "academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime", according to Knight and Slaughter's accounts, and it can divert the institutional focus away from ensuring the quality of university functions (Knight, 2008, p. 25–26; Slaughter, 2020, p. 15). Also, there is a belief that the university is an "agent of change and development" (Knight & Sehoole, 2013, p. 1; Jowi et al., 2013, p. 11–14; Langa, 2013, p. xi) wherein cooperation and competition define higher education at the height of globalization (De Wit, 2011, pp. 244–245).

Does Angola's national higher education system encourage competition among public and private institutions to create an environment conducive to generating cutting-edge knowledge, moving beyond profit-driven motives and mercantile approaches within higher education and fostering cross-national collaboration? While the UAN encourages cooperation through its partnerships with several well-established and international institutions, including New Lisbon University, University of Lisbon, Université Paris Panthéon Sorbonne, Sapienza Università di Roma, Universidad Complutense Madrid, Lisbon University, Portuguese Catholic University and the University of South Africa, it is hard to demonstrate how these linkages help to improve or enhance the UAN's postgraduate research practices and profile. Furthermore, competition should have as an end-goal the establishment of objective and measurable criteria for monitoring and evaluation to warrant quality and effective management of courses delivered by the faculties. Despite good intentions, research context can trump the resolve for change.

3. Research question and reflections on the research context

This chapter wrestles with the question: To what extent do context and process affect doctoral production at the UAN? To address this question, brief field research was conducted within the UAN's Department for Scientific Research and Postgraduate Studies and across the UAN's faculties of social sciences, economics and law, which offer doctorate courses. The UAN has as its core institutional rationale teaching, research and production carried out across seven

faculties, namely science, social sciences, law, economics, engineering, humanities and medicine.

The vice-rector for scientific research and postgraduate studies would in theory oversee UAN's Department for Scientific Research and Postgraduate Studies (DICEP) for the whole university. In reality, there is no direct linkage between the rectorate's DICEP and the faculties' departments for research and postgraduate studies as regards monitoring and to serve as institutional-level mechanisms for oversight and quality assessment. In contrast, each faculty possesses a department for scientific research and postgraduate studies of its own that seems to operate in isolation, except for occasional reporting to the office of the UAN director of DICEP based in the rectorate who reports to DICEP vice-rector, who ultimately liaises with the National Directorate and Secretary for Higher Education in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESCTI). On some occasions the DICEPs sideline the rectory and report directly to the ministry.

Field research enabled me to acquire the most accurate data possible on

1. the number and gender of students enrolled in doctoral courses,
2. the number of doctoral candidates allocated to each supervisor,
3. the number of doctoral candidates that successfully submitted and defended their theses from each year of enrolment in the doctorate courses offered by the UAN faculties of social sciences, law and economics, and
4. the number of doctorate candidates working on the doctoral projects.

Field research intended to generate data can get bumpy and be time-consuming, which demands extra levels of resilience and people skills. The following three steps illustrate the challenges that were encountered during the process of gathering empirical information:

- **Step 1**: The researcher had to meet the UAN director for scientific research and postgraduate services (DICEP) to get his authorization for access to information from the faculties of social sciences, law and economics offering PhD courses in sociology, social psychology, anthropology, history, political science and social media; public law and private law; and economics and management. As is standard practice in research involving data collection within public or private institutions, a written letter of permission was required.
- **Step 2:** Once permission was given to the researcher, UAN's DICEP instructed the faculties to send the data to the DICEP who then handed it

to the researcher. However, the data was mostly incomplete. The researcher then had to engage directly with the respective faculties to access the data. The bureaucratic procedures underlying the process reflect a context where data collection serves as a means of exerting power, determining both access and dissemination.

Moreover, the DICEP clearance letter stated the researcher's affiliation with the university and the reason for seeking authorization to conduct research and to obtain data at the UAN. Once the formal letter was issued one would assume that the researcher would not encounter more impediments from anyone. But to get to this stage the researcher had to engage the UAN vice-rector for scientific research and postgraduate studies once more, who instructed the DICEP director to authorize data collection. It took 2 weeks before the application for a credential was issued by the DICEP.

- **Step 3:** In his engagement with the faculties, the researcher presented a copy of the DICEP letter to the dean of the faculty since this was a condition set by the DICEP before the faculties could provide the information. It was then found that the information was scattered in different files, from those recording the data about doctorate courses, doctoral candidates to the partnership contracts between UAN's faculties and the Portuguese universities such as Lisbon New University and the Institute of Economy and Management. However, there were no accurate records demonstrating both the supervision process and candidate satisfaction with the quality of doctoral training and supervision experienced at the faculties, let alone record of the existing challenges regarding international cooperation, in terms of delivering doctoral outputs.

Interestingly, this context also illustrates a deeper social stigma and fear of potential political punishment, which in a way works as a deterrent to creativity and concomitantly serves as a kind of public prescript for survival and self-preservation. It is also a reflection of the inefficient processes that sustain the view that doctorate context matters a lot as it reveals the UAN showing perilous signs of being locked up in a political quagmire of its own making. A view held by the author of this chapter, as university context can in turn hamper doctoral production outputs. In sum, the research processes and structures at UAN are inefficient: there was no proper process for submitting an application for and obtaining permission; the DICEP services were very inefficient, requiring repeated visits; and when the information was provided it was incorrect or incomplete.

4. The UAN - beyond politicization

Notions of a 'resilient authoritarian regime', the Portuguese 'colonial legacy' and higher education trajectories are intertwined and define the broader research context at UAN. At this point one would wonder why, instead of helping enable the development of a full-fledged higher education system, UAN is entangled in a dominant party quagmire. HE in Angola is still a new phenomenon that only emerged a year after independence from Portugal in 1975 with the creation of the University of Angola (*Universidade de Angola*, UA). On 24 January 1985 the UA became Agostinho Neto University (UAN), named after the country's first president and the UAN's first chancellor (Almeida et al., 2022, p. 128; Langa, 2013, p. 6; Jowi et al., 2013, p. 15).

President Agostinho Neto (1977) defined the UAN's mission as

> *to serve the revolution and fight against the remnants of the Portuguese colonialism; help to implant a just and progressivist society; to produce national cadres endowed with new consciousness, and who'd be able to work as the agents of a new society that will strive to fulfil the popular democracy* [translated by the author, Faria].

Therefore, the rise of independent Angola's first public university as part of the national higher education system was more concerned with furthering nationalistic purposes than devising policies that would have promoted the quality of research education and subsequently help with harnessing critical-thinking skills (Yranoski, 2011). In fact, in Angola, party-dominant structures continue to define the campus as well as hinder academic freedoms and autonomy.

The context at the UAN has worsened since the university's establishment for the following three reasons: first, the higher education trade union fought against the government of former president of Eduardo dos Santos. Dos Santos's government had established in its Executive Act 90 (12) of 2009 that the government ought to appoint the governing bodies of the universities, proposed by the minister for higher education and based on three candidates elected by the assemblies of their respective institutions (Republic of Angola, 2009). The likely reason was that the legislation was tailored to control and discipline individuals perceived as critical of the regime's dominance over higher education. On the other hand, it seemed like an artefact to reward the scholars loyal to the status quo. Nevertheless, it took almost two and a half decades before new legislation defending a contested election of the UAN rector and vice-rectors, faculty deans and vice-deans came to effect in June 2022.

These officials were elected in May and June 2022 by the representatives of academic groups within the faculties, including the professors, researchers' assistants, postgraduate students, and students' association (UAN, 2022). Prior to this breakthrough on the tortuous path towards academic freedom, there had been no elections for positions in public university executive entities, because the then president dos Santos retained for himself the powers to appoint them. The higher education trade union criticized the decision to appoint these bodies as unconstitutional, claiming it reduced the pursuit of quality in higher education to nothing more than a "mirage" (José, 2015) Thirdly, governing higher education through presidential decree reflects a tension between efficiency, stability, and the president's discretionary decision-making.

The strict control over higher education began to ease during the first term of President João Lourenço's administration, as he, under pressure from unions, permitted all nine public universities and their respective faculties to hold elections (Angop, 2022). Before the elections, the UAN had since 2017 been run by an interim rector, Pedro Magalhães, who had been appointed by president Lourenço alongside Maria Antonieta Baptista as vice-rector. Later Maria Antonieta Baptista left this position to take up a ministerial post for fishery and sea, and automatically became a member of the MPLA political bureau, leaving the vice-rector post vacant. Magalhães rose to the top of UAN hierarchy after Maria do Rosário Sambo was appointed minister of higher education, science, technology and innovation.

Beyond the pledges for a relative liberalization of the national higher education system (NHES) lie two sets of challenges. The first has to do with a huge imbalance between the limited number of university staff holding PhD degrees and an increasing number of doctoral candidates. According to the Angola 2016 High Education Statistical Bulletin (2016, pp. 13–17) there were 64 HEIs in Angola, of which 24 are public and 40 private institutions. In addition, 18 were classified as universities (8 public and 10 private), 41 were classified as institutes (11 public and 30 private) and 4 higher education public schools.

However, when adding up the national data scattered in the RNBM as shown in Table 1, one notices that, at time of data collection, Angola had 87 HEI nationwide. However, in 2020 the Angolan government "abolished and fused 12 public HEI in unprecedented efforts to reorganise the higher education network to avoid the disbursement of finance and encourage the sharing of human resources" (Expansão, 2020).

Table 1: HEI by type and nature

HEI	Public	Private	Total
Academy	1	-	1
Higher Schools	4	-	4
Higher Institutes	12	37	49
Polytechnic Institutes	2	9	11
Universities	11	11	22
TOTAL	**30**	**57**	**87**

Sources: Anuário Estatístico (2018a) and Relatório National de Balanço (2022).

According to the Social Statistical Yearbook, there were 11 433 lecturers in Angola's HE system in 2019 (2 574 female and 8 859 male) (Anuário de Estatísticas Sociais, 2022a, p. 75). The proportion of staff with master's degrees in 2016 was 33.3%, with 1 708 holders of master's and doctoral degrees employed by public universities and 1 209 by private institutions. Whereas the academic staff with doctorate degrees was 9.8%, that is 601 doctorate holders in public universities and 237 for all private universities.

Since the HE Statistical Yearbook began publishing this data in 2016, there has been systematic and reliable information to illustrate the evolution of HE staff according to degrees. Nevertheless, the existing information which is scattered and hard to verify accounts for the production of 183 PhDs and 931 MAs from 2018 to 2022 (RNBM, 2022, p. 43). Despite this limitation, one should give the benefit of the doubt and recognise that the HEI system did manage to bring newly graduated BA, MA and PhD holders into the system, surpassing the figures in Table 2 below.

Table 2: National higher education teaching staff in 2019

Indicators	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
No. Lecturers	2 575 (22,5%)	8 858 (77,4%)	**11 433**
Lecturers MA holders	1 025 (39.84%)	3 054 (34.48%)	**4 079 (35.69%)**
Lecturers PhD holders	250 (9.71%)	987 (11.15%)	**1 237 (10.83)**

Source: Anuário Estatístico (2019) (adapted and completed by the author)

The table could be problematic to interpret, for it mixes numbers and percentages. However, it is possible to make the calculations and complete the table. Table 3 below provides an overview of the persistent dominance of lecturers with bachelor's (BA) degrees. For instance, where the number of lecturers is 8 405 (2016), 10 198 (2017), 10 441 (2018) and 11 433 (2019), there would

respectively be 3 755 (2016), 4 613 (2017), 4 716 (2018) and 5 224 (2019) lecturers with either MA or PhD degrees. The pattern that springs out shows that the number of lecturers with BAs is consistently higher than the number of lecturers who are MA holders, and the number of PhD holders in Angola's HEI is even lower in comparison to the two former categories of lecturers.

Table 3: BA holding lecturers in Angola's HEI

Year	No. BA holders	Total lecturers
2016	4 650	8 405
2017	5 585	10 198
2018	5 725	10 441
2019	6 209	11 433

Sources: Anuários Estatísticos 2016–2019

In sum, the figures on Tables 2 and 3 show three conflicting realities. The first betrays a higher education system which has been expanding both in type and nature. The second depicts a condition of protracted deficit of lecturers to respond to pressing demands for HE degrees and courses. Furthermore, a third reality emerges from the data of the Bulletin of Social Statistics: that out of a total 319 295 students enrolled in HEI in 2019, 151 946 (47.5%) were female and 167 349 (52.5%) male (Anuário de Estatísticas Sociais, 2022a, p. 70).

A second observation relates to a comment made by Maria de Rosário Sambo, the minister of higher education, science, technology and innovation. She said that the national scientific environment reflects that

> *there is scientific research, but it is still weak, compared with other SADC countries. We have a huge potential to avert this reality, if we are able to properly manage the human, the financial resources and above all we shouldn't be megalomaniacs. We should instead try to focus on the objective to produce science with a pragmatic sense.* (Voz de Angola, 2017)

Furthermore, she asserted "we need to diagnose bad practices and make an effort to root them out progressively with a change of mind and behaviour" (Voz de Angola, 2017).

Sambo's remarks should have rung alarm bells about a serious mix-up between the causes and the effects of bad practices. Clearly, these could be comprehended as an effect of the entanglement of the national higher education system with the omnipresence of the party-state regime. In such a context, the possible production of scientific knowledge is constrained, even if this is conducted with pragmatism, as there is a clear and growing gap between a

set of policies and the contexts in which the researchers find themselves. A closer look at the UAN shows an imbalance of strategies, policies and available resources for providing quality doctoral training. The next section looks at some government legislation to ascertain how it establishes the process for doctoral provision.

5. Government legislation on doctoral training

The key challenge for HE is not the lack of legislation to regulate the system, but the lack of implementation of coherent mechanisms for quality assurance across different HEIs and within each university, across different faculties. In fact, the doctoral research process does follow an orderly defined set of procedures and guidelines on the nature of the doctorate, the role of doctoral supervisors and the defined goals and competences a PhD candidate ought to acquire throughout the process.

This section discusses some of the legislation in order to indicate the general institutional guidance on doctoral education.

Legislation on HE and doctoral studies in Angola is based on two presidential acts: Presidential Executive Act 90 of 2009 (Republic of Angola, 2009) and Presidential Executive Act 29 of 2011 (Republic of Angola, 2011). Each act establishes the procedures and norms necessary to regulate the universities. According to Section 24 of the Presidential Executive Act 90 of 2009 (Republic of Angola, 2009), postgraduate studies comprise two categories: the academic route for MAs and PhDs and the professional route.

The professional route aims to improve and expand the technical and vocational skills of postgraduate students. Additionally, the same legislation specifies the maximum completion time for MAs as two years, and four to five years for PhDs. The PhD is viewed as a

> *training and research process that consists of strengthening, widening and deepening scientific abilities of BA and MA holders through research and a written thesis, which ought to be original and with the potential to make contributions to universal scientific heritage.*

Subsequently Section 21 of the Presidential Executive Act 29 of 2011 reiterates the overarching government policy on PhD education as a

> *process of training and of research, which endows the candidates with BA and MA degrees with a vast and deep scientific competence, resulting with*

> *a production of thesis whose content must be innovative and constitute to universal knowledge*. (Republic of Angola, 2011)

In this process, the PhD students are expected to do course work during the first two years of doctoral study to acquire research skills. For this purpose, different faculties have different types of modules crafted in accordance with the nature and objectives of each doctoral programme. That is the case with doctoral programmes in UAN's faculties, namely, social sciences, economics and law. These share the same processes and procedures regarding the writing of an original thesis, which happens after the student has successfully defended the doctoral research project.

Moreover, Section 26 of the Presidential Executive Act 29 of 2011 (Republic of Angola, 2011) on supervision specifies three key procedures: first, for the doctoral candidates to produce the thesis they must be supervised by professors or researchers holding a PhD degree and affiliated to the institution where the doctoral candidate is enrolled. The supervision could be provided in a system of co-supervision. However, it spells out that this model must be referred to clearly in the candidate doctoral project as well as stating the strategies for co-supervision. Second, it specifies that only those lecturers and researchers with PhDs should supervise theses. HEI could seek to establish agreements or contracts with other institutions for adequate supervision of doctoral candidates. Lastly, supervisors must inform and update the scientific councils of their faculties every semester on the key milestones and progress of the theses.

Clarity about the role and purposes of supervision makes a big difference when it comes to meeting the target of graduating more doctoral candidates within the expected timeframe. In this section it will be shown that the outlook on doctoral production is negative as there has not yet been a single doctoral graduate from the doctoral courses offered by FCS, FECUAN and FDUAN since their start. It will be shown that underlying causes for this failure relate to context and bad institution practices that ultimately are tied to the dysfunctional equilibrium between legislation and implementation of policies by the faculties. It is worth bearing in mind that this gap between policy and implementation is also a major challenge in many other African countries with consolidated academic and research cultures. It does not help much to have a set of excellent policies if the capacity and will to implement them properly is lacking. There is also a need for a fully independent and autonomous body to provide oversight as well as audit policies and assure efficiency and quality, as in most other countries in the world (CHEA, 2022; INQAAHE, 2022).

6. UAN's doctoral production outlook

This section draws from the data collected at the UAN's three faculties – social sciences (FSC), economics (FECUAN) and law (FDUAN). To help further illustrate the status of doctoral production at the UAN, the data were pooled together from disparate sources of information provided by each faculty's DICEP (documents and internal memos) as well as exchanges with staff members of DICEP in each faculty. As will be made clear, there is a common thread running through the data conveyed below. However, it would be misleading to claim that the profit-driven approach, reflected in the high fees of AKZ 3,500,000 (approximately USD 8,121.53) per PhD candidate, has turned doctoral candidates into mere "golden geese," causing faculties to neglect or abandon their primary responsibility of fostering doctoral research and production.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 depict a context of stagnation in doctoral production. The tables offer an overview of enrolment and progression patterns in three of UAN's biggest faculties, FCS, FECUAN and FDUAN, by conveying four sets of information about (a) the number of doctoral candidates (PhD) according to gender; (b) doctoral candidates from the first cohort in 2012, the second in 2016 and the third in 2020; (c) number of PhD enrolments per supervisor; (d) number of doctoral theses handed in; and (e) the number of vivae held per year.

Table 4: FCS: PhD in social sciences enrolment and progression 2012, 2016 and 2020

FCS	PhD Enrolments by Gender		PhD Enrolments per Supervisor	Theses Handed In by 2020	Vivae per Year		
	F	M			2019	2020	2022
PhD in 2012	10	13	5	3	1	1	1
PhD in 2016	8	18	5	-	-	-	-
PhD in 2020	11	50	5	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	29	82	-	**3**	**3**		
	111						

Source: Data from DICEP – FCS

The FSC started offering a doctoral programme in social sciences in 2012 with 23 enrolments, plus 26 and 61 enrolments in 2016 and 2020 respectively. That gives a total of 111 enrolments over the whole period, of whom 29 were female and 82 male candidates. FCS seems to allocate five candidates to each supervisor. This means that the faculty would need at least 22 lecturers/professors

holding PhDs to be able provide adequate supervision and combine it with heavy teaching loads. In general, the candidates are mature students, who hold full-time jobs with state institutions, government departments such as defence and security, as well as the banking sector, and some are UAN staff as well as in the private sector.

PhD candidates have struggled to meet the mandatory completion time, and this factor combined with the challenges of coping with the pressure of finding the right balance between working life, private life and studies, leaves the doctoral student less time to do research. Moreover, the same challenges are encountered by supervisors who so often can barely, as Cloete et al. (2015:112) argue, facilitate the student to become an independent professional researcher and scholar possessed of a set of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. In these circumstances, only 3 doctoral candidates, out of 23 who have been enrolled since 2012, have managed to submit their theses and had successful vivae.

The doctoral pipeline at UAN is therefore clogged and consequently, doctoral production rates remain low. In this case there is no clarity nor the slightest possible estimate as to when 20 candidates from the first cohort will manage to complete their doctoral studies, let alone those from the second and third cohorts. A key problem observed here relates to the lack of good record keeping on who's supervising who and, more importantly, there was no file or data about the supervisor six-monthly report accounting candidate progression or drop out. This practice is just one among many which seems to indicate that the regulations of the government on doctoral supervision are not complied with at UAN.

Table 5: FECUAN: PhD in economics 2015 and PhD in management 2015, 2016 & 2017

FECUAN	PhD enrolments by gender		PhD enrolments per supervisor	Theses handed in by 2020	Vivae p/Year		
	F	M			2019	2020	2022
PhD in management 2015	5	21	1-2	6	-	-	-
PhD in economics 2015	5	16	1-2	2		1	-
PhD in management 2016	2	15	1-2	2	-	-	2
PhD in management 2017	2	18	1-2	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	14	70	-	**10**	**3**		
	84						

Source: Data from DICEP – FECUAN

FECUAN started offering doctoral programmes in economics in 2015, forging institutional cooperation with two Portuguese institutes, the Portuguese Public University Institute (ISCTE) and the Lisbon School of Economics and Management (ISEG). FECUAN outperformed FCS and FDUAN as it saw 10 doctoral candidates who handed in their thesis for jury review. Most of those, around 8, were enrolled in 2015 and 2016 from the first and second cohorts in management. However, only 2 doctoral candidates went on to pass the viva in 2022, whereas 4 out 6 PhD candidates in management were waiting for the viva in 2022, and 1 PhD candidate had the thesis refused by the jury with strong recommendations, and the other was still waiting to hear the jury's assessment.

There were 2 doctoral candidates from the first cohort in economics, who submitted the thesis, one underwent the viva successfully in 2022. Overall, 81 doctoral candidates had yet to submit the thesis and do the viva. According to the data provided by DICEP "on average 17 lectures in FECUAN supervise between one and two PhD candidates" (FECUAN, 2022). This suggests that most doctoral students lacked supervisors, with DICEP highlighting the poor organization of the database on doctoral production.

However, lower output in doctoral production in management and economics has been subject to different interpretations. The faculty could have produced its first doctorate prior to 2022, but the "candidate was found guilty of plagiarizing his thesis by the FECUAN's internal review committee before commending it to UAN's rector for viva" (Personal communication, 2019). The student was advised to rewrite his thesis.

Table 6: FDUAN: PhD in public and private law 2011 and 2017

FDUAN	PhD Enrolments by Gender		PhD Enrolments per Supervisor	Theses Handed In by 2020	Viva per Year
					2020
	F	M			
PhD in public law 2011	3	12	NRA	-	0
PhD in private law 2011	2	9	NRA	4	4
PhD in public law 2017	2	14	NRA	-	0
PhD in private law 2017	3	19	NRA	-	0
TOTAL	**10**	**54**	-	**4**	**4**
	64				

Source: Data from DICEP – FDUAN

The faculty of law (FDUAN) enrolled their first cohort of doctoral programmes in public and private law. Taken together, there were 26 doctoral candidates

enrolled in the two courses in 2011, 5 female and 21 male. There were 4 doctoral candidates in private law, who had vivae in 2020. This was a significant achievement for the FDUAN that could be a positive stride towards ending its 9-year drought in doctoral output. Nonetheless, there were 60 candidates yet to complete the thesis. In DICEP's view "3 candidates were nearing to the end" (Personal communication, 2022). Matters became even more complicated when the faculty DICEP was unable to supply a record of the number of PhD candidates per supervisor, and no information was available on the progress of these candidates, despite the fact the law programme had more than a decade of experience running doctorate courses.

Here an anecdote about the experience of one PhD candidate is worth retelling. The jury to recommend the candidate to reformulate in 6 months after the candidate's first viva attempt on 20 June 2017. Only in 2020 was the candidate able to give the viva a second attempt, and then they had to complete the viva via Skype as the supervisor, a professor at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, was unable to travel to Luanda. With regard to the second cohort in 2017, it shows an increasing demand for the doctoral programme.

The doctorate in public law gained one more student, but the number of female candidates dropped to two compared to the first cohort; whereas the PhD in private law added one more female student and the number of male candidates jumped from nine to 19 in 2017. As mentioned before, no information was made available to the researcher to determine what the supervision load is within the doctoral course of the FDUAN. Finally, this study has found that there were some discrepancies between what the written regulations and norms say about the obligation of supervisors to inform the faculty scientific council on their doctoral candidates' progress and the actual recording of this information on file. This issue seems to stand out as a common shortcoming among the faculties.

On the whole, the low doctoral production rates demonstrate that these faculties share common challenges. There is a gender gap. The number of male candidates is significantly higher than the female candidates in all three faculties. In the Faculty of Social Sciences, the first female has yet to complete their PhD, and this faculty had more female doctoral candidates than the faculties of economics and law.

UAN's faculties share the challenge of an inadequate information management system, to record who is supervising who, data on the doctorate candidates, and data on the quality of training and supervision. This is certainly an issue that independent bodies such as the NCHE and HEQE need to address and enable the faculties to contribute to doctoral production. Currently the

contexts and processes exhibit many deficiencies that hinder the UAN's contribution to increasing in PhD graduates across the whole Angola HE system. Moreover, the total number of doctoral candidates stood at 249 in 2022 for just three faculties. It will certainly continue to increase steadily, but the UAN must undertake deep assessment to revamp or fail to become a driver of innovation and development.

7. Conclusion

Angola's HE system straddles the crossroads of deep reforms to ensure, on the one hand, an alignment between the demand for doctoral education and training, and on the other hand, the need to deliver quality research and supervision across postgraduate courses.

Three of UAN's faculties, FDUAN, FCS and FECUAN, started offering doctoral training from 2011, 2012 and 2015 in fields such as public law, private law, management and economics. Since then, these faculties enrolled 259 PhD candidates, of whom 10 obtained doctoral degrees, whereas the greatest part are still stuck in the pipeline despite twice exceeding the 5-year period allowed for doctoral studies by the legislation. Below are some of the issues that might contribute to UAN's producing too few doctoral graduates:

- The political context of secrecy and bureaucracy puts pressure on the data gathering process. Access to information that in normal circumstances would be publicly accessible is protected behind walls of secrecy, wherein DICEP operates as the gatekeeper of information that is only made available to researchers if they obtain a clearance letter from the deputy vice-chancellor.
- There is no set of guidelines for submitting an application for permission to access data. DICEP services were often inefficient. Repeated visits and requests were needed to get information and when it was finally made available, it was either incomplete or incorrect. Thus, the lack of a proper process propels the researcher to seek personal contacts that may help them with obtaining data. Having a good network of contacts at the academic level proved to be crucial for access to the higher education statistical bulletins of 2017, 2018 and 2019 from the ministry of higher education, science, technology and innovation.
- The doctoral training *conundrum* (MacGregor) shows a reality where the growing demand for doctoral degrees is met with a low number of PhD

degree holders. This unbalanced reality threatens the chances of any HEI having enough PhD supervisors.

- Institutional neglect within the faculties – with rare exceptions from the FECUAN – is fueled by an inadequate and deficient organisational model of doctoral training. The current model at UAN is representative of what Kehm (2007, p. 314) calls a "chair holder logic" rather than an "institutional logic".

One could add the entrenched partisan sense of belonging shown by the top managers – ministers, rectors, vice-rectors, deans and doctoral courses directors – whose membership to the incumbent MPLA party plays out as a free ride to move in and out of HEI ranks.

The dean of a faculty or the director of doctoral courses would either belong to the MPLA central committee or be a member of the national parliament for the incumbent party or even a much-trusted pair of hands for the 'securitised state' (Roque, 2021). PhD candidates were piling up, receiving poor or unaccounted supervision. This blackspot is assumed to be dealt with silently, in a way that would prevent any potential negative publicity against the regime. Doctoral candidates are caught up in this context. They are expected to pay tuition fees regardless of the fact that the faculty lets them down persistently.

Suffering in silence is often the only way of overcoming doctoral research challenges. For the sake of development, society-based knowledge and HEI's reputation, there will have to be a constructive and steady way out of these pitfalls. A solution to that would become possible when the key HE stakeholders coalesce around the belief that "the generation of the new knowledge has become an important strategic resource" for any society, be it developed or underdeveloped (Kehm, 2007, p. 308). The only way that may help Angola's higher education turn doctoral research into the "trigger of economic growth and innovation" (Kehm, 2007, p. 315; Jowi et al., 2013, pp. 17–21), will be to adopt a more systemic, structured and innovative model that works for the benefit of doctoral students, researchers and state institutions.

For that purpose, the academic production context needs a major "paradigmatic change in higher education policymaking, which implies first, the shift from the institutional to system logic, focusing on the structure and configuration, and second the shift from chair holder logic to the institutional logic" (Kehm, 2007, p. 314). In this case, such shift would require the introduction of a doctoral school at UAN faculties as a key strategy "to provide more efficiency, i.e., get higher number of doctoral candidates more rapidly through this phase" (Kehm, 2007, p. 309).

Equally, doctoral schools need to ensure good practices and constructive approaches towards research and postgraduate studies across UAN faculties, where each DICEP shows a reality of doctoral studies of its own making. In addition, a doctoral school could help to improve the practices of supervision as well as act as a coordinating body for the whole university which could foster intra-doctoral school continuous engagement to improve: (a) teaching and learning and curriculum development (Botha, 2020, p. 1801); (b) harmonise doctorate programmes; (c) monitor supervision arrangements; (d) control progress of doctoral candidates; (e) "launch a 'central management information office in which complete sets of institutional data would be stored' and made available" (Botha, 2020, p. 1797), and (f) foster a collaborative research and knowledge production community system (Sehoole & Jowi, 2020, 1899; Botha, 2020, p. 1798).

Such a new institution and organisational system at UAN's doctoral school could also help in defining criteria to determine the knowledge and skills with which doctoral candidates enter their studies and subsequently find ways to match them up with relevant institutional facilities, funding and range of initiatives that could harness cross-regional institutional mobility. All these should liaise with domestic quality assurance bodies such as INAREES and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

In a context in which there are not enough supervisors to match the growing number of doctoral candidates, a one-to-one supervision model might not properly deliver doctoral production, but the faculties would greatly benefit from a "shared supervision or *co-tutelle* arrangement" (Kehm, 2007, p. 308). The doctoral schools may also introduce supervisory panels composed according to their respective research subjects and expertise. This could be attained as long as there was an increase in partnership opportunities and

> *strengthened relations between African universities through collaboration, exchange and the development of supportive frameworks to strengthen capacity to deal with [the continent's] own circumstances and develop platforms for international engagements.* (Jowi et al., 2013, p. 24)

A cross-continental engagement could not only expose Angolan doctoral candidates to new and more competitive environments, but also foster institutional drive and commitment to developing excellent and innovative doctoral programs. This would enable Angola's higher education institutions to capitalize on the opportunities offered by internationalization (Jowi et al., 2013,

pp. 27–28). Both PhD candidates and UAN doctoral academic staff would be compelled to embrace a competition mindset for research funding, rather than relying heavily on the government's dwindling resources.

This chapter argued that UAN's context and processes are currently detrimental to doctoral production, for a number of reasons. UAN cannot be completely dissociated from Angola's past and most recent political trajectory. Here, so often politics trump UAN's chances of becoming a locus of knowledge production through doctoral research. The process for doctoral production is clearly codified in presidential decrees and faculties. Yet, there is a big gap between policy ideals and actual practice.

The chapter found that the lack of accountability, the institution's lack of independence to apply checks and balances, and the existence of bureaucratic posturing and political entanglement cast a shadow over doctoral provision.

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