

# AGOSTINHO NETO UNIVERSITY: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEXT AND PROCESS OF SCIENTIFIC WORK PRODUCTION

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## Introduction

An analysis of the context, process and production of scientific work requires a well-documented understanding of the existing institutional research environment, based on observable evidence. In particular, this article is aimed at Agostinho Neto University (ANU), to evaluate doctoral training processes at three faculties or organic units (OUs). In doing so, this paper recognizes the crucial connection between the University and the spheres of market productivity. It also recognizes that different countries have different trajectories, patterns and models of development in the Higher Education Subsystem (HES) which can sometimes undermine or make this connection possible. Although this topic is of great importance because of its potential to empirically hinder relevant studies, this article follows a different path, as it aims to explain how context and process influence the production of scientific work at ANU.

As the oldest public university in Angola, the ANU cannot be dissociated from a broader two-sided political and social environment: on the one hand it helps to define ANU as a source of cutting-edge knowledge production and on the other hand, acts as an obstacle to this goal. Despite the negative tone, the ANU is currently experiencing a moment of balance and is seeking its own essence. It needs to reinvent itself, from being merely a passive receptacle of state revenue to a fully integrated institution, regionally and internationally, freeing up its human resources to work with the outside world, either through joint research projects or plans of student mobility within African universities. This requires not only networks and integration, but also a set of policies aimed at extracting its best from the ANU and esta-

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blishing new national higher education management structures, similar to the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) in South Africa.

Although this article makes reference to this subject, its main purpose is to offer the reader a critical approach about contexts and processes of scientific work production at ANU. This is done in five interrelated sections. The first section gives a brief overview of the bibliography. The second focuses on the issue and gives the reader a personal six-stage account of the research environment that has a negative impact on researcher motivation. The third section underlines the condition of the ANU, as a politically challenged space, by what is understood more as an area or domain of power and control than as an autonomous, innovative and applicable knowledge factor. The fourth section investigates the key points of Angolan government legislation that underpin the provision of higher education for the purpose of producing scientific work. The last section draws on information gathered from the three ANU faculties or OUs to explain the influence of context and process on the production of scientific work in them.

## Bibliography Overview

Research contexts and processes are the springboard for the production of scientific works. But this is often based on two intertwined axes: training for scientific research tailored to the research needs of the doctoral candidate and the role of the advisor. The advisor is presented, in the specific academic bibliography dealing with the supervision of scientific works, no longer as a “distant master with the sole responsibility for the quality of the results” (Own Translation) (Mouton 2018), but mainly as a facilitator of the students’ walk, apprentice or novice until they reach the master (Bastalich, 2017). The view of the student doing scientific, master’s or doctoral work as a permanent learner makes perfect sense when the student is expected to “reflect on a research process and supervisors and others to facilitate the process of research and reflection on the process research to ensure a capacity for future innovation” (Own Translation) (Bastalich, 2017).

The production of scientific work is therefore an increasingly developed integrated process through which providers, beneficiaries, legislators, government institutions and independent higher education bodies play a significant role in ensuring the “discourse of the five policies” which, in Mouton and Frick’s view “drives and influences doctoral production in South

Africa – *quantity, transformation, efficiency, quality and internationalization*” (Own Translation) (Mouton and Frick, 2018).

The authors were cautious in mentioning that “trends toward increased doctoral and undergraduate enrollment coexist with tension and contradiction” (Own Translation) (Mouton and Frick, 2018). Simply put, the five policies discourse does act as a guideline for stakeholders involved in HES and underscore the importance of striking the right balance between context, processes and expected outcomes. This should be considered as a conscious measure to avoid or at least reduce the negative impacts of the paradox, which is that “to produce more doctorates, more PhD supervisors are needed, but to have more supervisors, more PhDs are needed” (Own Translation) (McGregor, 2013).

In South Africa, where there appears to be an interaction between policies and practices, there is also an independent body set up to monitor and verify that the global imperatives for scientific research are operating in a coherent and harmonious manner. This works, and it really makes sense in the South African context, where one of the roles of the NCHE and Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) is to audit the policies developed by the ministry of higher education. However in the context of Angola, there is no such independent institution that guarantees the quality of higher education aiming at doctorates, and that verifies the soundness of policies designed by the ministry of higher education. Thus, Bitzer’s question of “who verify the verifiers” (Bitzer, 2016) is simply unanswered in this case. The Angolan context is cluttered with legislation, presidential decrees and regulations. But it needs a coherent system that serves the national interest, rather than a system that only advocates and works for the *status quo*.

In short, the main purpose of education or teaching for PhDs is to “prepare students to become researchers” and in this sense “doctoral education structures” (Own Translation) (Matas, 2012) are essential for “quality and efficiency at the highest level of education” (Bastalich, 2017). Two key principles may follow from this discussion. First, the role the advisor plays in bringing to light the hidden talents of his or her students. The second element is based on the recognition of the important role that structures should play in the overall process of education/teaching for doctoral formation. This is the idea of structures based on the belief that practices should be regulated by a sustainable chain of values, principles and procedures that, ultimately, can operate as both cause and condition for the action of HES actors.

The notion of structure, in terms of doctoral education or training, calls for “necessary resources” such as “candidate funding, expertise for tau-

ght components, and supervisory capacity and facilities available for research” (Own Translation) (Frick, 2018). While this is the view, in most societies with an independent, autonomous, advanced HES, the ability to supervise and produce scientific research results can be overshadowed by the daily hustle and bustle. In our case, inefficient supervision is reinforced by the accumulation of production of scientific work. Even when the situation starts to get out of hand, with the increase in doctoral candidates, no one has yet ventured to blame the advisor for “unsatisfactory deadlines and high dropout rates” (Own Translation) (Bastalich, 2017).

Beyond the time trap in which counselors feel tied, research resources, such as access to the internet or libraries, are huge barriers that the investigating student has to learn to live with, using the alternative of researching private media or risking stagnation during the research. PhD training at ANU is predominantly a “professional doctorate that combines classroom work with a supervised research project” (Own Translation) (Matas, 2012). Thus, in opposition to the IAU-ACUP (International Association of Universities and Catalan Association of Public Universities, in english) scenario of optimism about doctoral recognition in Africa, it could be more inclined to clarify that, unfortunately, the PhD title is not yet fully understood. Recognized as an essential asset for contributing to the “knowledge economy” neither the Angolan government “knows how to assess the competencies of PhD holders nor the relevance of what they can contribute to society” (Own Translation) (IAU-ACUP, 2012). Why is it so?

There are, at least, three evidences that support this claim. First, for access to a public sector neither the master’s degree nor a doctorate degree puts their holders above the level of their competitors, since the ministry of labor and social security only considers the bachelor’s degree. However, both MA and PhD holders may apply for a post, but if they are admitted they cannot expect to earn more than their licensed colleagues. Masters and PhDs are treated fairly at the academy, where they are paid accordingly.

Second, it has to do with cases of movement between the political sphere and the University, which makes it seem as if it were an incubator of ministerial careers in government. For example, under the administration of President João Lourenço of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in portuguese) party, the government appointed, under Article 12 (g) of Decree 90/09 of 15th December on HES, ministers for superior education, science, innovation and technology and for fisheries and sea, the rector and the vice-rector of ANU, respectively.

The third evidence is the transformation of the University into partisan territory, willing to bow to higher orders, despite its quality or wisdom, but unable to provide critical thinking and socially applicable knowledge. Under these circumstances, it might be a bit exaggerated to see ANU as a space that is able of:

generating jobs by balancing and integrating three objectives: first, meeting the practical demand of the labor market, second, producing new knowledge through research by more PhD-level scientists and ultimately producing committed and global citizens through teaching (Own Translation) (Friesenhahn, 2014).

However, there are some positive signs as discussed below. One of these positives has to do with the present government's decision to promote some significant reforms in the HES, as expressed in the National Development Plan (PDN, in portuguese). The PDN aims to achieve four key objectives, namely: "(1) improving the work network of different higher education institutions, (2) increasing courses, graduates, (3) increasing postgraduate offerings, and (4) improve the quality of teaching by strengthening masters and doctorates" (PDN, 2018). However, in order to achieve these goals, the government sets as its main goal "to strengthen higher education with 772 new masters and 125 new PhDs, graduated abroad, by the year 2022" (PDN, 2018).

The plan is ambitious and marked by contradictions. For example, despite the fact that in early January 2019, the council of ministers gave the green light to implement the plan, in fact it will not be possible to have 125 fully-qualified doctorates at the best universities in developed countries by 2022. Let's say the government decides to send candidates in September 2019 to the "most prestigious universities in the world", experience also tells us that PhD students who have English as a foreign language will have to prove their proficiency in that language through a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) at US and UK universities. The same requirement for language will apply at French or German universities.

The government could still send students abroad. One thing is certain, however, that it is unlikely that it will reach the goal of 125 doctorates by 2022, even if they were chosen from a group of candidates with the highest levels of foreign language competence. In addition, students will have to deal with some university related culture shocks, and this alone is enough to hinder or delay research efficiency. Another issue that could be pointed out to the PDN is the silence it makes about domestic doctoral candidates. They exist and clutter the system at ANU's faculties of social science (FSS),

economics (FEC), and law (ANULS). Challenges are always beginning to arise when decision-makers and policy-makers assume that formulating a new policy within HES training policies will necessarily imply an absolute start from scratch, as if there were no supply of doctoral courses in Angola. Indeed, the outlook for producing doctoral work at ANU faculties tells us of a reality of institutional neglect and utilitarian measures that make money from doctoral candidates.

## Issues and reflections on the research context

The article deals with the question: to what extent do the context and the process affect the production of scientific works at ANU? To address this issue, a small field research was conducted at ANU's DICEP (department for scientific research and postgraduate studies) and at ANU's colleges - FSS, FEC and ANULS, all with PhD courses. The objective of the field research was to collect the most accurate data possible on (1) the number of students, men and women enrolled in doctoral courses; (2) how many doctoral candidates for each advisor; (3) students who successfully presented and defended their thesis in the first and second Issue of the course; (4) number of PhD students working on their PhD projects. However, the field research intended to generate data has turned into a real roller coaster, which is worth reflecting on:

*Step One:* I had to meet with the director of the ANU's DICEP to get his authorization to access information related to the doctoral programs at FSS, offering the doctorate degree in social sciences; in law school with two courses in public law and private law; and in economics college offering a doctorate in economics and management.

The visit to the director took place on December 20th, 2018. After explaining to him the purpose of the research, the director became aware of its importance. Instead of allowing me to go in the next door to consult the files, he asked me to put in writing what I just explained. I had no choice but to drive me back to the social science faculty, which took me another hour and a half to prepare and send the requested letter.

*Step two:* The director instructed the secretary to hand me the files with the reports that the OUs were supposed to have sent to him, at the request of his department. "Dr. Paul, I'm afraid we don't have all the information you need here. For that, you will have to go to the OUs. Anyway, take a look at these files", said the secretary. In fact, most of the files were incomplete. Therefore, the possibility of contacting OUs to get the data seemed

the best. However, I needed to reduce research to three branches of social science, leaving for further evaluation the engineering and medical schools that have doctoral degrees in chemistry and environmental engineering, and public health respectively. In addition, I noticed that for the social sciences, I would not have to go through tense bureaucratic processes as part of the faculty. Additionally, I would need a service credential that would make it easier for me to access data in law and economics.

*Step Three:* I returned to the ANU to apply for a credential, basically a research permit stating that “for the purpose of scientific research and to collect data from ANU’s OUs, Dr. Paulo, a professor at this University, is accredited. And so that no one impedes you in any way, we pass this credential that is signed and stamped with the stamp of this institution”. But to reach this stage I had to address a letter to the Vice Chancellor for ANU’s scientific research and postgraduate studies. Luckily, the Vice-Chancellor, also a member of the ruling party’s political bureau, the MPLA, was available and ordered her secretary to enter the credential. When the secretary began printing the authorization note for the DICEPs director’s credential, she noticed that the printer was out of ink. “At least she can read it anyway,” she was referring to the secretary of the director of the DICEPs. The secretary read the note and typed the credential. But neither the director nor the deputy director were available to sign the same credential.

I only got this signature on January 3rd, 2019. When, early in the morning, I called the secretary to ask her if the credential was ready and if I could come and receive it, she replied: “Mister, the document is ready, but we are unable to open the office door at this time. We are still waiting for a colleague with the master key to arrive”. I took another hour and a half of driving to the ANU campus to put some pressure on them. I waited over an hour for the master key man. But he could not open the door. The subdirector arrived with the solution.

He walked straight into his office and then appeared with a handwritten sheet of paper for the secretary to copy and type after finding a place for it. She eventually did so in the office of the former vice-dean - appointed minister of fisheries and sea by the president on January 2nd 2019 - and finally brought the credential to the office of the ANU’s rector to be stamped. Then the dean’s office director said that, before being stamped, the credential needed the deputy’s director’s signature. The secretary returned to the deputy director, who signed, and only after all this process did I get the credential on January 3rd.



*Step Four:* At FSS it was a real battle to get the information, without hearing this: “Mister, write here what you need, exactly. We will look for it and bring it to you”. In the end, we came to the conclusion that essential data was missing or placed elsewhere or nowhere, so it would be impossible to find it. Thus, I ended up looking for a lot of information that made the best sense possible.

*Step Five:* At FEC, I first met the head of DICEPs. I identified myself, explained to him the reasons for contacting the department, and evidently showed him the credential in order to have any guarantee. “I can’t give you any information without the dean’s order,” replied the chief. Fortunately, the dean was present, and before I returned to the head of department, he gave me a 50-minute description of doctoral courses, and handed me some copies of documents that he considered to be of great interest to my research. Back in the department, I was given some more information, but I was not provided with data on the number of candidates assigned to each advisor, and no records of the progress of the doctoral students were available.

*Step Six:* Once again, at Agostinho Neto University Law School (ANULS) in search of information for my investigation, I was told that I had to address a letter to the head of DICEPs for authorization. A letter and copy of my credential were emailed to her on January 3rd, but I never received a reply. I continued to move on until I finally learned that the boss was absent, on medical leave, and that only she could handle my business.

Meanwhile, on January 16th, the chief was back in her office, but she told me that she needed to speak first with the vice-dean for scientific research. “Mr. Paul, please, sit in the reception room while you wait for the vice-dean. He must be on his way”, said the lady. I waited almost two hours and the vice-dean didn’t show up. Then the boss asked if I had a copy of the email I had sent her. “What for?” I asked. “I wanted to leave a note for the vice-dean,” she said. “Colleague, it’s been more than two weeks since I sent you an email. Are you telling me now that you haven’t even referred him to the vice-dean yet? I remind you that we are civil servants and this kind of bureaucracy shows that we are holding back the University’s hopes of moving into the top 100 universities in Africa. One piece of data is an indicator of our public service,” I said, venting my frustration. “Unfortunately, this is the situation. Please, let’s talk to the vice-dean’s secretary”.

Once in the office, the secretary said that the vice-dean was absent from meetings and that she would not be able to tell me when he would return. “I just need the information for the research I am doing, and as you well know, I was given a credential for that purpose. So the question is



very simple: either you have the information and you give me access to it as evidence of the quality of the HES or you have to admit that you do not have it. Please pass this on to the vice-dean”. Then, kindly, the secretary announced, “Mr. Paul, leave your contact with me so I can let you know when the vice-dean arrives. ” She never called me back and I had to go back there on January 23th, 2019.

Fortunately, by the time I met the vice-dean at college, I had some time to forward my request to the college dean, who gave the department the green light to make all the information available. The boss then appointed a department secretary to work with me and openly address all issues related to my research. She showed me all the archives that had information on PhD courses in private law and public law since 2011, some information on PhD candidates and on a cooperation and partnership agreement between ANULS and the Faculty of Law at New University of Lisbon (FLNUL).

The information was there, although not complete. For example, there was not a single record to illustrate both the orientation process, and the applicants’ satisfaction with the quality of doctoral training and supervisory experiences at ANULS, but there is only one record of the existing challenges regarding cooperation with FLNUL, in terms of receiving results related to doctorates.

On the one hand, the above account is designed to help the reader gain insight into the research context mired in excessive bureaucracy. This context is also a harbinger of a deeper social stigma and a fear of possible political punishment that, in a way, acts as a barrier to creativity and a kind of public rule for survival and self-maintenance. On the other hand, the reflection on the steps helps to support the view that the doctoral context is very important, because it reveals that ANU has been closed in the political quagmire. Moreover, this article also shows that the university context runs over doctoral processes, which in turn limits the results of the production of scientific works.

## **ANU: Position beyond politicization**

Revolutionary policies and the trajectory of Angola’s HES are intertwined and define the broader research context. At this point, one might ask why policies, instead of helping to enable the development of a full-fledged higher education system, on the contrary, lead the ANU to get bogged down in the swamp of the ruling party. In the midst of this fact, the HES is still a

new phenomenon that only emerged a year after independence from Portugal in 1975, with the creation of the University of Angola (UA). The UA became Agostinho Neto University, ANU, named after the country's first president and first rector of ANU, on January 24th, 1985.

President Agostinho Neto thus defined ANU's mission:

to serve the revolution and to fight against the reminiscences of Portuguese colonialism; to help to establish a just and progressive society; to produce national cadres with a new conscience who will be able to work as agents of a new society that will strive to achieve popular democracy (Own Translation) (Universidade Agostinho Neto, UAN. 1977).

The establishment of a Public University as “part of national higher education systems” (Bitzer, 2016) showed a greater interest in later nationalist purposes than in designing policies that would have promoted quality research in education and subsequently helped to harness “critical thinking skills” (Cyranski, 2011). Indeed, the ruling party structures continue to set the orientation and also hamper academic freedoms and autonomy. Since then, the context has only gotten worse. For three reasons: First, the higher education teachers' union fought for an agreement with the government of former president José Eduardo dos Santos to establish that “the government should appoint the governing bodies of universities and public academies through a proposal Minister of Higher Education, based on three candidates elected by the assemblies of their respective institutions” (Own Translation) (Decree 90/09, Article 12). The fact is that this proposed legislation never came into effect. Second, the election of the three candidates never took place at the time, and former President Dos Santos called upon himself to appoint the deans and vice-deans of all public universities. This decision was considered by the higher education union to be unconstitutional. Third, HES governance, through presidential decree, equates a conflict between efficiency, stability, and discretionary decision of the president.

The steel fist exerted on HES during President João Lourenço's current administration was believed to end in May 2019, after last year when the president made the decision to allow Angola's 9 public universities and their respective colleges to elect their deans and vice-deans (ANGOP, 2018). Previously, the President, acting under his predecessor's decree, appointed Pedro Magalhães and Maria Antonieta Baptista as Dean and Vice-Dean of ANU for the area of scientific research and postgraduate studies. The caveat here is this: As I mentioned earlier, Maria Antonieta Baptista was recently appointed Minister of Fisheries and the Sea by the President, who at that

time left his position as Vice-Dean at ANU. It is worth remembering that the current minister of higher education, science, technology and innovation, Maria do Rosário Sambo, was formerly the Dean of ANU, appointed by former President Dos Santos, in 2015. Meanwhile, President Lourenço has appointed his Minister, in 2017.

In addition to the promises of relative liberalization of the National Higher Education System (NHES) there are two types of challenges. The first has to do with a huge imbalance between the number of PhD holders from university staff and the growing number of doctoral candidates. According to the higher education statistical bulletin, in 2016, the Angolan HES was composed of 53.1% of graduates, with public institutions employing 1,578, against 3,072 in private institutions. The proportion of staff with master's and doctoral degrees was, respectively, 33.3% and 9.8% with a total of 1,708 in public universities and 1,209 in private institutions. There are, definitely, 601 doctorates at public universities and 237 for all private universities.

The second set of challenges has to do with the public statement by Minister Maria de Rosario Sambo, who, speaking of the national scientific environment, specified that:

there is scientific research, but it is still weak compared to other SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) countries. We have enormous potential to change this reality if we are able to properly manage human and financial resources and, above all, we should not be megalomaniac. Rather, we must focus on the goal of producing science with pragmatic meaning (Own Translation) (Voz de Angola, 2017).

She further stated: "We need to diagnose bad practices and make an effort to progressively eliminate them with a change in mindset and behavior" (Voz de Angola, 2017).

The minister's remarks underscore a confusion between the root causes and effects. Bad practices clearly originate from the NHES' link to party-political engineering. It will not be possible to produce scientific knowledge, even if it is conducted with pragmatism, if there is a real gap between a range of policies and contexts in which researchers are immersed. In addition, a closer look at ANU reveals an imbalance in available strategies, policies and resources to provide quality training for PhDs. The following section discusses government legislation to ascertain the legal provisions to which the process leading to the award of a doctoral degree is subjected.

## Government legislation on PhD formation

NHES' key challenges are not the absence of a set of legislations to regulate the system, but rather the lack of coherent mechanisms to ensure the quality of education at all ANU colleges. In fact, the doctoral research process follows a set of orderly procedures and guidelines on the nature of the doctoral degree, the role of doctoral supervision and the defined objectives and competencies that a doctoral candidate should acquire through the process. This section delves into legislation to find general institutional guidance on teaching or training for doctorates.

The legislation on HES and PhD studies is based on two presidential decrees, 90/09 of December 15th and 29/11 of March 3rd, both establishing the appropriate rules and procedures to regulate universities. Article 24 of Decree 90/09 states that postgraduate studies comprise two categories: academic for masters, doctorates and professional - the last one aims at the technical-professional improvement of the licensee. In addition, the same article sets the maximum time to complete masters degrees in two/three years, and four/five years for doctorates. The PhD is seen as "a process of training and research, which aims to provide a broad and deep scientific capacity to undergraduate or master's degree candidates, culminating in a dissertation whose content constitutes an unprecedented contribution to the universal scientific heritage" (Own Translation).

The Decree of March 3rd 2011 reiterates, in its article 21, the government's overall position on doctoral education as a process of training and research that provides already graduated or masters candidates with broad and profound skills, which will result in an original dissertation that will contribute to world scientific knowledge. In this process, doctoral students are expected to attend classes, lectures or conferences during the first two years of their doctoral studies to acquire research skills and techniques. For this purpose, the different OUs have different types of modules designed according to the nature and objectives of each course. This is the case with doctoral programs in social science, law and economics. However, they share the same processes and procedures regarding the writing of an original dissertation, which happens after the student has successfully defended their doctoral research project.

Furthermore, Article 26 about supervision presents three main procedures: first, for doctoral candidates to produce their thesis, they must be guided by professors or researchers with a doctoral degree in their institution. Supervision or guidance may be provided by a co-guidance system. However,

it is indicated that this model should be clearly stated in the candidate's doctoral project, as well as the strategies for co-orientation. Second, the theses will also supervise the professors and researchers with doctorates from other institutions, according to existing agreements or contracts established by the parties. Finally, the advisor should inform and update, every six months, the faculty scientific council about the fundamental steps and the progress of the thesis.

A clarification of the role and purposes of guidance makes a huge difference when we think of the goals to be met for more doctoral candidates, to complete their training within the PND schedule. As the last section stresses, the outlook for the production of scientific work is negative because, so far, there has not been a single doctoral degree resulting from the doctoral courses offered by the three ANU'S OUs. The underlying causes will be shown to be related to the institution's contexts and bad practices and are ultimately linked to the imbalance between legislation and policy implementation by colleges. There is also, as I mentioned earlier, the lack of an independent body, such as the NCHE and HEQF from South Africa, to oversee and audit policies and ensure efficiency and quality.

## Overview of ANU's scientific work production

This section was created from data collected at ANU's faculties of social science (FSS), law (ANULS) and economics (FEC) to illustrate the state of production of scientific work at ANU. The data were compiled together, but from scattered sources of information such as files, internal memos, and conversations with DICEPs staff members from each faculty. Undoubtedly, there is a common feature that covers all data entered in the tables below. However, it would be misleading to suggest that, due to the high fees charged by a doctoral candidate - from AKZ 3,500,000.00 (Angolan Kwanza, Angolan currency), about USD 10,000 - the doctoral candidate has become a kind of chicken of golden eggs. Which leads the faculties to retreat or abandon their main obligation to provide doctoral production.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 try to portray a context of stagnation in the production of doctorates. The tables refer to the following categories: the number of doctoral candidates from the first Issue in 2013 to the second in 2016 (PhD13 & PhD16) for FSS; the first Issue and Issues in 2011 and 2017 of ANULS; and the first, second and third Issues of FEC, respectively in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (PhD15, PhD16 & PhD17). The tables show the number of doctoral

students in terms of gender - female (F) and male (M), the number of theses presented for the corresponding Issue (Ths); *viva voce* or public defense (viva) that took place and number of students assigned to each advisor (Orient) per year of enrollment.

**Table 1: Faculty of Social Sciences - PhD in Social Sciences (2013 & 2016)**

PhD13		PhD16		Ths 13	Ths 16	Viva 13	Viva 16	Orient13	Orient 16
F	9	F	8	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
M	14	M	18	3	0	0	0	4-6	ND
F+M	23	F+M	26	3	0	0	0		
Total		49 PhD Students							

**Source:** Made by the author

The FSS began with PhD studies in Social Sciences in 2013 with about 23 doctoral candidates enrolled for the first Issue and this number rose to 3 years later to 26. The idea was for all candidates to complete their theses within 4 years and if they failed to reach this target during that period, they would be granted an extra year. Generally, applicants are older students who have a full time job in state institutions or in the private sectors - ANU personnel, defense and security, banks etc.

Given that, it is understood that doctoral candidates often have a real struggle to meet the required deadline and this factor coupled with the heavy burden of teaching hours leaves the doctoral student less time to investigate. On the other hand, mentors, according to Mouton, can hardly “help the student become an independent professional researcher and an academic with a set of cognitive and metacognitive skills” (Own Translation) (Mouton and Frick, 2018). Specifically, only 3 students out of the 23 from Issue of 2013 were able to deposit their theses, which indicates that “doctoral *tunnel*” (Bitzer, 2016) is blocked and as a result, the rates of production of scientific work remain low, with a total 20 candidates who could not yet find the PhD’s exit door.

The numbers add up to those of doctoral candidates from the second Issue in 2016, despite the fact that 8 out of 26 candidates have successfully

defended their doctoral projects and apparently are working on the theses. The main problem observed concerns the lack of good record keeping on who oversees who, and most importantly, there are no records and no data (ND) to quantify the progress of the candidate's investigation. This practice is just one of many that seem to contradict government legislation on guidance.

**Table 2. Faculty of Economics: PhD in Economics (2015) PhD in Management (2016-17)**

PhD 15		PhD 16		PhD 17		PhD Sub15	PhD Viva15	Orient15&16
F	5	F	2	F	2	None	None	ND
M	21	M	15	M	18			
F+M	26	F+M	17	F+M	20			
Total		63 PhD Students						

**Source:** Made by the author

The FEC started doctoral courses, first in economics, in 2015, establishing institutional cooperation with two Portuguese institutes - Portuguese Public University Institute (ISCTE) and the Lisbon Higher Institute of Economics and Management (ISEG). Of the 2015 Issue, only 5 doctoral candidates came to the defense of doctoral projects; in this process 4 students passed and were allowed to write the thesis, while 1 student failed. In addition, there are only 2 possibly close to the presentation, with 1 candidate, according to the college dean, the former transport minister who recently was sentenced to 14 years in prison for corruption and money laundering.

Due to the low demand of candidates for PhDs in economics, the faculty has been focusing, since 2016, on the PhD course in management. By now, the college should have already produced its first doctorate, but the candidate was found guilty of plagiarizing his thesis by the FEC internal review committee before sending it to the ANU dean for public defense (*viva* on board). The student was then advised to start his doctorate from scratch. Similarly, there are no supervisory records or data (ND) from which to infer the quality and progress levels of each candidate.



### Quadro 3. Faculdade de Direito: PhD em direito público & direito privado (2011 & 2017)

Public Law 11		Private Law 11		Public Law 17		Private Law 17		Orient/PhD	VIVA	
F	3	F	2	F	2	F	3	ND	0	
M	12	M	9	M	14	M	19	ND	1	
F+M	15	F+M	11	F+M	16	F+M	22	ND	1	
Total	64 PhD Students									

Source: Made by the author

The ANULS launched the first PhD Issue in 2011 and has a total of 15 doctoral students enrolled in public law, 3 of whom are women and 12 men. The private law course has a total of 11 candidates, 2 women and 9 men. There are 2 public law candidates working on your thesis; while a total of 8 students – 2 women and 6 men – are writing their thesis in private law.

No information is available on the progress of these candidates, but it is known that although the law program has been in place for almost 8 years, only 1 student of the 2011 course made a public defense (*viva*) on June 20th 2017, but the jury “unanimously decided to recommend that the candidate reformulate it within 6 months” (Own Translation). This information was taken from the defense memorandum (Memorandum da Primeira Defesa Doutorado, 20 de Junho de 2017), but after almost 2 years, there is not a single reference that explains whether the candidate has been able to carry on the work or is still struggling for progress. In addition, an interesting point that stood out from the memorandum was the candidate’s advisor, a professor from the University of Coimbra of Portugal, who attended the defense via skype. However, it is unclear how many times the candidate has been able to travel to Coimbra to meet with the advisor and if he or she has had proper guidance. Most likely, this question will continue without an observable answer.

Regarding the second Issue of 2017, there is an increase in demand for doctoral courses. The doctorate in public law gained 1 more student, but the number of female candidates dropped to 2 compared to the first Issue, while for PhD in private law there was an increase of 1 female student and the number of male students jumped from 9 to 19, in 2017. There are still

a number of 8 students, that is, 5 in private law and 3 in public law who are already working on their doctoral thesis. As in the previous Issue, there is no information available to ascertain if there is supervision/guidance burden in the context of doctoral courses offered at ANULS. Finally, there are a few more points that highlight major discrepancies between the written provisions of the regulations and standards as regards the obligation of supervisors to report to the faculty scientific council every six months on the progress of their students and the existing record of this information on file. This is an outstanding issue that seems to be common to all colleges – FSS, FEC and ANULS.

In general, these faculties share the same challenges: low rates of production of scientific work, at the very least. In addition, there is a clear gender disparity, as can be seen in the three tables, where the number of male candidates is significantly higher in the three OUs. FSS features more women candidates than FEC and ANULS. In addition, ANU colleges also jointly face the challenge of an inadequate information management system (Bitzer, 2016) on who guides whom, the doctoral candidate, and the quality of training and mentoring. This is clearly an issue that an independent NCHE and HEQE-type body would have helped to settle and get the OUs back on track to contribute to the production of doctorates. However, contexts and processes are simply far from favoring the goal of increasing doctoral production across the HES. Above all, when the total number of applicants amounts to 176 in all ANU OUs and this number is likely to increase.

## Conclusions

Angola's higher education system calls for far-reaching reforms that can ensure that there is a match between the demand for doctoral studies and the quality of guidance provided throughout the ANU. To this end, a new structure for postgraduate higher schools is needed to give ANU doctoral courses some efficiency and harmony. They would then ensure good practices and constructive approaches to scientific research, making access to information more accessible and a crucial factor for the advancement of scientific knowledge and production, whose successful doctoral rates in OUs are markedly low.

In addition, postgraduate school reforms would help improve mentoring practices, as well as acting as the coordinating body for all ANU doctoral programs and setting criteria for determining the basic skills and knowledge

of doctoral candidates and subsequently find ways to adapt them to the institutional facilities, funding and range of activities that could provide regional institutional mobility. For a context where there are between 4 to 6 students assigned to each advisor, perhaps a one-to-one guidance approach model does not result in doctoral production. The undergraduate college should likewise focus on creating guidance panels set up according to their specialties and research subjects. The undergraduate college should also promote opportunities for partnerships with SADC higher education institutions to expose Angolan doctoral students to modern and increasingly competitive, excellent and innovative centers that could enable applicants to apply for funding, in particular, rather relying heavily on government resources, which are already scarce.

This article was intended to argue that the ANU context and processes currently work to the detriment of doctoral production for a number of significant reasons. The ANU cannot completely dissociate itself from Angola's past and most recent political trajectory. Policy often creates obstacles to ANU's opportunities to become a space for knowledge production through research for scientific work. The process of producing scientific papers is, in fact, codified in presidential decrees and OU's regulations.

On the one hand, the lack of accountability and an independent institution to enforce verification and control mechanisms in NHES, and on the other, the existence of bureaucratic stances and political entanglement cast a shadow over the provision of doctoral production. In addition, the lack of funding puts an extra burden on applicants and faculty who get the money to pay faculty and other doctoral staff from student fees.

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## ABSTRACT

The context and process reveal the obstacles that have conditioned the development of Agostinho Neto University (ANU), as an autonomous space for research and knowledge production at the level of doctoral courses in Organic Units (OUs), namely the Faculties of Social Sciences (FSS), Law (ANULS) and Economics (FEC). These obstacles are so widespread that they are associated with the nature of the political regime that prevailed in Angola shortly after the Independence from Portugal in 1975. It should be noted that political transitions have in fact taken on different rhythms and characteristics, for example, the shift from monopartisanship to semi-liberal pluralist democracy, from bureaucratic administrative and economic centralism to a market economy model in the early 1990s. But the rekindling of violent conflict overshadowed the fervor for structural change with real impacts on the exercise of civil and academic freedoms, and the promotion of the rule of law. On the contrary, the authority originating from the constitutional reforms following the end of the civil war became absolute in the exercise of power and structurally personalizing as to the mode of administration of the *res publica*. This paper argues that the ANU - despite the reform efforts of the current administration - is still a sounding board for regime paradoxes that foster weak scientific research and pedagogical megacephaly. More emphasis is given to a type of education that results in low production rates as found in doctoral students in the OUs analyzed.

## KEYWORDS

Agostinho Neto University; Context and Production.

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