

Higher education in angola: From colony to decolonity



<https://doi.org/10.56238/ptoketheeducati-042>

Teresa de Jesus Portelinha Almeida Patatas

University of Namibe – Angola.

E-mail: teresapatatas.angola@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In Angola, Higher Education has undergone several transmutations. This communication aims to show the transformations that Angolan Higher Education has undergone in its history and the associated process of colony and decolonity. Through a bibliographic and documentary research in this area will deconstruct this objective. The history of Higher Education can be divided into phases: Non-existence (until 1962), Final Colonial (until 1975), Civil War (until 2002) and Post-Peace (since 2002) and Current. Its origin had a religious initiative. Without this option, those who wished to pursue higher education went abroad, particularly to Portugal. These were from families with greater financial resources or supported by religious missions. In 1962 the General University Studies appeared, initiating public higher education in the territory. The number of students was small, as the

migrations to Portugal continued. In Angola, Higher Studies constituted an elitist-exclusivist system, promoter of colonial culture and defender of the interests of the regime, where individuals of the black race had almost zero access. Independence in 1975 provoked a massive departure of teachers. The lack of staff hindered the evolution of education. For example, in 1977, the year of the first educational reform, there was a drastic decrease of 73.4% in the number of university students. All the political-military and socio-economic constraints of the civil war, and later years, prevented decolonization and the intended advancement in Higher Education. Peace in 2002 boosted the growth and expansion of universities, expanding the offer of institutions and higher education courses. In national development, Higher Education has a key role in the training of cadres to boost the growth and reconstruction of the country, so its growth in quantity and quality and territorial expansion are targets that Angola seeks to achieve. The process of colony/decolony leads us to a pertinent research and reflection.

Keywords: Higher Education, Angola, History, Colony, Decolonity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Angola, a country located in southwestern Africa with a population of 24.3 million,¹ was a Portuguese colony for 493 years (from 1482 to 1975). These almost five hundred years of colonialism have left deep marks on all sectors of the country. One of the determining sectors for any nation is education, and in this area the effects of colonialism left a less positive footprint that harmed and limited the development of the country after independence. Because, in Angola, the Basic Law of the Education System (Law no. 17/2016, of 07 October) intends in its applicability "to ensure the growth and economic and social development of the country".

¹ Estimated in 2014 in the first post-independence census.



If we consider, in this case, *decolony* as the process of liberation from the heritage and colonizing influence (*colony*), and this linked to the educational system, it can be assessed that this (process) has not been easy, especially for reasons linked to the history of the country.

This work highlights the process of colony to decolony linked to Higher Education, for the primary role that this level of education plays in the creation and preparation of cadres in Angola, as this aims at "the training of high-level cadres for the different branches of economic and social activity of the country, ensuring them a solid scientific preparation, technical, cultural and human, as well as the promotion of scientific research and the provision of services to the community".² This subsystem of education is, therefore, considered governmentally as a decisive foundation for national reconstruction and the building of the economy for a solid development of the country.

This study aims to show the transformations that Angolan Higher Education has undergone in its history and the associated process of colony and decolony. Through a bibliographic and documentary research in this area will deconstruct this objective.

This history could be divided into two phases: the phase of *colony* and the phase of *decolony*. One can point to the beginning of the first one for 1482 (the year in which Angola was considered a Portuguese colony), however, although one can link the beginning of decolonization to the³ wars of liberation that began in 1961, it would be difficult to specify a specific date for *decolonization*, because it is a process still active and not totally suppressed.

Therefore, it was decided to divide according to the phases of the history of Angolan Higher Education: Non-existence in the Colony (until 1962), Final Colonial (until 1975), Civil War (until 2002), Post-Peace (since 2002) and the Current Situation. Before the phases, the context of colonization and formal education is presented, and after the phases, a reflection on Angolan educational colony/decolony is proposed.

2 COLONIZATION AND FORMAL EDUCATION

Before starting the historical phases of Angolan Higher Education it is worth mentioning, for a better understanding of them, some historical aspects.

Angola was a Portuguese colony from 1482 to 1975. But the first contacts between Portuguese and natives of Angola, organized in kingdoms, were of a commercial nature and not of domination. However, "the conflicts originated by the competition between the various European powers led to the

² Decree No. 90/09 of 15 December, Article 3: p. 3952.

³ Decolonization "is the generic name given to the process by which one or several colonies acquire or regain their independence, usually by agreement between the colonial power and a political party (or coalition) or liberation movement." Source: <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descoloniza%C3%A7%C3%A3o>.



political domination of these kingdoms, which culminated in the partition of the Black Continent by the European states at the Berlin Conference in 1885."⁴

For Moutinho (2000) the three pillars of colonization were: "(1) Superiority of the colonizer; (2) Right to intervene in men and things; and (3) Colonization is permanent" (p. 20). The two colonial economic foundations were the Portuguese immigration with mostly business purpose, and the native population that in its bulk were pushed to agriculture (of products established by the settlers, namely coffee, corn and sisal) and / or to low-paid functions. It was in this colonizing context that the formal education in Angola brought by the Catholic missionaries began, creating elites consequently linked mainly to theology, history, culture and literature.

In schools, students were taught to read and write Portuguese, as well as Christian values and Portuguese culture. For authors such as Almeida (n.d.) and Neto (2014) this implied *de-Africanization*, because this education did not take into account the diversity of cultures, endogenous languages and the native reality, nor was it adequate to the specific characteristics and contexts of local populations.

Munanga in his reasoning (presented in Almeida, n.d.) comments that the colonizer despised the local culture and "initiated a movement of deculturation of blacks and their distancing from native traditions. This process of *deculturation* had as its main ally education. The school was then used as one of the vehicles of oppression used by the colonizer." (id., s.p.). As in the rest of Africa, native languages have been banned from education.

Through education the native incorporated the culture and values of the Portuguese, and after his conversion to Christianity classified the native culture as superstitious, antiquated and uncivilized. Thus, showing that the educated/schooled internalized the image that the European had of the traditional culture of Africa (Chung, 1996).

For Almeida (2005) "the educational process postulated that the African was an inferior being and, as such, could only clarify and progress, that is, free himself from the condition of savage, through the incorporation of the culture of the metropolis." (s.p.). In colonial times formal education was elitist and black people had little access to state education. It was the time of the dominance of colonial thought.

3 HISTORICAL PHASES

3.1 LACK OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COLONY

There were no higher studies in the Angolan territory. The Catholic Church started a seminary with higher studies in 1958, in Luanda and Huambo. For those who wanted to advance to higher studies, there was only this religious option or else they would have to travel outside the colony, especially to Portugal (metropolis).

⁴Excerpted from https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angola#Processo_de_descoloniza.C3.A7.C3.A3o.



Campos and Lima (2012) portray this reality alluding that at that time the young people of the colonies who aspired to do a higher education, and had this opportunity, was a minority composed of children of assimilated with greater possessions or supported by religious missions. They left their land and headed to Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto, places where most of them had no relationship or any family support. It was the students of Angola who were the first to form a charitable association to support their own, then imitated by students from the other colonies.

According to the same authors (id.), the Estado Novo was concerned with what could originate from these different associations and had intentions to gather them into a single unit and sought to keep them under control. To this end, it instituted a political initiative based in Lisbon and with a delegation in Coimbra. However, the result of the same was contrary to what was expected, because from this sprang the formation of African thinkers and political leaders, among them, guides and militants of the liberation movements, namely Amílcar Cabral, Mário Pinto de Andrade, Marcelino dos Santos and **Agostinho Neto** [bold added to emphasize the Angolan leader].

Public higher education in Angola began in 1962 with the birth of General University Studies (EGU). This education was concentrated in Luanda, only in this entity, which changed its name to the University of Luanda in 1968. However, despite this option, most young people continued to move to universities in Portugal. Fituni (1985, p.56, cited by Neto, 2014) states "students, forced to assimilate Portuguese culture, were compelled to do their university studies in the metropolis." (p.170). Anderson (1966, p. 64, cited by Neto, 2014) points out "higher education was almost inaccessible; Only a few Angolans have ever been able to reach Portuguese universities." (p.165). These, as mentioned above, were those from wealthier or religiously supported families. In Angolan territory there were very few students, according to Teta (n.d.) in the academic year 1973/74 there were about 2354 students instructed by 274 teachers.

Higher Education was completely in the phase of its colonization: the thought, culture and values of the colonizer dominated teaching and its didactic content, not taking into account, as mentioned, the culture, values, languages, contexts and realities of the native Angolans.

3.2 HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FINAL COLONIAL PHASE

Education was a pathway to colony, but it was also used for decolonity, as not all native students were assimilated, that is, those who reproduced and helped the dominant culture. Almeida (n.d.) alludes to a group composed of those who used the knowledge coming from the school and the language taught there as means of affirmation. About these the author states:

They saw education as a means of liberation, refused cultural whitening and sought to value their roots, to accept their socio-cultural heritage. These blacks did not deny European knowledge, they used it to give birth to a movement of reaction to the domination of which they were victims. The Portuguese language was treated by them as a resource to fight against



the colonizer. This school came to represent the environment in which the colonized becomes aware of their roots and seeks in the incorporation of elements of the colony, its object of struggle and preservation. (id.).

Gradually, resistance is emerging and the desire to transform this colony into an independent country is growing. Other national and international socio-political factors contribute to this independence will. The climax of this reality occurred from 1961, demonstrated in an armed struggle against Portugal, starting the *war of liberation* in 1961 and ending in 1974.

The Carnation Revolution in 1974 (military coup that ends the dictatorship in Portugal) with the immediate suspension of fighting by the Portuguese military in Angola and the subsequent national events - in which the new holders of power in Portugal announced their intention to consent to the access of the Portuguese colonies to their independence - help the independent movements. Angola's independence was declared on November 11, 1975, the so-called "Independence Day".

In the balance of independence he was faced with a precarious educational condition. The percentage of literate Angolans was too low, according to the Strategic Plan for Revitalization of Literacy 2012-2017, of the Ministry of Education (MED), the Estimated Illiteracy Rate in 1975 was 85%, of these 70% were women. Therefore, soon after independence one of the priorities was to expand education, giving in 1977 the first educational reform.

One of the obstacles to this goal was an exodus of teachers at independence, consequently there was a huge shortage of cadres at all levels of education. This negative reality occurred notably in Higher Education, because the lack of staff led to the closure of some courses, decreased the quality of teaching and hindered its evolution.

The climate of uncertainty and national instability also reduced the number of university students, for example, in 1977 there was a drastic decrease of 73.4% in the number of university students. All the political-military and socio-economic constraints of the civil war, and later years, prevented the advance and decolonity intended in Higher Education that goes through an abysmal quantitative and qualitative low.

3.3 HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CIVIL WAR PHASE

After colonialism, a civil war broke out for control of this country, especially Luanda, the capital. This conflict led to the exodus of the approximately 350,000 Portuguese⁵ who were based in the country. As a result of colonial policy, these formed the majority of local cadres, consequently industry, public administration, commerce and agriculture collapsed. The successful Angolan economy has collapsed and is in successive decline.

⁵ Source: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angola#Processo_de_descoloniza.C3.A7.C3.A3o.



The civil war was markedly a time of negative consequences: political instability, destruction, precariousness, insecurity, national underdevelopment, socio-economic mismanagement and the expansion of poverty, among others.

In this disturbed context, Higher Education undergoes transformations: EUG changes its name to the University of Angola in 1976 and later, in 1985, to the Agostinho Neto University (UAN). However, there were still other contradictions for the development of this level of education, in addition to the factors mentioned above and the aforementioned deficits of professors and university students, there were also destroyed infrastructures, low didactic, pedagogical and economic resources that brought bad conditions to teach, in addition to the implicated and notorious lack of security. The state of higher education was one of great weakness, there were governmental efforts in its development, but there were few conditions for effective decolonization initiatives.

3.4 HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE POST-PEACE PHASE

This long and hard war ended in 2002, leaving a devastating trail that affected and inhibited all its development in the various national sectors, including education.

In the balance sheet of the country it is verified that despite independence, there were strong consequences of its historical past in all social, moral and cultural aspects due to the slave trade, Christianity and **colonization** (PAN/EPT, 2005) and the long civil war.

After decades of civil armed conflict, the reconstruction of the country was cogent. There is a manifest growth of the economy, and consequently of the other sectors, however there were great regional dissimilarities and strong social inequalities.

Peace has made possible the development of Higher Education and there has been a remarkable growth in this. This subsystem of education now had the opportunity to move forward with its process of decolonisation. For, it could really meet the real internal needs of the country, seek no longer the interests of the settler, but its own developmental interests and to be restructured adjusting to the Angolan reality.

UAN, the only public for a long period, even expanded into 40 colleges across the country. According to Teta (n.d.) until 2007 there were three public and thirteen private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In 2009, the UAN was divided, continuing only in Luanda and Bengo, while six autonomous public universities were established from the existing faculties with probational coverage by Resolution No. 4/07 of February 2 and by Decree No. 7/09 of May 12. According to this Decree, the reorganization of the network and the creation of higher education institutions were aimed at their adaptation "to the strategic objectives of economic, social and cultural development of the country, in accordance with the programs of the Government".



Mendes and Silva (n. d.), stated that this restructuring procedure of this subsystem sought to add efficiency to the management of HEIs, because there was a certain lack of this (effectiveness) in practices and processes, due to various factors internal and external to the education subsystem.

In 2014 there was a reorganization and the 18 provinces of Angola were divided into eight academic regions, each constituting a public university. In 2020 there was a new reorganization in this network of Public Institutions of Higher Education (IPES) by Presidential Decree No. 235/20 of October 29. This organizational action "is based on the resizing of existing institutions, the merger of some institutions and the creation of new public institutions of higher education" (MESCTI, 2020, p. 1).

3.5 CURRENT SITUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Currently Higher Education is implemented in accordance with the reorganization of IPES initiated in 2020 and mentioned above. All institutional forces are concentrated on their full adaptation to this recent organization and its previously defined targets. It is recalled here that the main purpose of Angolan higher education institutions, according to Presidential Decree No. 236/11 of August 29, is: "the production of the dissemination of scientific and cultural knowledge, as well as the creation of a dynamic training space open to all areas of science and technology" (p. 4065).

And that, according to article 60 of the Basic Law of the Education System (Law no. 17/2016, of October 7) the Higher Education Subsystem aims at the "training of high-level staff and technicians, the promotion and realization of scientific research and university extension with the aim of contributing to the development of the country, assuring them of a solid scientific, technical, cultural and human preparation" (s. p.). In Article 62 the first general objective of this subsystem is to "prepare cadres with a high level of scientific, technical, cultural and human training, in various specialties corresponding to all areas of knowledge" (s. p.).

It is reinforced that since the national peace there has been a "rapid progression of the supply of higher education, public and private" (Government of the Republic of Angola, 2012, p. 37), but still inferior to the demand as well as the evidence of its presence being reduced in many of the 18 national provinces, highlighting the lack of the necessary scope for the development of this subsystem of education. This fact, of insufficient HEIs, happens throughout Africa: Chung (1996) points out that less than 1% of the population of Africa has access to this level of education (Higher Education).

In the process of national development, Higher Education continues to play a key role in the training of cadres to boost the growth and reconstruction of the country, so its growth and territorial expansion are targets that Angola seeks to achieve, that is, the training offer in this area needs to grow not only in quantity, but also in quality to respond to the internal and external needs of the country.



The process of decolonization does not seem to be a priority at this stage of Angolan Higher Education, although this process may never be resolved as can be seen in the reflection below.

4 REFLECTION: ANGOLAN EDUCATIONAL COLONITY/DECOLONITY

A close look at the Angolan reality leads to agreement with Freire's ideas (in a speech transcribed by Torres, 2005) when he states that an educational revolution is not easy to introduce:

Even if a country makes its revolution, the school continues for a long time to repeat the previous school; The explanation for this lies in what one author calls the dialectic of overdetermination, that is, the old superstructure of society that has been modified remains, in contradiction with the new infrastructure that is constituted. For a long time this contradiction occurs [...]. In the first place it is not the school that changes society, but it is the society that makes the school and it seems that the school is built with this dialectic. (p. 92).

According to this thought the school continues for a long time to repeat the previous school (op. cit.). Angola, despite its independence in 1975, despite some changes, the current educational system remains very similar to that of the time of the colonizer. In fact, this happens throughout colonized Africa, Chung (1996) states that in this continent an elitist education is maintained and "based on systems and structures of the colonial period" (p.198).

The National Plan for Education for All (PAN/EPT) points out the causes for educational delays in Angola as "**the educational policy inherited from Portuguese colonialism** [bold added] and from the political, military and economic-social contradictions registered after national independence" (2005, p.13). These setbacks position Angola as one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest rates of under-schooling.

The inheritance of the low quality of education of the settler justifies, in part, the low qualitative level of teachers and students, as well as the difficulties that students have due to the lack of bases for correct learning aiming at achieving academic success. This may be one of the consequences: a high level of student dropout. Another consequence of the educational deficit inherited from colonial times, among other reasons, is also the low quality of the staff that the HEIs offer and make available to the labor market.

Chung (1996), after an analysis of the African educational system at the different levels of education and the failure to generalize them to the entire population, stresses the need to redefine the concept of education in view of the real African context, so *as not to preserve the colonial structure and its feudal past*, that is, to decolonize itself.

Ferreira (n.d.) says that formal education has nothing to do with African roots and traditions and therefore needs to be changed. He adds that these (roots and traditions) are devalued and ignored by international organizations that try to establish in Angola a development of the Western kind, imitating an educational system of this origin, especially that of Portugal. Now, that is, the one



belonging to its former colony, reversing and devaluing the necessary process of decolonity, which in other words was referred to by Chung (id.).

For Ferreira (id.) the formal education, imposed by the State, does not succeed in the common people, but only in the elites, because this is culturally "foreign" to the native - nowadays referring especially to those coming from the less victims of colonization areas, especially the rural ones - adds that non-formal education would be the natural one, following the African tradition.

However, the author does not explain how this type of education could be applied to effective teaching, such as Higher Education or staff training, with Angola in a globalized and competitive world. After centuries of colonization it is difficult to imagine a Higher Education with the process of complete decolonization and following the true Angolan traditions and values, but one can fight for a greater approximation to these.

5 CONCLUDING NOTE

Angola was a Portuguese colony for 493 years, consequently Higher Education in this country went through a process of colony. Since national independence this shows signs of a process of decolonization (in this case considered as the process of liberation from the heritage and colonizing influence), but still unfinished, especially for reasons linked to the history and reality of the country.

This study aimed to show the transformations that Angolan Higher Education has undergone in its history and the associated process of colony and decolonity. This is done through a bibliographic and documentary research.

For a better understanding, some historical aspects related to colonization and colonial thought linked to formal education at that time were presented. Education was a means of deculturation of the native, causing a distancing to their culture and values. The educated/schooled internalized the culture of the metropolis. Formal education was elitist and black people had little access to it.

The educational system was a route to colony, but it was also used for decolonization by native students resistant to the process of assimilation, contributors to the origin of the independence movements.

By describing the phases of the history of Angolan Higher Education: Non-existence in the Colony (until 1962), Final Colonial (until 1975), Civil War (until 2002), in the Post-Peace (since 2002) and the Current Situation, it was also shown the situations of colony or decolonity at this level of education considered as a decisive foundation for national reconstruction and the building of the economy for a solid development of the country.

Since peace, and up to the present day, there has been a rapid and remarkable growth of Higher Education Institutions, despite their insufficiency in the face of demand and the still unequal coverage in all national provinces.



In the reflection on Angolan educational colony and decolonity, presented as the last point of this work, with the support of some authors, it is shown that the process of decolonity is necessary for the revaluation of Angolan traditions and values and of a teaching closer to this specific reality and its own characteristics, which have to be taken into account in the current educational restructuring. However, it is a non-priority, difficult and time-consuming process, of total almost utopian realization.

After centuries of colonization it is complex to imagine the practice of Higher Education with the process of decolonity finalized and adopting Angolan traditions and values, but one can continue to fight for a greater approximation to this ideal, and leave in future generations the practical application of an effective and effective decolonity in this African country with so much potentiality.



REFERENCES

Almeida, A. (2005). O papel dual da educação em Angola colonial: instrumento de repressão ou agente transformador da realidade?. In *Ensaio*. União dos Escritores Angolanos. www.ueangola.com.

Campos, G. A. G. & Lima, M. C. (2012). Mobilidade académica internacional e a transformação das práticas pedagógicas na direção da transculturalidade, a experiência de estudantes originários dos países de língua portuguesa. *Revista: Ensino Superior*, 45- out./nov. e dez. 2012, 35-45.

Chung, F. (1996). *Educação na África actual*. In Jacques Delors et al. Relatório para a UNESCO da comissão internacional sobre educação para o século XXI. Rio Tinto: Asa. 197-199.

Decreto Presidencial nº 285/20 de 29 de Outubro (2020). Diário da República: I Série, nº 173/20.

Decreto nº 70/10, de 19 de maio. (2010). Diário da República. I Série – nº 93. Aprova o Estatuto orgânico do Ministério do Ensino Superior e da Ciência e Tecnologia [MESCT]. www.minct.gov.ao/verLegislação.aspx?id=436.E Estatuto_orgânico_do_MESCT.pdf

Decreto nº 7/09, de 12 de maio. (2009). Diário da República. I Série – nº 87. Luanda. Estabelece a reorganização da rede de instituições de ensino superior públicas e o redimensionamento da Universidade Agostinho Neto (UNA).

Decreto nº 90/09, de 15 de dez. DR I série, nº 237. Aprova as normas gerais reguladoras do subsistema do Ensino Superior.
www.fm.ukb.ed.ao/ficheiros/Decreto_subsistema_do_sistema_do_Ensino_Superior.pdf.

Descolonização em Angola.

https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angola#Processo_de_descoloniza.C3.A7.C3.A3o.

Ferreira, M.J.S. M. (2005) *Educação e política em Angola, Uma proposta de diferenciação social*. Centro de Estudos Africanos/ISCTE, *EducaçãoPolítica__Angola.pdf*.

Governo da República de Angola. (2012). *Sumário Executivo: estratégia Nacional de Formação de Quadros* [ENFQ]. Luanda: autores.

Lei nº17/2016, de 07 de Outubro, Lei de Bases do Sistema de Educação (2016). Diário da República. Luanda.

Mendes, M.C.B.R. & Silva, A.da (s.d.). *Avaliação, acreditação e gestão do ensino superior em Angola: percepções, desafios e tendências*. *Mcbm_eas.pdf*.

Ministério do Ensino Superior, Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação [MESCTI]. (2020). *Memorando sobre o processo de implementação da reorganização da rede de instituições públicas de ensino superior*. Luanda: Autores.

Ministério da Educação. (2012). *Plano Estratégico para Revitalização da Alfabetização 2012.2017*. Luanda: autores.

Moreira, A. & Barata-Moura, J. (coord.). (s.d.). *Estudos – ensino superior e competitividade*. Vol.II. S.l.: Conselho Nacional de Avaliação do Ensino Superior [CNAVES].

Moutinho, M. (2002). *O indígena no pensamento colonial português - 1895-1961*. Lisboa: Edições Universitárias Lusófonas.



Neto, T. S. (2014). *História da educação e cultura de Angola: grupos nativos, colonização e a independência* (3.^a ed.). Chamusca: Zaina Editores.

Plano Nacional de Educação para Todos PAN/EPT. (2005). Luanda.

Teta, J.S. (s.d.). *Educação superior em Angola*. www.pucrs.br/edipucrs/cplp/arquivos/teta.pdf.

Torres, A.T. (2005). *Os mundos distorcidos de Ivan Illich e Paulo Freire*. In A. Teodoro & C. Torres (Org.). *Educação Crítica e Utopia, Perspectivas para o Século XXI*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.