

Chapter 31

Angolan Higher Education, Policy, and Leadership: Towards Transformative Leadership for Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the armed conflict in 2002, Angola has witnessed rapid socio-economic development characterized by the stabilization of macro-economic indicators. In this context, the government has been implementing important structural and economic reforms, including in the area of education. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on these developments and the implication they might have on development of sustainable higher education, access, quality education, equity, leadership, and education policy. The chapter provides a brief comparative analysis of tertiary education funding among the countries of Southern Development Community (SADC) and other African countries in order to draw the attention of the decision makers about the relevance to invest more on education and protect the investments that the state has been making in education. In addition, the chapter calls for transformative leadership for social justice and change in organizational culture as an alternative avenue for enforcing current policies.

INTRODUCTION

Angola is a country located in the southern hemisphere in Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa). Since independence in 1975 the country conducted its first population census in May 2014. The results of the population census remain unpublished. However, the United Nations Statistics Division (2014) indicates that in 2013 the population of Angola was estimated in 19.618 million inhabitants. Portuguese is the official language of the country. In terms of economy and revenues it is important to stress that the country is captive to oil and diamond revenues while the country grapples to rebuild its affected economy after almost 27 years of fratricide civil war. It is worth to stress that similar to most Sub-Saharan African

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3019-1.ch031

countries higher education in Angola is a colonial legacy (De Carvalho, Kajibanga & Heimer, 2003; Altbach, 2006; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Historically, the inception of tertiary education in Angola dates from 1958 with the launch of the Catholic higher education for Catholic priests both, in Luanda and Huambo (De Carvalho, Kajibanga & Heimer, 2003). According to De Carvalho et al., 2003, before independence higher education was a privilege reserved only to Portuguese people and their offspring.

This, undoubtedly points to the discriminatory and social stratifying role of higher in Angola in the colonial period. During the colonial period, tertiary education (tertiary education is used interchangeably with higher education), in Angola always served the colonial interest to maintain a social inequality and discrimination based mainly on race. The Settlement of Portuguese colonial system in Angola resulted in the creation of three racial groups, namely the natives, the White, and the mixed. After independence, however, the government declared education as a constitutional right and adopted free education policy for all levels of education. In this context, higher education in Angola was characterized with the existence of only one public university inherited from the colonial system and transformed first into Universidade de Angola (University of Angola) in 1979 under the rule of President Agostinho Neto, and currently Universidade Agostinho Neto after its first Vice-chancellor and the first president of then Republica Popular de Angola (Popular Republic of Angola). (See, De Carvalho, Kajibanga & Heimer, 2003, for a detailed account of the history of higher education in Angola).

Angola has improved economically (World Bank, 2012), while higher education still relatively underfunded. This chapter argues that there is a need to change the forms of leadership, policy, and practices. Connecting traditional transformative leadership theory with critical approaches may open a possibility for change and social transformation. Transformative theory in this paper refers not to the traditional concept of transformative leadership theory (Leithwood et al. 2002); it is believed that traditional conceptualization of leadership ignores the political and social justice dimensions of education. Transformative leadership in this discussion refers to a kind of leadership that challenges and questions the status quo and advocates for political activism and social justice (Apple, 2004, 2010; Shields, 2004; Brown, 2004, Giroux, 2006). The chapter is organized in two main sections. The first section entitled current issues provides a global picture of problems that affect Angolan higher education, namely the neoliberal arrangements and their impact for access, leadership, policy, and government's efforts toward equity, quality of education; this section also provides a comparative overview in terms of funding, faculty, facilities, and academic freedom. The second main section presents alternative ideas for change in Angolan higher education. A transformative leadership and social justice education are presented as a possible alternative for higher education reform in Angola.

CURRENT ISSUES IN ANGOLAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education in Angola is the blueprint of colonialism, civil war, international economic policies and internal problems. Economic crises of the 1970s affected most developed nations and the financial situation of African universities was affected by such developments as well. The crisis also aggravated African countries external debts. As a result, public funding for higher education in most Sub-Saharan African countries declined considerably. The development of education in this region of Africa became dependent on external funding. In this context, it is important to stress the role played by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other international agencies in funding education in the southern region of Africa. In fact, World Bank's negative influence on the development of Higher education

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