

Higher Education Systems and Institutions, Mozambique

Pedro Videira¹ and Pedro Teixeira²

(1)CIPES & DINAMIA'CET – ISCTE-IUL, Matosinhos, Portugal

(2)CIPES & FEP – U.Porto, Matosinhos, Portugal

Pedro Videira

Email: pvideira@cipes.up.pt

Pedro Teixeira (Corresponding author)

Email: pedrotx@fep.up.pt

Without Abstract

Introduction

The Republic of Mozambique is a country located in southeast Africa. It is bordered by South Africa and Swaziland to the southwest, Zimbabwe to the west, Zambia and Malawi to the northwest, and Tanzania to the north. With a surface area of roughly 800,000 square km and a rapidly expanding population roughly at 29.5 million, it is the second largest Portuguese-speaking country in Africa. Although Portuguese is the official language, most Mozambicans speak Bantu languages.

As other Lusophone countries in Africa, Mozambique became independent in 1975 after a prolonged war with Portugal. After that, it had to endure an even longer civil war between former independentist movements which ended only in 1992. At the same time, between independence and the mid-1980s, the government of Mozambique experimented with socialism as a political and economic model of development and social construction. All of these factors have led the country to a desperate socioeconomic situation until the beginning of the 1990s. Since then, the establishment of multiparty democracy, the implementation of structural adjustment programs sponsored by the IMF and World Bank, and a number of market-driven reforms in the economy have led to a period of sustained economic growth. In spite of this recent economic growth, the Human Development Index of 2019 still rates the country in the 180th position (out of 189 countries), the life expectancy at birth is 59 years, the adult literacy rate is at 60%, and the majority of the population still lives in poverty.

Development of Higher Education

As in other Lusophone countries in Africa, higher education in Mozambique is a relatively recent phenomenon (Langa [2013](#)). In 1962, in response to criticism by settlers and the international

community concerning the absence of tertiary education in the country, the General University Studies of Mozambique (EGUM) was established. In 1968, this institution was upgraded to university status and renamed as the University of Lourenço Marques (and after the independence as University Eduardo Mondlane). Until 1985, University Eduardo Mondlane remained the only higher education institution in Mozambique.

After independence, a number of reforms were introduced aiming at democratizing access to higher education. Before 1976, less than 0.1% of students were native, and after independence there were growing social and labor market demands, in a country where university graduates were extremely scarce since most of the more qualified personnel had fled the country between 1974 and 1975. This period nevertheless witnessed a significant drop in the number of students and staff in UEM. In the early 1980s, this tendency started to reverse with the adoption of significant legislative and curricular reforms such as the approval of legislation on the National Education System and the introduction of new university collective management bodies and of the 5-year degrees. In 1985, and in response to the increased social demand for teachers, the Higher Pedagogical Institute (known as from 1994 as the Pedagogical University) was established, marking the end of UEM as the only higher education institution in the country. A year later, a Higher Institute of International Relations (ISRI) was also founded.

The adoption of the 1990 Constitution paved the way to important changes in higher education, namely, by opening higher education to the private sector (Langa [2013](#)). Moreover, the approval of the 1993 Law of Higher Education and establishment of the National Council for Higher Education paved the way for the licensing of other higher education institutions in Mozambique. Thus, in 1995, the establishment of the Catholic University of Mozambique and the Higher Polytechnic and University Institute, both private institutions, marked the beginning of a boom in higher education institutions and student enrollments which reached their peaks after the year 2000. In 2002, an agreement was signed between the Mozambican government and the World Bank toward implementing the Strategic Plan for Higher Education. The stated objectives were to increase access, relevance, and quality of higher education provision in the country; to promote the diversification of institutions, training opportunities, and forms of education; and to redefine the role of government in the management and financing of the institutions.

The last two decades was a period of very rapid expansion and diversification of the higher education sector in Mozambique (Langa and Zavale [2015](#)). From one institution in 1962, the country now has 18 public (mostly polytechnic higher institutes specialized in specific professional or technical areas) and 30 private higher education institutions, and new HEIs are founded every year, especially by private providers. Most of the institutions were established from 2005 onward and tended to be regionally concentrated in the capital, a usual feature whenever the development of private sector is associated with the emergence of mass higher education (Teixeira et al. [2012](#), [2017](#)). In addition to the growth in the number of institutions, the growth in enrollments has also been substantial: from fewer than 5000 students in 1989 to more than 200,000 students in 2019, the overwhelming majority of whom in undergraduate programs. The share of female students was 42% in 2015 (the most recent data available), with a tendency to increase. Nevertheless, the gross enrollment rate in higher education is still very low (it was 6% in 2015), even when compared to neighboring countries with similar levels of income and development (UNESCO [2019](#)).

The private sector has contributed significantly to that expansion, and it currently enrolls around one-third of the total of students in higher education. The private sector is highly concentrated in the scientific fields it operates, a pattern also common to many other private sectors (Teixeira et al. [2012](#), [2017](#)). The available data on the private institutions show that most of them specialize in law and business sciences, followed by engineering and natural sciences, arts, social sciences education, and communication (Langa [2013](#)).

The educational provision of the public and the private sector is focused on initial degrees, with majority of academic programs offered leading to a BA Honors degree (despite of a recent growth in Masters programs). UEM is the only public higher education institution which covers almost all areas of scientific, cultural, and professional training, being by far the country's largest institution in terms of the scope of academic programs it offers and the size of its infrastructure. Most new public institutions, namely, the polytechnic institutions and schools, are relatively smaller and narrower in focus, specializing in some profession or scientific field.

This massification of access and diversification of offer was not sufficient to increase the gross participation in higher education to the level of other countries in the region and has additionally raised important questions about the quality of training provided in these recently created institutions, both at the private and public levels, as well as about the low research outputs of these institutions (Wangenge-Ouma et al. [2015](#)). Moreover, the system still faces significant challenges regarding its consolidation (Beverwijk et al. [2008](#)).

Higher Education Governance

Before the approval of Law 1/93, higher education in Mozambique was centrally managed by the Ministry of Education. This legislation conferred a certain degree of autonomy both to public institutions (regulated by the state) and private ones according to their private statutes. HEIs ceased to be dependent on the ministry in aspects relating to the courses they could offer and the careers to be chosen by the students. This law also established the National Council for Higher Education (CNES), an advisory board which comprises all rectors of functioning public and private HEIs. However, at least until the 2002 agreement with the World Bank, the degree of this autonomy was very much a matter of dispute, particularly in the case of public higher education institutions since, according to the 1990 Constitution, the appointment and dismissal of the rectoral team rested with the President of the Republic.

The University Council is the top decision-making body in the public higher education institutions and has elected representatives from the various faculties, lecturers, students, and nonacademic staff. However, both the strategic plans and other related policy reforms that have been taking place in higher education in Mozambique have been top-formulated and down-implemented, and many higher education issues are still decided, coordinated, and determined at national level by the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Higher Education, and the National Council for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education (CNAQ) (Langa [2013](#)). This suggests that the overall higher education governance is still very much centralized, which becomes a challenge for universities in the sense that autonomy of institutions becomes threatened (Uetela [2015](#)) and the institutional relationship between public universities and government is still permeated by the degree of influence exerted by the government (Collinson [2018](#)).

Funding

Regarding the financing of higher education, public institutions are financed from four different sources: the state budget which is by far the largest source of revenue, bilateral or multilateral donors through various scholarships, training opportunities and support to research and capacity building, by the institutions' own income-generating activities, and from the mid-1980s onward also by charging tuition fees. The private institutions, whether they are nominally for-profit or not-for-profit,

such as the ones pertaining to the different religious organizations, are funded from three sources, donor support, capital venture, and student fees, which are their essential sources of revenue. There is, however, consensus among the different higher education stakeholders that the funding of higher education in the country faces great challenges and that its recent expansion may threaten both the sustainability of public higher education and its equity, efficiency, and accountability (Langa [2013](#)). The 1998 and 2000 Reports on the Expansion of Higher Education in Mozambique already discussed new ways of financing public and private institutions of higher education and also the introduction of mechanisms to ensure transparency in the management and distribution of funds. More recently, the Strategy for the Funding of Higher Education was approved by the government which aims at making the funding of higher education more sustainable and equitable and allows for the possibility of the government participating in the funding of private HEIs, through specific programs and mechanisms.

Quality Assurance

Despite some concerns expressed in previous official documents, the legislation and regulations for the establishment of a system of quality assurance, including an internal assessment and external accreditation process as well as the establishment of a regulatory body, are very recent phenomena in Mozambique dating only from 2005. This concern with quality assurance is further addressed with the approval of the New Higher Education Act that introduces beacons of quality in practice and functioning of higher education institutions, including the definition of degrees and their durations and the accreditation and quality assurance in the higher education system. The expressed objectives of this system were (i) to ensure the aims set to measure excellence in higher education are attained and are operationalized by various stakeholders, (ii) to set norms and procedures within which higher education institutions are to operate and assess their performance through self-evaluation, (iii) to establish norms and mechanisms through which external entities can apply and be guided with in order to assess performance of higher education institutions through external evaluation, and (iv) internally, procedure for accrediting higher education institutions (Uetela [2015](#)).

In 2007 the government approved the National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (SINAQES), and it established CNAQ – National Council on Quality Assurance in Higher Education – to implement the former’s guidelines. However, the process was far more complex and difficult than anticipated (Langa [2014](#)). Only by 2014 did CNAQ started to review programs on a voluntary basis through a pilot project. The number of programs reviewed has expanded, and CNAQ has had clearly an impact on the system, which has contributed to a greater awareness of quality in the system. Moreover, the system seems to be moving to another phase, as legislation has been approved in 2018 that made assessment compulsory. This will be a big challenge for all actors, not least regarding the capacity to enforce stricter regulations. Although the system was set up in response to the existing consensus among both the public officials and the different stakeholders that quality of assurance was a major issue in the system, its consolidation still remains a huge challenge for the future.

Concluding Remarks

Higher education in Mozambique faces major challenges that are somewhat specific to its recent history, but that also share important aspects with other neighboring countries. The system has been

under significant pressure to expand, and this will continue to be a major priority, given the need to improve the qualifications of its labor force and the significant social pressures for greater access to higher levels of education. This is particularly relevant given the economic potential of the country and its traditional reliance in foreign-trained skilled professionals. Nonetheless, this expansion has also created important regulatory challenges, not the least since it was supported by a pattern of increasing diversification and privatization that created a more heterogeneous institutional landscape. This pattern of growth and diversification has created important regulatory challenges regarding both the public and the private sectors. The system needs to strengthen the research capacity of its institutions and to consolidate the quality and relevance with respect to the labor market. Important steps have been taken recently to address them, namely, through a greater focus on quality assurance and accreditation. Another important policy challenge refers to the need to continue expanding its regional diversification, fostering greater interaction with local needs, and enhancing the contribution of higher education to economic and social development in different parts of the country (and not only in the capital and a couple of other major cities). Finally, the country faces major challenges regarding the necessary resources to support a growing system in a context of scarcity and pressing needs in other areas of public policy. Until now the funding of higher education has been significantly supported by external sources and families' contributions, though it also needs to find the public sources that can make its higher education sustainable. The recent economic crisis has made this challenge even more difficult, and it will be important to see how the country manages to keep higher education as a major policy priority.

Cross-References

- . [Autonomy and Accountability in Higher Education, Africa](#)
- . [Financing Higher Education in Africa: An Overview](#)
- . [Higher Education Expansion in Africa and Middle East](#)

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