

# Higher Education as a Field of Research in the Portuguese Speaking Countries: Insights on an Emerging Scientific Field

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the preconditions for the emergence of higher education as a field of research in the Portuguese speaking countries. It uses various sources of data, including the worldwide inventory on higher education by the Center for International Higher Education of Boston College, to map the existing infrastructure for the establishment of higher education as new scientific field. This includes research centres, academic programmes, journals, and professional and academic associations. The article shows that higher education has become a complex social institution, which, according to Altbach (2014), is the condition that leads to the constitution of a new scientific field. Bourdieu's theory of field is used to shed light on the sociological conditions for the establishment of new fields. The article concludes that the prerequisites for an emerging field of higher education research in the Portuguese speaking countries are in place, but further research is required to establish whether the magnet effects of a functioning field have been ignited.

**Key Words:** Higher Education, emerging field of research, Portuguese speaking countries

Cet article examine les conditions pour l'émergence de l'enseignement supérieur comme discipline de recherche dans les pays lusophones. Il utilise des sources variées pour schématiser les infrastructures nécessaires à l'institution de l'enseignement supérieur comme nouvelle discipline scientifique, y compris l'inventaire mondial sur l'enseignement supérieur du

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Center for International Higher Education à Boston College. Celui-ci inclut les centres de recherche, les programmes universitaires, les journaux, et les associations professionnelles et académiques. Cet article démontre que l'enseignement supérieur est devenu une institution sociale complexe, ce qui, d'après Altbach (2014), est la condition qui mène à la constitution d'une nouvelle discipline scientifique. En conclusion, cet article affirme que les prérequis à l'émergence d'une discipline de recherche sur l'enseignement supérieur dans les pays lusophones sont remplis, mais il faudrait effectuer plus de travaux de recherche pour vérifier que les effets magnétiques nécessaires au bon fonctionnement d'une discipline de recherche ont bien été enclenchés.

### Introduction

In the past half century, higher education (HE) scholars have been vocal about this sector as an emerging scientific field (Goodchild, 2011; Amaral and Magalhães, 2013; Altbach, 2014) and recent studies have focused on whether it can be considered a global field of study, research and practice (Marginson, 2008; Altbach, 2014; Langa and Zavale, forthcoming).

Authors such as Marginson (2008) argued that HE as a social practice has established itself on virtually every continent, thus becoming a global social field. Its global dimension is also associated with the expansion of national, regional and supranational HE institutions and systems, both public and private (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002; Altbach and Levy 2006). This is associated with what can be considered a (global) field of HE studies (Marginson, 2008). Altbach (2014) argued that the emergence of HE as a field of study is associated with its increasing complexity as a social institution, requiring data and interpretation for effective management and governance.

A critical distinction is that between HE as a field of social practice and as a field of research and inquiry. On the one hand, there is unquestionable evidence that HE has become a major global social enterprise. In the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, postsecondary education or tertiary education has become a worldwide reality. While thousands of people in different countries have limited access to HE, almost all countries have a national HE system, comprised of various institutions, thousands of students and academic staff, ministries, national directorates, civil society organisations, think tanks, research centres and institutes. All these entities comprise what can be called the social field of HE.

On the other hand, academic departments, research chairs, academic positions, academic programmes (mostly graduate), research institutes, academic journals and books, professional reports and different forms

of publications and dissemination platforms, including regular conferences are focusing on HE research. These entities constitute part of the required infrastructure for a scientific field to be established and become operational. However, while the global expansion of the social field of HE is clearly evident, evidence of the existence of an emerging field of research in HE is still required.

This article discusses the constitution of the field of HE research in Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PSC). It examines whether such research has become a relatively autonomous scientific field. The key research question that informed the study was: *Has the increasing complexity of HE in the PSC steered the constitution of a relatively autonomous scientific field of research?* Studying and capturing the specific features of a functioning field should establish its autonomy (Langa, 2016). As Maton (2005, p. 689) noted, a “field’s autonomy is illustrated by the way it generates its own values and market achievements, but the relative nature of this autonomy means that values are not alone in shaping the field, economic and political power also play a role, albeit in a form specific to each field”.

Theoretically, the study draws on Bourdieu’s (1993a; 1993b; 1996; 2004) theory of field to establish whether research in HE in PSC has become an autonomous scientific field. According to Bourdieu (1996, p. 132), the presence of field effects - manifested by the existence of competition and struggles for monopoly of different forms of capital, such as academic, economic, cultural and social capital in which the contenders make use of different strategies such as usurpation and exclusion - is one of the chief indicators that a set of actors and institutions functions as a field. It is thus a reliable instrument to empirically determine the limits of the field, which is simply the point at which these effects are no longer found. Before establishing the existence or absence of field effects in HE research in the PSC, the following section provides a brief overview of the development of HE as a social institution in the PSC showing its increasing complexity.

### **The PSC Higher Education landscape**

Portuguese is the official language of instruction for more than 250 million people across the globe with cultural similarities and a shared history (Bastos, 2015; 2016). The Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries - *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP) has grown from the seven founding states, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and São Tomé & Príncipe, to nine, with the self-determination of Timor-Leste in 2002 and the admittance of Equatorial Guinea in 2014 at the 10<sup>th</sup> summit in Dili. Timor-Leste was admitted in terms of the Dili Declaration (All Africa, 2014). Having commenced life as a cultural community, the CPLP is becoming a geopolitical and economical one, due to

the fact that it is the fourth largest producer of oil in the world and the growing number of larger nations seeking to join, including Turkey and Indonesia. There is thus a developing transnational space of Portuguese language that may constitute an alternative to the growing hegemony of English as the language of science communication (Ammon, 2001; Ortiz, 2004; Kerklaan, Moreira and Boersma, 2008).

The focus of this article is the seven PSC: Angola; Cape-Verde; Guinea-Bissau ; Mozambique; St. Tome and Principe; Portugal and Brazil. These are the main countries where Portuguese remains the principle language of instruction in the educational system and science communication. It is clear that the complexity of HE as a social institution in the PSC has increased considerably in the past half century. A brief overview is provided below on the development of postsecondary education in the seven PSC.

### *Portugal in Europe*

Portugal is the former colonial master of all other PSC. Portuguese universities have existed since 1290. The oldest, the University of Coimbra, was established in Lisbon before moving to Coimbra. Under the now obsolete Portuguese Empire, the Portuguese founded the oldest engineering school in Latin America (*the Real Academia de Artilharia, Fortificação e Desenho*) in 1792, as well as the oldest medical college in Asia (*the Escola Médico-Cirúrgica de Goa*) in 1842 (Langa and Zavale, forthcoming).

In more contemporary times, HE in Portugal has become a binary system and can be split into university education and polytechnic education. Students can switch from one system to the other. The country has a diversified and differentiated HE system comprised of public institutions; military and police institutions; private institutions; and Denominational or *Concordatory* Education – for instance, Catholic University (Correia, Amaral, and Magalhães, 2002; Neave and Amaral, 2009).

Higher education is provided by both public and private institutions, with the latter requiring recognition by the ministry. There are 51 universities, made up of 15 public, five public non-integrated, four public military and police and 27 private institutions as well as the Portuguese Catholic University (Neave and Amaral, 2009).

University education covers all fields of study. Most programmes have an academic focus, but some offer a professional one. Prior to the introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure, university education comprised three levels, each of which culminated in a different degree. The first level finished with the '*Licenciado*', the second with Masters and the third with a Doctoral degree. The integration of Portugal in the European Union impacted developments in HE including the adoption of the

Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon strategy, which aims to build a Europe of knowledge and a HE area. Integration resulted in the modernisation of the Portuguese HE system and increased its complexity (See European Commission, 2005; Keeling, 2006; Maassen and Olsen, 2007).

### *Brazil in Latin America*

The two colonising powers in Latin America, Spain and Portugal established universities in these countries (Langa and Zavale, forthcoming). Spain pioneered the process by creating the first universities of San Domingo in the Dominican Republic and the San Marcus University in Peru, to name but a few. At the time of independence of the Spanish colonies in the early nineteenth century, there were about 30 universities. These universities, with traces of the Catholic Church, were founded in the image of medieval universities, particularly the Universities of Salamanca and Alcala in Spain. With independence, they underwent transformation, resulting in their modernisation, professionalisation, secularisation and nationalisation in order to better serve the young nation-states.

Brazil is the only former Portuguese colony in Latin America. It has by far the most diversified and largest HE system amongst the PSC. In 2012, the country was home to over 2,400 HE institutions in both in metropolitan areas and small towns (Balbachevsky, 2016). According to Balbachevsky (2016), a characteristic of Brazilian HE is the crucial role played by the small undergraduate professional schools scattered around the country.

“These small schools comprise 83% of all institutions and answer for 29% of all undergraduate enrolments. Most of them are for-profit institutions. Many came to exist thanks to the past entrepreneurship of successful owners of private secondary schools. A few of them (29 institutions) have experienced strong growth in the last two decades and have been up-graded to the status of private universities.” Most of the growth of the private sector in the last decade has been linked to the expansion of these large for-profit universities (Balbachevsky, 2016, p. 31).

The Brazilian HE system experienced significant changes in the past two decades as a consequence of globalisation in the neoliberal context. Expansion led to governance and institutional reforms and the federal universities were restructured internally through decrees and programmes that changed their organisational structure.

Currently, there is a diversity of academic institutions, comprising colleges, university centres, universities, federal centres of technological teaching, and federal institutes. There are also public institutions (federal, state, and municipal), private ones (Catholic, Protestant), non-profit community institutions, and private institutions (Martins, 2013).

The size and shape of HE institutions differ. They have different

organisational formats, and distinct academic goals: some do not pursue research and devote themselves to the professional training of students, while others undertake both teaching and research (Martins, 2013). Other significant changes in recent decades include a more socially differentiated student body through affirmative action policies, a significant increase in the admission of students of colour and women, the admission of working students, and internationalisation. All these changes led to increased complexity of the system.

### **The PALOP HE in Africa**

Most of the features of HE in the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa (PALOP) resemble the Portuguese system. However, new developments in the post-colonial era led to some variations. It is important to note that Portugal only established HE in its African colonies from the 1960s. The current HE landscape mainly reflects developments after independence in the mid-1970s (see Langa, 2013; Langa, Cumaio and Rafael, 2014; Teferra, 2016). For instance, Angola and Mozambique had only one HE institution in 1975, and less than 1,000 students (Langa, 2013). These countries established relatively complex, differentiated and diversified HE systems after independence (See Langa, 2006; 2011; 2013, Langa and Zavale, 2015).

#### *Angola and Mozambique: Twins at birth*

The first HE institutions in Angola and Mozambique were established by the same decree, which created the General University Studies of Angola and Mozambique (Estudos Gerais e Universitários de Angola e Mozambique) in 1962 (Langa et al., 2014). However, they took different pathways in the development of their HE system, although some structural aspects inherited from the same colonial master remain similar, notably Portuguese as the main language of instruction.

Angola currently has 64 institutions including universities (18), polytechnic institutes (42), higher schools (4) and academies (GEPE, 2016). The Angolan system comprises both public (24) and private (40) HE institutions. More than 241,284 students have registered, of which 55.27 percent are female (Fonteyne and Langa, 2017).

As in Angola, the Mozambican HE system experienced an increase in the number of students and increased differentiation and diversification (Langa, 2016). In 2015, the country had 51 (18 public and 33 private) institutions (DNES, 2015). The field is differentiated with universities, polytechnic institutes, higher schools and academies. Both the Angolan and Mozambican HE systems have become more complex in the past two decades, particularly due to the exponential growth of the private sector (See Langa, 2013; Langa and Zavale, 2015; Fonteyne and Langa, 2017).

*Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe & Guinea-Bissau .*

Cape Verde, São Tomé & Príncipe and Guinea-Bissau have very recent HE systems. Although they share similar features with other Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, they have a comparatively small system (Langa, 2013).

When Cape Verde celebrated its independence in 1975, there was no HE institution. From 1975 to 1979, students had to travel abroad to obtain a university degree. Most registered in Portugal, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, because of the strong relations the government of Cape Verde maintained with its former coloniser and with the socialist bloc (Tolentino, 2003; 2006; Langa, 2013). The first HE institution, *Escola de Formação de Professores de Ensino Secundário*, was established in 1979 at Praia City, with the aim of training teachers. In 1984, the second, *Instituto de Formação Náutica*, specialising in Marine Sciences, was established (Langa, 2013).

According to Langa (2013), HE in Cape Verde is a very recent occurrence. He (2013, p 32) notes that, “there was no university in the island until the establishment of Jean Piaget University in 2001, also the first private university in the country”. Prior to this, “the island had three small higher education institutions: the *Instituto Superior de Educação*, located in Praia and specialising in teacher training; *Instituto Superior de Engenharia e Ciências do Mar* (specializing in engineering and sciences), in Mindelo; and the Instituto Nacional de *Investigação e Desenvolvimento Agrário* (INIDA), (specializing in agriculture) in São Jorge dos Órgãos”(Langa, 2013).

According to Langa (2013) the introduction of multi-party democracy and free-market economic policies in the early 1990s led to the expansion of HE with the establishment of the *Centro de Formação Agrária* in 1992 in São Tiago Island. It mainly offers Bachelor’s degrees in Agriculture and Forestry. The existing institutions were also upgraded and expanded; in 1995, the *Escola de Formação de Professores de Ensino Secundário* (secondary education teacher training school) became *Instituto de Educação* (Institute of Education) and, in 1996, the *Escola de Formação Náutica* (nautical training school) became *Instituto Superior de Engenharia e Ciências Marinhas* (ISECMAR) (higher institute of Marine and Engineering Sciences). Later, these entities were merged to form the first and only public university, the University of Cape Verde (UNI-CV) (Tolentino, 2003; Langa, 2013). For more insight into HE in Cape Verde see Varela (2011; 2013) and Varela and Pacheco (2013).

Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe are the smallest and most recent HE systems in the PSC (Langa, 2013). While public universities had a quasi-monopoly of the sector in the years after independence in most African countries, those like Guiné-Bissau, São Tomé & Príncipe, and Cape Verde were exceptions to the rule as they had no (public) universities several

years after obtaining their independence. However, the market-friendly reforms initiated under structural adjustment programmes, deregulation, and the financial crisis of the state created an environment for the emergence of private HE in Africa (Correia et al., 2002; Varghese, 2004; Langa, 2013).

The first institutions with university status in these countries were a product of the legislative measures initiated in the 1990s to enable private provision of HE. On 20 May 1991 the government approved Decree 07/91, making space for private operators in Guinea-Bissau's education system. The private Portuguese University Lusíadas was in advanced talks with the former minister of education Paulo Silva with a view to commencing operations in Guinea-Bissau in 1995, but the process was interrupted due to political instability in the country (Langa, 2013).

This brief overview of HE in the PALOP points to its increasing complexity in the past two decades (Langa, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

According to Altbach (2014) HE as a field of study emerged as institutions, including universities, polytechnics, higher schools, academies, and the ministries regulating the system became more complex, creating the need for data and interpretation for effective management and governance. For centuries, it was assumed that HE institutions, particularly universities that were by and large small institutions that served a small elite, could be managed by senior academics, generally trained in their scientific disciplines, and selected by their peers as Rectors, Vice-Rectors or other senior management positions (Langa, forthcoming). The twentieth century witnessed the transformation of HE from serving a small elite to a global massified enterprise. Postsecondary education expanded dramatically with an increase in enrolment by students from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds (Trow, 1970; 1972). The rapid growth of HE institutions to more than 20,000 universities and other institutional types, with millions of students, has transformed institutions and systems into a complex social reality.

According to Goddard (2012), global student enrolment in HE is forecast to more than double to 262 million by 2025. Almost all this growth will be in the developing world, with more than half in China and India alone. The number of students seeking to study abroad could increase to eight million – nearly three times that of today. The emergence of the global knowledge economy has contributed to internationalisation in the form of student and staff mobility across borders and the establishment of branch campuses (Langa, 2016), and has broadened the scope and realm of HE as a social institution.



The massification of HE systems, initially examined by the American sociologist Martin Trow in the 1970s (Trow, 1970), was followed by an increase in the diversity of both students and professors, and by the rise of institutional forms very different from those found in the elite universities that the ‘academic man’ had inhabited (Langa, 2010). According to Amaral, this system was based on much trust in academics, and grounded in professional behaviour, guided by the “dictates of conscience, or considerations of honour, or professional norms, depending on their social origins” (Amaral, 2008, p. 85; Trow, 1996, pp. 317-318).

The study of the academic mind-set and the singularity of the faculty would gradually give way to the study of faculties, and the division of academic labour, as well as of academic life, disciplinary specialisation and different campus cultures. With massification, the university became a far more heterogeneous space, and the large numbers of students and teachers are now a motive for a more economically instrumental type of HE (Langa, 2010).

In most countries, the field of HE emerged slowly from the mid-twentieth century as a consequence of its expansion and growing complexity as a social institution. In the United States of America (USA) and Europe it became evident that expert knowledge of the academic enterprise was required, and that leaders and managers of institutions as well as governments, students and their families and society at large required expertise to address the expanding size and scope of the HE enterprise (Altbach, 2014). Specialised knowledge was needed of academics, academic administration, student life and services, research management, facilities, financial affairs, legal issues, national regional and international policy making and so forth (Langa, 2009; Fumasoli and Stensaker, 2013, Altbach, 2014).

The emergence of HE as a field of studies, including research, scholarship, and professional and academic training, mirrors its growing complexity as a social institution (Altbach, 2014). In the USA and Europe, but also in other parts of the world such as Asia, Latin America and the Anglophone African countries, HE has emerged as a new field of research and inquiry. Academics and practitioners have established research communities, journals, and centres for research and training, and have established graduate programmes.

There is evidence that HE as a social institution has evolved dramatically in the PSC. However, little is known about the research and the knowledge base that informs these recent developments. While a small number of academics have written about HE in the PSC, no systematic survey has been undertaken on the knowledge infrastructure, research centres, journals, and academic and professional training programmes that constitute the knowledge base of HE in these countries.

This article thus examines whether the evolving, developing, and growing social field of HE as an institution in the PSC is leading to the constitution of a field of research, academic and professional training.

### Theoretical Remarks

“When one considers the scientificity of a field, one is referring to properties which all have to do with degree[s] of autonomy. For example, the social sciences must endlessly reckon with external forces which hold back their *take-off*” (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 47).

Drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of social field, this article examines whether the growing complexity of HE institutions and systems in the PSC has led to its constitution as a scientific field of study. The assumption is that as a result of the expansion and diversification of HE institutions, this highly complex phenomenon would require expert knowledge for management and policy formulation. The need for more sophisticated knowledge which does not only rely on experiential knowledge and intuition (Langa, 2014) would also lead to the establishment of a new field of research. According to Altbach (2014), similar trends occurred in Europe and the USA where the growing complexity of the HE system and institutions required more research based knowledge for policy and management.

Bourdieu (1985) conceives of a ‘field’ as a magnetic space of forces, as the properties selected to construct a space constitute a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on everyone entering the field and are irreducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to direct interactions among agents.

Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions whose properties depend on their position within those spaces and can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them) (Bourdieu, 1993a). For Bourdieu, each field has its own specific structure and logic, but all share homologous features. There are “general laws of fields” (1993a, p. 72), including relative autonomy, relational and hierarchical structures, and struggles. Relative autonomy is the condition of possibility of a field and therefore a precondition for its existence. It is thus important to note that the field serves as a decisive mediating context which, “like a prism”, refracts external influences “according to the specific logic of the field; and it is by this intermediary that they act on the logic of the development of works” (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 164).

The social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables. Thus, agents are distributed within it,

in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital - i.e., according to the relative weight of the different kinds of assets within their total assets (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724).

Establishing the existence of an operating scientific field is also a complex endeavour. The structure and dynamic logic of a field is a complex enterprise that is beyond the scope of this exploratory study. As Bourdieu (2004, p. 32) puts it, “the scientific field, like other fields, is a structured field of forces, and also a field of struggles to conserve or transform this field of forces.” Like other fields, scientific disciplines are structured spaces of forces, according to both generic and specific logics; and it is possible to map and understand a given position in that space. For Bourdieu (1975; 1988), whose sociology of science has been concerned with the hierarchy in scientific fields, scientific position can be objectively allocated by means of various forms of capital, and it generates a disposition that matches the position actors as a consequence. The implication of this observation is that positions inform dispositions.

This study did not specifically examine the relative level, position and dispositions of actors (researchers, academics, institutions) in the PSC, which would help to understand the dynamics of the field of HE research in these countries. This would require establishing the levels of accumulation of academic and scholastic capital of the actors and their position in the field as well as discerning who is in control, and by what principles (Maton, 2005).

According to Merton (1968), science has its own reward system for those occupying particular positions in the academic and scientific field. This system is graded and based, amongst others, on recognition, principally by fellow scientists. It is stratified for various grades of accomplishment as judged by academic peers. He proposes that an academic career should be guided by the ethos of science, that is, the values and norms which are held to be binding for the person of science (Storer, 1973). For Bourdieu, capital is “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrues to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). However, the specific forms of capital differ. It is important to note that, for Bourdieu, the positions that can be mapped out in social space – for example, the purposes of statistical analysis which constitute the main means to manifest the structure of the social space – do not exist as real groups, although they explain the probability of individuals constituting themselves as practical groups (Langa, 2006; 2010).

## Data and Methods

### *THE CIHE Worldwide Inventory of Higher Education: Research Centres, Journals and Academic Programmes*

It is difficult to create relational data to establish the genesis and structure of a field by capturing its magnetic effects. This study relied on data produced by the Worldwide Inventory of Research Centers, Academic Programs, Journals and Publications in higher education compiled by the Center for International Higher Education of the Boston College in the USA published by Rumbley, Stanfield and Gayardon (2014).

The inventory provides a broad overview of the main centres for research on HE, as well as the many graduate-level academic programmes offered in the study of HE. The inventory and resulting maps not only provide a snapshot of these important activities but also serve as a resource to facilitate communication and collaboration across the HE research and training community (Rumbley et al., 2014).

According to Rumbley et al. (2014), there were 218 HE research centres/institutes around the world. The name and geographic location of each is given. The map shows that the major concentration of HE research centres occurs in areas with few PSC. Countries such as the USA and a number of European nations, have concentrated research organisations that are clustered in their capital cities. In the PSC, Brazil and Portugal have two and one research centres, respectively in the worldwide inventory (Rumbley et al., 2014).

The two Brazilian research centres are the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Brasilia (*Núcleo de Estudos Superiores da Universidade de Brasília*) and the Laboratory for Research on Higher Education at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. While the mission of the centre in Brasilia is to carry out multi-disciplinary research on the transformation of contemporary Brazilian HE, the one in Rio de Janeiro is a multidisciplinary network of researchers from different parts of the country that conducts research on various themes and methods on issues relating to Brazilian HE.

The research centre in Portugal, the Center of Research in HE Policies (*Centro de Investigação em Políticas do Ensino Superior - CIPES*) was established in 1998 and has become the flagship of HE research in Portugal and abroad. CIPES' mission is to conduct academic research and critical thinking on policy and other national and international issues relating to HE.

Among the PSC, Mozambique also has a research centre dedicated to the study of HE. The Center for Higher Education Studies and Development (*Centro de Estudos do Ensino Superior e Desenvolvimento – CESD*) was established as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in 2008 by Sociologist and Professor of HE Patrício Langa, together with nine other academics from Eduardo Mondlane University. The CESD strives to become a centre

of reference in scholarly research in order to provide evidence based policy and critical thinking in the Mozambican HE sector. It has been a key player in the formulation and evaluation of policy initiatives in the country.

To summarise, the PSC have very few research centres dedicated to HE compared to other regions and countries in the world. The infrastructure and organisation to conduct research on HE is inversely proportional to the growing complexity of the system. Even large countries such as Brazil and Portugal (the former is integrated in a vibrant HE area in Europe with a long tradition of research centres on HE), have few centres when one considers the development of this sector. In the PALOP countries, with the exception of Mozambique, establishing research centres dedicated to the study of HE is not yet part of the agenda.

Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of studies conducted by individual academics on topics related to HE. Many studies on the PALOP countries have been carried out by post-graduate students in the northern countries, but also in Brazil and Portugal (See, for example, Queiroz, 2001; Langa, 2006; 2010; Sani, 2013; Sucuma, 2013). However, there is currently no inventory of the theses and dissertations by students from these countries on issues relating to HE.

#### *Higher Education Programmes in the PSC*

Academic programmes are another prerequisite for the presence of HE as a field of research in the PSC. Such programmes constitute the social space where the knowledge produced by researchers is shared with a selected number of individuals based on certain principles. Academic programmes are the training ground for the new cadre of HE experts as it is here that ordinary individuals are bestowed with new knowledge and admitted into the new academic community. In other words, academic programmes constitute the space for the acquisition of the cultural and scientific capital (Bourdieu, 1975; 1986; Langa, 2006) in the form of certificates and credentials that legitimises the graduates' knowledge.

However, it should be noted that the mere existence of the research infrastructure and academic programmes does not lead to the constitution of a research field. Actors need to be aware of the space and the rules of the game informed by what is at stake in that particular scientific field. There are gatekeepers of what constitutes valid knowledge in the field and how it should be reproduced and legitimised.

With respect to HE academic programmes in the PSC, it is important to note that not all those with some content on HE constitute an academic training ground in HE. Most faculties have academic programmes in areas and disciplines that discuss matters concerning HE, but the core curricula and organisational structure of the programme is not designed to train HE

experts. Programmes in educational studies, for instance, or in disciplines such as sociology of education, might cover some aspects of the knowledge base of HE without necessarily intending to train HE experts.

The CIHE inventory of worldwide academic programmes in HE considered these observations. According to Rumbly et al. (2014), similar to research centres, academic programmes in HE tend to rely on a fairly small staff. A very small percentage of these programmes have a staff of 25 or more. Most of the larger centres are located in the USA, with two in China, and just one in Australia, New Zealand, and Kazakhstan. In the PSC, only Mozambique seems to have a Master's programme dedicated to training HE experts. The Master's program in Higher Education Studies and Development (MESD) was established in 2012 in the Faculty of Education at Eduardo Mondlane University as one of the by-products of the CESD. Thus far, this university is the only institution in the PSC/PALOP with a degree-granting academic programme in HE studies.

#### *Higher Education Journals/ Publications in the PSC*

Journal publications are a key prerequisite for the establishment of a scientific field (Goodchild, 2011; Langa and Zavale, forthcoming). By and large, scientifically valid publications are those that have been reviewed, evaluated and accepted by the scientific community through the peer review process. The existence of academic journals with editorial boards is one of the rules of the game in the scientific fields. According to Sarli and Carpenter (2014), the peer review process dates back to the late seventeenth century when Henry Oldenburg, then secretary of the Royal Society of London, applied this method to edit the world's first scientific journal, *Philosophical Transactions*. At the time, scientific research was almost exclusively done outside HE institutions, by individual initiative and private agencies.

With the adoption of research as an intrinsic mission of the university, universities also started to produce and publish the results of scientific research. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a proliferation of journals and publishers dedicated to the publication of the results of scientific research, whether carried out by HE or other institutions. This led to the need to classify and establish hierarchies of scientific journals and publishers, depending on the quality and impact of their publications.

The result was the creation of databases of magazines and publishers, such as Thompson ISI Web of Science, Scopus-Elsevier and Scielo (Sarli and Carpenter, 2014; Herculano and Norberto, 2012). These databases list and index scientific journals and publishers based on the quality, excellence and impact of their publications, measured by the citation of those publications in a given period.

Brazil is the sole PSC with two academic journals dedicated to HE. The *Journal of Higher Education Evaluation (Revista da Avaliação da Educação Superior)* is published by the University of Sorocaba (Uniso). The second journal is published by the University of Campinas. It is not clear whether these journals are peer-reviewed and rigorously follow all the requirements of an academic publication. The *FORGES Journal* is a third journal which does not feature in the CIHE inventory. FORGES stands for Forum of Management of Higher Education in the Countries and Regions that speak the Portuguese Language (*Fórum da Gestão do Ensino Superior nos Países e Regiões de Língua Portuguesa*). The journal is published twice a year and is supported by the State University of Santa Cruz, Brazil. The fact that there are still very few journals in PSC HE signals a field in its inception phase. Most of the papers and publications on HE in the PSC are published in specialised international journals, as books or journals in other disciplines which also cater for HE topics.

#### *Higher Education Associations in the PSC*

Professional and academic associations are another indicator of the existence of an operating scientific field. Academic associations are organisations that promote one or more aspects of a given discipline or field of study. They usually hold meetings at least once a year and most publish peer-reviewed journals and/or newsletters. Members usually pay fees and are clearly associated with the given discipline or field/area of study. In the USA and Europe where HE is a more established field of research, there are a number of associations. Globally, they include the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) in the USA, the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER) in Europe, the European Association of Institutional Researchers (EIAR), the Southern Africa Association of Institutional Researchers (SAAIR), and the International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA). This study did not identify many associations in the PSC that are particularly dedicated to research. However, it found a number of organisations that directly or indirectly promote studies in the field of HE.

#### *The AULP*

The Association of Portuguese Language Universities (AULP<sup>1</sup>) was established on 26 November 1986, to promote multilateral collaboration between universities in PSC and promote efforts to consolidate ties and joint action among its members, to ensure recognition of the importance and strength of the community of people who speak Portuguese. This international NGO promotes cooperation and exchange of information

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1. [http://aulp.org/A\\_AULP](http://aulp.org/A_AULP)

between universities and HE institutions. The AULP has more than 140 members in the nine PSC of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, St. Tome & Principe, East Timor and Macau. Its mission is to facilitate communication among members to promote the collective development of teaching and the Portuguese language. The association encourages research and the exchange of students and lecturers. It promotes on-going reflection through daily news dissemination and organising conferences and events and encourages studies and research amongst its members. The AULP is responsible for a wide range of initiatives including annual meetings; thematic bilateral meetings; publications; prizes; the *International Journal in Portuguese Language* (RILP); imprints that promote the Portuguese language and national cultures, and the promotion of multilateral postgraduate courses.

### FORGES

FORGES seeks to develop and consolidate a network of the management bodies of different HE institutions and the technical staff responsible for administration. It aims to link researchers that focus on HE policies, mainly in Portuguese-speaking countries and regions. The network of researchers and academics, managers and technicians with experience in university management aims to promote exchange of experiences. Since its establishment it has organised six annual conferences in a Portuguese-speaking country or region on topics relevant to university management. It also publishes an electronic journal<sup>2</sup> with original scientific articles relating to HE management as well as a biannual newsletter.

### RIPES

RIPES is the Network of Public Higher Education Institutions (Rede de Instituições Públicas de Educação Superior) that was launched by the *Universidade Luso-Afro-Brasileira* (UNILAB) in 2012 in a meeting held in Maputo (capital of Mozambique). Its main objective is to create and strengthen communication between the CPLP's public HE institutions and build an international network, while respecting the sovereignty of partner countries and institutions, and promoting technical, administrative and academic support and interventions, as established by the UNILAB<sup>3</sup> guidelines. RIPES is not necessarily a research organisation, but one that can promote research amongst its members. It is one of the growing numbers of transnational institutions that add to the complexity of the HE landscape in the PSC.

In summary, the entities discussed above organise events such as confer-

2. <http://www.aforges.org/revistas/>

3. <http://www.ripes.unilab.edu.br/index.php/projeto-ripes/>



ences, seminars, and symposia, and commission research to inform HE policies in the PSC. While they are still in the early stages of their development, their existence indicates that there is an emerging field. The research centres, academic programmes, journal publications, professional and academic associations and government agencies represent the infrastructure that supports researchers in producing and disseminating new knowledge on the subject. Mapping the existence of these institutions is the first step towards establishing the existence of a field. However, to assert that the field is already ignited with its magnetic effects felt by those participating in the field needs a step further. In short, thus far, we have shown the growing complexity of the social institution of HE in the PSC. Is it reasonable to conclude that the growing complexity of HE in the PSC led to the emergence of a scientific field of studies?

### Discussion and Conclusion

Bourdieu (1985) conceives a field as a magnetic space of forces, as the properties selected to construct a space, constitute a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on everyone entering the field and are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to direct interactions among the agents. The social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables. Thus, “agents are distributed within it, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital - i.e., according to the relative weight of the different kinds of assets within their total assets” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724).

According to Goodchild (2002), to establish the existence of a field of HE research it is important to consider at least five dimensions: (i) degrees and programmes offered; (ii) research; (iii) institutions and consortia, professional associations, and networks of researchers; (iv) agency accreditation programmes and institutions; and (v) government and policy-making agencies and bodies. We would add the sixth dimension of supranational and / or international non-governmental bodies.

The social space of HE in the PSC is endowed with some of the basic elements to have a functioning field. However, further research is required to test Altbach’s (2014) hypothesis that growing complexity leads to the constitution of a field. The current study identified the pre-conditions for the existence of a field of HE in the PSC. (i) First, although the degrees and programmes in HE are still very few in number, there are signs that more will be established. (ii) Research on HE is taking place in an *ad-hoc* form,

but demand for more research-based evidence to support both government policies and institutional demands is growing (Fonteyne and Langa, 2017). (iii) Institutions and consortia in each country as well as transnational spaces are emerging in the PSC, such as AULP, FORGES and RIPES, which create networks for researchers and practitioners to engage. (iv) Almost all PSC have established HE quality assurance agencies (Langa, 2013). Finally, (v) all PSC have government policy making agencies and bodies that deal with issues of HE. The supranational entities such as AULP, the CPLP, RIPES and FORGES also add to the complexity of the space and contribute to the emerging field of studies.

In conclusion, this article mapped the space of HE in the PSC to show its growing complexity. In so doing, it also presented the existing and emerging infrastructure, which might constitute the precondition for a functioning field of HE research in the PSC. Previous studies demonstrated that the growing complexity of HE as a social institution has led to the need for specialised knowledge and therefore the constitution of a new scientific field of HE (Goodchild, 2011; Altbach, 2013; 2014). This study demonstrated that although in an incipient stage, HE as a social institution is growing and becoming more complex in the PSC. However, thus far, it is not possible to establish whether this growing complexity has already ignited a functioning field of HE research. This line of inquiry could be pursued in further studies. In short, the study provides insights that indicate the presence of the prerequisites for an emerging scientific field of HE studies in the PSC.

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