

The university as it Should be

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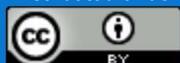
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FEIJÓ, António; TAMEN, Miguel. **A universidade como deve ser**. Lisboa: Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos, 2017. ISBN 9789898863249. 96 p.

This book is number 77 in the Foundation's Essays collection, which is dedicated to disseminating and reflecting on relevant issues of our time, in this case Portuguese Public Universities. Written in clear, easy-to-read language, it helps us understand how universities work in Portugal and how they can work even better.

The authors, António Feijó and Miguel Tamen, are professors at the University of Lisbon and have worked and reflected on higher education.

The book is divided into two parts. Thus, "in the first, almost exclusive attention is given to what we call an idea of the university (...) in the second part of the book, we describe ways of doing things that are characteristic of universities in Portugal" (p. 10).

In the first, *The Idea of the University*, he begins by saying that in Portugal, the opening of a public university course depends on the employability of its graduates. In other words, the number of places in a given course must consider and satisfy an employability formula for the course, in which the number of graduates registered as unemployed at the Vocational Training Institute is a key indicator.

Other dimensions are also addressed here: the difficulties of employability, where it is mentioned that "the State considers the data from the Employment Center and takes it as a negative matrix of what is the correct structure of the economy" (p.15); the university and life as a job, in which the authors point out that "students in higher education today are subjected to a rhetorical barrage that insists almost exclusively on employability, professional outlets and the usefulness of courses" (p. 19); what is a university, in which the authors point out that their argument is not based on the original meaning of the word, the university would be the place where universal knowledge is cultivated, but they start from the original idea that it is a corporation of masters and students. They argue that there has never been a university in contemporary Portugal, but that there has been and is university education of high scientific and pedagogical quality, being aware that this is a debate that allows for different opinions and points of view, and finally, the authors defend an idea of the university based on three positions: the university should aim at useful ends, it should offer its students access to all areas of knowledge, and that it should be autonomous from all powers and manage itself.

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The authors emphasize that these issues need to be discussed, understood and reflected upon, and that describing the university as it should be is not just a technical matter, but is too serious and political to be left to education specialists alone.

Universities must be guided by their individuality and uniqueness, where teachers have space and a different vision in the institutions where they teach and feel inspired to take initiatives, mobilize colleagues, students and resources.

What the university should be and becoming aware of what the university really is currently a matter of reflection and it is desirable that all the actors who are part of it can contribute with new proposals and alternative visions in relation to the production of knowledge, quality indicators, new teaching-learning methodologies, the pedagogical relationship, among others.

It is a useful and fundamental contribution to the understanding of the functioning of the Universidade em Portugal. Undoubtedly, it is a work that aims to clarify and question how universities are and can be, improving quality, becoming freer and more autonomous, making us aware that improving a university is a slow process that requires patience, knowledge and wisdom.

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