

## Special Focus on Private Higher Education

This issue features several articles on the expanding private sector in higher education worldwide. The role of private universities and colleges, and the “privatization” of public institutions of higher education deserves close attention. As public expenditure for higher education declines in many countries, private initiative has helped to provide access. The private sector is diverse and in many places unregulated. Private institutions have a long history and are often among the most prestigious universities in the country. This is true of several of the Jesuit universities in Latin America, institutions like Harvard and Stanford in the United States, the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines, and others. New private universities, on the other hand, face serious problems of funding and facilities. This is an opportune time to examine the private sector in higher education. - Editors

## On the Threshold: Private Universities in Jordan

**Dolores L. Burke and Ahmad A. Al-Waked**

*Dolores Burke is a former administrator at Duke University and a consultant in higher education. Ahmad Al-Waked is an economic researcher in the Ministry of Planning, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Email: dlburke@vnet.net*

As the belt tightens on higher education expenditure in the state systems of industrialized societies, developing countries are struggling to meet the rising demand for higher education within their borders. In the Near East the concept of the private university has emerged as a strategy for expansion of the higher education system. A case in point is Jordan, where public universities are able to accommodate only a small proportion of the secondary students qualified to continue their education at the university level. About 25,000 Jordanians study abroad each year, effecting a short-term economic drain as well as some subsequent contribution to the brain drain common in developing countries.

In partial response to the demand for higher education, the Jordanian government began licensing private universities in 1990; there are now 12 private institutions with an enrollment in 1994–95 approximating 25 percent of the total student body in Jordan’s universities.

### *A Brief History*

The history of higher education in Jordan is brief indeed. Originally Transjordan, a British protectorate, the small country of Jordan—90,650 square kilometers and with a current population of about 4 million—was part of the map of the Middle East that was redrawn after World War I. National systems of education emerged in the region in the 1920s, resulting in the rapid expansion of school attendance in Transjordan.

After his coronation in 1953, King Hussein (the longest-serving head of state in the world today) created a Royal

Education Commission to make recommendations to the Crown for the development of the education system. The commission’s first priority was basic literacy. Education Law No. 20 of 1955 made education compulsory for six years; Education Law No. 16 of 1964 extended the period to nine years. The resulting expansion of compulsory and secondary education created a college market for training teachers, with an increase in enrollment in teacher training institutes from 46 in 1952 to 7,000 in 1976. Since 1950, and even after higher education developed within the country, advanced study abroad was the principal technique used by the government to resolve shortages of educated personnel.

---

***In partial response to the demand for higher education, the Jordanian government began licensing private universities in 1990; there are now 12 private institutions with an enrollment in 1994–95 approximating 25 percent of the total student body in Jordan’s universities.***

---

The country’s first public university, the University of Jordan, was established in 1962, and the second, Yarmouk University, in 1976. In 1981 these were joined by Mu’ata University and in 1995 by Hashemite University and Al Al’byat University. The public institutions also include the Jordan University of Science and Technology, which was separated from Yarmouk University in the late 1980s at a time of political unrest in the north of Jordan, and the Amman University for Applied Engineering, which evolved from a technical college.

In 1990 Amman Private University opened with an enrollment of 1,324 students. In 1991, the Applied Sciences University, Al-Isra’i, Philadelphia, the Jordan University for Women, and Princess Sumayya University College for Technology opened their doors, followed by

the Music Academy in 1992; Al-Zaytoonah, Jarash Private University, and UNRWA College in 1993; and Irbid National University and Zarqa Private University in 1994.

#### *Educational System Structure*

Both public and private universities operate under specific Jordanian laws—for public universities the Jordanian Universities Law No. 29 of 1987 and for private universities the Private Universities Act No. 19 of 1989. Private universities also fall under the regulation of the Companies Law as public or private shareholding companies. According to law, each public university has a council of deans that is headed by the president and runs the university, a faculty council for each faculty or college, and departmental councils composed of the academic staff of a department. Each university also has a university council (advisory rather than administrative) that includes lay representation and interacts with the public. In addition each public university has government teaching staff regulations specific to the institution that cover matters such as academic freedom.

---

***The Higher Education Council has significant power over private universities.***

---

In contrast, the highest governing body in private universities is the university's board of trustees rather than a president's council. There are no regulations that establish employment conditions. The regulation of higher education that does exist is provided by the Higher Education Council. The council is chaired by the minister of education and higher education, and its additional membership consists of the ministers of planning and culture, the presidents of the public universities, representatives from the community colleges, and six lay members. (The members of the council have so far not detected any conflict of interest in their composition, although there is no private university representation in the body.)

The Higher Education Council has significant power over private universities. The council must approve the types of studies and fields of specialization at various levels; set admissions criteria; approve acceptance of donations, gifts, and grants; review performance through examination of budgets and reports, and approve any cultural or technical cooperation agreements the university may wish to make with other institutions and bodies. Regulations are issued for licensing and accreditation with criteria—so specific as the proper student/faculty ratio, the minimum (80 percent) proportion of full-time academic

staff, the maximum teaching load for each academic rank, and the maximum number of credit hours a student may take per semester. Public universities, on the other hand, are not subject to the council's accreditation or review procedures, and may start new programs and build new buildings without council or other government approval.

In recent months considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed with the financial state of the higher education enterprise. Public universities are funded heavily from earmarked taxes—customs duties and license fees. There is also a special “university tax” collected by the Ministry of Finance and distributed annually as decided by the Higher Education Council. Allocation of public monies to higher education is not well defined, and unfortunately the *wasta* (influence) of an individual president may play a significant role in how much his institution is given. Tuition and fees make up about a quarter of the budget, but have been kept at relatively low levels and have decreased in real terms over the past several years. The current public university deficit is about 30 percent of expenditures in a total budget of J\$156 million (about U.S.\$224 million).

Neither private universities nor their students receive financial support from the government. The private university must pay a one-time accreditation fee of J\$10,000 per department, and under the Companies Law pays an annual tax of 25 percent of profit to the government.

---

***The image of the private university in Jordan is a product less of the private universities themselves and more of the prejudice expressed by members of the public university community.***

---

#### *Image of the Private University*

The image of the private university in Jordan is a product less of the private universities themselves and more of the prejudice expressed by members of the public university community. Much is made of the fact that students “pay” for their education, and intimations of unfair practices and substandard education abound. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the private universities are not doing a good job, or in fact that the public universities are doing a better job, and so far the latter have escaped scrutiny in spite of a certain amount of fiscal recklessness. Some resentment arises from the fact that private universities pay better salaries, but this is on a contract basis without the expectation of tenure, whereas Jordanian faculty members in the public universities are guaranteed employment for life after two years of service (this stipulation does not apply to non-Jordanians) and frequently

opt for this security rather than taking the risk associated with a private institution's higher salary. Although rarely mentioned, a substantial number of public university officials and faculty members own shares in private university companies.

The complaint most frequently heard about private universities is that their admissions standards are lower, and at first glance this would seem to be the case. University admission is based on the results of the *tawjibi*—the General Secondary School Certificate Examination (GSSCE). The qualifying score is 65 percent for public universities and 60 percent for private universities. Actual requirements may be higher in some specializations owing to competition. For example, medicine generally calls for at least an 85 percent score and engineering 80 percent. The GSSCE is given in subject groupings (comparable in concept to the British A-levels) but the largest category by far is the combined total in arts and science. In 1995 a total of 41,000 students took the arts exam, of whom 12,000 scored at least 65 percent and 15,000 at least 60 percent; 23,000 took the science exam, of whom 13,000 scored at least 65 percent and 15,000 at least 60 percent. (First-year places in the public universities totaled less than 15,000 that year.)

This is not the full picture, however. In the public universities about 25 percent of the available places are reserved for students in special groups who make the qualifying score (65 percent). The "special" list includes children of the armed and security forces and Ministry of Education personnel, applicants from certain foreign countries (not including Malaysia, which has its own separately negotiated quota), and those with *wasta* of one kind or another. This exemption means that the sliding scale of competition does not affect a large number of applicants, and consequently many better qualified students lose their public university slots to the less qualified.

#### *Problems and Solutions*

The basic problem of private higher education in Jordan is that the private universities were established as a "quick fix" for the mushrooming access deficit in a system without surplus money, and where the existing money was not effectively spent. Furthermore, the development of the private university was restricted to the existing tradition in curriculum and delivery rather than reaching out for innovation and creativity.

Recent weeks have seen public addresses given by Crown Prince Hassan, Princess Sarvath, and others signifying potential changes. Probable actions are: professionalizing the Higher Education Council and adding private university representation, improving the management autonomy of both private and public institutions, and establishing an accreditation body for all higher education. With these first steps taken, the private universities may be able to cross the threshold into a new importance in Jordanian higher education.

## Private Higher Education in Pakistan: The Need for Order

### **James Coffman**

*James Coffman is executive director of the U.S. Educational Foundation in Pakistan. Address: USEF/P, P.O. Box 1128, Islamabad, Pakistan.*

With the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, only one university existed on the Pakistani side of the partition line—the University of the Punjab. In the ensuing 50 years of statehood, expanding tertiary education enrollments have outpaced the construction of new colleges and universities. Today, Pakistan has 28 public and private universities and over 100 "affiliated" or "constituent" colleges, technical training institutes, teacher training schools, and other specialized institutions. Despite a policy enacted during the Zia-ul-Haq regime in the 1980s to gradually replace English by Urdu, higher education continues to be conducted mostly in English.

In the early 1970s, education was nationalized under the Bhutto regime, effectively ending private education in Pakistan. Grants for funding universities were dispensed by each province. In 1979, the federal government assumed control over all university grants, ensuring a centralized administration of the country's university system. Today, 67 percent of all public university income comes from these federal grants. Additionally, all appointments of faculty and administrators are made by the Ministry of Education, thereby depriving universities of any autonomy whatsoever. In the mid-1980s, private educational institutions were again allowed to operate, on the condition that they uphold standards.

---

***Pakistani governments have never given high priority to the educational sector (education is not even compulsory), spending a smaller percentage of its national budget on education than any of its poor South Asian neighbors.***

---

While the state has assumed increasingly greater control over the financing and administration of higher education through the years, the country has been rocked by severe political upheaval and economic decline. Successive governments have failed to impose an acceptable rule of law within the country. The lawlessness, corruption, nepo-