

current reviews.

There are of course other drivers of importance to institutions and government such as promoting innovation in teaching and sustaining international competitiveness in recruiting international students. However, the political, economic, and social drivers outlined are those in the forefront of debate. Unsurprisingly, there are strong echoes of these issues in other countries, including the extensive critiques and debates surrounding US accreditation. ■

Higher Education in Kosovo: A Prolonged Transition

XHAVIT REXHAJ

Xhavit Rexhaj is vice-rector for International Cooperation, AAB University, Pristina, Kosovo. E-mail: xhavit.rexhaj@aab-edu.net. This article appeared in a different format in Stepping Into a New Era, edited by A. Glass (European Association for International Education, 2014 Conference Conversation Starter).

Together with the Kosovar society, Kosovo's higher education system has been going through a long process of transition: it has evolved from a completely destroyed and deeply politicized system in the late nineties, to a system striving to provide quality teaching to its students and to integrate into the European Higher Education Area.

Kosovo's population of 1.8 million is one of the youngest in Europe, with 45 percent under 25 years of age and more than a quarter not yet 15. According to 2011 census data, 6.72 percent of Kosovo's population holds a tertiary qualification, comparably lower than in other Western Balkan countries, where the share ranges from 8 to 14 percent. Fifteen years after the war of 1999, Kosovo's higher education system has increased student access to academic services from 12 to 55 students per 1,000 inhabitants between 2005 and 2014. The period also saw a significant structural transformation in the higher education landscape.

UNPLANNED EXPANSION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES

The number of public universities rose from only one, the University of Pristina (UP, established 1970), with 27,000 students in 2007, to six universities with instruction in Albanian language (established between 2010–2013) and one with instruction in Serbian in (established in 2000), altogether catering to over 75,000 students in 2014. Meanwhile, the private higher education sector ballooned. Between 2004 and 2014, the number of private institutions

(called "colleges" or "higher schools"), licensed and accredited by the authorities, rose from two to twenty-five. The private higher education sector provides services to roughly one third of the total student population in Kosovo, mainly at bachelor and master levels, and numbers continue to increase.

THE IMPACT OF SYSTEM EXPANSION AND INCREASED PARTICIPATION

Scarce statistical data from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics on student enrollment and graduation at UP for the period 2008–2013, show a rapid increase in student numbers. This increased participation appears to have had a devastating effect on the quality of education and on student performance, since the overall number of graduates has only decreased, both in real and relative terms. In the academic year 2008–2009, 5,161 students graduated, or about two thirds of around 7,000 students who had registered at UP in 2005. In the same year, 2008–2009, the UP admitted 10,007 new students. Three years later, in 2011, 4,496, or only 44 percent of those enrolled, graduated to join the labor market. Consequently, the intake increased by more than 40 percent over the three years (2005–2008), whereas the output instead of increasing, was reduced in nominal terms by around 10 percent. Data indicate that there has been a drastic fall of system performance—expressed in significantly increased attrition and decreased graduation rates—as a result of uncontrollably increased participation and the same trends continues to this day.

An almost threefold increase in student numbers between 2008 and 2013 in the public sector was not accompanied by a similar increase in government funding (less than 40 percent); teaching staff numbers (less than 30 percent); or new infrastructure. Public universities in Kosovo spend annually between €300 and 500 per student, in average 3 times less than in other countries in the Western Balkan countries and 15 times less than in OECD countries. Until June 2014, students in public universities paid a low annual tuition fee of €100 (US\$130). In an effort to gain political support during the national election campaign of 2014, the government curtailed these fees by 50 percent. As a result, transfer and administration costs to collect these fees exceeded the value of the income collected. The expansion of the system was not followed by more resources. Instead, existing resources were redistributed across a dramatically expanded sector, with the teaching staff and funds of UP allocated to more public institutions. It is only sensible to assume that this situation has negatively affected teaching quality and student learning.

MARGINALIZED RESEARCH

In addition to teaching quality, academic performance and research efforts have been reduced to an absolute minimum. Ministers of education and their strategic plans eagerly claim that Kosovo is a “Knowledge Society.” However, the country’s universities produce little or no knowledge for their society in terms of rigorous academic research, applicable learning or skills. Instead, the higher education system has gradually been turned into an incoherent assembly of teaching colleges (re)transmitting outdated content to younger generations. With increased number of students, most funds for research are necessarily directed to supporting teaching, with research losing its attraction as a mode of academic activity.

For many academics, scientific research has become a hurried way to ensure equally swift academic promotion, conveniently followed by a raise in salary. The aim of “doing research” is therefore to ensure personal academic employment stability in an ever-changing, transitory context. The situation has worsened over the years, with professors, and recently even a rector, publishing their work in dubious, pseudo-scientific journals in India just to be promoted to their professorship entitlements. Lately, however, these pitfalls have not gone unnoticed by the media. In early 2014, UP’s rector resigned from his post following student protests and extensive media coverage, both national and international. Moreover, investigative journalists are actively unveiling dubious practices by professors and university lecturers.

THE ROLE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The government policy to augment student participation in higher education appears to have significantly derailed the higher education system. Universities have come to play a social and political role, rather than serve an academic purpose. Increased participation in public and private institutions has not increased the number of graduates or their employability. It appears only to have served the purpose of postponing their entrance into the overflowing labor market, as unskilled workforce. Apart from this, establishing a university in every larger town may bring votes in times of elections, as was the case during the national elections of 2014. But it replicates throughout Kosovo the problems affecting the main university in the capital city.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

During 2014 there have been a number of more promising developments in Kosovo’s higher education. A new minister of education has been appointed and a new rector was elected at the University of Pristina. The new minister commenced a series of legal and structural reforms at the system level, while the new rector engaged in institutional and academic reforms at UP. Since a meaningful education reform takes at least seven years to show results, it remains to be seen how far reaching and effective these efforts will be. Nevertheless, they give the impression that there is a light at the end of the tunnel for Kosovo’s higher education.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Clancy, Patrick. *Irish Higher Education: A Comparative Perspective*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2015. 325 pp. Euros 28. ISBN 978-1-910393-04-8. Web site: www.ipa.ie.

This unique volume provides a thorough analysis of Irish higher education from a comparative (mainly European) perspective. Current statistical information as well as narrative are provided. Among the themes discussed are the expansion and diversification of higher education from an Irish and broader perspectives, access issues, admissions and retention, the student experience, the academic profession, higher education and the labor market, funding issues, and others.

Cloete, Nico, Peter Maassen, and Tracy Bailey, eds. *Knowledge Production: Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education*. Cape Town, South Africa: African Minds Publishers, 2015. 295 pp. (pb). ISBN 9781920677855. Web site: www.africanminds.org.za.

Focusing on research universities in sub-Saharan Africa, this book analyses aspects of the development, mainly, of eight “flagship” institutions in Africa. Among the topics considered in data-based chapters are the performance of these universities, the role of South Africa as a PhD hub for Africa, academic incentives for knowledge production in Mozambique and Kenya, student engagement and citizenship, the role of science councils in Africa, and others.

Dougherty, Kevin J., and Rebecca S. Natow. *The Politics of Performance Funding for Higher Education: Origins, Discontinuities, and Transformations*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. 257 pp. (hb). ISBN 978-1-4214-16908. Web site: www.press.jhu.edu.

Performance funding ties state support for public higher education to institutional performance on specific outcomes. Looking at case studies of 8 US states, the authors examine how performance funding is defined and measured, and how it affects funding. A special focus is on the policy-related aspects of this topic.

Gerber, Larry G. *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance: Professionalism and the Modern American University*. Baltimore, MD: