

CONCLUSION

The public–private dynamics are rapidly changing in a system which still has the highest enrollments in the private sector in the European Union today. In the global context of expanding higher education systems, there are several systems in Central and Eastern Europe, with Poland in the forefront, which are actually contracting. Their contraction is fundamental and rooted in declining demographics. In a global context of increasing reliance on cost-sharing mechanisms and private sector growth, the Polish system seems to be moving in the opposite direction. Interestingly, the Polish trend of higher education deprivatization goes against the global trend of privatization, with uncertain financial implications for the future. ■

Private Participation in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana's Experience

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Over the past quarter century, higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa has recorded phenomenal increases in the number of institutions and student enrollments, due largely to the deregulation of provision. For example, Ghana's higher education system has grown from just two institutions and less than 3,000 students in 1957 to 133 institutions and approximately 290,000 students in 2013, with most of the expansion occurring from the mid-1990s. Ghana's experience illustrates the push factors, policy responses, transformation of higher education, quality challenges of private participation, and the deepening of the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEIs) on the continent.

REMOTE AND IMMEDIATE PRESSURES FOR PRIVATE PARTICIPATION

The expansion of the higher education sector in Ghana from independence in 1957 to the early 1990s was constrained by a number of factors, resulting in excess demand relative to supply. Until polytechnics and other post-secondary insti-

tutions were “upgraded” to tertiary status from the 1990s, higher education was conceived narrowly as university education. The perceived low status of other post-secondary institutions made them less attractive than universities. Thus one reason for the phenomenal increase in number of HEIs and enrollments in Ghana was the inclusion of previously excluded institutions. Other factors which contributed to the building up of excess demand for HEI included rapidly growing population; the restriction of access to higher education through selective examinations such as the Common Entrance Examination; high unit costs; unsustainable subsidization of higher education; a socialist ideology that prevented private participation; and the lack of an attractive vocational education pathway as an alternative to higher education. Under these constraints, the demand for higher education outstripped supply to such an extent that, at some point, 51 percent of qualified applicants could not be offered admission. Between 1966 and 1990, the higher education system, consisting of just three universities, was characterized by frequent student protests, strikes, closure of institutions, and disruptions in the academic calendar. Policy changes were inevitable.

A combination of global forces pushed Ghana to move toward private participation in higher education in the early 1990s. These forces included increasing democratization and massification of education, the collapse of the socialist ideology, the spread of free market economics, and the emergence of public-private-partnership thinking. Anxious to absorb the excess demand for higher education were not-for-profit religious bodies and for-profit private individuals and organizations that had for decades been active in the provision of basic and secondary education.

POLICY RESPONSE: PRIVATE PARTICIPATION

As part of sweeping education reforms that began in 1987, higher education provision was opened up to the private sector, while public higher education was gradually deregulated. A legally mandated quality assurance body, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), was established in 1993 to regulate and guide the deregulation process. Before 2000, there were less than 15 private HEIs, but by 2015 their number had grown to 106, compared to 83 public HEIs. There are also numerous unaccredited institutions, 55 of which have been identified and published in the media by the NAB for the information of the general public.

TRANSFORMATION

Private participation and economic liberalization have changed Ghana's higher education landscape since the mid-1990s. Private HEIs outnumber public institutions but account for less than 25 percent of total enrollments, now approaching 340,000 students annually. Private insti-

tutions have brought dynamism and competition into the sector and made higher education provision more market-oriented than it was under public monopoly. For example, higher education no longer caters only for the traditional full-time student. Private institutions admit students twice a year and have flexible delivery schedules such as weekend and evening classes, targeting working professionals. They also actively recruit students from outside Ghana and offer innovative programs to carve niches for themselves. However, only a few private HEIs offer science and technology programs, most focusing on less capital-intensive programs, particularly management and business administration. Public HEIs have also responded to the liberalization policies by adopting market-oriented practices. For example, they introduced special fee-paying programs and fee-paying admission quotas for applicants whose grades do not put them among tuition-free offers. One of the most remarkable transformations in the public sector was the conversion of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) from a public funded HEI to a self-financing institution. In general, liberalization policies have made higher education provision in Ghana more stable, vibrant, and responsive to market conditions over the past two decades.

QUALITY CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE PARTICIPATION

Private participation in higher education has raised concerns about quality. Topmost among these concerns is whether private HEIs would have the requisite human and physical resources for delivering quality education. A few for-profit and faith-based institutions have met or exceeded expectations, but the majority of for-profit HEIs are struggling to meet expectations. Wide variations in the quality of faculty in private HEIs is a major concern. Overall, only 23 percent of the faculty in private HEIs have terminal degrees (all at least have second degrees), but some institutions do not have any terminal degree holders at all. Most private HEIs have a long way to go in meeting the terminal degree requirement set by NAB. In the short and medium term, the supply of qualified faculty cannot increase to match demand, and most private HEIs must depend on part-time faculty, some of whom combine multiple part-time appointments.

The accreditation authority has been implementing an increasingly rigorous quality assurance regime to allay public concerns. New private institutions must be mentored by chartered institutions for at least 10 years before they are granted the charter to award their own certificates. So far, only three private HEIs (all faith-based) have been granted charters. Accredited private HEIs undergo intensive external quality audits at least once every four years, and their accreditation may be renewed or revoked depending on the

audit results. During the past 15 years, NAB has revoked four accreditation licenses and temporarily suspended more than five others from admitting students until they rectified certain deficiencies. However, the sudden closure of a financially strapped private HEI by its owners in 2014 pointed to loopholes in the regulatory system. To forestall such occurrences, NAB now requires bank guarantees equivalent to \$500,000 for new accreditations. Quality is nevertheless being threatened by the establishment of unaccredited private institutions that exploit unmet demand for higher education. For now, NAB does not have the legal capacity to close down unaccredited institutions.

DEEPENING INTERNATIONALIZATION

Private participation and liberalization of provision have contributed to the deepening of internationalization of Ghana's higher education. Internationalization has deepened in areas such as diversity of student enrollments; offering of foreign curricula and awards through collaborations; locating offshore campuses of foreign HEIs in Ghana; and the adop-

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tion of institutional governance systems of foreign HEIs. In the 2012–2013 academic year, international students in private HEIs constituted 12.6 percent of total enrollments, while in public universities the proportion was 2 percent (relatively low but unthinkable two decades ago). Some private higher education institutions have established partnerships with institutions in countries—such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark, the United States, and the United Kingdom—to deliver their programs and have their students receive foreign awards while studying in Ghana. Tightened visa requirements for studies in Europe and North America are likely to promote further collaboration between local and foreign HEIs, thereby deepening the internationalization of higher education in Ghana.

THE FUTURE OF PRIVATE HEIS

At this stage, private higher education is mainly absorbing excess demand from the tuition-free public education system. However, elite private HEIs are emerging that target applicants from wealthy families locally and globally. Pre-

dictably, the growth in number of private HEIs will slow down, as more stringent quality requirements are enforced. ■

University Branch Campuses in Kenya

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On January 19, 2016, in an unprecedented demonstration of clout, the Kenya Commission for University Education (CUE) ordered Kisii University, a state institution, to close 10 of its 13 branch campuses, and relocate the 15,000 students affected to the main campus. This move brings to 20 the number of campuses ordered closed by the authorities. These actions are the culmination of concerted efforts by regulatory authorities to recalibrate university growth, from an array of low-quality, demand-absorbing campuses back to a traditional system of specialized, high-quality campuses. It is also a response to stakeholders concerns over the decline in quality, as a result of the commercialization of the university sector. The existence of campus networks in major universities has a long history. However, its surge in Kenya in the last decade has been explosive.

Kenya's university landscape, especially the public sector, is now a collection of campuses strewn all over the country and competing for the same student clientele. Whereas a decade ago the campus model was regarded as the panacea to the challenges of university demand and revenue diversification in the neo-liberal era, the model is now viewed with suspicion. It epitomizes the worst tendencies of university growth catalyzed by both social demand and commercialization, in the context of weak regulatory authorities.

IMPETUS FOR CAMPUS GROWTH

Given the rapid growth of branch campuses in the public sector in the last decade, it is important to highlight budgetary constraints, access, and equity as the key factors motivating this development.

Of the main drivers of the multicampus systems in Kenya's state universities, none ranks higher than institutional revenue diversification. Acute state revenue constraints beginning in the late 1990s, and the subsequent reduction of state funding of universities, have forced the institutions

to seek additional revenues from the marketplace. The universities have adopted a low-cost revenue enhancement model around inexpensive branch campuses targeting self-sponsored students (high school graduates without government scholarships) and working adults. Most of these campuses are in small rural towns and offer easy-to-mount courses in humanities, education, and business, taught by poorly qualified part-time faculty. The target students pay market-based tuition charges and fees, which contributes a large percentage of the universities' additional revenues. Since the campuses are inexpensive to establish and generate high financial returns, universities have a strong incentive to establish numerous branch campuses.

Though the number of universities in Kenya has grown from one public university to the current 43 accredited universities (33 public and 10 private), the challenge of access remains, as the current enrollment of around 324,000 represents only 30 percent of the eligible population. The number of students graduating from high school far exceeds the available number of university places, while the number of working adults seeking university education grows. University authorities have viewed leasing facilities for the establishment of campuses as the most practical approach to expand access in the context of reduced state subventions, for construction of capital facilities at the main campuses.

Most public and private universities are located in major metropolitan areas and in rich agricultural regions of central and western Kenya, leaving large swaths of the country without universities. These disadvantaged areas also experience greater levels of poverty. National educational authorities have, therefore, viewed low-cost campuses in marginal areas as a solution to the twin challenges of equity of access and economic disadvantage. It is not surprising that many campuses have been established in the low-income coastal, eastern, and north-eastern regions of the country.

These social goals have been the reason why regulatory authorities have overlooked the pitfalls of a university system characterized by low-quality branch campuses. The campuses have been a double-edged sword, providing access and equity while simultaneously compromising quality and equity.

QUALITY AND EQUITY CHALLENGE

Questionable educational quality in branch campuses is the utmost concern expressed by stakeholders. From academic facilities to academic staff, many branch campuses offer a grim contrast to the main campuses of the universities. In most rural urban centers, branch campuses share buildings with business establishments like pubs, restaurants, supermarkets, brothels, and bus terminals. They lack libraries, internet facilities, student services, as well as recreational