

amenities. Other than a full-time campus director, the academic staff consists of adjunct faculty who hold master's degrees, sometimes of dubious credibility. Rarely are academic conferences, seminars, and research symposiums hosted in the campuses. Not only does this environment impede excellent teaching and learning, but it also perpetuates teaching-research divorce, even in premier national universities. Surprisingly, most of these campuses purport to offer research-oriented master's degrees.

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**It epitomizes the worst tendencies of university growth catalyzed by both social demand and commercialization, in the context of weak regulatory authorities.**

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All branch campuses exhibit a common characteristic: a restrictive academic narrowness. Commercially oriented programs dominate academic offerings, with business studies, economics, and project management as the most popular. Other dominant fields include education, humanities, and social sciences. Engineering, the natural sciences, and the medical sciences are rarely offered at the branch campuses. Because branch campuses are peripheral appendages created to generate revenue and absorb demand, the central university administrators are reluctant to offer programs that could evolve into potential competitors to the main campuses for government-sponsored student numbers and state financial resources.

In as much as campuses have enhanced access, they also reveal the dark side of the intersection between social class membership and university access in Kenya. Rural campuses largely attract self-sponsored students who, as a result of their lower socioeconomic status, could not perform well enough in high school examinations to secure competitive government scholarships. With students from more privileged backgrounds taking the larger share of government scholarships and, therefore, places in the well-resourced main university campuses, the branch model of university development has contributed to the bifurcation of state universities: students from more privileged backgrounds dominate the well-resourced main campuses, while those from underprivileged classes are overrepresented in branch campuses. Branch campuses, therefore, contribute to the failure to address issues of substantive equity in higher education.

#### RECALIBRATING THE BRANCH CAMPUS MODEL

The Kenyan multibranch campus model of higher education is there to stay, granted its benefits in the commercialized higher education climate. While ensuring that campus resources meet minimum acceptable standards, as CUE is currently doing, is an appropriate short-term measure, the long-term solution lies in reconfiguring the university campus system. The state needs to support the development of branch campuses that not only provide access, but also address the socioeconomic and cultural problems in the regions where they are located. This will promote the hiring of qualified faculty, diverse academic programs congruent with local challenges, engagement in research and scholarship, and the mentoring of graduate students. Granting such campuses administrative autonomy in certain areas of finance and academic programming will enhance decision-making on critical issues. Elements of this model of branch organization are already evident in the organizational model of the University of Nairobi colleges. ■

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## Chilean Universities: Not So Tuition-free After All

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The dictatorship of General Pinochet in Chile (1973–1990) expanded private higher education and introduced tuition fees in the higher education public sector. Three decades later, Chile is the OECD country with the smallest share of public expenditure in the overall tertiary education spending. It also has the second highest level of tuition fees after US private universities, when adjusted to the per capita gross national product.

In 2011, Chilean students demonstrated massively against the marketization of the higher education system, making free higher education for all one of their key demands. The president at the time, Sebastián Piñera (a conservative), did not accede to this, but greatly expanded student aid as a response to the students' expectations. However, the issue did not go away, and by the 2013 electoral campaign, free higher education became a central pledge

in the plan of the current president Michelle Bachelet (a socialist). Since her election, Michelle Bachelet and her government have been working to fulfill this promise. At the end of 2015, a law intended to open the way to free higher education in Chile was passed by congress.

#### THE “SHORT TUITION FREE ACT” OF DECEMBER 2015

The government lacked the necessary legislative space in the congress’ docket for 2015 and the technical wherewithal to design and negotiate with the universities an acceptable mechanism to replace tuition fees with public funding. Therefore, it chose to add to the education budget law for 2016 a rider that would create an initial form of tuition free status for some students and some institutions. This legislative strategy was controversial in congress and was resisted by the opposition on constitutional grounds, but was nonetheless passed in December 2015.

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**The budget act for 2016 provides funding to enable free higher education for enrolled students whose families belong to the 50 percent poorest among higher education students in Chile.**

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The budget act for 2016 provides funding to enable free higher education for enrolled students whose families belong to the 50% poorest among higher education students in Chile—i.e., families who earn less than US\$250 per person per month. But to be eligible, students must be enrolled in state universities or in private universities that choose to take part in the program. Only non-profit universities with at least four years of accreditation are invited to join the program.

In 2016, 30 universities (50% of the total number of universities in Chile) will participate in the program for free higher education. As a result, some 30,000 first year students will have access to higher education free of charge, as well as 80,000 students in higher courses. With additional students whose status is currently pending, the ministry of education hopes to reach a total of 160,000 students in 2016. But this adds up to only 15 percent of the total student population, far from the “free higher education for all” target. The 2016 program is indeed publicized by the government as the first step of a gradual process that should end with free tertiary education for everyone in 2020, if the general state of the public budget makes it possible.

#### IMPROVING ACCESS?

Demonstrating students in 2011 advocated for free tertiary education for all as a tool to improve access to higher education. But the “Gratuidad 2016” law is unlikely to foster access. There is no evidence that students accessing free tertiary higher education in 2016 would not have gone to university if they had to pay tuition fees with the pre-2016 combination of scholarships and loans. In fact, according to Chile’s major household socioeconomic survey (CASEN), only 17 percent of young people in the 10 percent poorest households state that they do not participate in higher education for financial reasons. The most cited reason is that they did not finish high school or pass the qualifying examinations. Therefore, universal access to Chilean higher education seems to depend mostly on an improvement of the secondary school system, or on a change in university admissions criteria.

Additionally, the law currently targets only universities, while students from low socioeconomic backgrounds go predominantly to vocational and technical education. The benefit should be extended to professional institutes and technical training centers as soon as 2017, thus making it more inclusive for the most disadvantaged populations. However, it is not yet clear how this will be implemented (if at all), given budgetary restrictions.

For the government, however, this policy is not about increasing access, but that means to realize a question of principle: if education is a human right, it should be free of charge for the student.

#### THE UNIVERSITIES’ CHOICE

Private universities are given the choice to participate in the program or not. While all 16 state universities participate, only 14 private universities chose to do so in 2016. Thirteen opted out, while the remainder is not eligible. The way government subsidies for students benefiting from free higher education are calculated does mean that some universities will lose revenue previously obtained through tuition charges. The government is not paying full tuition for every “free” student; instead, the per capita allocation is a per-program average of the tuition fees charged by all universities with the same number of years of accreditation, plus a maximum 20 percent increase for universities getting less per student than their tuition fees level. In effect, the most expensive universities—the best private ones—will not receive full compensation for their students on the free track and will have to self-generate the missing revenue, or cut costs. While top-ranked universities might have leverage to secure other revenues from the government or private sources, most will experience a dent in their budget if they choose to participate in the program.

This is also somewhat problematic for diversity and inclusion. Students with the best scores in the university entrance test, who tend to be the most affluent, will have the option to select universities that choose to participate in the free program. The rest, often from less privileged backgrounds, will only find available slots in the less selective, for-profit, or poorly accredited, tuition-charging institutions. Equity could become a serious issue in Chilean higher education, as it is currently in the Brazilian free public system.

#### FREE FOR ALL

With financial and access issues entangled in the current version of the law, there is reason to doubt whether the 2020 free-for-all plan will ever become a reality. The funding for this watered-down version of tuition free higher education came from an increase in taxes on Chilean firms. This increase came at a time of general slowing down of the Chilean economy, mostly because of the steep decrease in the price of copper. Currently, the low price of Chilean exports and the anemic growth rate of the nation's economy are not in line with the increase in the educational budget needed to expand free tuition and fund other educational reforms in progress.

Indeed, the 2015 tax hike generated just enough extra revenue in 2016 to pay for the tuition of some 200,000 students. The target of eligible students in 2016 had to be lowered from 60 percent to 50 percent of the poorest students. And the future looks grim. Fiscal adjustments are already in the forecast for 2017, with education predicted to take the biggest blow. How this will square with the will to open free tuition to vocational higher education is uncertain.

In the longer term, how the government will ultimately manage to fund free higher education for 1.2 million students in the public and private sectors remains unclear. This pertains to feasibility. Whether it is also advisable to make higher education free for all is another question. ■

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## The Effects of Saudization on the Universities: Localization in Saudi Arabia

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The first university in Saudi Arabia was established in 1957. Since then, the country has witnessed fast-paced growth in the development of the academy—and the majority of faculty and staff members recruited to help set up and run it have been foreign workers. Now, however, with increasing numbers of young Saudis coming of age and acquiring advanced degrees, there is an urgent labor market need to absorb these citizens into all sectors of the economy, including higher education. This workforce localization has had various consequences on the way universities are staffed and managed, research is produced and supported, and students are educated in Saudi Arabia.

#### SAUDIZATION: BACKGROUND, PRESSURES, AND PROBLEMS

Saudi Arabia's policy of replacing foreign workers with its own citizens is known as *Saudization*. Until very recently, the oil rich Saudi kingdom has depended heavily on expatriates to fill jobs. Currently, however, the country is faced with a burgeoning young population that needs to find gainful employment. Unprecedented numbers of young Saudis are also returning to the country after benefiting from the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) overseas. The Saudi state has been working hard to absorb these qualified citizens into the workforce. As with all economic sectors, this has had an obvious effect on the substantial higher education industry in the country.

The Saudi ministry of labor has in recent years worked quickly to ensure the implementation of new Saudization laws within higher education, and both public and private universities have been quick to comply. Workforce localization at such a rapid pace has been unprecedented in this country—however, academia, for various reasons, has been ill prepared to deal with such a sudden paradigm shift.

#### HOW UNIVERSITY BUSINESS HAS BEEN AFFECTED

Whereas teaching and research faculty in Saudi universities continue to be a more or less even mix of Saudi and foreign citizens, the administrative positions have overwhelmingly been Saudized. Until recently, the vast majority of university administrators—the departmental administrative assistants, curriculum developers, research center directors, international engagement managers, quality assurance personnel, and so on, have overwhelmingly been foreign citizens. These have been the people tasked with establishing, developing, running, and maintaining, as well as growing academic departments and administrative units within universities. In contrast, it has been easier for the human resource divisions of universities to justify the recruitment and retention of non-Saudi teaching faculty, as Saudi applicants with the required terminal degrees and higher-level teaching and research credentials have been somewhat more difficult to find. Therefore, as opposed to teaching po-