

ONGOING PROBLEMS

To make higher education in Brazil more equitable requires improving the quality and reach of secondary education, which would depend, in turn, on improving the equally precarious system of basic education. In the meantime, the controversies surrounding the quota bill have led to the neglect of the main issues concerning higher education in Brazil. Creating an effective differentiated system would provide alternatives for students with dissimilar backgrounds and needs. The system must protect high-quality programs from pressures to lower standards. Funding will be required for deserving students who need financial support, while tuition should be charged from those who can pay at public universities. A range of policies are necessary for public and private institutions to improve their quality and to use more effectively the public resources they receive. ■

International Organizations for University Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean

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In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite current conditions favoring university internationalization, coverage and development of organizations promoting international university cooperation remain limited. These issues involve effects of globalization, protocols, political and economic agreements, as well as the opportunity to improve academic quality through cooperation. These factors have not yet been reflected in terms of the consolidation of these institutions or their effects on university development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTIONS

Over 30 international organizations now function in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are defined as "groups of universities," whose missions include "cooperation among their members" and improving "academic development through integrated action." Fifty percent of the actually active organizations were created less than 30 years ago; in the past years, the numbers have increased. Nearly all of the organizations are based on 20 to 50 affiliated universities, and only a fraction have integrated over 100 members.

The total number of institutions affiliated with interuniver-

sity organizations promoting international cooperation remains as yet low; and a considerable percentage of the affiliated are passive members. Moreover, many of these organizations are inactive, mainly due to financial and organizational problems.

Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico possess the highest number of organizational affiliations. On the other hand, in more than a dozen small Caribbean countries no university entities are registered as members of international-cooperation organizations. The situation in the Caribbean evidently involves the relative development of the university system in each country.

PROBLEMS AND TRENDS

International-cooperation agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean cope with several management and financial problems that limit their impact on university development. The increase in these types of organizations has not included differentiation of objectives, resulting in a large degree of overlapping and redundancy among them.

These agencies have encountered major management problems. The limited commitment of their members to materialize agreements relates to the practice that most universities do not plan international activities globally, except for student exchange programs. Even when a university creates a special unit for international affairs, the internal links with the rest of the institution are lax, resulting in limited academic involvement. Consequently, it becomes difficult to identify suitable mediators within each member to develop activities programmed by the international organizations. Relationships between a university and the international organization are personalized and restricted to officers, while the information flow toward academic levels remains deficient. Member-university representation is mostly formal within the international agency management structure, with limited authority and empowerment.

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Within the international organizations, responsibilities are commonly delegated to only a few persons in executive and technical positions, which reveals the low level of proficiency and activity planning, as well as a lack of a performance-based organizational culture. Thus, many conferences and meetings—the main activities undertaken by international university organizations—do not advance concrete academic products.

The Higher Education market in Latin America and the Caribbean appears to operate predominantly by competing

rather than cooperating and seeks to attain immediate benefits from the relationship. Profits from occasional opportunities are favored over well-planned projects. In the Latin American context, obstacles to the functioning of international organizations are caused by the diverse education laws and regulations in each state and even within a country. The lack of protagonists among local actors affects the decision-making process over education and cultural policies for central bureaucratic offices.

A number of financial difficulties affecting international organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean have been cited in official documents, seminars, and publications. Financial budgets based principally on variable incomes originated mainly from specific projects and programs. Fixed incomes generated by membership quotas are limited and less predictable. A high competition exists for funds available from international agencies. International support tends to prioritize African and eastern European countries. Only restricted funding is available for international organizations and the member universities. The short-term benefits, principally monetary, are perceived as a basis for links between member universities and the operating organization.

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CONCLUSION

To solve these difficulties and consolidate and improve levels of performance, Latin American and Caribbean international university organizations have adopted measures. The policy would call for working on projects, to take advantage of the increasing offer of specific grants. The organizations would function as networks. Each one would try to adopt clearly defined institutional profiles, courses of action, and advantages. Internal mechanisms need to be generated to compete for economic resources. The management group will require professionalization. Aspects such as graduate studies, research education, distance education, and information technology represent programs of high institutional profile. Bilateral, rather than multilateral relations, are preferred as a result of organizational difficulties of combining several partners in cooperation programs. Bilateral relations also facilitate specific and concrete short-run agreements.

The internationalization of Latin American and Caribbean universities as well as other aspects of their institutions are still limited. The conflicts must be solved to enable these institutions to take advantage of the increasing value of international affairs, as a result of globalization and the development of information and communications technologies. ■

Polish Semielite Private Higher Education Institutions

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IHE devotes a column in each issue to a contribution from PROPHE, the Program for Research on Private Higher Education, headquartered at the University of Albany. See <http://www.albany.edu/>.

As with most of the eastern European region, private higher education rapidly developed in Poland after the collapse of communism in 1989. Indeed, Poland quickly grew to have the largest private share in the region, some 34 percent of total enrollments. By 2007/08 the enrollment spread across some 324 private institutions, in comparison to 131 public institutions.

An overview of the private sector is possible through the categories invoked in the global private higher education literature: religious, elite/semielite, and demand absorbing/nonelite.

Only few Polish private higher education institutions are run religiously by the Roman Catholic Church and individual churches. The Catholic University of Lublin, established in 1918, is the only institution listed as private that existed under the communist regime. Elite private higher education is quite rare outside the United States, as seen in the *Times Higher Education*/QS ranking and Shanghai Jiao Tong global rankings. Although no Polish university archives these rankings, a few Polish public universities qualify as elite, such as Jagiellonian University and Warsaw University. In contrast, even the best private universities lie below these leaders. As in most countries, in Poland the large majority of private institutions are markedly nonelite. They absorb much of the demand for higher education that could not be accommodated by the public sector, from the communist era, even as that sector has since grown. Private demand absorbers are common, especially in the developing world. “Semielite” institutions lie somewhere between elite and nonelite institutions in the hierarchy of higher education and, compared to the private sector overall, hold much more than average status and selectivity.

POLISH SEMIELITE INSTITUTIONS

Semielite institutions have their own status and characteristics—substantially different from characteristics found in most institutions in the private sector. While data on the exact number are not available, perhaps about 50 to a maximum 100 semielite institutions exist, including examples like the Kozminski University, WSB-National-Louis University, and the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technology. Like