

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.

Many conferences and meetings—the main activities undertaken by international university organizations—do not advance concrete academic products.

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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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

semielite institutions elsewhere, such Polish institutions compete with good second-tier public institutions to become the “first second choices” for prospective students who prefer but cannot obtain the top public places. Some semielite institutions aspire to compete with the best public institutions and thus enhance their academic legitimacy. This competition is most credible in niches, epitomized by the master of business administration (MBA). The methods to create leading schools include specializing in niche areas. Some semielite institutions want to become comprehensive colleges and thus expand the curriculum and introduce PhD programs.

In Poland, as in eastern Europe overall, the private higher education sector suffers challenges of legitimacy based on the lack of tradition, social standing, and established support. The sector is stigmatized by the perception that private institutions are not academically committed. Consequently, semielite institutions not only need to be seen as socially accepted but also that they offer high-quality programs. This process is achieved through improving various types of legitimacy at different levels, which helps distinguish semielite institutions from demand-absorbing ones.

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Most semielite institutions are well recognized and occupy the leading positions in rankings of private institutions published by Poland's newspapers. The institutions also try to present themselves as internationally oriented organizations. Polish semielite institutions resemble such institutions in other countries in being usually Western and US oriented. They publicize their links with US colleges as, for example, Kozminski University with the State University of New York at New Paltz. In general, they are entrepreneurial and market oriented with successful job-oriented programs. As other private institutions, semielite institutions are nonprofit organizations that generate their incomes by charging tuition fees. They do not receive any government subsidy, but their students may be eligible to receive governmental support. Semielite institutions' tuition fees are high.

ACADEMIC LEGITIMACY

To obtain an acceptable academic legitimacy, all Polish semielite institutions undertake various approaches to respond to criticisms that private institutions lack such quality. As mentioned, a small group of semielite institutions labor to create formidable PhD programs and hire leading professors.

For the bulk of semielite institutions a common legitimacy-

seeking strategy is application for accreditation to one of the nongovernmental accreditation commissions (government accreditation is mandatory for all public and private institutions). The process of obtaining accreditation increases institutional prestige considerably.

Another common strategy constitutes building partnerships with foreign institutions and creating opportunities to establish joint degrees and exchange programs. The institutions often offer joint-degree programs and provide foreign modes of education.

Another strategy consists of establishing the right to confer graduate degrees. Institutions offering graduate education may achieve high status as PhD programs imply an engagement in research. Semielite institutions in Poland do not have

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well-developed basic research projects, though some develop applied research. This can help to attract a selective student body. In fact, quite unlike most private institutions, Poland's semielite institutions have students from high social-class backgrounds who are capable of paying ample private tuitions.

The semielite institutions place priority on good practical teaching or training supported by good full-time faculty. A number of them even foster activities to improve their academic staff. Several semielite institutions in Warsaw show a much more favorable student/faculty ratio than other private institutions, and some boast an above-average number of prestigious academics. ■

Iran's Giant Semiprivate University

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In 1983, the new Islamic regime in Iran permitted the founding of a nongovernmental, nonprofit university, called the Islamic Azad University. Azad was the first nongovernmental university to be created after the Iranian revolution of 1979.