Special Focus on Private Higher Education

This issue features several articles on the expanding private sector in higher education worldwide. The role of private universities and colleges, and the “privatization” of public institutions of higher education deserves close attention. As public expenditure for higher education declines in many countries, private initiative has helped to provide access. The private sector is diverse and in many places unregulated. Private institutions have a long history and are often among the most prestigious universities in the country. This is true of several of the Jesuit universities in Latin America, institutions like Harvard and Stanford in the United States, the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines, and others. New private universities, on the other hand, face serious problems of funding and facilities. This is an opportune time to examine the private sector in higher education. - Editors

On the Threshold:
Private Universities in Jordan

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As the belt tightens on higher education expenditure in the state systems of industrialized societies, developing countries are struggling to meet the rising demand for higher education within their borders. In the Near East the concept of the private university has emerged as a strategy for expansion of the higher education system. A case in point is Jordan, where public universities are able to accommodate only a small proportion of the secondary students qualified to continue their education at the university level. About 25,000 Jordanians study abroad each year, effecting a short-term economic drain as well as some subsequent contribution to the brain drain common in developing countries.

In partial response to the demand for higher education, the Jordanian government began licensing private universities in 1990; there are now 12 private institutions with an enrollment in 1994–95 approximating 25 percent of the total student body in Jordan’s universities.

A Brief History
The history of higher education in Jordan is brief indeed. Originally Transjordan, a British protectorate, the small country of Jordan—90,650 square kilometers and with a current population of about 4 million—was part of the map of the Middle East that was redrawn after World War I. National systems of education emerged in the region in the 1920s, resulting in the rapid expansion of school attendance in Transjordan.

After his coronation in 1953, King Hussein (the longest-serving head of state in the world today) created a Royal Education Commission to make recommendations to the Crown for the development of the education system. The commission’s first priority was basic literacy. Education Law No. 20 of 1955 made education compulsory for six years; Education Law No. 16 of 1964 extended the period to nine years. The resulting expansion of compulsory and secondary education created a college market for training teachers, with an increase in enrollment in teacher training institutes from 46 in 1952 to 7,000 in 1976. Since 1950, and even after higher education developed within the country, advanced study abroad was the principal technique used by the government to resolve shortages of educated personnel.

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The country’s first public university, the University of Jordan, was established in 1962, and the second, Yarmouk University, in 1976. In 1981 these were joined by Mu'ta University and in 1995 by Hashemite University and Al Alibyt University. The public institutions also include the Jordan University of Science and Technology, which was separated from Yarmouk University in the late 1980s at a time of political unrest in the north of Jordan, and the Amman University for Applied Engineering, which evolved from a technical college.

In 1990 Amman Private University opened with an enrollment of 1,324 students. In 1991, the Applied Sciences University, Al-Isra’, Philadelphia, the Jordan University for Women, and Princess Sumayya University College for Technology opened their doors, followed by
the Music Academy in 1992; Al-Zaytoonah, Jarash Private University, and UNRWA College in 1993; and Irbid National University and Zarqa Private University in 1994.

Educational System Structure
Both public and private universities operate under specific Jordanian laws—for public universities the Jordanian Universities Law No. 29 of 1987 and for private universities the Private Universities Act No. 19 of 1989. Private universities also fall under the regulation of the Companies Law as public or private shareholding companies. According to law, each public university has a council of deans that is headed by the president and runs the university, a faculty council for each faculty or college, and departmental councils composed of the academic staff of a department. Each university also has a university council (advisory rather than administrative) that includes lay representation and interacts with the public. In addition each public university has government teaching staff regulations specific to the institution that cover matters such as academic freedom.

The Higher Education Council has significant power over private universities.

In contrast, the highest governing body in private universities is the university’s board of trustees rather than a president’s council. There are no regulations that establish employment conditions. The regulation of higher education that does exist is provided by the Higher Education Council. The council is chaired by the minister of education and higher education, and its additional membership consists of the ministers of planning and culture, the presidents of the public universities, representatives from the community colleges, and six lay members. (The members of the council have so far not detected any conflict of interest in their composition, although there is no private university representation in the body.)

The Higher Education Council has significant power over private universities. The council must approve the types of studies and fields of specialization at various levels; set admissions criteria; approve acceptance of donations, gifts, and grants; review performance through examination of budgets and reports, and approve any cultural or technical cooperation agreements the university may wish to make with other institutions and bodies. Regulations are issued for licensing and accreditation with criteria—so specific as the proper student/faculty ratio, the minimum (80 percent) proportion of full-time academic staff, the maximum teaching load for each academic rank, and the maximum number of credit hours a student may take per semester. Public universities, on the other hand, are not subject to the council’s accreditation or review procedures, and may start new programs and build new buildings without council or other government approval.

In recent months considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed with the financial state of the higher education enterprise. Public universities are funded heavily from earmarked taxes—customs duties and license fees. There is also a special “university tax” collected by the Ministry of Finance and distributed annually as decided by the Higher Education Council. Allocation of public monies to higher education is not well defined, and unfortunately the wasata (influence) of an individual president may play a significant role in how much his institution is given. Tuition and fees make up about a quarter of the budget, but have been kept at relatively low levels and have decreased in real terms over the past several years. The current public university deficit is about 30 percent of expenditures in a total budget of J$156 million (about U.S.$224 million).

Neither private universities nor their students receive financial support from the government. The private university must pay a one-time accreditation fee of J$10,000 per department, and under the Companies Law pays an annual tax of 25 percent of profit to the government.

Image of the Private University
The image of the private university in Jordan is a product less of the private universities themselves and more of the prejudice expressed by members of the public university community. Much is made of the fact that students “pay” for their education, and intimations of unfair practices and substandard education abound. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the private universities are not doing a good job, or in fact that the public universities are doing a better job, and so far the latter have escaped scrutiny in spite of a certain amount of fiscal recklessness. Some resentment arises from the fact that private universities pay better salaries, but this is on a contract basis without the expectation of tenure, whereas Jordanian faculty members in the public universities are guaranteed employment for life after two years of service (this stipulation does not apply to non-Jordanians) and frequently
Private Higher Education in Pakistan: The Need for Order

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With the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, only one university existed on the Pakistani side of the partition line—the University of the Punjab. In the ensuing 50 years of statehood, expanding tertiary education enrollments have outpaced the construction of new colleges and universities. Today, Pakistan has 28 public and private universities and over 100 “affiliated” or “constituent” colleges, technical training institutes, teacher training schools, and other specialized institutions. Despite a policy enacted during the Zia-ul-Haq regime in the 1980s to gradually replace English by Urdu, higher education continues to be conducted mostly in English.

In the early 1970s, education was nationalized under the Bhutto regime, effectively ending private education in Pakistan. Grants for funding universities were dispensed by each province. In 1979, the federal government assumed control over all university grants, ensuring a centralized administration of the country’s university system. Today, 67 percent of all public university income comes from these federal grants. Additionally, all appointments of faculty and administrators are made by the Ministry of Education, thereby depriving universities of any autonomy whatsoever. In the mid-1980s, private educational institutions were again allowed to operate, on the condition that they uphold standards.

While the state has assumed increasingly greater control over the financing and administration of higher education through the years, the country has been rocked by severe political upheaval and economic decline. Successive governments have failed to impose an acceptable rule of law within the country. The lawlessness, corruption, nepo-