



Privatization of Latin American Higher Education Reflects Worldwide Trend of Collapse of Public Monopoly in Education

by Daniel C. Levy

Few policy issues in higher education surpass privatization for the interest, debate and change witnessed internationally over recent years. And no continent has matched Latin America for the intensity and breadth of transformation realized to date.

Private higher education in Latin America—already powerful a decade ago—has been significantly strengthened and increasingly fits the reigning political-economic ideology. Although the overall private share of enrollments—about one-third—has not grown dramatically, vitality and coverage have. Moreover, private growth has been enormous in the research arena.

Not long ago, the remarkable privatization of Latin American higher education was vulnerable for being exceptional. Now, the most dramatic change on the worldwide higher education landscape involving private-public issues is the collapse of public monopoly.

Other Regions Joining Trend

Sub-Saharan Africa has joined a minority of nations from North Africa and the Middle East in having some private sectors. Kenya leads at least six pioneer sub-Saharan nations. The largest African nation, Nigeria, has serious prospects to join, after an aborted experiment in the 1980s. Throughout the region, the prime factor is a sharp growth in overall demand for higher education which cannot be met by decreasing government revenues. Other factors are a decline of status, quality, and privilege as well as the diminished opportunity within the public sector.

The collapse of communism

has opened enormous private possibilities in other regions. Romania has about 20 private universities which are attracting students, though lacking State recognition. China has a growing number of “nonpublic” universities drawing on donations from Chinese living overseas and students eager for job placement in business. Australia’s private sector is led by the elite Bond University. England chartered its first private university in 1983. After more than 40 years of public monopoly, Germany has also opened a pri-

International Trends

mate sector. Greece illustrates how private institutions can expand even when government does not officially recognize their degrees.

Japan, the Philippines and South Korea demonstrate the existence of strong private sectors holding over three in four enrollments, followed by several other Asian nations with private majorities, such as Indonesia and Bangladesh.

While Latin Americans have reason to note and monitor privatizing trends elsewhere, there is arguably greater rea-

son for others to study Latin America. They are those nations mentioned earlier that have only recently begun to experience dual-sector systems, which are often ardently promoted by international agencies such as the World Bank and the Americas’ Fund for Independent Universities.

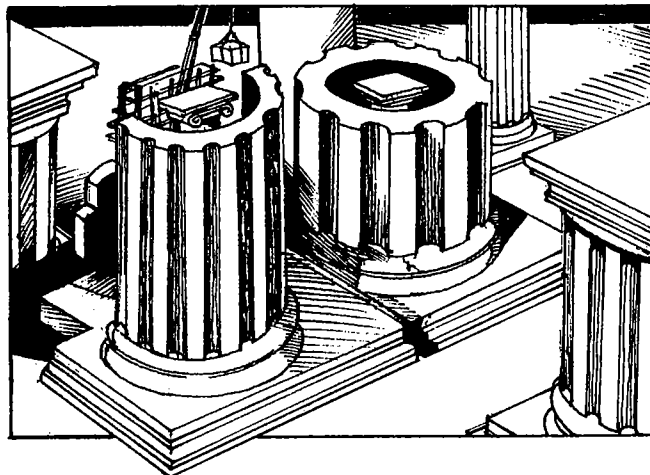
Political Economy a Factor

The privatization of higher education occurring in much of the world is part of a broader privatization of the political economy.

For decades, privatization of higher education was inextricably interwoven with broader political, economic and social phenomena in Latin America. Yet, up until a decade ago there were serious reservations about the degree to which this could be seen as part of a wider political-economic privatization. In the 1960s, for example, much privatization of higher education occurred while the role of the State was in fact vigorously growing. Continued privatization in the 1970s occurred as the State role became more muddled. This means that considerable privatization occurred in higher education without being part of, or dependent on, a broader privatization. But today, the two march closely together.

Nearly every Latin American nation is now experiencing a diminished role for the State and increased room for private action, both for-profit and non-profit.

Chile under military rule (1973-90) led in privatization, but a democratic Chile remains much more friendly to private action than was pre-coup Chile. Other democratizing nations



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Opinions Neither Sought Nor Heard

The crisis of higher education in the developing world has been the subject of countless debates in recent years. Many reasons are given for the crisis, including poor planning and too rapid an expansion under strong social pressure for higher education. The current assessment is that higher education has become too expensive for many countries to sustain. University budgets are being reduced in favor of other priorities.

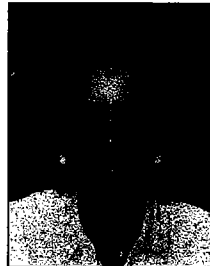
In Latin America, where there is increasing political stability and economic growth, private higher education is filling the gap somewhat.

The situation is quite different in Africa, where the private sector is almost non-existent. There are frequent confrontations between students and governments. Universities have been intermittently closed for long periods of time, and generations of students are piling up in already overcrowded institutions.

It is fundamentally unfair to see higher education in the developing world in narrow and economic terms, and to have it compete for funding with basic health care or transportation.

It may be too expensive, a big burden for weak economies and the benefits may not even be apparent, but it is difficult to imagine future growth without a trained and competent work force.

Most educators and professionals in developing nations are really skeptical about the economic remedies that are being forced upon them. Unfortunately, their opinions are neither sought nor heard, and the experiment continues.



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■ *Mariam Assefa*



Country Updates

✦ **Cambodia:** French Study Protested

About 1,000 Cambodian students took to the streets in October in a peaceful protest against compulsory French language classes at their Institute of Technology.

It was the first mass demonstration seen in Phnom Penh since 1991. The students were irate because France's promised educational assistance to their school was contingent upon their learning the language of their former colonial master.

Earlier this year, King Norodom Sihanouk had pledged that Cambodia, which was a French colony until 1955, would become a member of the French-speaking community of nations. This move was popular with older Cambodians, but not with others.

"Around the world, about 90 percent of students are learning the English language," said Ing Sochea, an engineering student at the Institute. "French does not help us develop." He accused the French government of harboring a "colonial attitude" toward Cambodia and of using stealth to spread "French influence."

English is by far the most popular second language in Cambodia. Scores of backyard English schools teach capacity crowds each night in Phnom Penh. (*International Herald Tribune* 10/8/92)

✦ **Canada:** Change in Nursing Distance Program

The Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Hospital Association have announced a new direction for their long-standing and successful joint initiative, the Introduction to Nursing Management: Distance Education Program, a program that has been operating for 32 years and has served 7,000 students in the last ten years alone.

In response to requests from nurses for university credits, and a resolution at the 1990 annual meeting of the Canadian Nurses Association, negotiations are underway to establish the Nursing Management program with an accredited degree-granting institution.

Although the program is already accepted for credit toward baccalaureate nursing degrees in 15 Canadian universities and institutes, it has been decided that having a permanent home in an educational institution will benefit more nurses across the country.

During the transition to a degree-granting institution, the program will be managed by the Canadian Nurses Association. For more information, contact: Nursing Management Programme, 17 York St., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5S7, Canada. (*International Nursing Review*, July/August '93)

✦ Traditionally, Ontario universities have been loath to recognize applied arts and technology courses taken at community colleges, as well as diplomas earned at those institutions.

Now, in response to both economic measures and student demand, a growing number of universities and community colleges in Ontario are forging alliances. Typical of the new cooperation is a recent agreement between the University of Guelph and Seneca College. The university will set aside 10 places in its bachelor of science program for graduates of Seneca's biology, pharmaceutical, and chemical technology programs who have maintained an average of at least B+.

A recent report by the Ontario government urges legitimizing vocational training by even closer cooperation among institutions. It also recommends establishment of a new degree-granting entity, the Ontario Institute for Advanced Training, to promote postsecondary advanced-training programs. The institute—made up of representatives from education, business and labor—would design new technology degrees that could be earned by completing courses at a community college.

Earlier this year, one of Canada's few polytechnic institutions won a decades-long battle to become a university, now known as Ryerson Polytechnic University.

Some argue that the only way to give real legitimacy to vocational education is to attach a degree to it. Gary Polonsky, president of Durham College, says "The body of applied knowledge has developed so quickly and deeply, it's now deserving of degree status." (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* 10/20/93)

✦ **China:** New Overseer for Foreigners Studying Traditional Chinese Medicine

The China International Higher Education Association on Traditional Chinese Medicine has recently been set up to oversee the increasing number of foreigners studying traditional Chinese medicine.

Since 1988, 14,700 foreigners have been trained in China's 21 traditional medical colleges. Many are choosing in-depth study rather than short-term training.

The new organization will work out unified policies regarding student enrollment, degrees conferred, and scholarship awards, and will facilitate exchanges among colleges.

Continued

☒ Country Updates

It also will try to increase the enrollment of students from Europe and America with Western medical backgrounds. (*China Daily* 11/24/93)

☒ A shortage of funds has become the main obstacle to achieving nine years of compulsory education by the turn of the century according to Wang Wenzhan, the State Education Commission's/SEC Director of Basic Education.

To date, the allocation of funds to support education has been 12 percent of the national budget, which will increase to 15 percent by 1995. Governments at all levels are being urged to increase their allocations for education.

In 1992, 88.1 percent of State funding for primary schools was used to pay for teachers' salaries, with little money left for improvement of facilities. In high schools, 81.5 percent of funds went for salaries. If China is to universalize its compulsory education system, it must develop the facilities to enroll at least 34 million more students by 2000.

Local governments are failing to collect the full tax for education in rural regions, according to the SEC. In 1992, only \$951 million, or .79 percent of farmers' income, was collected, much less than required by law. The SEC warned that after a decade of great development, basic education may suffer a setback unless the central government can find ways to ease the current financial tension. (*China Daily* 10/30/93)

☒ Eritrea: University Closure

When students arrived for the start of the new academic year at the University of Asmara in September, they found that the fall semester had been canceled.

The government also re-assigned one third of the institution's 106 instructors to other jobs in the country, basically because they were not qualified to teach.

University administrators and officials of the fledgling government called the measures necessary to clear the way for reforms that will enable the University of Asmara to pull itself up to international standards.

An Italian colony for the first half of this century, Eritrea was made a federated part of Ethiopia by the United Nations in 1952. A decade later, the country was annexed by Ethiopia, inspiring a secessionist movement and a guerrilla war which lasted until 1991. Eritrea gained full independence from Ethiopia last spring.

The campus was closed in 1990 and reopened in September 1991 with a small faculty. When classes resume in January, the university will have room for only about 900 of the 15,000 high school students who took the university entrance examination this year. The country has only two other postsecondary institutions, both technical colleges.

A 10-year plan for the university envisions a new main campus with four branches and several agricultural research stations. Building and equipping the new college of engineer-

ing and technology alone will require tens of millions of U.S. dollars, according to the new university president, Andebrhan Wolde Giorgis. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* 10/20/93)

☒ Estonia: Reforms in Progress

The *Riigikogu* (parliament) is working on educational legislation dealing with the general school and the gymnasium, preschool education, higher education, private schools, and adult education.

A law has been passed allowing the Ministry of Culture and Education to issue teaching licenses to private colleges. Eight such institutions have been licensed. The licenses do not, however, guarantee official recognition of diplomas from these institutions. Recognition is obtainable at the end of the second year of activity, if the necessary criteria have been met.

It is planned to introduce an accreditation system at tertiary level. A transition also will be made from a course system to a subject system at university level, allowing students to graduate year round rather than only in June.

In order to strengthen Estonia's contacts with western countries, a number of cooperative agreements have been made in the areas of training of school administrators and in-service training of teachers of German (Austria); vocational and commercial training (Denmark); problems of people of the Finno-Ugric language group (Finland and Hungary); and cultural cooperation (Minister of Culture of the Baltic Sea Countries). (*Faits nouveaux* 3/93)

☒ Ethiopia: Broken Spirits

Addis Ababa University has had a tumultuous year. With 16,000 students, the university is Ethiopia's largest and considered among Africa's finest.

The turmoil began in January with a student demonstration protesting plans by the United Nations to send officials to observe the referendum on independence in the breakaway northern province of Eritrea. Government security forces shot and killed one protester and beat dozens of others.

Following that incident, the government shut down the university for three months, detained more than 100 students, and dismissed the institution's president, two vice-presidents and 39 other administrators and academics.

Education Minister Genet Zewdie said the government's actions were aimed at changing the intolerant political climate fostered by some factions at the university. She added that academic standards at the university had been in decline, with little research being conducted and some faculty members holding other jobs while continuing to draw their university salary.

A feeling of resignation now permeates the remaining faculty and student body. One professor said the government's

actions had broken the spirit of the university: "There is an atmosphere of resignation. The will to resist has been broken." (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* 11/10/93)

✦ *Haiti*: Pushed to the Brink

Higher education in Haiti seems headed toward collapse—a situation brought about by the country's political and economic crises, social unrest, and, in a large part, decades of neglect. Events of recent months, however, clearly have pushed things to the brink.

Students at the State University of Haiti, long accustomed to the disruptions and lack of resources that characterize education at their institution, almost expected the academic year to begin there as scheduled in October. It did not. Buffeted by growing street violence and general strikes, most schools and colleges here either did not open at all, or did so for only a day or two before shutting down. Now, like many businesses, they stand idle.

This year the university was expecting an enrollment of about 8,000, which students say is already far beyond the institution's capacity. Since 1987, as many as 20,000 people have sought places in higher education each year, but only 3,500 places were available for entering students at all the public and private institutions combined.

Since the State University has been unable to increase faculty salaries, only 3 percent of the academics now hold full-time campus posts. They spend a growing share of their time trying to find other work to support themselves. As a result, virtually no research is being conducted at the national university. Constant disruptions have resulted in the loss of the 1992-1993 academic year for most students.

Military leaders see the State University of Haiti as a center of resistance, and installed Gerard Bissainthe as rector in 1992. He fired many top administrators and about 100 instructors, and did not allow many students to return. Bissainthe resigned last summer, and now leads a coalition against exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Because education here is virtually unregulated, legions of proprietary schools thrive at all levels, many without credentials, some fraudulent. Many college students are found to be illiterate. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* 11/17/92)

✦ *India*: More "Self-styled" Universities

Names of more "self-styled" universities have been released by the University Grants Commission. These institutions have no legal sanction to call themselves a university/vidyapith and to award degrees:

Indian Education Council, Uttar Pradesh; Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh; Bharatva Siksha Parishad, Uttar Pradesh; Open

Vishwavidyalaya, Lucknow; St. Ravidas Vishwavidyalaya, Mumraipur, Bulandshar, Uttar Pradesh; Raja Arabic University, Nagpur; Bharati Vidyapeeth, College of Engineering and Medical Education, Satara Road, Katraj, Pune; Akhil Bharatiya Ghandi Nisaropchar Vidyapeeth, Vijaynager, Nanded Housing Society, Nanded; Mahatma Ghandi Nisargopchar Vidyapeeth, Ghandhi Bhavan, Kothrud, Pune; and Urdu University, Motia Park, Bhopal.

For additional self-styled universities, see WENR F90-5 and S90-4. (*University News*, 9/27/93)

✦ *Italy*: Recognized Private Translation Schools

The State formally recognized a number of private translation schools in October 1986. Among them are the *Scuola Superiore per Interpreti Traduttori*, attached to the University of Trieste. A second school is attached to the University of Bologna at Forli.

Also recognized is the *Scuola Superiore per Interpreti e Traduttori* with branches in Milan, Rome, Naples, Florence, Bologna, Bari, and Genoa, offering two-year programs in translation and interpreting and three-year programs in parliamentary interpretation.

Other institutions include the *Scuola Superiore Interpreti e Traduttori*, Como; *Istituto Linguistico Superiore*, Varese; *Scuola Superiore Europea Interpreti e Traduttori Aleardi*, Verona; *Scuola Superiore Interpreti e Traduttori San Pellegrino*, Messina Adriatico (Forli); *Scuola Superiore Interpreti e Traduttori*, Perugia; *Scuola Superiore Interpreti e Traduttori*, Pisa; *Scuola Superiore Lingue Moderne Interpreti Traduttori Istituto San Pio V*, Rome; *Scuola Superiore Interpreti Traduttori dell'IFOSTA*, Rome; *Istituto Superiore Interpreti Traduttori Maddaloni*, Caserta, *Scuola Superiore Interpreti Traduttori*, Calabria; *Scuola Superiore Interpreti Traduttori*, Palermo.

All require the *diploma di maturita* (maturity diploma) and an entrance examination for admission. Generally, the institutions offer a two-year basic program leading to a *diploma di interpreti di trattative* (Diploma of Interpreter/Translator) followed by a third year of specialization leading to a *diploma di specializzazione di interprete*. Diploma holders are eligible for admission to the third year of a *laurea* program at the private University Institute of Modern Languages in Milan and Feltre. Public universities also grant recognition by examination, although negotiations are underway for general recognition. (Correspondence from Fondazione Rui 10/93)

✦ *Japan*: Graduate School Enrollments Boosted

More university graduates than ever are going to graduate school because they can't find jobs, an Education Ministry survey has found. A record 8.5 percent of this year's graduates, or some 38,000, decided to continue their studies. Only

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