



WEBINAR: EDUCATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

4 March 2014, 16h00 Paris (France) time

HIGHLIGHTS

The context for innovation

Skills identified as necessary in the 21st century are not the skills generally nurtured and developed in higher education. Innovation of higher education is needed for students to acquire skills for success in the labour market and for helping society develop in a civilised way.

Innovation in higher education can happen in various areas, including:

- technology
- research and development
- school organisation
- system organisation

There is substantial and real resistance to innovation in traditional and especially public higher education. The presenters at this webinar addressed questions relating to innovation and private higher education, namely:

- Is there a privatisation of HE systems – as a “system innovation”?
- How much innovation is there in the private HE sector?
- What do the innovations look like? Are there promising practices that are unique to the private sector?
- What are the mechanisms to ensure that these innovative practices can inspire the overall HE sector?

Private higher education

Distinguishing between for-profit or non-profit private higher education is not always helpful. The very diverse private higher education sector can be usefully categorised in three broad segments:

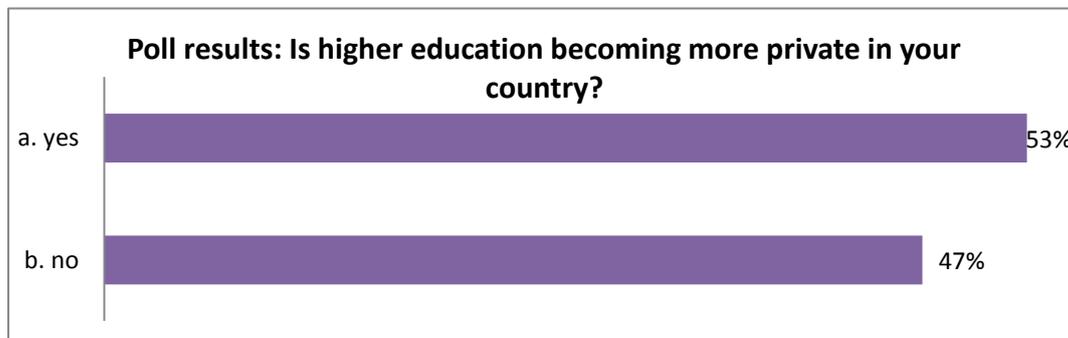
- elite institutions: typically not-for-profit, research intensive, and historical;
- middle end institutions: not elite, but above average or average, not research intensive;
- low end institutions: typically for-profit “demand absorbing” institutions (often small size).

In every region, the number of private higher education *institutions* is significant, including in Europe. Forty-four percent of higher education institutions in Europe are private; the private higher education sector here is smaller than in any other region.

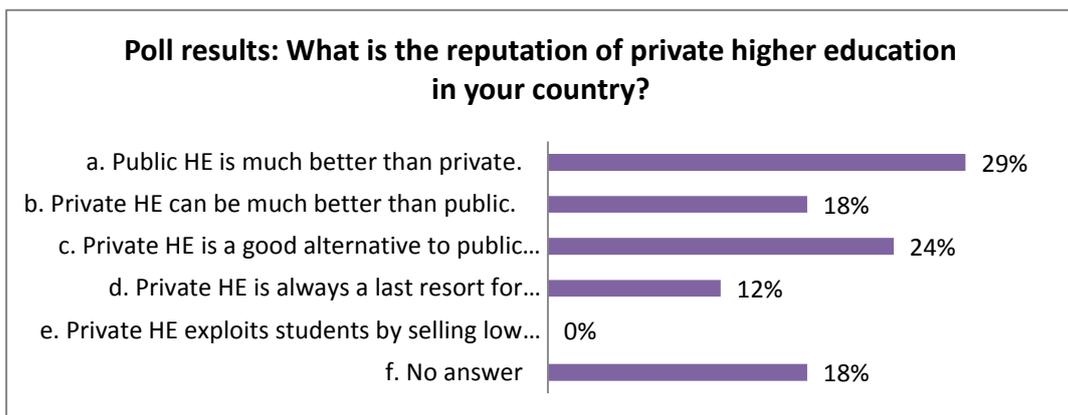
Meanwhile, the number of *students* enrolled in private higher education is much smaller than the percentage of institutions within systems. This is the case in every region. In Latin America, for example, where 69% of higher education institutions are private, only 40% of students are enrolled in private higher education. In Europe, 18% of students are enrolled in private higher education.

In general, private higher education institutions tend to enrol fewer students than public institutions. There are numerous instances of licensed, autonomous private higher education institutions with fewer than 100 students enrolled at any given time.

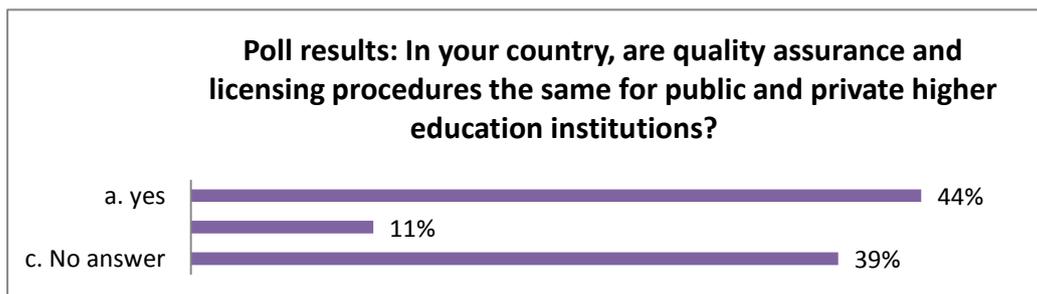
During the Webinar, participants were asked if higher education is becoming more private. Becoming more private could mean many things: more private institutions, more students enrolling in private higher education, more private funding (and less public funding) of public universities, etc. Among the participants of the webinar, just over half reported increasing privatisation of higher education.



In every region, the private higher education sector is growing. With growth has come an increase in perceived legitimacy and reputation of private higher education. Webinar participants confirm this finding with their responses when asked about the reputation of private higher education in their countries. No one responded that private higher education is exploitative. Almost 20% reported that private higher education can be much better than public and 12% replied that private higher education is always a last resort for students entering higher education.



The improved reputation of private higher education evolved mainly from consistency in quality assurance procedures and practices. In most national contexts, private higher education was allowed by law before quality controls were in place. It took time for quality assurance to catch up with the rapid expansion of private higher education and this continues to be a challenge; however, the application of the same licensing and quality assurance procedures for public and private higher education is advancement toward this goal. More than 40% of Webinar participants reported that quality assurance and licensing procedures are the same for public and private higher education institutions.



Innovation in private higher education

The OECD's [Centre for Educational Research and Innovation](#) (CERI) investigated the question: is there more innovation in private higher education than in public? To an extent, they found that yes, there is more innovation in private higher education.

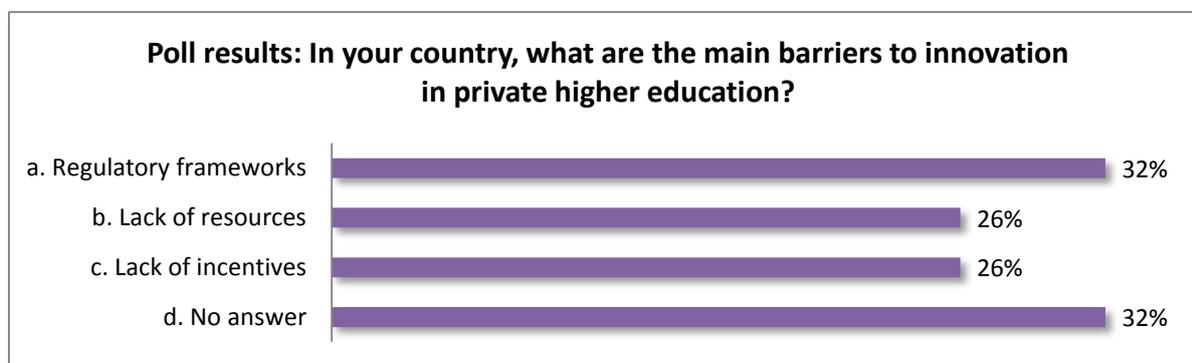
There are good reasons why innovation would be a greater necessity for private higher education:

- more non-traditional students: various ages, learning styles, cultural and economic backgrounds);
- more part-time students: limited availability due to work schedules, family responsibilities, commuting distance, etc.;
- competition: variety of options for students seeking higher education.

In reaction, private higher education institutions are:

- in greater need of innovation to meet (and create) demand for their services, so they innovate the supply of educational programmes;
- mMore responsive to the needs of students, so they innovate pedagogy;
- oOften less subject to central regulation and public administration rules, so there is more room for organisational innovation;
- sometimes better able to access non-public financing, which makes them more able to innovate with the funds to support change;

There are always barriers to innovation and these barriers can be different for public than for private higher education. Webinar participants identified three barriers to innovation in private higher education (more than one answer was possible per respondent): regulatory frameworks, lack of resources and lack of incentives.



Teaching vs. research

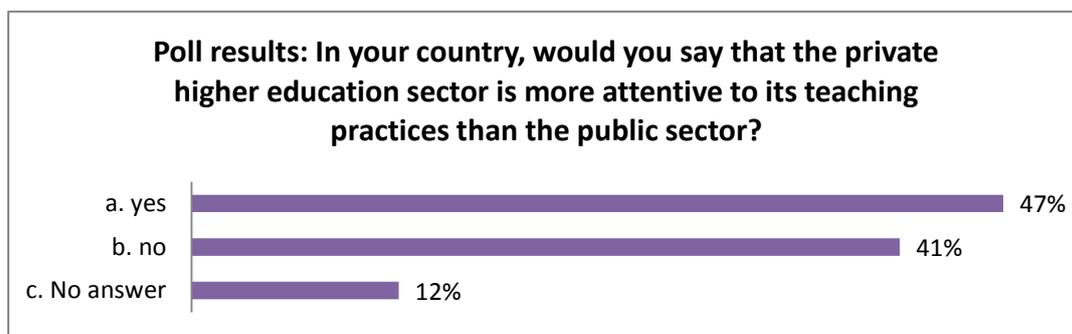
Most research and funding for research occur in the public higher education sector. Some private higher education institutions have taken the initiative to demonstrate their quality in teaching and student development.

Although teaching is a claimed priority throughout higher education, the recruitment, promotion and retention strategies of public universities for academic staff are primarily based on achievements in research. Private higher education institutions have more flexibility in this regard and can recruit and promote faculty based on excellence in teaching. Professional development of faculty is often an integral part of the organisational routines in private higher education institutions.

Furthermore, networks of private higher education institutions are establishing innovative organisational and professional development structures to exploit synergies in the production of instructional content and in the

delivery of student services across member institutions. CERI suggests that sharing resources across public institutions could be explored in a similar manner.

Of course, it is not a hard and fast rule that private higher education is more attentive to teaching than public universities. Webinar participants confirm this in their responses to a poll asking if private higher education is more attentive to teaching practices than the public sector. The responses were nearly evenly split, indicating that attention to teaching practices is also a priority for public higher education.



Partnerships with industry

CERI has found that partnerships with industry are a distinctive feature of the private higher education sector. Such partnerships are usually pervasive throughout all dimensions of an institution's operations and they support organisational and pedagogical innovations that foster graduates' employability. CERI has found many examples of innovative solutions developed by private higher education institutions to implement skills-based curricula, teaching and assessment practices.

Digital revolution

The digital revolution has brought new opportunities to higher education, but it also challenges existing organisational business models. Generally, public universities have been at the forefront of developments in costly technology-enhanced innovations in higher education. Private higher education institutions, meanwhile, have benefitted from many of the innovations pioneered in the public sector.

Mixed picture

Although CERI findings show significant innovation in private higher education, the greater picture is mixed. Capacity to innovate depends on an institution's size and resources:

- Small institutions may find it difficult to innovate proactively.
- The rising cost of educational delivery can impede (or sometimes drive) innovation.
- Large networks of private higher education institutions are gaining stronger market positions and developing innovations in a variety of areas.

Lessons for public higher education

CERI analysis has identified the following lessons for public higher education when it comes to innovation:

- The organisation should give more importance to pedagogical knowledge and professional development.
- There are better ways of carrying out needs analysis and more continuous professional development of faculty.
- There is a need for more systematic exchanges and collaboration with industry.

Find out more about the OECD-Laureate seminar

Summary report, agenda and presentations available on the CERI Innovation Strategy project website:

www.oecd.org/edu/innovation

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