

# Fulbright New Century Scholars Symposium on Higher Education

October 24, 2006

UNESCO, Paris

## Statements and Recommendations

### ***Working Group Four: Rethinking Public-Private Mix in Higher Education: Global Trends and National Policy Challenges***

Higher education (HE) is experiencing a rapid worldwide expansion and private higher education (PRHE) takes a significant role in that. In many countries the recent increase of PRHE, often associated with a for-profit orientation and the appearance of international providers, raises concerns about academic quality, equity, and the coherence of the system. Recent developments in PRHE, coupled with the increasing marketisation of public institutions, has often led to competition for students, funds, and human resources, blur the distinctions between private and public institutions. In order to address the novel and significant policy challenges, it is necessary to rethink some basic concepts and definitions, because private higher education is here to stay.

Therefore, in order to support the formulation of adequate HE policies, an analytical framework is proposed that is systemic and takes into account the contexts, dimensions, and functions of HE. The historical, socio-economic and political contexts have to be considered as they vary across countries. The dimensions to distinguish between public and private institutions should include sources of funding, ownership, autonomy, and whether the institution is for profit or not. The relative importance of multiple functions of HE (teaching, research, promotions of economic and social development) needs to be reflected in policy making according to national needs.

### **Recommendations**

- The higher education system should be examined as a whole and PRHE regarded as its integral part.
- Effectiveness, efficiency, and equity should be used as the primary goals for policy development. These goals ought to be pursued in all aspects of policymaking including regulations on admissions, quality assurance, governance, institutional support, allocation of research funds and student financial aid.
- Distinguish public from private benefits of HE. Use more public resources to accomplish public missions (such as generation of knowledge and pursuit of socio-economic development) and mobilize private resources to accomplish private benefits (such as individual advancement in the labor market).
- It is important to consider long term and indirect consequences of policies, as well as short term and direct policy objectives to avoid unintended consequences.
- In order to achieve effective policy development, indigenous capacities in research and policy-making in higher education need to be strengthened.
- In countries where the private sector has expanded to accommodate unfulfilled demand, low income students risk paying more for low quality education. Therefore, corrective mechanisms should be developed to address the issues of access and equity.
- In countries where demand for HE has expanded without the corresponding public resources, greater public allocations as well as mobilization of private resources are required, combined with proper quality assurance and accountability mechanisms.