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**The Two Decades of Privatization in Polish
Higher Education: Cost-Sharing,
Equity, and Access**

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Abstract

Poland, via privatization, found its own way of expanding its higher education system in the last twenty years. The emergence of powerful market mechanisms in public higher education and the emergence of the private sector itself in Poland can be viewed as the two different faces of the same process of the privatization of higher education. In existing literature, Polish higher education in general has been discussed in a highly dichotomous manner: either public institutions, or private institutions, or both as opposite to each other). The radical distinctiveness of the public sector from the private sector has been a constant point of reference in both research and policy analyses. But both sectors can also be looked at as following the same road of privatization if the phenomenon of privatization as applied to higher education is taken more widely. The paper is divided into 8 sections: the general theme of coping with financial austerity in various segments of public services and the wider economic contexts accompanying the privatization of higher education; “the policy of non-policy” as a guiding thread in the expansion of both public and private sectors and its positive impact on equitable access to higher education; the two decades of growth of the private sector; financing higher education in Poland in brief; internal privatization as a response of the underfunded public sector; cost-sharing – the different roles of tuition fees in (nominally free) public and private sectors; academic survival strategies in the public sector in the times of financial distress and their implications on the Polish academic profession; and conclusions.

Marek Kwiek

THE TWO DECADES OF PRIVATIZATION IN POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION. COST-SHARING, EQUITY, AND ACCESS

1. INTRODUCTION

The general theme of coping with financial austerity has been very much visible in thinking about the future of (public) higher education in the last two decades, and it has often been accompanied by its twin theme in thinking about the future of public services in general, namely that of privatization.¹ The generally tight fiscal environment for public services², higher education included, continues, and in many countries is even bound to intensify (as Paul Pierson has entitled his influential paper, we face “coping with permanent austerity” in major public services today, or as D. Bruce Johnstone put it with reference to public higher education, we face “pervasive condition of austerity”, Pierson 2001, Johnstone 1998: 4). In European transition countries, the solutions suggested to higher education systems increasingly include references to such notions as academic entrepreneurialism (in both teaching, research, and third mission activities), financial self-reliance of academic institutions, and cost-sharing (the introduction, or increasing, of tuition fees, smaller state subsidies, more student loans and less student scholarships etc, see Shattock 2005, Shattock and Temple 2006, Williams 2003, Kwiek 2006a, 2006d, 2007a). What is also sometimes

¹ The present working paper is forthcoming in *Financing Access and Equity in Higher Education*, Jane Knight (ed.), Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei, Sense Publishers (2009).

² I would like to greatly acknowledge the support of the Fulbright Foundation Program of “New Century Scholars” (2007-2008), led by the Distinguished Leader D. Bruce Johnstone, in which I had the honour to participate: “Higher Education in the 21st Century: Equity and Access”. I am greatly indebted to the whole team of scholars with whom I have spent a fascinating year of various joint activities worldwide. Additionally, let me thank Adriana Golebiewska for her superb research assistance and data processing.

suggested is bigger workloads for academics and bigger classes for students, contracts for faculty instead of tenure etc. As a European Commission's influential policy paper concludes,

After remaining a comparatively isolated universe for a very long period, both in relation to society and to the rest of the world, with funding guaranteed and a status protected by respect for their autonomy, European universities have gone through the second half of the 20th-century without really calling into question the role or the nature of what they should be contributing to society (EC 2003: 22).

So higher education is no longer isolated from the society and, especially, from the economy; its (especially research) funding is no longer guaranteed and its social missions are under public scrutiny. The solutions suggested are both cost-side and revenue-side, strongly relating the future of public higher education to current (and envisaged for the future) financial austerity. Consequently, university missions are often being renegotiated, either in theory or in practice (or both), new economic contexts of the functioning of public universities are increasingly important, following renewed interest of policy-makers in higher education/economy nexus, and new concepts for rethinking higher education are being coined by international and supranational organizations (the EU, the World Bank, OECD). There is clear convergence of economic and academic spaces in thinking about reforming higher education in Europe, the best exemplification being the recent subsumption of the Bologna Process of creating a common "European higher education area" ("certainly the politically most powerful campaign ever experienced in Europe to develop the patterns of the higher education system similarly across European countries" as Teichler put it, 2007: 93), initially focused on students, under the overall economic EU Lisbon strategy of more growth/more jobs while creating the most competitive economy in the world, see Kwiek 2004b.

Various European countries (and especially transition countries) have been experimenting with the privatization of various segments of the welfare state, both cash benefits (such as old-age pensions) and benefits in kind (such as health care and higher education, see Barr 2004: 89-92). Welfare state seems to be "overburdened" today, and operates under increasing financial pressures. As Nicolas Spulber in *Redefining the State*, stressed, "whatever its form, a privatization program involves a broad redefinition of the role of the state and of its relations to the market and the society. Specifically, it aims at shifting the prevailing balance between

the public sector and the private economy, by rolling back the state's power and activities via public ownership and public services – but in practice its impact is far more widespread". The crucial role is played by wider political, economic and legal contexts (Spulber 1997: 148). Because of changing European demographics and the aging of European societies, the costs of both healthcare and pensions are very high, and they tend to be increasing as a percentage of GDP in almost all Western EU countries (Pestieau 2006: 24); the total costs of university research are escalating, and the participation rates in higher education has never been as high as today (although they seem to be stabilizing in many countries on current, very high, levels, Poland included). The competition for (tax-generated) public funds has been growing. Higher inflow of private funds to research and development through technology transfer and corporate contracts, to higher education through student fees, to pension systems through multi-pillar solutions instead of pay-as-you-go ones, and to healthcare through semi-privatization and individual private insurance policies – is happening right before our eyes. Perhaps especially, but not inclusively, in the European transition economies. Current trends and priorities in funding – as discussed in a North American context – do not represent the cyclical changes, though: they are structural and they will predominate for a long time (ACE 2004: 4).

An interesting angle to view the future of higher education in the context of the future of public services is to view it through what D. Bruce Johnstone has called “diverging trajectories of costs and available revenues”, which is a function of (1) per-student costs, (2) increasing participation and (often) population growth, and (3) increasingly inadequate government revenue (shrinking tax base) (Johnstone 2007: 1). Viewed from this angle, higher education in several major European transition countries, Poland and Romania included, has been consistently turning towards privatization, both external (new booming private sector) and internal (fee-paying courses offered in the nominally free public sector, see Kwiek 2007a, 2007c). If we view privatization as a “process or tendency of universities taking on characteristics of, or operational norms associated with, private enterprises” (Johnstone 2007: 1), then privatization of higher education is in full swing in several major European transition countries. Johnstone finds it useful to look at privatization as a direction along the continua of several related yet distinct dimensions: from “high publicness” to “low privatness”, with 5 elements under consideration: mission or purpose, ownership, source of revenue, control by government, and norms of management (Johnstone 2007: 2). In general terms, privatization is “the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions to

private individuals and agencies. Education can be privatized if students enrol at private schools or if higher education is privately funded (Belfield and Levin 2002: 19). Poland provides examples of both types of privatization: private provision and private funding.

The emergence of powerful market mechanisms in public higher education and the emergence of the private sector itself in Poland can be viewed as the two different faces of the same process of the privatization of higher education. In existing literature, Polish higher education in general has been discussed in a highly dichotomous manner: either public institutions, or private institutions, or both as *opposite* to each other). The radical distinctiveness of the public sector from the private sector has been a constant point of reference in both research and policy analyses. But, surprisingly, both sectors can also be looked at as following the same road of privatization if the phenomenon of privatization as applied to higher education is taken more widely. Privatization according to Johnstone's paper suggests a movement along a dimension – rather than an “absolute quality or precisely measurable distinction”. It may mean any or all of the following: seeking greater autonomy from government, relying more on revenue from tuition fees, attention to marketing, “enrollment management”, adopting a culture of service (to the student-client), fund raising, contracting out auxiliary enterprises, and trimming departments and other units that seem not to be attracting students or research funds (Johnstone 2007: 1-2). As Daniel C. Levy stressed, “institutions called private and public are not always behaviorally private and public, respectively” (Levy 1986: 15) – and this is indeed the Polish case.

2. THE “POLICY OF NON-POLICY”, MARKET FORCES, AND THE COMPETITION

What are the current results of privatization processes in higher education? Was privatization beneficial – and if yes, to which segments of society? What would have happened to equity and access to higher education without ongoing privatization? Privatization in the above wide sense of the term brings us closer to the issue of equity and access: why in Poland, in contrast to most other Central and Eastern European and Central Asian transition countries, the post-communist transformation period (1989-2007) brought about a significant decrease in inequality of access to higher education? (for a much more detailed discussion, see Kwiek

2008a, from which part of this section is taken). What was at the heart of the Polish educational policy success (testified by the rise in the number of students from disadvantaged, especially rural, communities from 2 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2002 to 20 percent in 2005, and by the rise in the total number of students from 400 000 in 1990 to almost 2 000 000 in 2007, see OECD 2006a, 2006b, Youth 2005)?³ The crucial role was played by market forces, academic entrepreneurialism (mostly teaching-related) and the competition introduced to the Polish educational arena in 1990. In other words, the crucial role was played by privatization (in a wider sense) of Polish higher education system. Along the enormous competition for free (tax-paid) places at public universities, there had appeared in the 1990s new private (initially mostly BA-level) universities and fee-paying places available at public universities for part-time students. Increasingly, there were dramatically more students, and also increasingly, especially in the 2000s, they came from disadvantaged social backgrounds. The widening of access and growing equity were accompanied by fee-paying mechanisms, which in 1998 were supplemented by the introduction of student loans, more widespread in the 2000s.⁴ Surprisingly, the phenomenon did not occur in other European transition countries, or its scope was substantially smaller. Poland also witnessed exceptionally high returns from higher education (about 160 percent of the average earnings in 1998-2004, OECD 2005: 130) and relatively small unemployment rates among its higher education graduates. There were significant costs to these developments which need careful examination, though: lacking quality control of both public and private sectors, problems of financing of the public sector (O'Brien and Paczynski 2006: 18; OECD 2006b: 105ff), and growing conflict between quantitative development/expansion of the system and quality standards, especially in the mid 1990s (OECD 2006a: 14). The Polish expansion should thus be viewed in a comparative context of major OECD economies and selected transition countries to see its successes and limitations. Privatization in Polish higher education had two

³ In Poland, the radical educational differentiation between the rural communities and the cities, to the extent unknown in Western Europe, has been of critical importance; Poland has also the highest share of employment in agriculture in EU-27, reaching 18 percent in 2004, UNDP 2007: 91.

⁴ Between 1998 and 2005, the total cumulative number of student loans was 268 000; starting with 100 000 in 1998/99, 152 000 in 2000/01, and 198 000 in 2002/03; the rate of increase seems smaller in 2006/07; at the same time, the number of scholarships – which between 1990-1998 was in the range of 150 000-180 000 – had increased in 2005 to 573 000, including 348 000 for regular students, GUS 2006: 268; to contrast with the United States, see on loans Johnstone, 2005; and globally, Salmi and Hauptman, 2006.

distinct faces – and we refer this concept here to two traditionally distinct sectors, public and private.

The key factor determining a substantial increase in equitable access to higher education in the 2000s was the liberal attitude of the state and its agencies towards the emergent private sector back in the 1990s. Its dramatic growth and then consolidation was substantial owing to this “policy of non-policy”. The phenomenal numerical growth of the private sector in 1990-2007 was the following: 1991 (500 students), 1995 (70 500 students), 2000 (445 400 students), 2005 (621 000 students), and finally 2006 (640 000 students). As Belfield and Levin put it, “the first factor to explain privatization in education is simple: many parents want it” (Belfield and Levin 2002: 29). Indeed, Polish students (and their parents), for a variety of reasons, wanted higher education.

Case studies from other transition countries show Poland’s exceptionality in terms of growing access to higher education and liberal attitude of the authorities: elsewhere strict laws and regulations quite often abounded. The expansion was also enabled by the exceptional differentiation of the system (two-tier degree system, new modes of studies, large sector of vocational higher education), rare in most other transition countries where the elite institutions seemed to have prevailed. What counted was also the liberal quality assurance mechanisms and licensing and accreditation procedures, as applied to the new private sector at the time of its inception and in the first decade of its operation (1990s). Growing social legitimacy and public recognition of private higher education was another factor. Still another factor was also related to privatization in a larger sense of the term: it was liberal educational policies which allowed to introduce large-scale fee-paying studies (and cost-recovery mechanisms) in the underfunded public sector right after the collapse of communism in 1989. This limited state intervention – guidance only through an “enabling framework” (Steier 2003; World Bank 2002: 83) – contributed to the 400 percent increase in the number of students in the public sector between 1990 and 2007.⁵ In the last three years, the increase has finally stopped and there were slightly below 2 million students in 2005-2007. The expansion occurred also in doctoral education: in the last 15 years, the number of doctoral students has

⁵ The structure of the student body in Poland in 2006 was the following: total enrolments 1 941 000, divided almost equally between two major modes of studies: regular (950 000) and part-time (991 000) studies; public sector 1 301 000 and private sector 640 000 (33 percent), of which 494 000 part-time and 146 000 regular students (GUS 2007: 34).

increased by more than 1 100 percent, reaching the level of 32 thousand in 2006. The peak of enrollments in PhD studies was reached in 2004, since then there has been a slow decrease which brought the number of them in 2007 equal to 2002. One of the most important reasons for this decrease has been the lack of academic perspectives for doctorate holders and low salaries in the higher education sector compared with other professional sectors (see Kwiek 2003). The structural reform of all levels of education which started in 1997 also played a crucial role in strengthening the trend of increasing equitable access.⁶

The chronic underfunding of public higher education in transition economies, Poland included, meant permanently seeking temporary solutions; some of these market-oriented solutions – e.g. cost-sharing in the public sector in Poland for fee-paying part-time students, following a full-cost recovery model in the private sector, or the state authorities giving the green light for expanding the accredited private sector, albeit with no state subsidies for it – subsequently become parts of national policies and legislation. At the same time, as education costs have become increasingly shared between governments and students/parents, several transition countries, Poland again included, have been successfully experimenting with student loans (see Johnstone, 2003, for an international perspective; and for the World Bank activities in the area in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, see Salmi, 2006).

The expansion of educational systems in transition countries has been accompanied by financial austerity and the emergence of market mechanisms in the public sector (previously immune to market forces) and the arrival of private providers on the education market. In a globally unique way, higher education systems in such countries as Poland needed deep (mostly institutional and structural) changes (accompanied by liberal government policies) implemented in a short time-span in order to accommodate the increasingly diverse student body, which previously was under-represented in higher education. As Levy noted, “Central and Eastern Europe lies at the extreme for the global generalization that private higher education emergence has been sudden, shocking, and unplanned” (Levy 2007: 280). In

⁶ The equity success story can be measured by the increase in the number of students with low socio-economic backgrounds: in Poland between 2002 and 2005 the share of students whose mothers had only primary education increased from 7 percent to 18 percent, while those whose mothers had secondary vocational education increased from 13 percent to 23 percent. In the case of mothers with postsecondary and higher education, the increase, quite expectedly, was marginal (from 53 percent to 55 percent) (see *Youth 2005*, 2005, chapter on the perception of the role of education).

expanding systems, though, the burden of costs of education was increasingly being shifted from governments to students and parents, leading to sharp national debates on fees, equity and efficiency (globally, see especially Teixeira et al., 2006; Salmi and Hauptman, 2006; Marcucci, 2006; Pennel and West, 2005; for the EU views on equity, see EC, 2005b, 2006). The expansion of the Polish system was made possible by its growing external and internal privatization, both referring directly to the opportunities provided by opening higher education to the market. In Poland, two alternative strategies to meet growing demand for higher education were used, both implicitly (rather than explicitly) supported by the state: the emergence of privately-owned, teaching-focused, fee-dependent institutions and the internal privatization of public sector institutions by which they were able to supplement their state subsidies with students' funds. The state encouraged both forms of cost-sharing, in both sectors: the growing demand was absorbed by both private institutions and weekend-mode studies in the public sector, and both forms of privatization were – to a large extent – driven by academics. Hundreds of thousands of students gained access to higher education which for the first time, institutionally, began to differentiate sharply: along elite public universities there appeared private institutions open to absorb the demand from new, differentiated student populations and, as a variant of privatization, there appeared fee-based weekend studies in the (nominally free) public sector, open to all those who had no chance to study on a regular basis because of the restricted number of vacancies. The expansion of the system through the two forms of privatization has fundamentally changed access to higher education: an undeniable access “success story” meant also, although to a smaller degree, and equity “success story”.

3. THE TWO DECADES OF PERMANENT GROWTH OF THE POLISH PRIVATE SECTOR (PRIVATIZATION I)

The growth of the private sector in Poland has not been an isolated educational phenomenon: there is a powerful global trend of growing enrollments in the private sector (in which the European Union countries play mostly a marginal role, with such exceptions as Poland, Romania or Portugal). Speaking of the growth of the private sector generally, as Daniel C. Levy notes, the twentieth century norm and persisting public norm is state funding of public universities (and overwhelmingly private sources of funding for private institutions). State subsidies for private institutions are rare and the examples of India, Belgium and the

Netherlands (as well as Swedish “foundation universities”) may call into question their designation of private (Levy, 2006: 10). The global demographics of private higher education is such that the major center of the sector is East Asia, with about 80 percent of all students enrolled in private universities in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines; in the USA (surprisingly) – only 20 percent; in Western Europe – on average 10 percent or much less, and almost no significant private sectors in major higher education systems: German, French, British or Italian; in Latin America – over 50 percent in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela, and finally in the transition countries, and some post-Soviet republics – where the most rapid growth took place after 1989 – up to 30 percent (on the private sector in Europe, see especially two recent fundamental edited volumes: *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*, ed. by Wells, Sadlak and Vlasceanu, 2007 and *Private Higher Education in Post-Communist Europe. In Search of Legitimacy*, ed. by Slantcheva and Levy, 2007). As Levy puts it, “where public budgets do not meet the still rapidly growing demand for higher education, students pay for alternatives” (Levy, 2002: 4) – and this is what happened in several transition countries. In most of them, both public and private higher education enrollments in general, and the share of the private sector in overall enrollments in particular changed dramatically in the last 15 years. While Western Europe has not in general witnessed the emergence (or substantial strengthening, depending on the country) of the private sector in higher education, in several postcommunist transition countries in Europe, for a variety of reasons, the private sector emerged as a tough competitor to the most often traditional, elitist, faculty-centered and inaccessible public sector. The differences between the transition countries are significant, though: while in Croatia and the Slovak Republic private institutions enroll as few as 3.0 to 4.6 percent of the countries’ student body – private sectors in Estonia, Poland, and Romania enroll almost one third of all students. Other countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia have enrollments of about 15 percent (Slantcheva and Levy, 2007: 3). The growth of the private sector in Poland in 1990-2007 was from almost zero to 640 000 in 2007, and from almost zero to 33 percent share in enrollments.

The gross enrollment rate in Poland increased in the same period from less than 10 percent to almost 37 percent. The number of graduates in both sectors in 2007 (below 400 000) was equal to the number of all students in 1990. Such an expansion of Polish higher education would not be possible without the growth of the private sector and the parallel growth of irregular forms of education in both public and private sectors (fee-paying weekend students: in 2006, for the first time, the total number of these irregular students in Polish higher

education was higher than the number of regular students – with the proportion of 51 to 49 percent. Such a composition of the student body remains unprecedented in both OECD and EU countries and raises serious concerns about both the quality of teaching and the areas of studies which often are not linked to the labor market needs, increasing the mismatch between the supply of graduates and demand for them from the labor market. Still in 1990, regular students were 77 percent of the whole student body). The total number of private higher education institutions in Poland in 2006 was 318, and the share of enrollments in private (called “non-state” in Poland) was 33 percent (GUS 2007: 19). Private institutions were most active in responding to new demands of the labor market (and of students themselves) but many of them have been offering poorly taught and undemanding degrees in “popular and cheap-to-run” fields of studies, as an OECD economic survey of Poland recently put it (OECD 2006b: 106).

4. FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND IN BRIEF

Before we move on to the specific response to growing financial austerity of Polish public higher education institutions, that is, to their internal privatization, let us discuss briefly the sources of income in Polish higher education as a context for further discussions. There is a substantial difference between public and private institutions as far as the structure of sources of income is concerned. Both public and private institutions in 2006 obtained the vast majority of income from teaching. For public institutions, teaching provides 81.4 percent of income, for private ones – 93.1 percent. Income obtained from research is 11.6 percent in the case of public institutions and only 1.4 percent in the case of private institutions. In general terms, the private sector is almost fully a teaching sector and for most private institutions, research is a marginal activity both in terms of academic mission and in terms of sources of funding. It is important to note, though, that the proportion of income by source of income is highly diversified according to the type of public institution. In 2006, in public technical institutions, the proportion of income from teaching was 75.1 percent and from research – 19.8 percent. For universities it was 84.2 percent and 9.6 percent, and for universities of economics – 92.3 percent and 4.6 percent.

Where do the funding for both teaching and research come from? The structure of income from teaching according to sources of funding for teaching shows that the main source of funding in public institutions is state subsidies (72.9 percent), followed by tuition fees (19.8 percent). In private institutions, the main source of income from teaching are tuition fees (95 percent); and there are no state subsidies for teaching in private institutions today (2008) but they are being discussed in the government. Generally, in 2006 over 80 percent of all income (in both public and private sector) from teaching went to public institutions (82.4 percent); almost all state subsidies (99.8 percent) went to public institutions as well. And additionally, slightly less than a half (49.5 percent) of all income from student fees went to public institutions as well (GUS 2007: 306).

Research is an additional source of income for both public and private institutions and it is funded almost exclusively by the state. The structure of research funding looks differently for public and private institutions. Almost all income from research goes to public institutions (97.8 percent), with a small proportion (2.2 percent) going to private institutions. The reason is both legal and structural. By law, state subsidies for statutory research go exclusively to the public sector. The only funding available in practice, albeit in a limited way, are competitive research grants. In the last decade, the proportion of total income from teaching which goes to the public sector from both students (fees) and the state (through subsidies) has been steadily decreasing: public institutions had a share of over 90 percent in 1997 and in 2006 the share shrank to over 80 percent (from 91.2 to 82.4 in 2006). What it means in practice is that the private sector has been more aggressive in charging fees (because, at the same time, the number of fee-paying part time students in the public sector was growing, as were state subsidies for regular students in the public sector). The trend over time is shown below.

Table 1: Proportion of total income from teaching in Poland, by type of institution (public/private, and by types of public institutions, 1996-2007, in percent)

Years	Private	Public (total)	Public institutions, including:			
			Universities	Technical	Medical	Agricultural
1997	8.8	91.2	28.7	25.7	10	8.9
1998	12.5	87.5	27.9	24.6	9.4	8.4
1999	15.8	84.2	28.6	23.3	8.9	6.6
2000	18.9	81.1	27.8	21.5	8.8	6.2
2001	19.6	80.4	29.1	21	8.2	6.1
2002	19.7	80.3	29.2	20.6	8.2	5.9
2003	19.6	80.4	29	20.1	8.5	6
2004	17.9	82.1	29.5	20.2	8.8	6.3
2005	16.7	83.3	30.2	20.1	8.4	6.3
2006	17.6	82.4	29.9	19.7	8.8	6.2

Source: GUS various years (1998-2007), own calculations.

In the same ten years, the share of private institutions in total income from research did not change substantially. Private institutions increased their share in total income from research from 0 percent in 1997 to 2.2 percent in 2006 and research for them is still a marginal activity.

5. THE RESPONSE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR TO FINANCIAL AUSTERITY (PRIVATIZATION II)

The public sector in Polish higher education found its own way to cope with permanent financial austerity: running fee-paid study programs through a non-standard mode of delivery: weekend part-time studies. Part-time studies were known before 1989 but their role was limited and access to them was restricted to working adults; no fees were paid, as higher education was free. Increasingly, from mid-1990s, the role of tuition fees from these part-time irregular students – who were no longer working adults but who in the largest proportion are of 19-24 years of age and are not able to get state-subsidized places in regular studies – was

increasingly financially important. In the last decade, the share of tuition fees from part-time students in public institutions in their revenues was high and varied substantially, depending on the type of institution. Without this particular form of privatization – increasing reliance on fees from part-time students (in a legal environment in which charging tuition fees from full-time students is not possible, based on art. 70 of the Polish Constitution) – Polish public sector would have found it enormously difficult to survive economically. Educational expansion would have been left entirely to the growing private sector which would not have been able to meet unexpectedly high student demand. In the last ten years, public institutions were less and less reliant on state subsidies, and the share of state subsidies in the structure of their income has decreased from 90.6 to 83 percent for medical universities, from 71.4 to 66.2 for universities, and from 56.3 to 51.6 for universities of economics (the only exception being technical universities for which the share has been the same, about 80 percent, GUS various years (1998-2007), own calculations).

A thorough transformation of the structure of the Polish student body in the public sector in the last (almost) two decades – in which today 39 percent of students are part-time students, compared with 77 percent of part-time students in the private sector in 2006, GUS 2007: 34 – can be attributed to the appearance in the beginning of the 1990s of this new source of funding for impoverished public institutions.

From the very beginning, the most important dimension of internal privatization was financial: additional revenues for academics and the university. In an initially surprising manner, public institutions in the first half of 1990s started having two sorts of students (fee paying and non fee-paying students, the former academically weaker), two sorts of curricula (academically weaker for the latter students) and two different teaching times: weekdays for the former and weekends for the latter. Additionally, from the equity perspective, increasingly, and especially in study fields traditionally leading to best-paid jobs such as law, economics or finances, there appeared two sorts of students: those with high cultural capital (usually coming from the middle classes) and those coming from disadvantaged social backgrounds (who under communism, in the vast majority of cases, were cut off from higher education despite various forms of state preferential treatment). Those with higher social capital studied as non-fee paying full-time students, those with lower social capital studied as fee-paying, part-time students. The numerical expansion of higher education opened the system to new segments of society – but these newcomers have been attending mostly the two

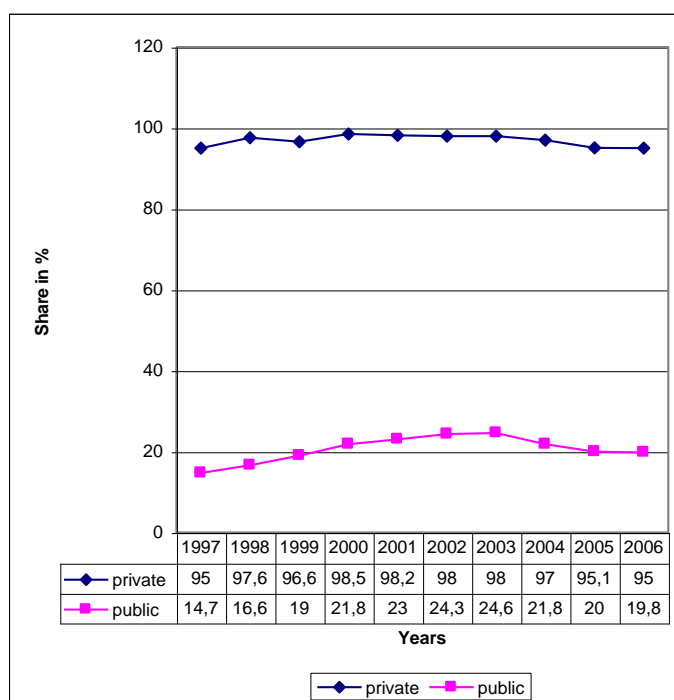
academically inferior forms of studies: those offered in the private sector and those offered for fee-paying weekend students in the public sector. Privatization generally did not substantially transform the social composition of the student body in elite public universities, although with their expansion, the socio-economically weaker groups are substantially more present there as well – especially in part-time studies.

The expansion of both the private sector and of the public sector in its part-time weekend mode meant in practice an entirely new composition of the student body in higher education in general, though: the traditionally closed and elite system was opened up (via privatization) to new segments of society. Under communism, enrollment rates in higher education were small and access to it was restricted: in a country of 35-40 millions, student numbers were between 250 and 450 thousands in the peak of enrolments in the 1970s: they reached 252 000 in 1965, 331 000 in 1970, 468 000 in 1975, 454 000 in 1980, 341 000 in 1985 and 377 000 in 1989, the year of the collapse of communism in Poland (Duczmal 2006: 187). Interestingly, while the total number of vacancies in the public sector in 1990-2007 has increased by 225 percent (from 400 thousand in 1990 to 1 300 thousand in 2006), the total number of academically most valuable vacancies – those in the full-time mode of teaching – has increased only by 165 percent (from about 300 thousand to about 800 thousand). In top Polish universities (such as Warsaw University, Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Poznan University), the number of full-time, especially MA, students have increased by less than 100 percent only. Which means in practical terms that top research universities were not opening up in its full-time modes of teaching to new student body as much as national statistics show – in conditions of underinvestment in infrastructure, buildings etc, to avoid overcrowding of classes and sharp deterioration of quality. Fees as a new source of funding for the public sector have indeed transformed the general composition of the student body but top research universities do not seem to have compromised on quality for their traditional (also in terms of their high socio-economic background) full-time students. The widely criticized deterioration in teaching quality generally affected part-time fee-paying weekend students.

6. TUITION FEES: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

Tuition fees have played a critical role in the expansion of both private and public sectors in Polish higher education. In 2006, funds collected through fees in both sectors reached the level of 4 221 million PLN (1 206 million EUR; 1 EUR = 3.5 PLN as of February 2008), with only slightly higher share going for private institutions (2 132 million PLN or 609 million EUR) – 50.50 percent. Thus, in practice, almost half of all fees paid for higher education in Poland went to the public sector which is nominally “free” (tax-based). This is the most striking financial aspect of the privatization of the public sector which does not seem to be dealt with carefully enough in current research. In spite of the existence of the booming private sector (with 33 percent of enrolments), almost half of revenues from fees go to the public sector owing to its privatization. In competition with the private sector, the public sector in terms of enrolments is strong but in financial terms it is very strong. At the same time, the share of income from fees in the public sector in the last 10 years went up from about 15 percent in 1997 to almost 25 percent in 2003 and since then it has been decreasing steadily year by year, to reach the level of 19.8 in 2006.

Figure 2. Proportion of institutional income from fees by type of institution (1997-2006), in percentages (100 percent – total income of a given institution type)



Source: GUS (1998-2007), personal calculations.

Which types of public higher education institutions would go farthest in their privatization? Where do fees constitute the most significant share? The income from fees is not divided evenly. The biggest share of fees in 2006 went to universities (947 million PLN or 271 million EUR), followed by technical universities which received almost three times less and universities of economics which received four times less than universities (335 million PLN or 96 million EUR, and 215 million PLN or 61 million EUR, respectively). While the popular wisdom in Poland claims that the biggest private contributions through fees go to (public) universities of economics, in fact they go to public universities. Private academies of economics, in turn, take almost 50 percent of fees charged by all private institutions, and more than all public universities (1 105 million PLN or 316 million EUR). The structure of total income from tuition fees in Poland in higher education institutions according to their types is given below:

Table 2. Proportion of total income from student fees in Poland, by type of institution (1997-2006), in percentages (100 percent – all fees collected in Poland by all types of institutions)

<i>Years</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Public (total)</i>	<i>Public Institutions</i>			
			<i>Universities</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Economics</i>	<i>Medical</i>
1997	38.4	61.6	25.7	11.9	8	2.3
1998	45.6	54.4	22.2	11.1	7	2.3
1999	48.9	51.1	21.7	10.7	6.4	2.3
2000	51.4	48.6	21.2	10.0	5.6	1.9
2001	51.0	49.0	21.8	9.8	6	2.1
2002	49.7	50.3	21.7	10.2	6.1	2.5
2003	49.2	50.8	22.4	9.4	5.7	2.7
2004	49.3	50.7	22.6	8.9	5.6	2.9
2005	48.7	51.3	23.5	8.4	5.5	3.1
2006	50.5	49.5	22.4	7.9	5.1	3.7

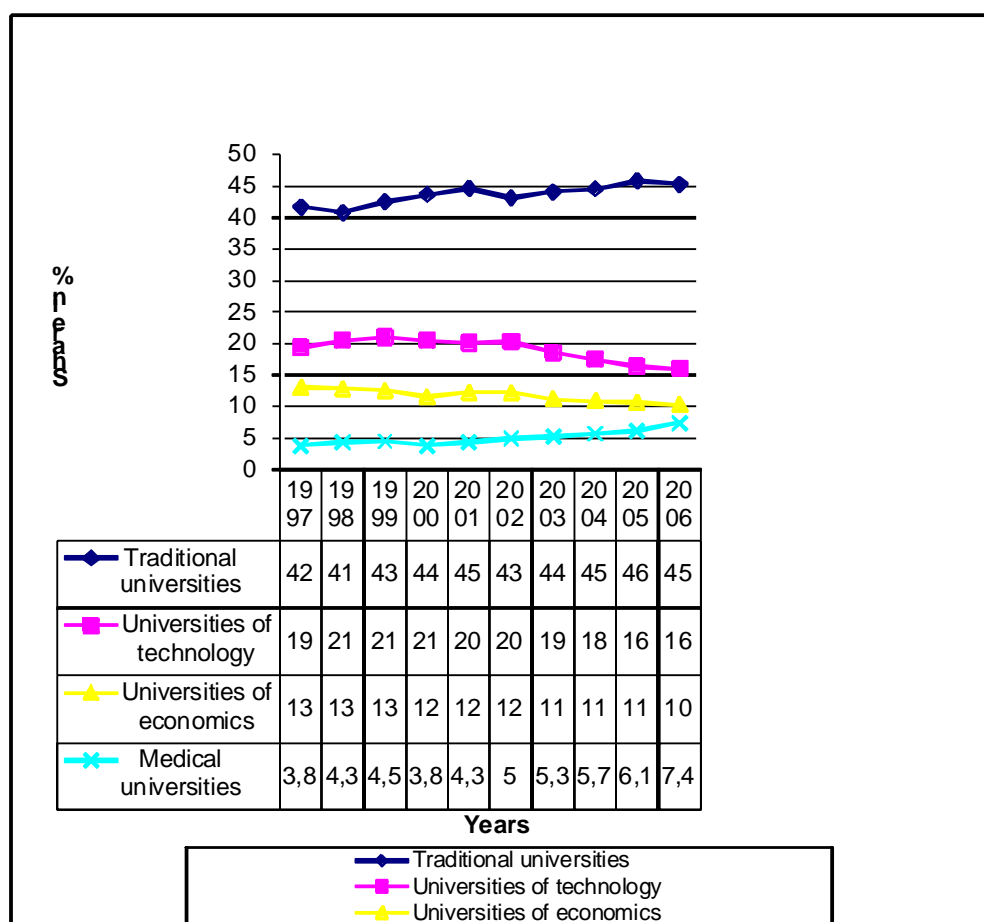
Source: GUS (1998-2007), personal calculations.

In the decade analyzed here, the share of the total income from fees in Poland was steadily increasing for the private sector, from 38.4 percent in 1997 to 50.5 percent in 2006. It was only in 2006 – that is, 16 years after the emergence of the private sector in Poland – that the share of the total income from fees for the private sector was bigger than 50 percent. At the same time, the share of the total income from fees collected by public institutions was decreasing steadily, from 61.6 in 1997 to 49.5 in 2006. In financial terms, the public sector (fee-paying part-time mode of teaching only) was steadily losing with the private sector (fully fee-based and financially self-reliant). While the drop in funding from fees was radical for technical universities and universities of economics, in the case of public universities it was significantly smaller. Universities in the last decade were collecting between 25 and 22

percent of all fees charged in Poland. Tuition fees are the only source of income from teaching in the fee-based private sector (which is not eligible for state subsidies today). But what is interesting from the point of view of the privatization of the public sector is the share of fees in the total budget for teaching there. Income from teaching in the public sector consists of: state subsidies, local government subsidies, tuition fees (from part-time students) and other.

In the last decade, the biggest share of all income from fees in the public sector was collected by universities (between 40 and 46 percent). The domination of the traditional university sector is complete: the other competitors were left behind, with technical universities charging between 20 and 16 percent, and universities of economics between 10 and 13 percent. The trend for universities in that period is upward, while the trend for both technical universities and universities and economics is generally downwards. The details are given below.

Figure 3. Share of income from fees in the public sector, by type of institution, in percentages (1997-2006)



Source: GUS (1998-2007), personal calculations.

Income from teaching activities (from fees, both sectors, and from state subsidies, public sector only) has not evenly distributed between public and private institutions in the last decade: the hegemonic position of public institutions is being slowly undermined – between 1997 and 2006, their share decreased from slightly over 90 percent (91.2) to slightly over 80 percent (82.4). For private institutions, the increase in this period was by 100 percent (from 8.8 to 17.6).

The reliance of public institutions on fees from part-time students is decreasing. The peak was reached in 2002 and 2003 and since then the role of fees in overall income from teaching activities is steadily decreasing. In the decade analyzed, fees had the biggest share in the structure of income from teaching in public institutions – not surprisingly – in universities of economics (between 35 and 50 percent, with a peak in 2002, and then decreasing). The second biggest share belonged to traditional universities and reached between 20 and 30 percent (with a peak in 2003, and then decreasing), and the third to technical universities (between 10 and 20, with a peak in 2002 and also then decreasing, GUS various years (1998-2007), own calculations.

7. THE TWO DECADES OF COPING WITH FINANCIAL AUSTERITY: ACADEMIC SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Polish public higher education is a good example of a system in which, most probably, most obvious forms of cost-side solutions to the problem of financial austerity are not able to work. Several major, although not crude, variations of them (see Johnstone and Marcucci 2007: 11ff.) have already been used in 1989-2007: freezing of salaries (in a highly inflationary economy of the 1990s), the limitation or elimination of expenditures except for basic ones (thus very limited expenditures on books, equipment, and generally on all non-salary items), and the cutting of maintenance and repair work. In a highly expanding system, the number of faculty was not increasing correspondingly and therefore per-student costs of instruction were kept low; the faculty-student ratio was lowering in that period by increasing class sizes (especially for part-time students). The only significant differences with other, especially

developing, countries was not substituting lower-cost junior or part-time faculty for higher-cost senior faculty, not increasing teaching loads from a relatively moderate levels (180-210 hours per year in the traditional university sector) and not differentiating faculty workloads (i.e. expecting more teaching from some faculty only). Two decades of not increasing per-student expenditures, following the expansion, absorbing substantially more students and offering new academic programs without additional public funding – as Johnstone and Marcucci summarize the issue globally but as it can be referred to Poland – “has arguably taken most if not all of the ‘low hanging fruit’ of obvious waste and budget cuts” (Johnstone and Marcucci 2007: 14). What remains to be done are more fundamental and systemic changes, including most of all further sector differentiation. While cost-side solutions are not able to stop the growing gap between higher education costs and available public revenues, revenue-side solutions offer possibilities to complement governmental funds with non-governmental funds through, inter alia, cost-sharing (the introduction of fees for all students) and academic entrepreneurialism (see Shattock 2003). Both funding strategies are new to the Polish public sector, and both shatter its relative stability (albeit existing amidst austerity).

In Poland, as in other transition countries (and especially in Anglo-Saxon types of welfare regimes), higher education in general, as opposed to healthcare and pensions sectors, and top research-intensive universities in particular, are perceived as being able to generate their own additional income through e.g. entrepreneurship or cost-sharing. The discussion in the above sections clearly demonstrates that the role of fees in institutional budgets in public institutions is already substantial. Also, ironically, the more successful public entrepreneurial universities are today, the bigger chances of letting them follow this entrepreneurial direction in the future are. Along with the efforts to introduce market mechanisms in pension systems (multi-pillar schemes instead of pay-as-you-go ones) and healthcare systems (privatized systems based on additional, private, individual insurance policies), especially but not exclusively in European transition economies, the most far-reaching consequences of this marketization/privatization trend can be expected for public funding for higher education and research. As William Zumeta stressed recently, “unlike most of the other state budget components, higher education has other substantial sources of funds that policy-makers feel can be tapped if institutions need to cope with deep budget cuts” (Zumeta 2005: 85). In the Polish case, the relative financial success of the ongoing processes of (internal) privatization in the educational institutions of the public sector merely reinforced the processes and their spread to ever-growing number of institutions. And an additional element of privatization in general (which

was peculiar to many CEE countries), namely the legal and practical opportunity for university professors to hold multiple academic positions, both in the public sector and in the private sector, led to the huge numerical expansion of the system as a whole.

From the perspective of academics, the two distinct forms of privatization in Polish higher education in which they could be involved at the same time made it possible *not* to leave the academic profession altogether (see Kwiek 2003). The new law on higher education which severely restricted the scope of holding multiple positions was introduced only in 2005, fifteen years after the beginning of the transition to market economy and democracy. As Ewa Chmielecka put it in her study of multiple employment as an additional source of revenue, public institutions “would have problems in keeping their staff on the job without the additional sources of revenue being offered by private HEIs What we thus had was a symbiosis of both sectors with an asymmetric flow of resources. What we did not have was a law-regulated system of higher education” (Chmielecka 2006: 282). Academics’ additional (week-end) employment to offer fee-based part-time studies in their own public institutions – the core of the internal privatization of the public sector – was also the way public institutions used to retain their staff. The division of labor was simple: employment in a public institution only, in a public institution which has additional week-end employment opportunities, in a public institution plus in a private institution(s). The patterns of employment varied between disciplines and university ranks, with best options for multiple employment available in traditionally cheap-to-run areas (economics, business and management, social sciences) and for senior academics, sought by the private sector because of the minimal legal requirements: the holders of Habilitation degree (second, higher PhD) and professorship titles.

Revenue-side solutions to chronic underfunding of Polish public higher education included various forms of cost-sharing (from among Johnstone’s catalogue): a special tuition-paying track in nominally free (by Constitution) public institutions – fee-paying, non-regular weekend mode of studies; the imposition of “user charges” to recover the expenses of what were once heavily subsidized residence and dining halls; the reduction of student grants and scholarships. Of special interest is another form of cost-sharing:

The limitation of capacity in the low or tuition free public sector together with the official encouragement (and frequently some public subsidization) of a tuition-dependent private higher education sector. A number of countries ... have avoided

much of what would otherwise have been significant governmental expenditure on higher education by keeping a limited public sector – usually elite and selective – and shifting much of the costs of expanded participation to parents and students through the encouragement of a substantial and growing private higher education sector (Johnstone and Marcucci 2007: 18).

Poland went even further (although largely in a climate described above as the “policy of non-policy”): in face of tremendous demand in access to higher education following strictly regulated, limited access in all communist years (1945-1989), it encouraged the private sector to grow and encouraged the public sector to develop its fee-paying tracks. In the times of harsh financial stress, and with other priorities on the top of the agenda, higher education (especially in 1990s) was able to expand without governmental interference and without increasing per-student governmental expenditures. The major difference with the above case referred to Latin America and East Asia is that the state was neither willing nor capable of subsidizing the emergent private sector. The first forms of (indirect) subsidization appeared with the loans schemes to which private sector students became eligible in 1999, with the reform of research funding under which private sector institutions became eligible for research grants in 2004, and currently when the government is discussing the direct subsidization of teaching in the private sector, based on the proportion of the average per-student costs in the public sector. Current government is also discussing (2008) the possibilities of the introduction of the most financially important form of cost-sharing: tuition fees in the whole public sector, accompanied by large-scale loan schemes. The chances for the introduction of fees for full-time students before next parliamentary elections are minimal, though, as their introduction would require the Polish Constitution to be changed, for which the government is too weak in the parliament today.

8. CONCLUSIONS

In the times of the reformulation of various public services in general in most parts of Europe, and especially in transition economies, educational institutions and systems have to be able to balance its negative financial impact on public funding for higher education. As Paul Pierson stressed, “while reform agendas vary quite substantially across regime types, all of them place

a priority on cost containment. This shared emphasis reflects the onset of permanent austerity ... the control of public expenditure is a central, if not dominant consideration”, Pierson 2001: 456. The pressures to privatize education systems – apart from push-and-pull factors – include also global economic and social change. Globalization “has both pressed and encouraged governments to seek more efficient, more flexible, and less expensive education systems. Privatization may be one response to these changes” (Belfield and Levin 2002: 32). Surprisingly, Poland found its own way, following the collapse of communism in 1989, to expand its higher education system via privatization. From a perspective, the privatization of higher education in the two distinct forms presented in this paper (new private sector and privatization in and of the public sector) was a spontaneous movement, led mostly by academics, which was only mildly encouraged by the state’s “policy of non-policy”. Times are changing, though; after almost twenty years from the collapse of communism, new government is discussing the introduction of fees for all students in the public sector, the direct subsidization of the private sector, and the radical reform of both financing and governance of higher education and research and development. It is hard to predict the future of these developments today but for the first time the future of privatization of higher education is very high on the state’s agenda. Their future implications for equitable access remain to be seen, though.

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