Higher education: the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few

F.F. Padró¹, C.S. Nair²
¹University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, QLD, Australia; ²University of Western Australia, Crawley, WA, Australia

19.1 Introduction

Marginson (2007) warns about looking at the distinction between public and private universities from a dual or binary perspective. The stories found in the chapters in the book attest to this. There is a blurring of the public–private good argument and the state–private funding divide in the support of private higher education (PHE), which, in turn, sometimes makes the distinction between private and public based on who ultimately controls the institution(s) taxonomically challenging (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2004). What has become apparent in the extent of the growth of the PHE sector is its agility to fill the national demands for additional or specialized provision in tertiary and higher education while somewhat alleviating funding pressures on governments of public universities. Liu and Elliott, in their chapter, also suggest that uncertainty and the opportunities it brings is also fueling some of the growth. To understand the contributions that PHE brings to global and national higher education, the benefit(s), quality/reputation, role(s), and value(s) of PHE have to be appreciated from the view of the different lenses of Clark’s (1983) “triangle of coordination”: state authority, the market, and the academic oligarchy.

Allowing for the development of private institutions tends to reflect a cost-effectiveness approach toward expanding the higher education sector while keeping costs down. According to Kinser (2010), the literature suggests private institutions generate three benefits: (1) distinctiveness from the public sector (eg, programming, individualized/personalized student experience); (2) providing an alternative based on ratcheting up the quality of the education (eg, stricter admission standards); and/or (3) access to those denied due to capacity or geographic constraints. A fourth benefit noted in the literature (eg, Shah & Nair, 2013) is the second chance for many students who may not have had access to tertiary education due to their education achievements. The question is whether the roles taken on are more than merely a reflection of a massification by-product, what Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) termed “demand absorbing” (ie, increasing access to students who otherwise may not be qualified to attend public universities or accommodating those for whom there are not sufficient seats) or the effects from outsourcing (and adding competition) vis-à-vis diversification.
The importance of this query is the surprise in the unanticipated expansion of private institutions, although the view of expansion is framed by how private institutions are defined to be seen across the world (Altbach et al., 2009; Levy, 2006, 2011), in part due to the rise in for-profit institutions, but principally because of political expectations (Teixeira, Rocha, Biscaia, & Cardoso, 2012). These expectations are shaped by notions of globalization and internationalization, national socioeconomic needs and priorities, quality and quality assurance, regulatory compliance, the capacities and techniques of technology enhanced learning, perceived value by students and other stakeholders, and meeting job churning and workforce preparation demands (Michelacci & Lopez-Salido, 2007; Padró, 2012).

There are two basic types of private institutions per the OECD (2004, p. 59):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Government-dependent:</td>
<td>Institution that either receives 50 percent or more of its core funding from government agencies or one whose teaching personnel are paid by a government agency, either directly or through government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent private:</td>
<td>Institution that receives less than 50 percent of its core from government agencies and whose teaching personnel are not paid by a government agency</td>
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Growth in PHE seems to be of both types and not an isolated phenomenon (Shah & Nair, 2012, 2013). Examples of countries where PHE has expanded include the United Kingdom (Fielden, Middlehurst, Woodfield, & Olcott, 2010), India (Gupta, 2008), Australia (Ryan, 2012), and countries such as Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda in Africa (Varghese, 2004; Deravajan, Monga, & Zongo, 2011) just to name a few. In fact, PHE caters to more than 70% of students in India, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines (Gupta, 2008).

19.2 Impact of globalization and internationalization on PHE

What cannot be ignored, according to de Wit (2011), is “(the) changing landscape of international higher education as a consequence of the globalization of our societies and economies is manifest in many ways: increasing competition for international students and academics, the growth of cross-border delivery of programmes, the emergence of international for-profit providers in higher education and the changing position of countries like India and China in the world economy and in the higher education arena” (p. 246). Globalization has meant that nations and their educational structures have to look at what’s happening in other countries to determine their engagement and ability to succeed in a more interconnected world. Internationalization provides opportunities to establish exchanges that will benefit the national knowledge capital through different programming
opportunities and higher education relationships between providers and nations. The rise of English and the development of technology-enhanced learning have created immediate and simplified communication between academics, scientists, and students (Altbach et al., 2009). In sum, these developments suggest a strategic response (missions, objectives, outcomes, planning, and action plans) (cf. Elkin, Farnsworth, & Templer, 2008).

Abbott and Xiaoying, echoed by Tsevi in their respective chapters, point out that there are two prevalent types of PHE models: the Anglo-Saxon model and the Continental model. Lo’s chapter showcases how Hong Kong is an example of how globalization and internationalization are driving the expansion of PHE. As with other countries, massification vis-à-vis demand absorption in order to keep public investment costs in higher education down at the 2-year subdegree programs as well as the university degree level. In addition, Lo makes the argument that globalization (transnational) and internationalization reflect the pragmatic impact of commodification in higher education. One extension of this mindset is Bajunid and Wong’s view, in their chapter on Malaysian PHE, about countries growing their higher education sector to attract students and generate reputation and revenue.

Reading all the chapters in the book, one other perspective comes through, that globalization and internationalization also reflect the desire to attract investors as a means of lubricating national efforts at increasing PHE. Countries need to make investment attractive and doable. At times, there is the possibility of creating a loss-leader situation in the short-term in order to enhance capacity, reputation, or improved performance in the public higher education sector. Barriers for entry, quality maintenance, and regulatory compliance are a concern because these can reduce the value-added proposition for investors national and international.

19.3 National socioeconomic needs and priorities, job churning and workforce preparation demands as drivers supporting the expansion of PHE

Rama, in his chapter, points out that improvement of national economies based upon liberalization of the economy and increasing levels of modernization and productivity has been an important driver behind the rise of PHE across the world. Jakiel’s chapter also writes about gainful employment and how it has been driving the growth in the for-profit portion of PHE. There are other drivers behind the growth as well as discussed by Liu and Elliott in their chapter on China’s PHE: pent-up and/or pressing social demands and workforce development and its upskilling. In China’s case, these drivers have meant the deinstitutionalization of the public monopoly in higher education alongside the rise in private involvement in education and the slow growth of PHE. Etim, in his chapter on Nigeria’s PHE sector, further adds the concern of the need of graduating more PhDs to enhance the quality of higher education in teaching (and research), as well as increase the number of academics capable of teaching courses locally. Political ideology and contesting norms bound the development and approach to PHE in a manner similar to the discussion on PHE contraction found below.
Churning is not something typically discussed when talking about workforce development, but it impacts the demand for higher education as globalization creates new job opportunities, often requiring enhanced skills. Higher skill jobs in demand areas have the lower job churn rate, while those jobs with the lower skill sets encounter the highest rates of turnover. As Watson (2008) wrote:

*People whose background characteristics are favored by the labor market are likely to have a three in four chance of maintaining continuity in their employment experiences. By contrast, those with unfavorable characteristics have just a two in five chance (men) or a one in four chance (women). For people with these kinds of characteristics, labor market churning is the order of the day (p. 82).*

On the other hand, low churn means lack of movement in the labor force, requiring a linkage between policy-steering preferences for economic activity and the formation and/or realignment of knowledge capital to meet national priorities. Job creation rates a cyclical rising during economic expansion, while job destruction rates are countercyclical in nature (Haltiwanger, Hyatt, McEntarfer, & Sousa, 2012). In a knowledge economy, entry or maintained or increased capacity does mean a more thorough calculation of resource allocation and alignment, with higher education playing a more prominent part in these activities. This per force reshapes the relationship in Clark’s triangle. Issan’s chapter on Oman provides an example of how PHE expansion is seen as a means of tackling employment issues but from a perspective of a rapid population growth perspective. Lo’s chapter about Hong Kong illustrates the impact of workforce preparation, although it is an example of unintended consequences based on nonanticipated or unidentified need.

### 19.4 Issues impacting PHE: credibility (legitimacy), quality, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance

Often, there are diverse types of private institutions within any one national PHE sector. As already noted, how these institutions are defined impacts growth trends. More importantly, institutional types create challenges of positive market distinctiveness and institutional legitimacy based on differentiation in organizational structure and program offerings, quality and recognition, two aspects normally associated with regulatory compliance schemes. As Liu and Elliott point out in their chapter, legitimacy is based on cultural norms, and acceptance shapes growth or lack thereof sector-wide or by institutional type, which is why regulatory compliance alone is not enough. Rama’s chapter seems to imply this as well.

#### 19.4.1 Credibility (legitimacy)

Stanford, in her chapter on Australia, talks about PHE as the “other” sector. This, by implication, questions the credibility, standing, and quality of private institutions regardless of type. However, as Jamjoom indicates in her chapter, Saudi Arabia is an
example of the rise in its PHE sector as a result of the public sector’s failure to meet the demand for more and better higher education.

Oman’s debate on PHE arrangements, according to Issan’s chapter, highlights the challenges of imprecise meaning regarding terms such as “privatization” in helping shape the discussion, as well as the views about the appropriateness of choice and the role of PHE in meeting national priorities. What Issan points out is how credibility is challenged when views tend to be polarized, rather than focusing on consensus and approaches toward expanding higher education are not clearly understood and enacted upon (eg, financing, partnering versus nonpartnering, partnering arrangements), which lead to quality concerns. Credibility in this type of discussion is framed, as Ahmad and Shah indicate in their chapter, which is the extent to which PHE supplements rather than supplants public higher education, particularly as an aftereffect of economic and regional inequities (financing, access, admission policies, etc.). The discussion is also framed by the extent to which PHE promotes the new sociopolitical agenda in the developing countries (frequently based on the neoliberal philosophy espoused by the international community), rather than buttressing previous (often-times colonial) values, a point indirectly brought out by Irungu and Kimencu’s chapter on Kenyan PHE. They also identify the biggest challenge to credibility: the political manipulation by heads of state; the same can be said for legislative bodies whose decisions are perceived to be arbitrary and serving self-vested interests.

19.4.2 Quality

Quality means different things to different stakeholders based on their perceptions of what they need to be of use to them (Combs & Snygg, 1959; Padró, Hawke, & Hawke, in press). Fitness is typically based on utility, and in the prevailing neoliberal environment, the focus is on workforce issues as talked about in Trivellato, Triventi and Traini’s chapter about Italian higher education: development, capabilities/skills, flexibility, and adaptability; the meaning/usefulness of credentials and high retention, progression, and graduation rates (these last as effectiveness and efficiency measures); placement of graduates (preferably in an area related to their graduating degree); job satisfaction; and return on private and public investment (to ensure the higher experience was worthwhile). The last points are particularly important for PHE because a higher education degree remains an attractive personal investment and, as Teixeira et al. (2012) point out in their chapter, one reason behind the increase of PHE in many countries.

Universities and private higher education providers are usually at loggerheads about the quality of the qualifications achieved by graduates. Regulatory compliance at times seems to exacerbate rather than mitigate the disagreement. The literature has, on a number of occasions, questioned the quality of these providers and the utility of the qualifications. If there is a bottom line, it is that PHE graduates receive and demonstrate the same competencies and level of knowledge in their disciplines, trades, and professions as those who graduated from the public sector. The literature lists a number of issues of quality and includes excessive student fees, the quality of teaching, the status of the degree being offered, a mismatch between promises and reality after
graduation, limited support arrangements to help students in learning, and employer complaints about the quality of graduates (Jalowiecki, 2001; Lim, 2010; Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004; Mok, 2009).

Though the studies alert to issues with private higher education providers, the literature also indicates strengths of such higher education providers. First and foremost is the accessibility factor, where private higher education has improved accessibility of studies to the wider population (eg, Chae & Hong, 2009; Jalowiecki, 2001; Oketch, 2009). This, in turn, has helped many countries to achieve higher skill levels to their economies.

Recent works (Bennett, Shah, & Nair, 2014; Shah, Nair, & Bennett, 2013) reveal a number of strengths in the provision of quality learning and teaching in private higher education providers. The studies, based on student feedback from three private higher education providers, indicate strong satisfaction with the caliber of the teaching staff; small class sizes; interactive and practical-orientated approaches at such institutions; opportunity to undertake work experience, which is usually embedded in the curriculum; and personalized services, where queries and concerns are addressed in a timely manner.

Students had indicated in this research that the high caliber teaching staff arose primarily because the teachers who were employed were practicing professionals, which resulted in the benefit of being exposed to authentic industry issues and practices. This is in line with the work carried out in the UK, which shows that in many cases, private providers were seen as being closer to the professional practice and the working environment than traditional universities (Universities UK, 2010). In addition, with the industry connections that most teachers had, students were accorded a further advantage in finding placements with industries. An area that students spoke highly of was small class sizes. Some students who have previously attended universities noted that class sizes in universities have risen significantly, and this has resulted in the teaching and learning environment at universities being impersonal. A sense of greater connectivity and engagement was more apparent at private higher education providers. In addition, students echoed that there was greater access to the teaching staff, where further discussions and questions could be explored.

19.4.3 Quality assurance

Juran (1999) defines QA as a process for “those who are not directly responsible for conducting operations but who have a need to know—to be informed as to the state of affairs and, hopefully, to be assured that all is well” (p. 2.13). Bajunid and Wong, in their chapter, write about a quality assurance agenda. They and authors of other chapters, (Rama, Trivellato, Triventi, Traini, and Hegde) identify elements of an important component of the QA agenda: the composition of the teaching staff at PHE institutions, especially as these compare or contrast with the public higher education sector. A number of QA schemes have standards regarding teaching, and in Australia, the credentials and ratio of full-time to casual staff have been identified as risk factors (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 2014). Abbott and Xiaoying do point out that the concern has to be about QA practices that detract, rather
than enhance, quality. This is possible because of the strong potential within QA for institutions to minimize regret by simply focusing on compliance (Padró, 2013).

The chapters by Trivellato, Triventi, Traini Irungu and Kimencu, Etim, and Tsevi highlight traditional areas to consider (especially in developing countries and regions): the distribution of tenured teachers to nontenured, age, and experience of teachers, contingent to full-time teachers and student-teacher ratios. Rama adds to these the elements of retired academics reentering the teaching ranks and the number of practitioners in the field given teaching appointments compared to traditional classroom-focused academics. Institutional types play a major role on the composition of teaching staff as these will differ between Levy’s (1986, 2006): elite, semielite, and nonelite institution types. Differentiation will also occur as a result of teaching scope and program areas being offered. Conversely, these differences are used and marketed to demonstrate distinctiveness specific to attracting particular type of students and therefore used as QA markers as well. The challenge may occur when the size of the PHE is large enough to make accreditation a challenge, a point noted in Hegde’s chapter about India’s PHE. Accrediting and regulatory bodies often account for these differences. Where the differences are not as well accounted for is in the rankings, as these may not to be able to account for niche market performance.

Trivellato, Triventi, and Traini’s and Jamjoom’s chapters also bring out a QA element that is more internal in scope for 2-year, 4-year, and postgraduate programs impacting learner analytics, the ability to personalize learning and provide appropriate learning scaffolding support, and the incorporation of data/information about a student’s previous school career. This is gaining in importance, not simply because of the analytics movement, but because of the desire to attract the adult learner and the multiple backgrounds these adult learners represent. Astin’s (1985) input-environment-output (I-E-O) model talks about inputs based on what the students bring as prior experience to their higher education studies: student demographics, family backgrounds, academic, and social experiences students bring into campus. The usefulness of these data are in their use in determining institutional resources needed, program structuring, and qualifications offered to students because these help shape the knowledge acquired by the graduates, the skills they are able to master, their personal and professional attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Padró & Kek, 2013).

### 19.4.4 Regulatory compliance

Government agencies responsible for different parts of regulatory compliance (or through policy steering considerations through legislation as part of the auditing and regulatory technology of government) impose the approach to audits or organizational checks and identification of organizational “truths” (Padró, 2014; Percy & Beaumont, 2008; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). Liu and Elliott, in their chapter on Chinese PHE, indicate that environmental uncertainty caused by sociopolitical change has opened

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1 There is value in determining how many teachers are at early-, mid-, and late-career stages and looking at issues such as succession planning; however, these considerations have to be weighed against a potential ageist bias.
legal and policy steering opportunities for promoting organizational experiments, due to the involvement of new stakeholders. However, expectations about quality embedded within the regulatory compliance mechanisms could actually be undermining expectations in terms of responsiveness to labor market demands or even demand absorption, as implied by Teixeira et al. (2012). More problematic are the additional costs of regulatory compliance that higher education institutions in the private and public sectors must bear, from which the concept of proportionality comes to the fore and what proportionality means. “(The) principles of regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality when applied in line with the Government’s intention, support a high degree of autonomy which supports the aspiration from the sector and government for light touch regulation across the sector” (Dow & Braithwaite, 2013, p. 2).

Along with concerns over costs, Stanford points out that scope of compliance is another issue that has to be taken into account. She talks about the pressures and tension between regulation and deregulation. One major concern is that the regulatory agenda could hinder innovation, with a second concern being ethical shortcomings that do not guard against self-vested interested on the part of regulators or even different stakeholders (Blackmur, 2007). Lo’s chapter provides the perspective of the degree to which the regulator should be involved in monitoring quality assurance in contrast to letting the market control content, level, and costs of courses—providing a de facto self-accreditation/quality assurance feedback loop—as seen in the early history of Malaysian higher education as described by Bajunid and Wong. One approach to help define the balance between regulatory compliance and quality assurance (typically based on accreditation) can be the provision of a charter to private institutions, as is the case in Kenya as reported by Irungu and Kimencu. Abbott and Xiaoying’s chapter is about the contractible quality. The concern that this discussion brings up is again that of role and scope.

19.5 Capacities and techniques of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) and PHE: impact and challenge

Globalization and the internationalization of university have placed an emphasis on TEL: access, capacity, reliability, quality, support, and training of staff and students in its use to maximize learning opportunities. The 2005 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education provide an approach to ensure that the quality of programs delivered by universities is comparable whether provided in the home country or abroad. Latchem and Jung (2012) posit the view that QA for distance education and e-learning should judge teaching and learning in the same manner as a face-to-face learning environment. Attention should be on doing the work (Massy, Graham, & Short, 2007). This attention needs to be based on the experience prior and after the use of TEL, as it is an enduring signal of quality (Oliver & McLoughlin, 1997). Experience is important because there is a paradoxical relationship developing in which the more TEL becomes embedded within standard practice, the current approach to QA contributes to the neglect the way in which technology
enhances learning rather than simply augmenting the capacity to learn (QAQE in e-learning Special Interest Group, 2010). Successful implementation of e-learning is dependent on the extent to which the needs and concerns of the stakeholder groups involved are addressed (Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2008).

The growth in demand for higher education spaces driving the increase in PHE is significant, and the existing infrastructures of universities suggest that this demand needs to be met in other ways instead of the traditional universities. It can be argued the new massive open online courses (MOOCs) are one solution to this demand, but the projections of growth of higher education used in many research works have not taken this phenomenon into account. What this suggests is that there is a need for other providers to support or take up the demand that cannot be met by the traditional higher education institutions, along as concerns regarding regulation and the quality of course and program offerings are taken into account, especially pertaining to assessment and evaluation issues (Ruby, 2005).

Irungu and Kimencu’s chapter points out to the challenges presented in providing an appropriate platform for the delivery of technology enhanced learning by PHE as well as the public sector. This is particularly a key issue in developing countries such as those in Africa. Strategic plans at the national level as well as at the institutional level are critical to ensure a reliable and stable infrastructure, especially as they allow the expansion of access to populations that may not have easy transportation capacity to attend a university or whose lifestyle makes it difficult. This is especially important in wanting to develop and ICT literate knowledge society and economy, as discussed by Bajunid and Wong.

19.6 Perceived value held by students and other stakeholders

Nations create an agenda for education at all levels. Where they differ is in the goals they adopt for their educational institutions. Regardless, legislation and regulations define the priorities and policies that not only enact needed changes, but also help shape value and stakeholder perceptions (cf. Sabatier, 1991). Bajunid and Wong highlight the importance of ethics and “smart partnerships” between PHE institutions, governments, government-linked agencies, public higher education sector, and end users: employers, students, parents, communities. Value co-creation should, therefore, focus on quality of life and well-being issues, ie, forms of satisfaction based on benefit enhancement (Taylor & Judson, 2014).

Middlehurst, in her chapter on UK privately funded education providers, equates its expansion at the beginning of the 21st century to Christensen’s “disruptive innovation” in relation to creating a new market and new values (Christensen, 2013; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). The one thematic constant in a market driven economy is change that organically generates creative destruction as a result of competition over time, overcoming organizational complacency and stagnation (Schumpeter, 2003/1943). The determinant of success is how higher education institutions of any type are able to successfully meet the balance between personal interest and national priorities and the extent to which the expectations of both sides of the seesaw are met (Padró & Horn, 2008).
One major point Christensen and Eyring (2011) make is that disruptive competition has not taken hold of higher education as with most other businesses and industries. For-profits have made niche-like inroads with adult learners, but students prefer the comfort of traditional universities (credentials and student experiences). As a result, much of the competition has come from imitation rather than true differentiation. Teixeira et al. (2012) write in their chapter that private institutions are an instrument to assimilate more efficient managerial practices. Unfortunately, as Rama points out, there is also the limiting factor of how university management may actually stifle innovation and limit academic standards in the name of efficiency. Then there also is the paradox of curtailing innovation to ensure regulatory compliance to ensure standards are met.

Creativity is the first step of innovation, with innovation defined as the “successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization” (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996, p. 1155). What is happening in China as described in Liu and Elliott’s chapter arguably is an example of an innovative approach based on disruption. The Chinese hybrid PHE is a response based on opportunities shaped by changing mores and technical environmental forces that are now allowing change, leading to organizational diversity in its higher education sector. However, success is somewhat limited because prevailing internal and external conflicts regarding legitimacy of purpose and role largely rest with independent colleges being perceived as a part of public universities by many stakeholders. The limitation reflects the reality that many stakeholder issues involving obligations and responsibilities that have to be perceived as being met (Bradford & Florin, 2003; Clarkson, 1995). What impacts stakeholder perceptions and satisfaction with innovative processes are the characteristics of the innovation (technical compatibility, perceived complexity, and process engineering/reengineering) in relation to the organization’s characteristics (top management support, organizational objective consensus, and the level of training/support required to make the innovation successful) and the environmental characteristics (eg, competitive pressures—Bradford & Florin, 2003).

19.7 A counter perspective to PHE growth

Much of the focus on PHE has been on the growth side, but there are examples of slowing growth and potential contraction. The possibility of this contrary trend has been noted previously by Levy (2011) and touched on in this book by Texeira et al. For Levy, the issues that can lead to slower growth or contraction are two: (1) the diminution of social distinctiveness or groups; and (2) demographic changes. What we see in this volume is that the possibility is real.

Rama, in his description of PHE’s evolution in Latin America, indicates a slowdown in its growth. He identifies a number of factors for the reduction in growth:

- increasing regulatory barriers of stricter licensing mechanisms;
- rising costs associated with demands for higher levels of quality, quality assurance expectations, and concerns with international institutional rankings;
- economic expansion allowing for additional funding of public universities;
• an increase in the offering of “free education” through the public higher education sector;
• the increases in and level of costs to students wanting to attend PHE, steering preference toward elite institutions, effectively increasing market differentiation within the PHE sector, with the competition leading to concentrating enrollments; and
• market realignment through mergers and acquisitions of institutions, leading to the creation of larger private universities and/or entry by international entities, especially from the for-profit sector.

For him, there is the additional component of the ideological political interplay that fuels what the bullet points imply. The dynamics are complicated given the political polarities that are at play regarding notions of ownership (and accompanying political pressures) as well as access, equity, quality, and resources.

Kwiek contends that Poland provides an example of a contracting PHE sector. Private sector enrollments shrunk by 30% between 2007 and 2012. For him the reasons for the contraction are:

• demographic shifts in traditional student-age cohort groups meaning less students, hence less demand;
• large-scale reforms of public higher education that have created a zero-sum game where private institutions lose; and
• unpredictable political activities/pressures.

It can be argued that this is a case of reduced demand creating an oversupply of student spaces. At a prima facie level, the challenge here is one of how to attract new student cohorts. However, Kwiek is implying that there may be too much overcapacity to stem the tide, a situation compounded by Polish full-time students not having to pay fees when going to public universities. Worth noting is the role of politics playing in a contracting scenario in both instances. Issues emanating from ideologies emanating from the political spectra do seem to play a role, particularly in relation to access and equity, with these favoring the public sector in ways ranging from making it more difficult for private institutions to be recognized or maintaining recognition to approaches toward the imposition of student fees.

19.8 Where to from here?

Though universities are the dominant force in higher education, private providers are, without doubt, a force to be reckoned with. Private higher education will continue to grow and play a key role in providing higher education to the community. The expansion of such providers would witness an increase in competition, which would entail greater development of resources and support, which should be advantageous to students in the long run. It can be argued that the increase in private higher education providers is the solution to the increasing demand for higher education. However, the traditional public higher education sector increasingly perceives the rise of private higher education as a competitive threat due to their desire to access the continuing shrinking public funding of universities (Ross, 2009; Trounson, 2010). However, such a perception also means a need for greater collaboration between private
higher education institutions with traditional universities to ensure greater flexibility and pathways for those who seek to pursue their studies further in order to reap the benefits of achieving higher qualifications. Creating this symbiotic relationship provides additional benefits such as attracting more international students who traditional universities upon completion of their studies at private higher education institutions. Shah and Lewis (2010) provide a model from Australia that has reaped such a benefit. This model is based on the pathway colleges established by private providers in partnership with eight Australian public universities. The model encapsulates the following:

- students undertake a 1-year diploma in the private college, which provides a pathway into a 2-year undergraduate degree with the university;
- development of processes to ensure high quality; the approval of courses and curriculum by the partner university and moderation of assessments;
- teacher and student mobility between the private college and the public university, which ensures exchange of teaching pedagogy;
- sharing of campus facilities, such as the library; and
- academic preparation and transition into higher education.

Shah and Lewis (2010) further argue that such collaboration would certainly improve quality assurance and assure academic quality and standards, thus resulting in improved credibility of graduates.

19.9 Concluding remarks

Where does education fit in the grand scheme of things at the global platform? Currently it is estimated that unemployment in world stands around 200 million. There are around 1.5 billion people occupying marginal jobs (underemployed are those who occupy positions which are not full time, but who want to work more). The expected demographic surge in the next 10–15 years suggests that there is a need to create around 600 million jobs. These data point to one important driving force, the demand for education, especially higher education will not be a constant, but actually increasing; Altbach et al. (2009) estimated there were around 150 million tertiary students globally, an increase of around 53% from 2000. What is more alarming is the study estimates around 7 million international students by 2020. These data indicate that higher education is, without doubt, in high demand globally.

This mushroom effect of global demand for higher education is no different in Australia. A 2014 study by the group of eight universities indicate that the overall demand for higher education in Australia will rise by 344,000 students by 2020 and 563,000 student by 2030 (Go8, 2014). Fig. 19.1 illustrates this growth projection.

Quality matters are the usual argument that universities tend to pivot on regarding the private providers, but such issues are not only prevalent in only private providers. Audits that have taken place around the world have illustrated issues of quality both in universities and private higher education and the outcome of improvements where issues have been identified.

Placing quality matters aside and understanding issues identified are being addressed or monitored, the attention would then need to be of the students who enter the higher
education arena. The data on increasing student numbers suggest that there are sufficient participants in the higher education sector, which supports the notion that there is no competition as such to find “bumps to fill seats.” If there is general acceptance of this scenario, and the need to work cohesively to achieve the best outcome for all students, then the future of higher education is to draw on a collaborative relationship, which is not only beneficial to both universities and private higher education providers, but as well the community. This outcome will result in greater satisfaction among students in their ability to continue the studies, improved quality regimes, and improved flexibility of pathways to benefit the community of learners. Whatever the arguments that might be put forth in terms of quality of the private higher education provider, the arguments that support the notion that it is in the best interest for educators to work together to give the best possible learning and teaching environments for all students, whichever pathways they may choose, is the way forward for the higher education sector.

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