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Title

Diversification in Argentine higher education : dimensions and impact of private sector growth

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Abstract

Private education is a remarkably dynamic area of change in post-secondary education, particularly in Latin America. Evidence of growth in the number of private institutions and enrollment suggests that higher education is becoming increasingly diversified into two sectors ? public and private. While this appears to be true throughout Latin America, and much of the developing world, recent evidence from Argentina casts doubt on the degree to which private sector growth trends may actually translate into a significant increase in the impact of private institutions in higher education, where impact is proxied by the relative share of student enrollment and graduates. This study explores the dimensions and impact of private expansion in Argentina, and places the findings in a comparative (regional) and theoretical framework. The analysis shows that, despite unprecedented growth in the number of private universities, the public sector remains the dominant provider of university education. Private institutions, while certainly more numerous and training a growing number of students, do not account for a larger share of university enrollment. They have, however, developed specific niches

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(e.g., in graduate level training and in urban areas). Significantly, following a pattern of institutional proliferation found throughout Latin America, some private universities offer elite alternatives to prestigious public institutions. The findings serve to qualify apparent 'gains' in private higher education and to underscore the need for further research into the relevant intrasectoral (public and private) dimensions of change in post-secondary education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)