

Poland

I. A Brief Description of Polish Higher Education

The fall of Communism has brought about many changes in Poland's higher education system, including increased academic freedom, curricular reform, the development of more market-oriented curricula, and the emergence of a private higher education sector. During the past decade, enrollment in higher education has grown from about 11 percent of the college age population to nearly 30 percent (Strategic planning for Polish higher education, SPPHE Proposal). New academic programs, new faculty pay schemes, a new system of accreditation, and an expansion in facilities have accompanied this growth.

The current higher education management system is based on Article 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (which states that everyone has the right to a free education) and on four fundamental acts – the Higher Education Act of 1999, the Academic Title and Degrees Act of 1990, the Act on Forming the State Committee for Scientific research of 1991 and the Vocational Training Colleges Act of 1997.

On September 3, 1999, a revised higher education framework law was presented to the Executive Committee of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP). The law consolidated what had been three separate acts (the Act on Higher Education (1990), the Act on Institutions of Higher Vocational Education (1997), and the Act on Loan System for Students (1998) in one place and put one minister in charge of supervising all non-military higher education institutions, instead of the five different ministers that had previously been involved. It also created a new body, the Academic Accreditation Committee (AAC), to set educational standards and assess the quality of education in all institutions. In particular, the AAC reviews applications for the establishment and operation of new HE institutions and applications for launching new study programs at existing institutions. The law formally recognizes the right of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools to present initiatives and opinions concerning higher education and contains provisions allowing for limited tuition fees (discussed below).

In spite of these new provisions, the Government still exercises only limited control over the management of universities. State funding is distributed to the Polish universities according to an algorithm that is closely related to enrolments. Internally, university administrators retain approximately 30 percent of their state grants for central system functions and distribute the remaining 70 percent to their various faculties for instructional and other costs, including the maintenance of facilities. In addition, most of the public universities earn approximately 25 percent of their total operating budgets from other external sources, including tuition from part-time and continuing education programs. External income is divided between the central administration and the relevant faculties at most universities by the same 30/70 basis. Under these circumstances, individual faculties and departments operate on one-line budgets and may carry forward savings from the current year to future years

(<www.indiana.edu/~polishst/spphe/spphe_proposal.html>). Research funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

Polish higher education, both state and non-state (private), includes the following sectors: universities, technical universities, agricultural schools, schools of economics, teacher education institutions, medical academies, maritime schools, academies of physical education, and schools of arts and theology. In the 2004/05 academic year 1,290,000 students were enrolled in 115 public institutions and 510,00 students were enrolled in 280 private higher education institutions (<http://poland.gov.pl/?document=315>). To qualify for admission in a higher education institution, the applicant must hold the secondary school certificate or meet requirements determined autonomously by a specific high school (Batog, D. et. a. 2002, p. 1081)

More and more students are choosing to study part time or weekends because they are able to work during weekdays, as shown in Table 2, below. The rapid increase in the number of students in recent years can be correlated with a higher level of educational aspirations. The expansion and the differentiation of higher education—both vertically and horizontally—has led to a broadening of university offerings, an expansion of degrees such as the licentiate (BA), complementary MA studies, and post-graduate and doctorate studies, and the increase in part-time studies (<http://www.andras.ee/issue/matlakiewicz.htm>).

Table 2:
Student Enrolments in Higher Education

Year	Total	Day (fulltime)	Part-time
1990/91	384,706	295,070 76.7%	89,636 23.3 %
2001/2002	1,697,652	758,850 44.7%	938,800 55.3%

Source: File, Jon and Leo Goedegebuure. Eds. 2003

The radical changes in all Polish institutions brought about by the end of the so-called *command economy* has greatly affected the governance and management of the universities and other institutions of higher education. As in all of the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Socialist/Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the changes involved both decentralization and devolution of authority from the central government to the institution and to its management. The rise of a market economy and commercialism brought about a new level of responsiveness both to the student and family, as well as to emerging business enterprises as consumers and users of higher education. In addition, the economic, political, and cultural reintegration of Poland with the rest of Europe, just at the time that all of European higher education was undergoing reforms in the direction of greater institutional autonomy, conformity of degrees, and more reliance on non-governmental revenues, has accelerated changes in Polish higher education.

II. Costs of Higher Education in Poland Borne by Parents and Students

Although the underlying legal guarantee of free education legal continues to constrain Polish universities in the diversification of revenue through the imposition of tuition and fees, there are exceptions and loopholes. Under the 1999 *Act on Higher Education*, a fee, not to exceed 10 percent of an average monthly salary, was authorized to pay for the *verification of knowledge*, the *certification of qualifications*, and for some “*extra services*.” In addition, the revised Framework Law allows State-owned higher education institutions, beginning in November 2000, to request tuition fees for selected study programs such as evening and extramural studies. Estimates of total costs borne by parents and students in both public and private sectors are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Higher Education Expenses Borne by Parents and Students in Poland,
First Degree, Academic Year 2004-05

[National currency converted to \$ US by 2004 Purchasing Power Parity \$1= 1.83 Pl zloty];

		Public		Private	
		<i>Low Public</i>	<i>High Public</i>	<i>Low Private</i>	<i>High Private</i>
	Fees	0	2,000 [US\$1,090]	300 [US\$160]	400 [US\$220]
Instructional Expenses	Tuition	0	10,000 [\$5,465]	1,000 [\$540]	8,000 [\$4,370]
	Books & Other Ed. Expenses	500 [\$270]	500 [\$270]	1,000 [\$540]	2,000 [\$1,090]
	Subtotal Costs of Instruction	500 [\$270]	12,500 [\$6,830]	2,300 [\$1,240]	10,400 [\$5,680]
Student Living Expenses	Lodging	2,500 (US1,365)	3,000 (US1,640)	2,000 (US1,090)	3,000 [\$1,640]
	Food	4,500 [\$2,460]	6,000 [\$3,280]	5,000 [\$2,730]	6,000 [\$3,280]
	Transportation	300 [\$160]	300 [\$160]	500 [\$270]	500 [\$270]
	Other Personal Expenses	800 [\$440]	950 [\$520]	1,000 [\$545]	1,000 [\$545]
	Subtotal Cost of student living	8,100 [\$4,425]	10,250 [\$5,600]	8,500 [\$4,645]	10,500 [\$5,740]
Total		8,600 [\$4,700]	22,750 [\$12,430]	10,800 [\$5,900]	20,900 [\$11,420]

Low Public: living in dormitory or shared apartment.

High public: paying tuition fee for extramural, part-time and evening studies, living as an “independent adult.”

Low Private: low private tuition, and living at home with parents.

High Private: high private tuition, living in dormitory or shared apartment.

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