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**Title**

The decline of private higher education

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**Abstract**

No topic in private higher education study has attracted as great attention globally as has growth. This is appropriate as private growth has soared to nearly a third of the world's total higher education enrolment. But while private growth continues to be the dominant trend, important declines in private shares have emerged. These must be analysed and understood. What is private decline depends partly on definition. For the most part declines occur in private enrolment shares, rarely in absolute numbers. Declines also sometimes occur in private subsectors rather than in the private sector overall. Some declines are merely transitory. Short of actual decline, the slowing of private growth rates is also notable. After citing historical examples, we focus on contemporary social and political causes of private decline. The social causes are mainly two: diminution of social distinctiveness or groups that have fuelled private growth; demographic changes that fall hard on private sectors. The political causes analysed are three: government policy, ranging from hostile regimes to regulation; hefty expansion of the public sector of higher education; competitive partial privatization within public higher education. None of these dynamics reverses the continued dominant tendency of private

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growth but they do provide counter-tendencies important to grasp and with potential to accelerate.  
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