

A Comparison of Higher Education in Hungary and Australia

By

Professor Joo-Gim Heaney

Australian Institute of Higher Education, Sydney Australia

Dr Peter Ryan

Consult Ed, Sydney Australia

Associate Professor Márta Konczosné Szombathelyi

University of Szechenyi Istvan

Abstract

The paper proposes to compare the higher education sectors of Hungary and Australia. First, the structure of the higher education sector in each country is explained. This is followed by an analysis of the massification and privatisation occurring in each country's higher education sector, including trends that the sector is facing. The discourse then turns to a discussion of the consideration of the Bologna Process in each country followed by how higher education is funded. The paper then considers changes, trends and challenges facing higher education in each country and future research questions are then proposed.

# **A COMPARISON OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN HUNGARY AND AUSTRALIA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Hungary and Australia are two countries which face contrasting situations. With an estimated population of 10 million people, the Republic of Hungary has faced a number of political, resource and economic challenges ever since its involvement in the two world wars. In 1989, Hungary's constitution abandoned the Communist party's monopoly control and allowed Hungary to be ruled as a multiparty state. In April 1999, Hungary became part of NATO, and in May 2004, Hungary joined the EU (US Department of State 2011). Although Hungary is not a large country, with land resources equal to that of one state in the USA (that of Indiana), in the 1990s Hungary's openness to foreign direct investment made it a magnet for investment from large multinational companies such as GE, General Motors and Coca-Cola, amongst others (US Department of State 2011). However, in 2008, Hungary was indeed negatively impacted by the Global Financial Crisis, as more than a 50% share of its banks was in foreign ownership. This resulted in calls to the International Monetary Fund for lending requests, as well as stoppages in loan operations (Naude 2009, p.13).

In comparison, Australia has a population of more than 22 million people, with the sixth largest land area in the world (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2011a). In 2007 as the 14<sup>th</sup> biggest overall economy in the world and the 9<sup>th</sup> biggest industrialised economy, Australia is also a very rich nation as the 15<sup>th</sup> richest nation in per capita terms. This has been aided undisputedly by being the 6<sup>th</sup> oldest continuously functioning democracy in the world. Continuing on this trend of solid expansion economically Australia has increased its population by welcoming migrants from some 200 countries, making Australia an extremely diverse country in terms of religion, ethnicity and culture (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011a). It is perhaps this stability that has seen Australia enjoy seventeen consecutive years of economic growth since 1992, with an average of 3.3% a year, as well as being the envy of other world economies during the Global Financial Crisis in 2007 (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011b).

Thus, Hungary and Australia appear to be two countries with large contrasts between them. Hungary has been embroiled in political and economic changes for hundreds of years due to its geographical situation and political alliances. In contrast, Australia is a country that remains largely isolated, independent and politically unchanged and stable as it is a relatively young country. Hence, the authors are interested in comparing each country's higher education system, development and trends given the worldwide context of the massification of higher education (Gibbons et al 1994, p.11; Scott 1995). Consequently, this research paper offers a seminal comparison of the development of higher education between two widely contrasting countries. This paper also provides directions for future research based on these comparisons.

## **1.0 THE STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN HUNGARY AND AUSTRALIA**

Different countries structure and categorise their higher education systems differently. Higher education qualifications are those which are above that of a high school qualification comprising Diploma level or above (in Australia) as defined by Level 5 or above of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF 2011), or an Associate Degree or above in the USA (Carnegie Foundation 2000). The use of the word Institute, College or University is not necessarily related to the level of qualification conferred by that institution. Therefore, it is

important to understand the educational structure and nomenclature of each specific country when comparing different higher education systems.

### 1.1 THE HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Hungary’s higher education system comprises 72 higher education institutions (Table 1), with 19 state-financed universities, 10 state-financed colleges, 29 religious educational institutions (24 universities and 5 colleges) and 13 private tertiary institutions (2 universities and 12 colleges). Basically, there are 2 main sectors in higher education: state versus non-state owned. Within the non-state owned education category there are church-owned and privately-owned institutions. Hence “private higher education” in a strict sense refers to the institutions that were established by private capital, local governments, private organisations, e.g. non-profit organisations. Private tertiary education institutions as opposed to universities which are publicly or church funded, could be differentiated based on profit ownership.

**Table 1: Overview of the state and non-state higher education sectors in Hungary, 2009**

Type of institutions	State Institutions		Non-State Institutions				Total	
			Church Institutions		Private Institutions			
	University	College	University	College	University	College	University	College
Number of institutions	19	10	5	24	2	12	26	46
	29		29		14		72	
Number of students	328,935 (86%)		22,525 (6%)		29,573 (8%)		381,033 (100%)	

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2010

It is this prevalence of church-owned institutions, heavily subsidised by the government and forming a separate category besides state and private institutions that is a salient characteristic of the Hungarian higher education system. Overall, the Hungarian government has continued to finance both state and non-state institutions. Hungary follows a Central European tradition (e.g. the Humboldtian university), namely a two-tier system – two types of institutions: colleges (főiskolák) and universities (egyetemek). “This system was developed in response to the demand for training that meets practical needs in contrast to the longer and more theoretical courses offered by the universities. Consequently, universities generally provide a high standard of theoretical knowledge, and colleges offer more practical and generally shorter courses” (Rozsnyai 2004).

The system of higher education is co-ordinated by central government agencies, among which is the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC). Accreditation is the task of the HAC as a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education). The HAC’s main responsibility is to accredit all higher education institutions in Hungary that issue state-recognised degrees. The HAC has a number of additional tasks. They include accrediting doctoral schools; granting preliminary accreditation for new programs; and approving professorial appointments on request of a university or college. The accreditation of doctoral schools is the only domain in which the HAC has decision-making powers; in all others it makes recommendations to the Minister of Education (Rozsnyai 2004, p.129). It means that the Hungarian accreditation system is totally centralised.

It is within the government’s power to either found or close a faculty that is attached to a state institution of higher education, and it is also government responsibility to accredit faculties in private higher education institutions. The government decree lists the faculties of higher education institutions that are competent to either create or close educational, research or other units. Foundations, companies and organisations or persons may establish and support educational and research units that belong to the higher education institutions (Kozma, Radácsi, Rébay & Híves 2003, p.32).

## 1.2 THE AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

At the end of 2011, Australia’s higher education system consisted of 177 institutions (Table 2), which have been broken down according to the broad provider category standards as set by the Australian higher education regulator (TEQSA). To allow a comparison with the Hungarian higher education sector shown in Table 1, institutions have been categorised into three main types: government owned; church owned and privately owned. The federal government and various state and territory governments control 59 of these institutions, predominantly universities but with a significant number of technical colleges in the non self-accrediting category. Various church owned organisations control 28 institutions delivering predominately theology related courses but also some secular courses. While government and church owned institutions are exclusively not for profit, private institutions are predominately for-profit but also include a number of non-profit providers, notably professional associations.

**Table 2: Overview of institutions that make up the Australian higher education sector**

Type of institution	Self-accrediting university	Self-accrediting non-university	Non self-accrediting provider	Total
Government owned institutions	36	2	21	59
Church owned institutions	3	2	23	28
Privately owned institutions	5	0	85	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>177</b>

Source: Australian State and Territory Higher Education Registers / Higher Education Support Act

Up until 1998 the Australian higher education system had a two-tiered system of universities and colleges of advanced education. However, Australia’s higher education landscape was substantially changed by the Dawkins reforms of 1988, which “at the stroke of a pen” more than doubled the number of Australian universities (Thornton 2005). The reforms integrated colleges of advanced education and universities within a unified system of higher education creating larger and more business-like universities premised on conglomeration and economies of scale (Marginson 2005). While it is considered that the Dawkins reforms were successful in opening up the higher education sector to those who were previously excluded, it resulted in a highly homogenised university sector (Meek & Massaro 2008, p.3) where each of Australia’s public universities looked much like the other, doing essentially the same kinds of things and

providing little choice to students and little choice in educational opportunities (Trood 2005). The lack of more practical courses previously offered by the second-tier colleges has been steadily filled by the emergence of private providers of higher education operating as non self-accrediting institutions.

Until 2011, higher education regulation in Australia was fractured across nine government jurisdictions with differing requirements. This was the case as the federal government lacked the constitutional authority to regulate higher education Australia-wide as the Australian Constitution is silent on the matter of education (Nelson 2005, p.5). Attempts by the various governments to harmonise the regulatory requirements between jurisdictions only served to highlight the different approaches of each state or territory to higher education regulation in their particular jurisdictions. However, the federal government has used its constitutional power to control corporations to pass legislation that will regulate higher education Australia-wide, without the agreement of states and territories.

The new regulator, the Tertiary Education Standards and Quality Agency (TEQSA) has determined a set of Threshold Standards that all higher education providers must meet, notably Provider Registration Standards which inform the registration of an institution and the Provider Course Accreditation Standards which guide the accreditation of courses for non self-accrediting institutions. Accredited courses must also meet the Qualification Standards which in turn are underpinned by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF 2011).

Subsequently, the Australian higher education regulatory framework is moving from a system involving nine different government agencies to a system that will be totally centralised under the federal government. It is also the first time that universities will be directly regulated by a government agency that will have the power to sanction all higher education providers, including those previously outside the regulatory framework.

## **2.0 THE MASSIFICATION AND PRIVATISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The OECD (Organisation for Economic and Development) showed that there were far lower unemployment rates among university graduates compared to those that did not complete their high school certificates. For the OECD countries in 2009, unemployment rates among university graduates was 4.4% compared to 11.5% for those who did not complete high school (Schleicher 2011).

It is this large difference in income and employment rates that is driving the “massification” or “democratisation” of higher education worldwide. Using available data, the proportion of adults with higher education qualifications almost doubled in OECD countries between 1975 and 2000 (from 22% to 44% of adults) (Wooldridge 2005). Globally, adults enrolling in tertiary education have increased from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2007, roughly a 53% increase in that time (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley 2009). In fact, this trend is so entrenched that China and India are have doubled their student population in the 1990s (Wooldridge 2005).

As The Economist sees it (Wooldridge 2005), higher education is becoming a “universal aspiration”; it is becoming very difficult to balance the needs of individual attention with that of allowing the masses to access education. However, whilst students from Asian countries tend to pay full fees to enter the major public and private academic systems in North America, Western Europe (e.g. UK), and Australia, a corresponding trend is for more local students in the European Union to enter higher education – both public and private institutions – in the region (Altbach et al 2009).

Correspondingly, it is important to note that the share of private funding at tertiary level increased in 20 of the 26 countries (for which comparable data was available between 2000 and 2008), with more than 15 percentage points in Portugal, the Slovak Republic and the UK (Schleicher 2011). It is this trend of the privatisation of higher education including for-profit universities that is receiving much academic and media attention. Altbach et al (2009) define private institutions as those that may operate entirely with private assets or partially with public funds; they may include for-profit or not-for-profit business models operating as foundations or companies and may or may not be accountable to the overseeing government bodies in that country or region. In fact, privatisation of higher education seems to be correlated with massification of education. It may well seem that if education was not privatised, the massification of higher education, to the extent that it has, could not have been realised.

Therefore, private higher education is playing an ever increasing part in the massification of higher education. In a report prepared for the 2009 UNESCO Conference, it is stated that 30% of the global higher education enrolment is in private providers (Altbach et al 2009; Guruz 2008; Program for Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE) 2008). The same UNESCO report comments that in general, the private sector is “demand absorbing” of students who are not able to enter the public university system, not seen as prestigious institutions, and are run mostly on a business model where students are consumers and management decisions (as opposed to academic decisions) hold sway (Altbach et al 2009).

## **2.1 THE EUROPEAN AND HUNGARIAN SCENARIO**

Private universities are expanding quickly in Central and Eastern Europe. The growth of private institutions has occurred predominantly after the fall of communism (Altbach et al 2009). Therefore, privatisation in the higher education sector in recent decades has more to do with changes in the public sector than with the establishment of new private institutions. While Portugal is an exception with about 30% of its enrolments in the private sector, and Spain having some prominent private higher education institutions, most other countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium operate private institutions using government funds and within government regulations. In central and eastern Europe, Estonia, Georgia, Poland and Latvia have about 20% of their students enrolled private higher education institutions (Slancheva & Levy 2007).

Post-communism in Hungary (after 1989) has seen the education system in Hungary change from a selective education system to a mass system. From only 1 non-church private higher education institution in 1990 and 219 students, there are over 29,000 students in 2009 studying in private non-church higher education institutions in Hungary (Statistical Yearbook of Education 2009/2010). This includes 2 universities and 12 colleges.

However, if the definition of private higher education was expanded to include “non-state owned institutions”, i.e. all church and non-church private institutions, then the total number of private higher education institutions and the number of students enrolling in such institutions would have increased rapidly from a total of 11 such institutions in 1990 to 40 institutions in 2008 with over 52,000 students in 2009 (Statistical Yearbook of Education 2009/2010). This is a remarkable growth rate given that Hungary has only a population of about 10 million people.

## **2.2 THE ASIAN AND AUSTRALIAN SCENARIO**

East Asia has the largest concentration of countries; Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea are all approaching 70% of enrolment in private providers (Altbach et al 2009). Within the Asian region Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand are also fast

becoming more internationally competitive in the private higher education sector. In 2009, Singapore was home to 16 distinguished foreign tertiary (comprising mostly higher education) institutions (Singapore Economic Development Board 2009) attracting some 86,000 international students. These institutions include INSEAD, the Tisch School of the Arts, Duke University School of Medicine and the University of Nevada Las Vegas. To demonstrate its commitment in encouraging private education, Singapore is now establishing a Private Education Act to enhance regulation in the private education sector. The environment for providing education to international students is so competitive that Asia is set to account for 70% of the global demand for international higher education by 2025.

The increase in the private provision of higher education is a trend that is also seen in Australia. However, the proportion of higher education provision by private providers in relationship to total higher education providers in Australia is low, around 10% (Ryan 2011, p.47). However, the proportion of higher education delivered by the private sector compared with previous estimates of 3.5% proposed by Watson (2000, p.12) and the ‘anecdotal estimate’ of between 5 and 6% suggested by ACPET (2002, p. 2) shows considerable growth during the past decade, albeit from a low base.

### **3.0 AN INTERNATIONAL IMPETUS: THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

The Bologna Process is named after the Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999 by 29 ministers of higher education from European countries (compared to the now 47 participating countries) (Bologna Process 2010). The goals were that of the European Higher Education Area involving the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES, as well as representatives of higher education institutions, students, staff, employers, and quality assurance agencies. The reforms are mainly about “easily readable and comparable degrees in the three-cycle structure (bachelor-master-doctorate), quality assurance in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and fair recognition of foreign degrees and other higher education qualifications in accordance with the Council of Europe/ UNESCO Recognition Convention” (Bologna Process 2010). Given the global nature of education, it is of no surprise that a number of countries, particularly those that are exporting education, are monitoring the Process, which in 2006, was slated for completion by 2010 but is still ongoing.

#### **3.1 EMBRACED BY HUNGARY**

Although the Bologna Process is not a European Union initiative, it is of no surprise that countries in the EU region chose to quickly apply and adopt the Bologna Process; in Hungary the Process was applied to students who commenced their university education from September 2006. The purpose of the Bologna Process (or Bologna Accords) is the creation of the European Higher Education Area by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe, in particular under the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Between 1999-2010 all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were targeted to creating the European Higher Education Area which then became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March 2010. Diploma Supplements in Hungary were created, based on significant support by the European Parliament and national governments. Many other novel initiatives were created in the late 1990s, subjected to intensive discussions; these included qualification frameworks, outcome-driven organisation of education and the use of learning outcomes. Most of the 46 countries have adopted new higher education legislation to introduce and regulate elements of the Bologna Process. Many countries have allocated additional funds for the implementation of new Bologna-aligned

policies. The European Commission has also supported projects for the introduction of reforms.

The Hungarian government was already using a credit system and programs which created highly mobile transfers of educational qualifications across different countries. A two-cycle degree system was then implemented to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, a mutually recognisable system to all the considered partners. For example, a BS/BSc degree requires 180 credits in 6 semesters and a half year long internship program- and a Ma/MSc degree is usually 4 semester long course which could possibly be supplemented with a PhD program (6 semesters – 180 credits) (Tempus Public Foundation 2010).

### **3.2 AUSTRALIAN ADHERENCE?**

With some 32,000 European students in Australia, a comparable and transparent education system and outcomes (e.g. transcripts, units of study needed for completion, student workload comparability) using something called a Diploma Supplement describing the nature, level, context, content and status of studies would add a lot to making equivalence statements (DEST 2006). In 2006, the Australian government recognised the importance of the Bologna Process for a number of reasons including the need for greater consistency and portability across the higher education system (DEST 2006); this makes good sense as Australia earns substantial amounts from exporting education to international students, making international education Australia's third highest export earner (Ross 2011).

In 2007, the federal government announced that a consortium of universities had been commissioned to develop a single agreed template for an Australian version of the European Diploma Supplement. The final report "Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement" was released on 2008 (DEEWR 2008).

Despite government policy however, Australia has not fully embraced the Bologna Process, with only Melbourne University claiming some adherence through its 2006 Melbourne Model which has a curriculum consistent with the three-cycle Bologna benchmark (Contractor 2008) and with University of Western Australia "appearing to follow the lead" of Melbourne University (Maslen 2006).

It is notable that subsequent reviews of education in Australia failed to make any reference to the Bologna Process. The most recent review of the Australian Qualification Framework in 2011 still made no mention on the Bologna Process and went so far as to say "Alignment of the AQF with other nation's or regions' qualifications frameworks will be undertaken only where there is a demonstrable benefit to Australia" and "The AQF will not be adapted to suit another nation's or region's requirements" (AQF 2011, p.105).

In 2011, however, Macquarie University in Australia planned to restructure its degrees to adhere to the Bologna Process (Rosenberg 2011) so as to create degrees more in line with institutions in North America, Europe and China.

### **4.0 FUNDING OF AND TUITION FEES CHARGED BY PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Whilst it could be assumed that the very phrase "private" entails no funding or support by a country's government of a private organisation or its consumers (students), this is by no means a universally applied concept in the education industry. Education is widely accepted as a product that should be accessible to the public or at the very least supported as a means of offering students options of different types of study. However, due to the massification of

education, with more and more countries intending to achieve a larger proportion of their citizens with post-secondary qualifications, governments have embodied various policies of public support for private higher education institutions and their students.

#### **4.1 THE HUNGARIAN METHOD**

In Hungary, private higher education institutions are tuition-dependent but they also receive direct state funding, which is unparalleled in the entire European region. Achieving sector neutrality for processes leading to state recognition and state financial support was central to the proclaimed objectives of the 1996 amendments to the Higher Education Law of 1993 (Nagy-Darvas & Darvas 1999). Private higher education institutions are entitled to normative state funding through a special “authorisation agreement” with the state (Higher Education Law 1993, Section 9/H). As precise procedures for applying and gaining student normative funding remains ill defined, private higher education institutions receive much less normative governmental funding compared with church and state institutions.

Indirect funding which institutions obtain through student loans was available to private higher education institutions from 2001. The main characteristic of the Hungarian model is that all students, regardless of their social background and academic credentials, are eligible for loans, of which repayment is contingent on future income (Berlinger & Gönczi 2007).

#### **4.2 THE AUSTRALIAN METHOD**

Unlike the Hungarian higher education system, apart from one provider (Australian Catholic University) church-owned institutions are not subsidised by the government. Government funding to support higher education institutions is almost totally focussed on the 38 government-owned self-accrediting institutions. Government owned institutions in the non self-accrediting sector are not government funded to deliver higher education, although do receive funding support for their lower level technical and trade courses. Students in 126 of the total 177 higher education providers are directly supported by the government through access to income contingent student loans (FEE-HELP/FEE-HECS), however subsidised loans (FEE-HECS) are only applicable to students in government owned universities, with a few very minor exceptions for teaching and nursing degrees delivered by private providers.

#### **5.0 EDUCATION AS AN EXPORT**

A large number of students seek to complete higher education qualifications in countries other than their native country. One of the largest portions of student mobility includes students from Asia seeking higher education in the USA, Western Europe and Australia (Altbach et al 2009). Consequently, countries such as UK, Australia and Canada actively adjust their student visa and migration policies to ensure they are competitive in attracting such full-fee paying students both to their public and private higher education institutions. Within the European countries, there is also a form of student mobility; however, in contrast this portion does not comprise a large export industry from one European country to another (Altbach et al 2009).

#### **5.1 THE HUNGARIAN EXPERIENCE**

Compared to other countries, only 0.6% of international students choose Hungary as a destination for their higher education studies (Berács 2010). One of the main objectives of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999 was to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. Between 1999 and 2010 all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were targeted towards creating the European Higher Education Area, which included encouraging student mobility.

Therefore, the number of foreign students studying in Hungary is not significant with only about 14,000 students, drawn mainly from Romania, Germany and Israel. Because some of these neighbouring countries' citizens speak Hungarian, it is ease of language that allows these students to study in Hungary. For those who come from other continents, they may choose to undertake studies in English in Hungary (Berács 2010).

## **5.2 AN AUSTRALIAN EXPORT INDUSTRY**

Unlike the Hungarian experience foreign students have made, and continue to make a significant contribution to the Australian higher education sector. As an English speaking country Australia attracts students from a broad range of countries, particularly Asia and the sub-continent. International education has grown to become Australia's third largest source of overseas earnings, generating AUD\$15.5 billion in 2008 and supporting more than 125,000 jobs with nearly half a million students coming to Australia (Gillard 2009).

The full year data for 2010 (DEEWR 2011) reveals that 335,273 students studying at Australian higher education institutions were from overseas (28.1% of the total student population); 27.5% of the student population in public providers and 36.8% in private providers.

For some institutions income from international students is critical for their very survival. For example, some government-owned universities have international students accounting for nearly half their student population (Curtin University of Technology 45%; Central Queensland University 49%, University of Ballarat 49% and RMIT University 51%) while some private providers offer their higher education courses almost exclusively to international students.

## **6.0 COMPARATIVE FINDINGS**

This paper has compared the higher education systems of Hungary and Australia in a number of aspects: the structure of each country's higher education system; the massification and privatisation of higher education of Hungary compared to that of Australia; the contrast between the extent of adherence to the Bologna Process between Hungary and Australia; differences in government funding of institutions and tuition fees in each country; and the different extent of exporting education conducted by Hungary and Australia. Consequently, the following comparative findings below can be demonstrated.

The number of institutions per capita in both countries is roughly on par; Hungary 7.2 institutions per million population and Australia 8 per million. However, in Australia the number of private institutions is higher than government owned (90:59) whereas in Hungary it is lower (14:29). The number of church-owned institutions is much the same with 29 in Hungary and 28 in Australia; however, as a percentage of the total institutions, church-owned institutions are more prevalent in Hungary (40% in Hungary of total institutions versus 16% in Australia).

The overall number of higher education students is 381,033 in Hungary compared with 1,192,657 in Australia. The big difference between the two countries is the number of international students; 14,000 in Hungary compared with 335,273 in Australia, income from international students becoming an increasingly important source of income for Australian higher education institutions. Interestingly, the number of local students in each country (367,033 in Hungary compared with 857,384 in Australia) is a strikingly similar proportion of the overall population of each country (Hungary 3.7% versus 3.8% of the Australian

population). Furthermore, the number of students studying in the private higher education sector is comparable with 8% in Hungary compared to 10% in Australia.

The massification of higher education has been evident in both countries with the number of private providers and the proportion of higher education that they deliver steadily increasing over the past two decades.

From a regulatory point of view, Australian universities are self-accrediting and the courses they offer have not been regulated. However, this is set to change in 2012 with the advent of a new national higher education regulator which has the power to sanction all higher education providers, including universities. The Australian higher education regulatory framework is now mirroring the Hungarian model by covering all institutions in a centralised authority.

One of the key differences identified by this paper is each country's approach to the Bologna Process. Due to its location within Europe, Hungary is embracing the Bologna Process to facilitate the mobility of its higher education graduates across different countries. In comparison, the Australian regulatory framework has not explicitly referred to the Bologna Process, while some individual universities have attempted some adherence to the Bologna Model.

The funding of institutions is markedly different between the two countries with Hungarian church and private-owned institutions attracting direct state funding in a process designed to achieve sector neutrality. In contrast the Australian government's funding model perpetuates the divide between government-owned and non government-owned institutions with the vast majority of funding going to government-owned universities. For example, subsidised tuition fees are almost exclusively available in Australian universities, which from 2012 will have no limit on the number of subsidised places they offer to undergraduate students. This effectively decreases the competitive neutrality between the various sectors for Australian domestic students as non government-owned institutions must charge full fees. However, the similarity between the funding systems of both countries is the broad availability of income contingent loans to students.

A marked difference between the two countries is the number of foreign students studying within their higher education institutions. While in Hungary international student numbers are insignificant, Australian institutions are increasingly reliant on fees from international students as part of their business plans and maintaining ongoing financial viability. International students now make up 28% of the total student population and earn AUD\$15.5 billion in export earnings making education Australia's third largest export industry. In fact some Australian higher education providers have become so reliant on income from international students that changes to government policy can threaten the very survival of these institutions.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The past few decades has seen increasing massification and privatisation of higher education. However, this phenomenon may not have occurred in a similar manner across different countries and regions. This paper has chosen to focus on two contrasting countries: Hungary, which is located in Europe, and Australia, which is located in the Asia Pacific region, to compare their higher education structures and then specific aspects such as the types of institutions in the higher education sector, funding of institutions and tuition fees, the extent to which each country has adopted the Bologna Process, the extent of massification and privatisation in each country, and the extent of higher education as an export industry in each country.

A number of interesting and important findings have emerged from the comparative discussion section above. Each of these findings will be discussed and then future research areas will be proposed based on each of the comparative findings.

1. Both Hungary and Australia have experienced a large increase in the number of students enrolled in the non-public (or non-government owned or non-state owned) higher education sector. This comprises non-state institutions in Hungary (church and private institutions), and non-government owned institutions in Australia (church owned and privately owned institutions).

Future research could explore what disciplines each of these non-public institutions predominantly teach, and why there is an increasing number and proportion of students attending non-public institutions. Another important area of research would be to explore and contrast the perceptions of students and other stakeholders about each of these sectors (i.e. church institutions, privately owned institutions, public institutions) and contrast these perceptions between each country's sector and between countries. Included in these could be branding strategies used by non-public higher education institutions contrasting with strategies used by public higher education institutions.

A study on the quality of the graduating students of each sector would also be very informative in guiding government policy and funding issues. Research areas could explore issues concerning generic skills, industry and employer feedback and employability.

Each of these studies could be longitudinal to find out if stakeholder perceptions change over time.

2. Whilst the number of students studying in the higher education sector in both Hungary and Australia has increased, the international student sector comprises a larger and more important aspect of the higher education industry in Australia compared with Hungary.

Future research could uncover what factors underpin the more export oriented Australian education industry to differentiate it from the Hungarian education industry. In other words, what does Australia do differently (if anything) given that it exports so much education? It would also be productive to investigate government policies and other infrastructure that support or hinder the exporting of higher education in each country. For example, given that Australia's higher education regulatory framework is consolidating into a centralised body similar to that of Hungary's, what impact will this have on quality, and, if any, the impact on higher education as an export industry.

3. The Australian government seems to be perpetuating differences between public and non-public institutions (or between state, government owned and non-state, non-government owned) sectors through subsidising or not subsidising tuition fees in each sector and the extent and type of subsidy. This situation is in contrast with that of the Hungarian institutions, where both state and non-state institutions receive tuition subsidies.

Future research could explore the rationale behind such government policy settings and investigate the effect of such differences on the perception, choice and support between public and non-public institutions in Australia and Hungary. It would also be interesting to investigate the increase in the types of students in each sector based on the amount and number of student places subsidised by the government, e.g. what areas of study will be preferred by students and whether students prefer certain institutions.

4. There is a marked difference in the extent of adherence between Hungary and Australia to the Bologna Process. Hungary is a participant to the Bologna Process, whereas Australia, an ardent exporter of higher education, pays scant attention to adhering to such international impetus.

Future research should explore the development of the Bologna Process internationally, and which countries adopt these criteria. In Australia, it will be interesting to investigate whether additional higher education institutions align themselves more closely to the Bologna Process given that education is Australia's third largest export industry and contrast that with how Hungary's higher education institutions change to adhere to the Bologna Process.

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