

## PRIVATE UNIVERSITY & PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

Science & Technology has been a clear attribute of the public university and governmental research institution in Brazil. With the increasing structuring and development of private universities, a new approach has emerged to make these institutions participant in the national effort of producing knowledge.

Teaching and research is a basic attribute of universities and the Ministry of Education in Brazil has made clear this important linkage to authorize and to credit new universities. In this connection, most of the private universities are promoting a very positive rush to increase their academic production, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This has positive side effects, such as the opening of new room for young graduated professionals and strengthening the process of knowledge production in the country. Indeed, in the last decade there has been an increasing number of new PhDs concluding their doctoral studies and being released from outstanding institutions and there is an urgent need to absorb these professionals in research institutions. In this regard, the private institutions has an important role to play – and the interaction is symbiotic, since these institutions need also to adapt their faculty to the present regulations of the Ministry of Education, which request a minimum percentage of PhDs among teachers to maintain the status of university.

On the other hand, another problem arises - research funding. Different from other countries, funding of research in Brazil is mainly dependable on governmental agencies such as CNPq and the so-called FAPs. The latter are quite important regional initiatives for supporting research and FAPESP (The State of São Paulo Research Foundation) is among a few with enough structure and financial resources to attain its basic mission. However, research funding, to some extent, has been a one way road – from governmental funding agencies to governmental research institutions. Some figures are quite elucidative in this regard. In the emergency program to support the restoration and modernization of research infrastructure of the state system of science and technology, timely proposed by FAPES in 1994, only 1.6% of the total resources were distributed to private institutions and 78.3% of the total was allotted to the three major public universities in the state of São Paulo (USP, UNICAMP, UNESP). Another interesting example is that, in 1996, 3% of grants and awards for researchers were distributed to private institutions and 80% were destined to the same three public universities as mentioned before (MOTOYAMA, 1999; FAPESP, 2002).

In addition, only 9% of scientific papers in Brazilian periodicals come from private institutions (GARCIA, 2002). One should not blame the funding agencies for this potential unbalance. As a matter of fact, research has been historically an attribute of public institution since the very beginning of science and technology in Brazil and the present picture is a natural outcome of that historical aspect. Therefore, it is time for private universities to rapidly modify their common, and also historical, profile of pure centers for teaching and training to a place for creating and disseminating knowledge through research. However, improvements in science & technology should attain the ultimate goal of improving life of our fellow citizens – details of patents and profits can and should be addressed, but not as primary goal – and private institution should be regarded as partners in this search, since it is not a unique task of public institutions. Another important fact is that private universities are increasingly concentrating under-graduation students. In 2000, a private university had detained 66 000 students, roughly the double of students enrolled at University of São Paulo (USP), the largest public university in Brazil (Universidade, 2002).

Taking these facts into consideration, governmental agencies should launch an attentive look to a fast changing scenario where private universities arises with a concrete and innovative potential as producers of science and technology, in behalf of Brazil, and the private universities, from their side, should assume definitively their role of center with an adequate balance between teaching and research. This means improving quality and more laboratories, renovation and up dating of libraries, stimulating graduation of their home faculty and admission of new PhDs – these are, indeed, the modification that appeals to governmental funding agencies to consider a larger percentage of grants to be distributed among private institutions.

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