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Structural Developments of Higher Education in Cyprus

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Structure Development of Higher Education Systems

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1. Introduction

Cyprus is an ancient island with thousands of years of history and civilization; however it is also a young, independent state known as the 'Republic of Cyprus'. Consequently education and especially higher education, in comparison to other countries is a new concept in Cyprus that is constantly reforming and developing. Its strategic geographical position at the crossroads of three continents gives to Cyprus the benefit and the opportunity to be an international and global educational and research centre.

Until a few decades ago there was not a system of Higher Education at University level so therefore a large amount of Cypriot students were forced to study abroad because of the lack of appropriate study facilities in their home country. Nowadays the Cyprus Higher Educational System is developing and expanding and affords more opportunities to Cypriots to study in their home country, while also attracting students from all over the world. As a formal member state of the European Union, Cyprus has the potential to become a central bridge of knowledge between Europe, Asia and Africa.

“Official Cyprus Government policy as regards to higher education aims to fulfill the local needs for higher education and to establish Cyprus as a regional educational and research centre, a hub for international scholars and students alike. The higher education system in Cyprus is shaped by the European Higher Education Area as outlined by the Bologna Process. Higher Education in Cyprus consists of the public and private institutions of Higher Education at University and non University level.” (Cyprus Ministry on Education and Culture (CMEC), 2009a)

Especially in recent years, the Cyprus Higher Education System has reformed, developed and is continually expanding. “One of the most important developments in the educational sector in the 1990s was and the 2000s was the expansion of the university sector in Cyprus. The launch of the University of Cyprus in September 1992, the establishment and operation of another two public universities - the Open University of Cyprus in September 2006 and the Cyprus University of Technology in September 2007. Moreover, steps were taken to upgrade the private institutions of tertiary education under Law 109 (I)/2005, which provides for the establishment and operation of private universities, both as profit and non-profit organizations”. (European Commission, 2008, p.24)

However, my opinion is that the present Cyprus Higher Education System has some deficiencies which need to be rectified in order for it to become a more comprehensive and innovative oriented Higher Education System. For example, the Cyprus Higher Education

System should offer more opportunities to Cypriot students to study in their home country in fields such as medicine, a faculty that does not yet exist in Cypriot Universities. It could also attract more European and international students by promoting the permanent and temporary mobility of foreign students and offering study programmes taught in international languages.

In this paper I will attempt to describe briefly the Political and Social Background in Cyprus that influences the Higher Education System in various ways. I will begin with a historical overview of Cyprus Tertiary Education and its structural developments over the years, while also offering a description of the present Higher Education System. Finally, I will discuss the ongoing and anticipated future Structural Developments in the Cyprus Higher Education System.

2. The Historical, Political and Social Background in Cyprus

*"Golden-green leaf
thrown in the sea."*

Lyrics: Leonidas Malenis

These simple lyrics of a well-known Greek song describe the island of Aphrodite, Cyprus. Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is both an ancient island with an eleven thousand-year-old history and culture and a young independent state since 1960 –The Republic of Cyprus (Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία).

“Due to its strategic position and wealth, Cyprus experienced raids and conquests by many powers, which left their mark on the island and its culture. The cultural identity of the island was decisively and indelibly determined by the settlement of the Mycenaean and Achaean Greeks between the thirteenth and eleventh century BC. They introduced the Greek language and culture, which are preserved by Greek Cypriots to this day.” (European Commission, 2008, p.1) In ancient times, the most notable conquests were by the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Ptolemies and the Romans. From 330 to 1191, Cyprus was a province of the Byzantine Empire. The conquerors of more recent times were the Franks, the Venetians, the Ottoman Turks and the British. The three hundred and seven years of Ottoman rule gave Cyprus its Turkish Cypriot community, which in 1960 constituted 18,13% of the total population of the island. (European Commission, 2008. p.1)

“Cyprus became an independent, sovereign Republic on 16 August 1960 on the basis of the Zurich and London agreements and following a liberation struggle against British colonial rule, which lasted from 1955-59” (European Commission, 2008, p.1).

The dramatic events of 1974 stigmatized and traumatised the Republic of Cyprus and their effects continue until the present day. The capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, is the only divided Capital city in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. “Turkey, in violation of international law, invaded our island in 1974 and until today unlawfully withholds by force 37% of the land of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey has uprooted from their homes and properties almost 200,000 people, which is approximately 1/3 of the population; it has unlawfully brought over from various areas of Turkey approximately 80,000 settlers, which is approximately the equivalent number of our Turkish Cypriot fellow countrymen. At the same time, Turkey has been systematically eradicating our cultural heritage...” (Clerides, 1995) “The so-called ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)’ is recognised only by Turkey...Efforts to reach a solution to what has become ‘the Cyprus problem’ have continued intermittently under the auspices of the United Nations since 1975”. (European Commission, 2008, p.1)

“Although the northern part of the island is still under Turkish occupation, the Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognised as the sole legitimate state on the island with sovereignty over its entire territory” (European Commission, 2008. p.1). On 1 May of 2004 Cyprus became a full member of the European Union and on 1 January 2008 adopted the euro, which replaced the Cyprus pound (European Commission, 2008. p.2).

According to data from the Statistical Service of the Ministry of Finance the total population of the Government controlled area is estimated at 796,9 thousand at the end of 2008. The estimated composition of the population by community is: 75,5% the Greek Cypriot community, 10,0% the Turkish Cypriot community and 14,5% the Foreign residents (Statistical Service, 2008, pp. 11-12). The official of the Republic of Cyprus are Greek and Turkish (European Commission, 2008. p.8).

3. Historical Overview of Cyprus Tertiary Education. Structure Developments over the Years

Until some decades ago there was no tertiary education in Cyprus. “In the early years of the Republic of Cyprus, Cypriots in their quest for higher education travelled abroad in their thousands mainly to Greece, the UK and the US” (Anastasiou, 1995, p.28). The absence of a public or private university was the reason for the founding of several private colleges. In

1995, more than 20 tertiary educational institutions in Cyprus are registered with the Ministry of Education. (Menon, 1995, p. 254) The oldest tertiary level institutions are the School of Nursing and Midwifery, which was established in 1945 and the Cyprus Forestry College, which has been offering non-university programmes since 1951. The next significant event in the history of Cyprus tertiary education was the establishment of the Pedagogical Academy of Cyprus (Παιδαγωγική Ακαδημία Κύπρου) (Paidagogiki Akadimia Kyprou) in 1959/60. “This functioned as a teacher training college for teachers in the primary education sector. It ceased operation in 1993, at which point it was closed and training for primary school teachers was provided by the Department of Education of the newly established University of Cyprus.” (European Commission, 2008. p.147)

“The Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the subsequent de facto partition of the island was a major blow to the island’s educational establishment and a crucial factor in the delay in the development of higher education” (European Commission, 2008. p.147).

3.1 The Cyprus Higher Education System since 1984

The Department of Higher and Tertiary Education (DAAE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture was founded in 1984. The first Director of the new Department was appointed on 1st January 1984. “According to the decision on the basis of which the DAAE was established, all issues regarding Higher Education, except those which are entrusted under either a special law or by a specific decision of the Council of Ministers to another Ministry or Service, come under the new Department. At first the Pedagogical Academy of Cyprus, the Student Affairs Service, the Examination Service and the Educational Psychology Service were placed under the new Department”. (CMEC, 2009c)

At this time, the absence of legislation on tertiary education led to a number of problems. Consequently, “the enactment of relevant legislation was considered an urgent and imperative necessity. Among the first priorities was the establishment of an ad hoc committee to prepare a draft Law that would govern the establishment and operation of public and private tertiary education institutions”. (CMEC, 2009c)

According to the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (2009c) major provisions of the new Bill were:

(a) The constitution of an Advisory Tertiary Education Committee which is a consultative body to the Minister, with a broad composition of all the social partners, including the public and private sector, the employers, the students and the trade union organizations.

- (b) Issues referring to the foundation and operation of public tertiary education institutions and the operation of the Cyprus public University will be regulated under special legislation.
- (c) “The regulation of issues related to the establishment, operation and educational evaluation - accreditation of private tertiary education institutions” (2009c), and
- (d) “The regulation of issues which arise from the need for compliance of the already existing tertiary education institutions with the provisions of the Bill.” (2009c)

At this point the Government’s target was the foundation of “a University of high standards that would respond to the needs and the uniqueness of the character of Cyprus as a whole” (CMEC, 2009c). The University of Cyprus was established in 1989 and accepted its first 500 students in September 1992. Due to the increasing demand for Higher Education, the University of Cyprus has since expanded. (European Commission, 2008. p.147) “Despite its brief history, the University of Cyprus has earned the respect of the international academic community and the appreciation of Cypriot society”. (University of Cyprus, 2007a)

The number of students of the University of Cyprus had risen to over 5,322 during the academic year 2007-2008 in 73 graduate and 31 undergraduate programmes. “The University now has six faculties: The Faculty of Humanities, with three departments; the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, with five departments; the Faculty of Economics and Management, with two departments, the Economic Research Centre and the Centre for Banking and Financial Research; the Faculty of Engineering, with four departments; the Faculty of Letters, with three departments and the Archaeological Research Unit; the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education with four departments.” (University of Cyprus, 2007a)

“On completion of the permanent campus, the University will be able to accommodate a total of 9.000 students. The first phase of the new campus project has been completed and some faculties and the management and administrative staff have already moved to the new campus”. (European Commission, 2008. pp.147-148)

The Open University of Cyprus was established in 2002. It is dedicated to the conception of Lifelong learning, in order to facilitate distance learning in Cyprus. (CMEC, 2008, p. 292) The Open University of Cyprus (OUC) accepted its first 162 students in September 2006, while the total number of students in the academic year 2007/08 rose to three hundred and sixty. (European Commission, 2008, p.148) During the academic year 2009-2010 the Open University offers the following programmes: Master in Management of Health Units, Master in Education Studies, Master in Information Systems and Bachelor in Hellenic Civilization, and the four respectively PhD programmes, MBA and Banking and Finance. (Open University of Cyprus, 2009)

The Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) (Technologiko Panepistimio Kyprou) was established in December 2003. “It is a new, public, self-governing university on parity with the University of Cyprus and has similar academic guidelines, legal system, infrastructure and relationship with the state.” (European Commission, 2008, p.148) The entrance of its first students was in the academic year 2007/08. It offered bachelor degrees in five faculties (Geotechnical Sciences and Environmental Management, Economics and Management, Applied Arts and Communications, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences). The estimated year for offering Postgraduate programmes is the academic year 2009/10. (European Commission, 2008, p.148) The total number of its students during the first year of operation was approximately 400 undergraduate students (170 in the Department of Nursing and 30 students in each of the other Departments). During the following academic year, the number of the enrolled students rose to 900. The Cyprus University of Technology is the only government university situated in Limassol. The other state universities are situated in the capital city, Nicosia. (European Lifelong Learning Programme (ELLP), 2009, pp.43-46)

Another significant development in the History of Cyprus Higher Education System is the fact that about one hundred and eighteen degree programmes are now offered by private tertiary institutions which were recognised by the government in January 2000. “Many of them were associate degrees: however, about fifteen degree programmes were recognised as bachelors degrees by SEKAP, the accreditation body for Cyprus (see section 4.1) – the majority of these programmes were in the field of Business Administration”. (European Commission, 2008, p.148)

Furthermore the Private Institutions of Tertiary Education were upgraded to university level and were officially approved in July 2005 by the House of Representatives. The Council of Ministers in December 2005 appointed the Evaluation Committee for Private Universities. Subsequently, “the Council of Ministers with the decision of September 12, 2007, consented to the establishment of three Private Universities namely, the ‘Frederick University’, the ‘European University – Cyprus’ and the ‘University of Nicosia’. These universities started their operations in October 2007 under the initial license offering over 70 programmes at Bachelor’s and Master’s level.” (CMEC, 2008, p. 293)

The European University of Cyprus offers four faculties: Arts and Education Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business Administration and Sciences. The Frederick University offers six faculties-four at the Nicosia Campus: Architecture, Fine and Applied Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health Sciences and Engineering, Applied Sciences,

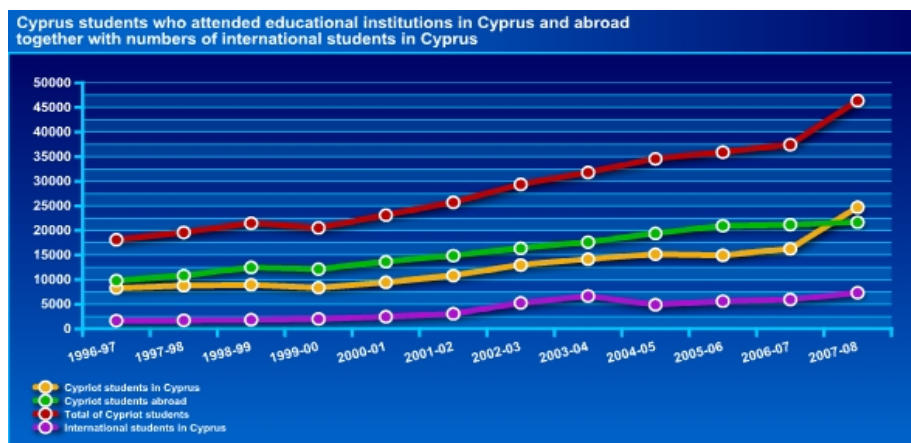
Economics and Administration (at the Nicosia Campus and Limassol Campus) and Education (only at Limassol Campus). Finally the University of Nicosia-Cyprus offers four faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences and Law, Business, Sciences and Education.

3.2 The Increase in the Demand for Higher Education in Cyprus

As we can see in the graph below, there is an overall increase of the number of Cyprus students who attended educational institutions in Cyprus and abroad from 1996 to 2008 from about 17,500 to about 45,000. (CMEC, 2009c) The Annual Report for 2008 on Education noted that in 2006-2007, the number of students studying in Cyprus reached 16,266, whereas, Cypriot students studying abroad reached 21,188. They were mainly distributed as follows: Greece (13,378), United Kingdom (5,641) and the USA (566). (CMEC, 2008, p. 290)

According to the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (2009c), “during the last few years there was a significant increase in the expenditure for the development of Cyprus as a regional educational and research centre.” The results of this effort are illustrated in the graph below; and indicates that there is a sharp increase of the number of the Cypriot students in Cyprus since 2007, in contrast to the steady increase of the number of Cypriot students abroad. We then see a steady increase in the number of international students in Cyprus. (CMEC, 2009c)

Graph 1: Cyprus students who attended educational institution in Cyprus and abroad together with numbers of international students in Cyprus



Source: CMEC, 2009c

According to the Statistics of Education of the Cyprus Statistical Service, in 2007/2008, “there were 43 public and private institutions with a total enrolment of 25.688 students, compared to 22.227 in 2006/2007. This increase is due to the increase of Cypriot students who choose to stay in Cyprus for their studies as well the increase in the number of

foreign students as a result of the further development of the university level of education on the island”. (2008, p.23)

It is obvious that there has been an overall increase in the demand for higher and Tertiary education in Cyprus over the years. Menon (1998, pp. 253-254) noted that the phenomenal increase in the demand for higher education in Cyprus is basically due to the influence of three factors: Firstly “the policies adopted by the government after the country’s independence in 1960 encouraged educational expansion at the third level” (p.253). Secondly, after independence there were major social changes that favoured the educational system, especially secondary and tertiary education. In the 1960s agriculture occupations lost their previously significant appeal for many Cypriots, who turned to ‘new’ occupations which required professional skills. Finally, “additional economic, cultural, and institutional forces are also considered to be responsible for the increase in the demand for higher education in Cyprus”. (p.254)

4. The Present Cyprus Higher Education System

At present, as we can also see in diagram 1, in Cyprus there are three public universities: the University of Cyprus (UCY) (Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου), the Open University of Cyprus (Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου) and the Cyprus University of Cyprus (CUT) and also three private universities. Public universities are autonomous and have legal power to develop their own courses and award their own degrees. Private universities are granted licences to operate for a probationary period of 5 years with specific schools and programmes. During this period any new programmes must be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for Private Universities for approval. (CMEC, 2008, p. 7)

According to the annual report 2008 on education (p.290), the Department of Higher and Tertiary Education is today responsible for:

- a. The legislation which governs the establishment and operation of the three state and the three private universities.
- b. The European Programmes in Higher Education
- c. The Private Institutions of Tertiary Education and their efficient operation
- d. The Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (K.Y.S.A.T.S) (see 4.1)
- e. The Council for the Educational Accreditation of Programmes of Study (SEKAP) (see 4.1)
- f. The Pancyprian Entrance Examinations (4.4)

- g. Lifelong learning
- h. Student affairs
- i. “Subsidy programme for Departments of Greek and Cypriot Studies at foreign Universities offered by the Ministry of Education and Culture”. (CMEC, 2008, p. 290)

4.1 Educational Evaluation: Recognition and Accreditation of Degrees

The Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (Κυπριακό Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών) (Κυπριακο Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών) (KY.S.A.T.S) is the competent authority for the recognition of Titles or Degrees awarded to higher education institutions that are recognised in the country where they operate. Its role is analogous to that of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC). “KY.S.A.T.S examines application for degree recognition and may also provide written information to employers and interested persons on the matter of recognition”. (CMEC, 2008, pp. 292-293)

The foundation of KY.S.A.T.S relies on UNESCO guidelines and the Lisbon Convention of 1997, which stated that all Europe Union members must have National Councils for the recognition of degrees that awarded by institutions of tertiary education. “The first KY.S.A.T.S council was appointed in January 1997 and began receiving applications in January 2000”. (European Commission, 2008, p.34) KY.S.A.T.S consists of seven members appointed by the Council of Ministers: “the chairperson must be a Professor from the University of Cyprus, a senior law officer from the Law Office of the Republic, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture, four university professors, one from the University of Cyprus (Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου) and the others from three other countries.” (European Commission, 2008, p.34)

Accreditation of degrees is another major concern in higher education. In Cyprus the Council for Educational Evaluation and Accreditation (Συμβούλιο Εκπαιδευτικής Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης) (SEKAP) is a competent authority, established in 1994, which evaluate the programmes of study offered by private institutions of higher education. (CMEC, 2008, p. 293) “Laws 67(I)/1996 – 221(I)/2004 regulate the establishment of SEKAP and state that all private tertiary educational institutions must register with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Such registration, however, does not imply recognition by SEKAP of the degrees awarded by these institutions – this is possible only after the private tertiary institution submits an application for the accreditation of a course.” (European Commission, 2008, p.34) According to the national report 2008 “in the year 2007, the educational

evaluation/accreditation process continued with the evaluation of 25 programmes of study and the evaluation of the alterations to other programmes.” (CMEC, 2008, p. 293) “S.E.K.A.P is a member of the European Association of Quality Assurance (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the European Association of the Schools of Higher Education (EURASHE).” (European Commission, 2008, p.34)

Another independent body relevant to the establishment and operation of Cypriot private Universities is the Evaluation Committee of Private Universities (ECPU). The Committee was appointed by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus in December 2005 following the provisions of the Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law 109(I) of 2005. The ECPU consists of seven members, that are appointed by the Council of Ministers on five year tenures, based on the recommendations of the Minister of Education and Culture. The intention of the Evaluation Committee is to examine the applications for the establishment of Private Universities. (Evaluation Committee of Private Universities, 2008)

4.2 Academic Qualifications

As we can see from diagram 1, the programmes of study at the universities in Cyprus are based on the three study units, in accordance with the Bologna Process promotions. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied to all programs. The University of Cyprus has been issuing the Diploma Supplement since 2004. A first study unit Programme (Πτυχίον-Ptychion) consists of four academic years of full time study (240 ECTS). At the University of Cyprus, “in parallel to attending a first unit program, a student may enroll on a minor program consisting of 60 ECTS. A minor program may be completed within the normal duration of the first unit programme (4 academic years) provided that the student will be in a position to undertake a heavier workload than normal and given that some courses could count both towards the minor and the major programme of studies.” (Euroguidance Centre Cyprus, 2008a)

A second unit Programme (Μεταπτυχιακό-Metaptychiako) comprises three to four semesters of full time study (90-120 ECTS) and leads to the award of a Magister Artium/ Science degree. At the University of Cyprus, “a thesis is not an obligatory component of second unit programmes. In case of a thesis, the workload corresponding to it cannot be more than half of the overall workload of the programme.” (Euroguidance Centre Cyprus, 2008a)

A third unit programme (Doctorate) (duration 3-8 yrs) leads to the award of a Didaktoriko Diploma (Doctor of Philosophy Degree). At the University of Cyprus “a Doctorate programme consists of postgraduate courses corresponding to at least 60 ECTS credits, a comprehensive examination, presentation of a research proposal to a three-member Committee, and the presentation of an original research programme Thesis to a five-member Examination Committee, comprising at least one external member”. (Euroguidance Centre Cyprus, 2008a)

4.3 Admission Requirements

Admission (for undergraduate studies) to state higher education institutions, namely the UCY and CUT, is granted upon success in the Pancyprian Examinations set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. “Admission to the University (UCY) is highly competitive, with a ratio of candidates to admissions of ten to one”. (European Commission, 2008, p.156) The Pancyprian Examinations are organized by the Examination Service for the purposes of graduation of secondary education and for entrance to the state Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus and Greece. (CMEC, 2008, p. 293)

“Committed to the ideals of open learning, the Open University of Cyprus does not select its students based on written examinations. Instead, applications are submitted by prospective students online and are evaluated on the basis of predetermined criteria. Based on these criteria, an automated system creates a ranking and, according to the number of student places available for each degree programme, students are selected for enrolment”. (European Commission, 2008, p.157)

4.4 Organizational Structure of State and Private Universities

As we have already seen, Cyprus Universities consist of three state and three private universities. This analogy, 3:3, proves that private universities play an essential role to Cyprus higher education system due to the lack of public higher education opportunities. According to the Euroguidance Centre Cyprus, the private universities are profit oriented and the tuition fees rise from €3.830 to €9.360 per year (2008b), whereas the state universities (namely the UCY and CUT) have no tuition fees for undergraduate study for Cypriots students.

In this subsection I will attempt to describe the organisational structure of a state University, the University of Cyprus, that until recently was the only University that offered university level education, while I will also describe the organisational structure of a private university, using the Frederick University as an example.

Structure of the Education System of Cyprus

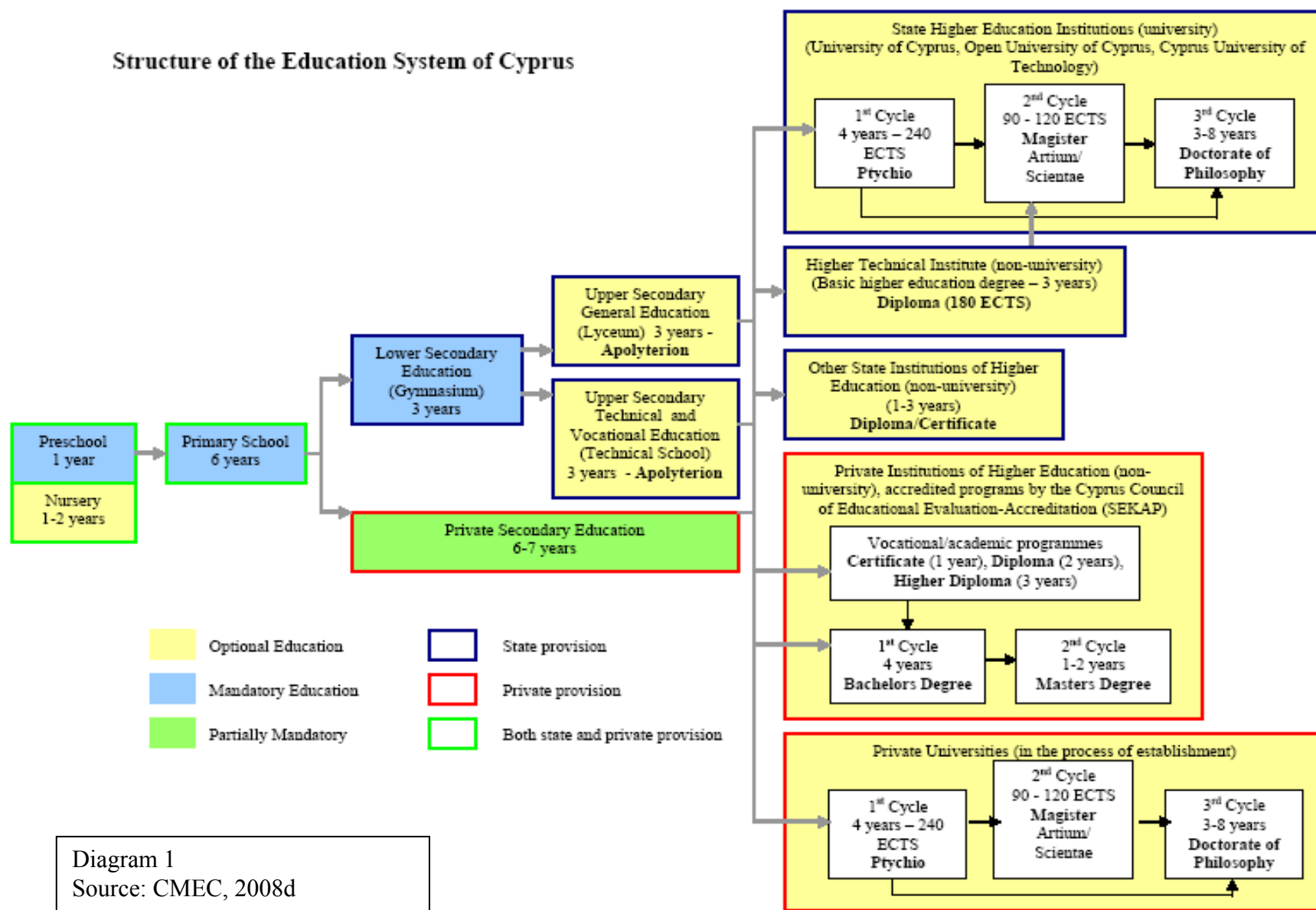


Diagram 1
Source: CMEC, 2008d

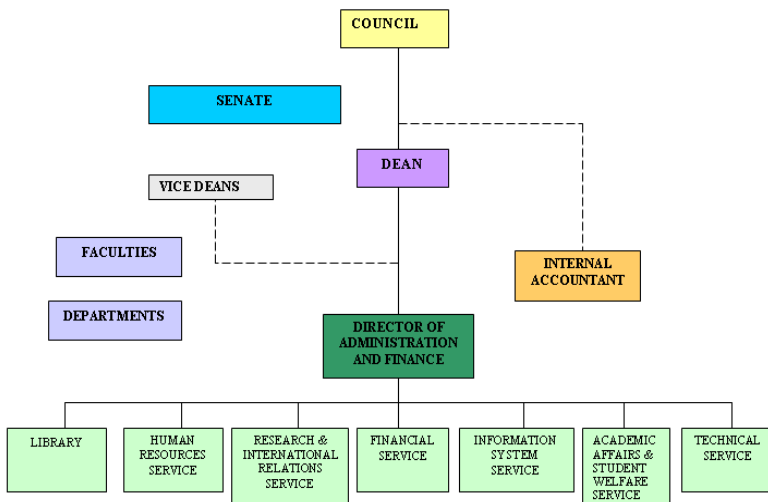


Diagram 2: Organisational Structure of the University of Cyprus. Source: ELLP, 2009, p.96

Regarding the University of Cyprus, “the Faculties and Departments are administered by Boards; each Faculty is headed by a Dean, and each Department is headed by a Chairperson”. (ELLP, 2009, p.92) The University is governed by the Council and the Senate. “The Council is responsible for the management and supervision of the administrative and financial

affairs of the University and its property. The Council prepares the annual budget of the University for the financial year commencing on the first of January and ending on the 31st of December in each year and ratifies or promotions of the academic and administrative staff of the University”. (UCY, 2007a)

The Council of the University comprises 15 members: the Rector and the two Vice-Rectors, two members of the permanent academic staff elected by all members of the academic staff, four members appointed by the Council of Ministers (nonmembers of the University staff), three members appointed by the Senate of the University (nonmembers of the University staff), one member representing the students of the University, one member representing the administrative staff of the University and the Director of Administration and Finance. Furthermore, the President of the Republic appoints the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson of the Council from the external members. (UCY, 2007a)

The Senate is the highest academic section of the UCY and is responsible for the academic affairs of the University. The present members of the University Senate are the following: the Rector and the two Vice-Rectors of the University, the Deans of the Faculties, three representatives from the teaching staff of each Faculty, one student representative for each Faculty, the Director of Administration and Finance and the Director of the Library. (UCY, 2007a)

The administrative section, as we can see from diagram 2, is composed of the following departments: the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare, Financial Services, Human Resources, Library, Information System Services, Research and International Relations and Technical Services. The Director of Administration and Finance, a non-voting

member of the Council and the Senate, is responsible for the organization, coordination and development of the administrative service, as well as the implementation of the University's targets. (ELLP, 2009, p.92)

The Frederick University is governed by the Council and the Senate. The Council is chaired by the President and comprises the following: four members appointed by the Founder of the University, the Rector, a member of the academic staff elected by the Teaching Research Faculty, the Director of Administration and Finance who has no voting rights, a representative of the Administrative Staff and a representative of the students. (Frederick University, 2007b) The Senate is the highest academic body in the University and it is responsible for academic matters as well as the promotion of academic research. The Senate is chaired by the Rector who is assisted by Vice-Rectors. (Frederick University, 2007a)

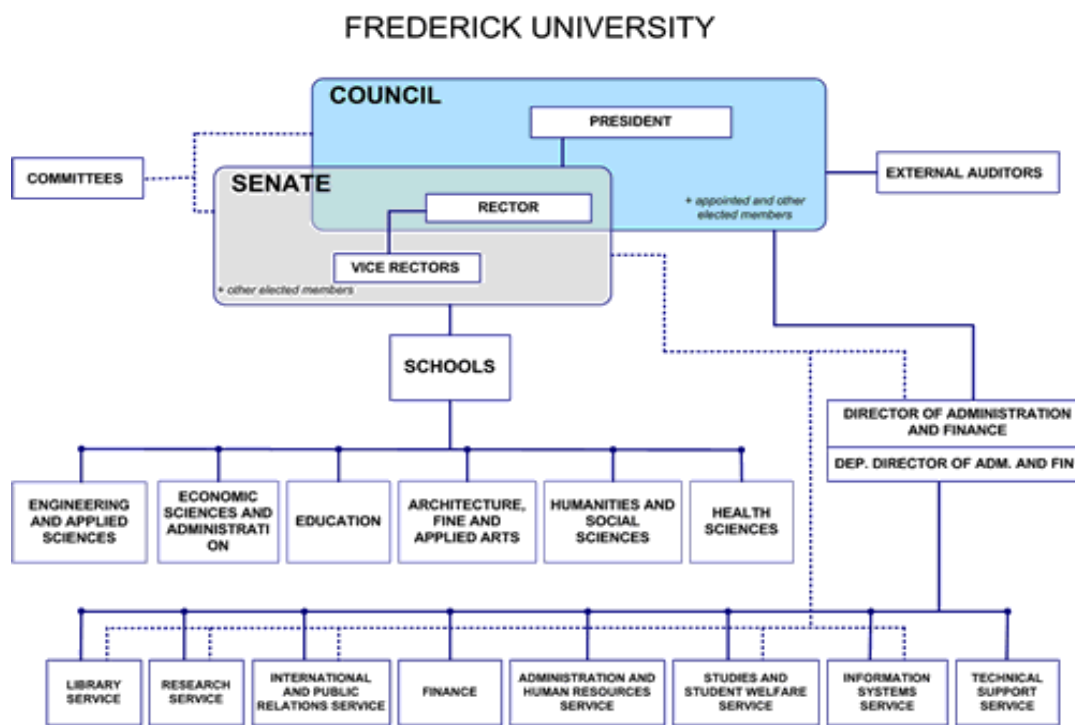


Diagram 3: Organisation Structure of the Frederick University
Source: Frederick University, 2007a

As we can see from diagrams 2 and 3, the organizational structures of the two universities (UCY and Frederick University) seem to be similar. However the UCY seems to be more state oriented and the Frederick University seems to be more profit oriented. In addition, the Faculties and Departments of the UCY seem to be more independent and autonomous than those at the private university.

5. Ongoing and Future Structural Developments in Cyprus Higher Education System

It is obviously that in the recent years the Cyprus Higher Education System has expanded and is continuing to do so today. There are many ongoing debates and future goals that aim to be implemented in the short term.

Firstly “the Council of Ministers has indicated the political will to proceed with the establishment of a Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency for Higher Education with its decision No. 66.010 dated 5 September 2007. Following this decision, a draft legislative decree has been prepared, which is currently under discussion with the relevant stakeholders”. (Bologna Process National Reports (BPNR), 2009, p.4) The goal of this Agency will be to promote quality assurance and safeguard accountability for both state and private universities on the basis of ENQA Standards and Guidelines and the European Agreements on collaboration for Quality Assurance. This new Agency will absorb the functions of SEKAP and KYSATS and carry out evaluation of all HEIs operating in Cyprus. (CMEC, 2008, p. 289)

Furthermore, according to the Bologna Process Cyprus National Report 2007-2009, “in 2008, the Minister of Education and Culture has appointed a specialist committee of university professors and high ranking administrators with the objective of proposing a new unified Law for higher education.” (p.4) This new Law will facilitate the introduction of relevant educational reforms and will aim to sustain the autonomy of the universities and to provide them with the necessary flexibility regarding their internal operations and utilization of resources. In parallel it would ensure the provision of quality higher education and research and to assign transparent accountability mechanisms. (BPNR, 2009, p.4)

In addition to this, in order to develop and expand university level education, a series of measures have been implemented, or will be implemented in the short term. These measures include the enhancement of the programmes of study of the three state universities. (CMEC, 2008, p. 290)

Firstly the University of Cyprus (UCY) established in September 2007 an undergraduate programme in Biology and another undergraduate programme in Law in September 2008. Additionally, the “UCY has submitted a strategic plan for its further development, according to which its student capacity will be increased by about 2000 places during the period 2008-2013. This is to be achieved both by increasing the student intake for existing programmes, and by developing new programmes.” (CMEC, 2008, p. 289) “UCY

has also undergone a successful evaluation by the EFQM receiving the title «Committed to Excellence» for its administrative services”. (BPNR, 2009, p.3) Finally, legislation regarding the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine at UCY was passed in 2008. The UCY aims to accept its first students in the Faculty of Medicine in 2013. (CMEC, 2008, p. 289)

The new public university CUT, in September 2008, created two more departments, the Department of Commerce, Finance and Shipping and the Department of Environmental Management. The CUT has also submitted a proposal regarding the establishment of a Faculty of Fine Arts. Finally, it has also developed its first Masters and PhD programmes. (CMEC, 2008, p. 290) In addition, the OUC has enhanced its aims of continuous education modules in the context of its Life Long Learning mission, with the goal of satisfying local demand in the relevant areas. (BPNR, 2009, p.3)

Apart from the expansion of the public HEIs, a private university, Neapolis University Paphos, “has been registered, aiming to start operation in the academic year 2010/11, provided that the required infrastructure and learning resources will be available on time and approved by the Evaluation Committee for Private Universities”. (BPNR, 2009, p.3)

6. Conclusion

In my opinion, although Cyprus is a small country and has a major political problem it could become an international higher education and research centre at the crossroads of three continents. As a small country we could adopt the positive elements of other Higher Education Systems (HES), such as the USA or the Scandinavian HESs in order to create competitive and international institutions and in parallel we should protect and promote the civilization and uniqueness of the country.

There is no doubt that Cypriot universities need to pay attention to potential structural matters and address more specific questions such as what would form the basis of this new Higher Educational System? What are the opportunities for Cypriots and foreign students to study in Cyprus? To what extent do the Cypriot Universities implement the declarations of the Bologna Process? What are the structural developments planned for the future? Should the private universities adopt a non-profit making principle?

To conclude, I would like to suggest that public universities should continue to expand in order for Cyprus to have an effective, international and competitive Higher Education System that all students could access.

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