

# Dealing with Diversity

## Institutional classifications in higher education

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LH Martin Institute Conference  
Melbourne, 27-28 November, 2008

## Overview

- basic concepts
- classical studies and recent perspectives
- arguments in favour of diversity
- higher education studies
- a theory of diversity and differentiation
- empirical indications
- policy implications
- the international higher education reputation race
- rankings and classifications
- US and European higher education ranking systems

## Diversity:

the **level** of variety in a system at a specific point of time.

## Diversification / differentiation:

the **process** in which the diversity of a system increases

## A General Distinction:

External Diversity: differences **between** entities in a system

Internal Diversity: differences **within** entities in a system

## In Higher Education:

**Systemic / Structural / Institutional Diversity:**  
the level of variety in different types of **institutions**

**Programmic Diversity:**  
the level of variety in types of **programmes** offered

## Classical Studies

- Ch. Darwin (1859),  
On the Origin of Species by Means of  
Natural Selection
- E. Durkheim (1893),  
De la Division du Travail Social
- T. Parsons (1966),  
Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative  
Perspectives

## Recent Theoretical Perspectives:

The Population Ecology Perspective (Hannan & Freeman, 1977):  
'organisations compete for limited resources'

The Resource Dependency Perspective (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978):  
'organisations adapt to and change their environments'

The Institutional Isomorphism Perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983):  
'organisations adapt to existence and pressures of other organisations'

## Arguments in favor of Diversity in Higher Education:

- A more diversified higher education system:
- offers better access to a wider variety of students;
  - provides more social mobility through multiple modes of entry and forms of transfer;
  - better meets the diverse needs of the labor market;
  - serves the political needs of a larger number of interest groups (and creates political stability);
  - permits the combination of elite and mass higher education;
  - increases the effectiveness of higher education institutions (allowing for institutional specialisation);
  - offers more opportunities for experimenting with innovation.

## Studies on Diversity of Higher Education Systems (1):

Higher education systems show immanent drive towards **increasing** diversity:

- Parsons & Platt (1973):  
emergence of new functions → increased diversity
  - Clark (1978):  
increasing variety student body  
expanding needs labor market  
knowledge specialisation
- Increased diversity

## Studies on Diversity of Higher Education Systems (2):

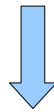
Higher education systems show immanent drive towards **decreasing** diversity:

- Riesman (1956):  
imitating behavior/academic drift → decreased diversity
- Birnbaum (1983):  
governmental regulation → decreased diversity

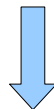
## My own Theory

- Higher education systems are open systems.
- Higher education institutions receive inputs from and produce outputs for their environments.
- In order to survive, higher education institutions need to secure a continuous and sufficient supply of resources from their environment.
- When scarcity of resources exists, higher education institutions compete with each other to secure the supply of resources.

Scarcity of resources



Competition between institutions



Decreasing institutional diversity

## My own Theory (continued):

- In competitive environments there are two crucial interacting sets of variables:
  - environmental conditions
  - organisational behavior characteristics
- The larger the uniformity of the environmental conditions of higher education institutions, the lower the level of diversity of the higher education system.
- The more the organisational behavior of higher education institutions is driven by academic norms and values, the lower the level of diversity of the higher education system.

## In a context of competition for scarce resources:

High uniformity  
Environmental conditions

High influence academic  
Norms and Values

Low level of  
Institutional diversity

```
graph TD; A[High uniformity Environmental conditions] --> C[Low level of Institutional diversity]; B[High influence academic Norms and Values] --> C;
```

## Higher Education Research Outcomes (1)

### General:

- size of higher education system not related to level of institutional diversity
- growth of higher education system does not imply increase of diversity

### Environmental conditions:

- homogeneous student body → low institutional diversity
- low variety needs labor market → low institutional diversity
- uniformity governmental regulation → low institutional diversity
- deregulation and increased market coordination → decreasing institutional diversity
- decreasing financial resources → decreasing institutional diversity

## Higher Education Research Outcomes (2)

### Organisational behavior characteristics:

- institutional merger processes → decreasing institutional diversity
- dominance 'traditional' academic culture → low institutional diversity
- strong impetus to establish academic reputation → low institutional diversity

## Policy Implications

### Strategies to increase institutional diversity:

- diversification of governmental policy-contexts (regarding missions & profiles, regulation, funding)
- development of multiple institutional reputation mechanisms (classifications/typologies, multiple ranking)

## The Higher Education Reputation Race

- market coordination in higher education?
- the market failure of imperfect information.
- the market of institutional reputation.
- Bowen's law.

## Effects of the Higher Education Reputation Race

- cost explosion
- reputational hierarchies & the Matthew effect
- social stratification

## Rankings and Classifications

- rankings amplify reputation race
- need for multiple rankings
- classifications: precondition for rankings

## Classifications

- mechanisms to group entities by similarity
- order empirical cases
- differ from typologies and taxonomies

## Classifications in Higher Education



- instruments to group higher education institutions
- and to characterize similarities and differences
- based on the actual conditions, behaviour and performances of institutions

## Classifications and Rankings

- 'the methodologies of ranking are judged to be simplistic and lack transparency'. (OECD, 2007)
- 'with increasing competition between institutions ... it is likely that rankings will continue to grow in importance ...  
Further consideration and acknowledgement of wider factors (than in a single league table only) should be considered so that the diversity of institutional mission and focus is taken into account'. (HEFCE, 2008)

## Functions of Higher Education Classifications


- transparency tool (various stakeholders)
- instrument for institutional strategies (profile, mission)
- base for governmental policies
- tool for research
- instrument for better ranking



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## US Carnegie Classification

- initial objective (1973): improve higher education research
- over time several changes: 1976, 1994, 2000, 2006
- labels and categories
- impacts on higher education system dynamics
- multi-dimensional approach (2006)



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## European Classification

- work in progress
- first draft (2008)
- interactive design process
- basic design principles
- tests on validity, reliability, feasibility

## European Classification Design Principles:

- inclusive for all European HEIs
- multi-dimensional
- a posteriori information
- non-hierarchical
- non-prescriptive
- flexible
- objective data
- parsimonious regarding extra data needs

## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators



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## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

**Education**

- ❖ Highest degree offered (degree level)
  - ❖ degrees/diplomas granted per level
- ❖ Subject mix
- ❖ Orientation of programmes
  - ❖ number of programmes offered for licensed professions
- ❖ Involvement in LLL
  - ❖ number of mature (> 30 years) students as % of total enrollment

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## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

**Research and innovation**

- ❖ Research intensiveness
  - ❖ peer reviewed publications per academic staff
  - ❖ scientometric 'crown' indicator
- ❖ Innovation intensiveness
  - ❖ financial volume privately funded research as % of total financial volume
  - ❖ number of start-ups
  - ❖ number of filed patents
  - ❖ income from licensing

## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

### International orientation

- ❖ Teaching and staff
  - ❖ international degree seeking students as % of total number of students
  - ❖ incoming international/European exchange students as % of total number of students
  - ❖ outgoing international/European exchange students as % of total number of students
  - ❖ joint international programmes as % of total number of programmes offered
  - ❖ programmes offered abroad
  - ❖ fte international academic staff as % of total academic staff

## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

### International orientation

- ❖ Research
  - ❖ financial turnover in EU research programmes as % of total financial research volume

## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

### Size and settings

- ❖ Size
  - ❖ total number of students (per degree level)
  - ❖ total number of fte's academic staff
  - ❖ total financial turn over per year
- ❖ Mode of delivery
  - ❖ distance learning programmes as %
  - ❖ part-time programmes as %
- ❖ Public/private character
  - ❖ income from government sources as % of total income
- ❖ Legal status

## The Classification Project: 2nd set of schemes indicators

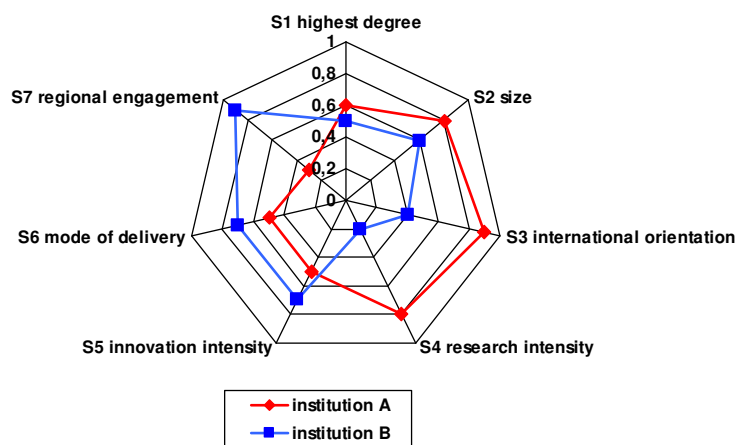
### Community engagement



- ❖ Cultural engagement
  - ❖ number of concerts
  - ❖ number of exhibitions
- ❖ Regional engagement
  - ❖ graduates in the region
  - ❖ turnover in EU structural funds
  - ❖ extra-curricula courses for region
  - ❖ importance of regional income

## Using the Classification

- Providing information to stakeholders and clients about characteristics of HEIs.
- Providing assistance to institutional strategic management and inter-institutional partnerships, benchmarking and networking.

## Future use of the Classification: examples



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## Future use of the Classification: examples

Selecting schemes and classes

highest degree	doctorate, master dominated	▼
international orientation research	low	▼
international orientation; students	high	▼
research intensity	medium	▼
mode of delivery	low part-time	▼
size category	medium sized	▼

[Preview selected institutions](#)




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## Thank you for your attention!




Education and Culture

**Socrates**