

# THE DYNAMICS OF DIVERSITY IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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# Overview

- Diversity and differentiation:
  - in the history of European higher education;
  - in the current European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- Research on diversity in higher education.
- Globalization and Innovation policies.
- Market coordination and the reputation race in higher education.
- European Higher Education: next steps.



# Definitions

## Diversity:

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

## Differentiation/Diversification:

- 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*.

## Programmatic Diversity:

- The level of variety in *types of programmes* offered.



# History of Diversity in European Higher Education

## Middle Ages

“... the sixty or so universities of the medieval West were ... extremely various as regards their numbers, their intellectual orientations, their social role and the ... institutions themselves”.

“Nevertheless, ... the universities had, at least in ideal terms, a universalist vocation. Although of course situated in a particular town or country, they could wield an influence whose extent was determined ... simply by their intrinsic capacity to attract”.

*J. Verger, Patterns, in: A History of the  
University in Europe, Volume I, 1992*



# History of Diversity in European Higher Education

Early Modern Europe (1500 – 1800)

“... it is possible to define a few major types of university institutions”.

“... universities in the strict sense of the term ..., recognized or legitimated by the de facto supreme authority in the territory by its granting the rights to award degrees”.

“... teaching academies, higher or illustrious schools ... which could claim university status but had not obtained all its privileges, especially that of awarding degrees”.

“... the college, teaching ... in the form of propaedeutic classes for university entrance or merely as an elementary form of higher education”.

*W. Frijhoff, Patterns, in: A history of the University in Europe, Volume II, 1996*



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# History of Diversity in European Higher Education

Modern Europe (1800 – )

“Of the sovereign states on the map of Europe in 1993, four had been formed in the sixteenth century, four in the seventeenth, two in the eighteenth, seven in the nineteenth, and no fewer than thirty-six in the twentieth”.

*N. Davies, Europe, A History , 1996*

“The political culture represented by the nation demanded cultural domestication and social standardization right from the start ... The university therefore took on the society-building role of providing a ‘national education’... Universities were to meet the needs of the modern state...”.

*B. Henningsen, A Joyful Good-Bye to Wilhelm von Humboldt, in:  
G. Neave et al (eds), The European Research University, 2006*



# History of Diversity in European Higher Education

## Trends

From a European system to national systems.

Formalization of diversity in national regulation.

Increasing but “hidden” institutional diversity.



# The European Higher Education Area

Sorbonne declaration (1998):

“harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system”.

Bologna declaration (1999):

“to achieve greatens compatibility and comparability ... taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and university autonomy”.



# The European Higher Education Area

## Outcomes:

Trends Reports (Reichert & Tauch, 2003, 2005; Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007):

- increasing implementation of structural changes (two or three cycles, ECTS, Diploma Supplement);
- different national interpretations;
- large variety of operationalisations.



# Diversity in the European Higher Education Area

General picture:

Macro-level structural convergence.

Large (increased?) meso- and micro-level diversity.



# Diversity in the European Higher Education Area

Recreation of an *European* system (structural convergence).

Still diversity between *national* systems.

Large, hidden *institutional* diversity remains.



# Studying Diversity in Higher Education Systems

## 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”



# Studying Diversity in Higher Education Systems

## Recent Theoretical Perspectives:

The population Ecology Perspective  
Hannan & Freeman, 1977.

The Resource Dependency Perspective  
Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978.

The Institutional Isomorphism Perspective  
DiMaggio & Powell, 1983.



# Studying Diversity in Higher Education Systems

“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 labour market ) → increased diversity  
knowledge specialization )



# Studying Diversity in Higher Education Systems

“Higher Education Systems Show Immanent Drive Towards *Decreasing Diversity*”.

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



# Studying Diversity in Higher Education Systems

## Empirical Studies:

### In a Context of Competition for Scarce Resources:

- high uniformity of environmental conditions → low level
- high influence academic norms → of diversity and values



# Globalization

- Increasing global economic interdependencies of markets for goods and services.
- Increasing mobility of production factors (capital, labour, knowledge).



# Globalization and National Policies

Increasing national economic specializations;

Nations identify international comparative advantages;

Nations increase location attractiveness for economic activities;

Nations try to attract mobile production factors;

The rise of national innovation policies.



# National Innovation Policies

- Focus on the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge.
- Higher education institutions as objects of policy.
- More autonomy for and more competition between higher education institutions.



# The Higher Education Reputation Race

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



# The European Innovation Policy

- The Lisbon Agenda.
- The European Research Area (ERA).
- The European Higher Education Area (EHEA).



# The European Innovation Policy

## Addressing Diversity?

- Modernizing European Universities
- More autonomy and more competition?
- Uniformity or variety of policy contexts?



# The European Higher Education Area

- Recreation of European system (structural convergence).
- Diversity of national systems.
- “Hidden” institutional diversity.



# The European Higher Education

## Next steps

- Diversity as a strength!
- Increase transparency of institutional diversity.
- Diversify policy contexts.
- Develop transparency instruments.



# Transparency of Diversity (1)

- Profiles European Higher Education at a global scale.
- Offers relevant information tot stakeholders and clients.
- Provides basis for effective policies and investment strategies.
- Allows institutional development strategies.
- Facilitates benchmarking, networking and partnerships.



# Transparency of Diversity (2)

Developing a European higher education classification instrument:

- objectives, concepts, process;
- research methodology, outcomes;
- classification and rankings;
- applications in various contexts.



Thank you for your attention.



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