

## Horizontal diversity in higher education systems

### Does the growth of participation enhance or diminish it?

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#### ***Introductory slide***

Higher education systems are continually evolving. This paper, derived from a three-year cross-country study of high participation systems of higher education, will refer to three tendencies shaping the sector that combine in various ways: (1) growth, or massification; (2) increased vertical stratification, often but not always associated with marketisation; and (3) reduced horizontal diversity, convergence of mission type. There are some national exceptions to the tendencies to stratification and reduced diversity, but these are the dominant patterns. There are no real exceptions to massification. All countries except the poorest one quarter of countries have achieved or are approaching a high participation higher education system. Once countries reach a certain point in their economic and political development, the accelerated growth of participation and provision takes off.

#### ***Vertical and horizontal diversity in systems***

In an early and influential treatment Birnbaum (1983) defines 'diversity' as variety in terms of specific characteristics of HEIs, using several variables: size; legal foundations; sector of control (state or private sector); disciplinary program, degree level, services, procedural differences in teaching or research; climate and values; and differences in the student body including age, sex and ethnic origins. Other scholars add reputational diversity, differences in status or prestige; and also mission, the social purposes or roles of institutions.

An important distinction is that between vertical and horizontal diversity. For Teichler (1996, p. 118) vertical diversity distinguishes HEIs by 'quality, reputation and prospective status of graduates'. It is about hierarchy. Horizontal diversity refers to 'the specific profile of knowledge, style of teaching and learning, problem-solving thrust'. Horizontal diversity can also include differences in mission, governance or organizational culture. Today I will use the term 'diversity' to refer to horizontal variety in higher education. I use 'stratification' for the vertical dimension of variety between institutions.

My main focus today is systemic diversity, meaning horizontal differences in institutional mission, classification, type, form and activity profile. One question here is how identified horizontal difference is understood and measured. Birnbaum's measure of diversity is simply the number of types divided by the total number of HEIs. Wang and Zha (2015) identify three structural notions of diversity. They argue that systems are more diverse if they include a greater number of institutional types, if the distribution of HEIs between the main institutional types is more evenly weighted, and/or if there is greater distance in kind between the institutional types.

Today I will reflect on the scholarship on diversity, and then move to the actual existing diversity in high participation systems. Then I'll say something briefly about stratification.

***Diversity, competition and growth: the debate in the literature***

Most of the research and scholarship is preoccupied with two main questions, or rather two sets of related questions:

- Does diversity foster growth? Or, does growth lead to greater diversity? Which causes which—One? Both? Neither?
- Does market competition foster diversity (and hence also growth)? Does market competition directly foster growth (and perhaps also diversity)?

Here we have a common syndrome in social science. Research scholars hope to establish a general causal relation between two complex mega-variables. First, they search for a general causal relation between growth and diversity, for example by mapping diversity in an individual national system over time, as growth proceeds, or by combining statistically-based analysis of various national systems at different stages of growth. Here two variables are in play. Second, they attempt to find whether—or to demonstrate that—market competition in higher education is associated with greater horizontal diversity between institutions or alternately, with less horizontal diversity between institutions. In this second case all three of growth of participation, marketization and diversity are in play.

Note that in the second set of questions the independent variable is the market not the state, though across the world the state is more ubiquitous in higher education than the market. This reflects the leading role of American scholars in the discussion, and in many countries also reflects the current policy preoccupation with the pros and cons of marketization.

Research on the first question or pair of questions, the relation between growth and diversity, has been unsatisfying. In individual national systems there are too many contextual factors affecting the patterning of diversity, including differences in historically inherited forms, political culture, state policy and regulation, not to mention policy contingency, that block the possibility of a robust quantitative relation between expansion and diversity of provision. For example, some systems are more engaged in neoliberal marketization than are others. Complex historical and environmental factors cannot be effectively modelled by multi-variate analysis. The outcomes of such studies are inconclusive, or unduly shaped by the selection of cases.

***The market diversity 'hypothesis'***

Perhaps it is partly because of this failure to find a clear-cut relationship between growth and diversity that discussion of diversity has been hi-jacked by debate about the 'market diversity hypothesis'. This hypothesis functions as a taken-for-granted norm in Anglo-American policy. It also has plenty of critics. Discussion of it has dominated the literature on diversity in higher education. Advocates of the market diversity hypothesis took the initial running but arguably, in the last two decades the sceptics have had the better of the argument. The problem though is this discussion is not really about diversity. Here the diversity debate is a proxy for the marketisation debate.

The market diversity hypothesis functions variously as unquestionable assumption, and site of investigation. The hypothesis is that all else being equal, market competition in higher education tends to both facilitate and enhance diversity of institutional mission and type. Advocates of the hypothesis also claim that all else being equal, the growth of participation leads to greater diversity, provided that that government steps back and

allows market competition free play; as if HEIs emerge, evolve and specialize in response to diverse needs in the manner of retail services. Other and related contentions are that under conditions of market competition, growth is facilitated and this fosters diversity, and greater diversity fosters further growth. Institutional diversity is said to increase the range of choices available to students, better match their needs to educational programs via the supply/demand conjunction, and respond to diverse labour markets, as Birnbaum (1983) argued. (A common variant of that argument is that the coexistence of elite and mass higher education, providing variety in price and access, facilitates growth overall (e.g. Palfreyman and Tapper, 2008).

Studies animated by the market diversity hypothesis assume a trinity of related virtues: market competition, diversity and growth, linked in a virtuous circle. Typically in such studies market competition is the starting point, providing favourable conditions for the other virtues. The normatively driven research in this tradition sets out to reproduce the virtuous circle in its findings. It looks for illustrations of the synchrony of market competition, diversity and growth. When the virtuous relationship fails to appear this is blamed on undue intervention by the state, which is outside the trinity. The remedy is clear: the state away, deregulation. Within this rhetorical frame the original assumption, the market diversity hypothesis, is protected from refutation on the basis of actual existing cases. One result is that advocates and critics of the market diversity hypothesis talk past each other, not with each other. It is a frustrating, inconclusive discussion.

The market diversity hypothesis emerged in the United States in the work of Birnbaum and others. In his work on the transition from elite to mass higher education Martin Trow in 1973 argued that growing diversity was natural to growing systems, though it could become stifled by government regulations. Though almost as a footnote, he noted, as previously identified by Riesman (1958)—in a point anticipating institutionalist narratives about isomorphistic patterns—‘the tendency for institutions to converge towards the forms and practices of the most prestigious models of higher education, a tendency that operates independently of government control’ (Trow, 1973, pp. 51-52). Here, Trow stated, with some truth, academically controlled higher education was hostile to the subversive richness of markets (p. 52). But remarkably, in his insightful and influential essay Trow failed to consider the point that markets can also generate homogeneity of mission and type.

In the US historical variations between states and in private sector HEIs have produced a complex mix of research and doctoral universities, elite liberal arts colleges, lesser public universities, public community colleges, for-profit corporate colleges, vocational education and on-the-job training. The Carnegie classifications hierarchy is also functional, with missions distinctions between tiers. Except for the distinction between doctoral universities and liberal arts colleges, both elite sectors, the distinctions between tiers are steeper (less ‘flat’) than distinctions within tiers. However, same tier HEIs compete with each other and are routinely ranked. This variety of types, which in the US has become associated also with the idea of higher education as a system-market, is seen (at least at home) as central to the virtues of American higher education. Institutional diversity is frequently positioned as an innate good based on a set of related assumptions about student choice, functional specialization and the engagement of higher education with society.

The US was also the first high participation higher education system. This fact, plus American geo-political preponderance, turned the narrative joining market, diversity and growth into a global education policy norm. However, the actual existing American institutional diversity developed long before, not just before 50 per cent participation but

before 10 per cent participation. It also predates the ideology of the system market. Historically, American diversity was not the outcome of either massification or market competition. That still leaves room for the alternate narrative, that decentralized competition and diversity became the condition of American growth. Nevertheless, growth to near universal levels has occurred in several systems that do not exhibit American style decentralized diversity, including Finland and South Korea, systems that exhibit closer government control over mission types, and less variety overall. Further, while an American style multi-origin, multi-form, semi-decentralized system has evolved in other countries, such as Brazil and India, these did not exhibit tendencies to accelerated growth until recently. This suggests that contextual factors other than diversity or market ideology, such as national wealth, a burgeoning middle class, economic modernisation and the need for meritocratic forms of social legitimation, are needed to explain the emergence of high participation in the United States.

Certainly, the next generation of American researchers after Trow and Birnbaum, looking at patterns of diversity between states and over time, often generated findings that questioned the market diversity hypothesis. Even Birnbaum had found that from 1960 to 1980 the range of institutional types did not increase and 'dedifferentiation' might have occurred, though he hypothesised that this was an outcome of government planning and regulation. Christopher Morphew in 2000 identifies 'the tendency of diverse groups of institutions to grow more homogeneous over time as similar degree programs are adopted by institutions with seemingly different missions and resources' (p. 58), and a concurrent tendency to systems more homogeneous by mission. Bruce Johnston in 2010 notes that for the most part, in the process of growth US HEIs did not specialize on the basis of sub-markets or niche markets. Instead they tended to 'broaden or widen, rather than narrow or focus their positions' (p. 15). There has been a widespread tendency for institutions to accumulate size and function in which internal diversity is increased but external diversity diminished. HEIs broaden their social reach through the upward drift of largely teaching HEIs to the research domain, and the downward drift of research HEIs into mass teaching and applied research, sometimes by creating new branch campuses that are more teaching-oriented and less research intensive, elbowing out the potential roles of non-university institutions. In some states there is also an upward drift of community colleges to degree programmes.

***Others find that growth of systems is associated with no change or less horizontal diversity, and ... competition fosters homogeneity***

Outside the US, since 1990 there has been growing scepticism about the market diversity hypothesis. In the UK and Australia at about that time, older forms of binary system diversity were abolished and unitary competitive systems established, amid policy rhetoric about the fostering of diversity. Both systems, especially Australia, came to largely consist of HEIs with a common teaching/research mission ordered in a steep informal status hierarchy regulated by research intensity, resources and student selectivity, with low horizontal diversity. While the state enforced common missions and continued to shape institutional behaviour, providing one explanation for homogeneity, market forces also fostered imitation and convergence. In a study of mimetic institutional convergence in Australia, at a time of rapid enrolment growth, Lyn Meek (2000) finds that: 'Institutions in direct competition with one another are more likely to emulate each other's teaching and research programs than to diversify in order to capture a particular market niche.'

In parts of continental Europe, with its historically varied structures, binary and specialist configurations have also been reworked. Most scholars in Europe have concluded that the market diversity hypothesis is wrong. First, government is not a *prima facie* suppressor of diversity. Its potential is ambiguous. Regulation often tends to homogenise misions, and iron out local idiosyncracies, but policy can also deliberately structure variety into systems, for example. These possibilities of the state are evenly balanced. In contrast, market forces in this sector always tend to foster conformity with standard norms, though when associated with corporate deregulation market competition can expand the scope for initiative—providing that it is self-funded and so brings with it genuine corporate autonomy. Pure commercial markets are more liely to foster variety than do government controlled nd part government-funded quasi-markets. This is one reason why there is more diversity between HEIs in the global setting, where they are more free of direct control by government, than in the national setting where quasi-markets rule.

***[van Vught quote]***

Van Vught (2008) notes that the sources of homogenisation are academic conformity and government regulation, but states cmn facilitate diversity on a planned basis, citing the case of Hong Kong (p. 165). He argues that government expectations for marketization reform, that it would lead to distinctive products and strategies are inevitably disappointed. Why is it that when free to determine their own strategies HEIs prefer to imitate each other rather than innovate in response to the consumer-student? Because higher education is an ‘experience good’ students can only judge its quality after they have been enrolled (p.167). Hence HEIs are driven not by consumers, but by competition with each other for institutional reputation and prestige, and for the best students, faculty, research contracts and endowments (p. 168). Competition based on reputation is naturally conservative, leading to the minimization of risky innovations.

***A more interesting question***

These findings in both European and more recent American literatures are convincing. Though competition does not always foster mimetic behaviour—take for example the highly innovative, competition-driven and successful global strategy of the Singapore universities—the overall tendencies to convergence, amid increasing competition, are too strong to ignore. However, is this really the main point about diversity? The market diversity hypothesis, for or against, has long held centre stage. But in itself, does it generate the most fruitful line of research into the actual character of systems?

The dominance of the market diversity debate indicates not its profound relevance to the diversity issue but the tenacious hold of marketization narratives in the agendas of both policy and its critics of policy. But the preoccupation with refuting (or defending) the market diversity myth has blocked a more nuanced and empirically grounded consideration of diversity in HPS. Likewise, to pose the problematic as ‘what is the one-to-one causal relation between growth and diversification?’ is another *cul de sac*, given that a definitive answer is impossible. A more relevant question is ‘what systemic and institutional configurations are typical of higher education in the high participation era, and why?’ What forms, homogenized or diversified, are present? With that answered, the secular tendencies in relations between growth and horizontal diversity can be investigated, identified and discussed.

### ***Systemic and institutional configurations***

Growth, the prestige of the research university form, and in marketized systems competition, are all placing pressure on binary systems, single mission HEIs and other kinds of regulated horizontality. At first examination the worldwide picture looks very complex. In some systems there is a convergence of institutional type with obvious negative effect on external diversity. In some jurisdictions reforms have increased external diversity. In some cases new institutional forms have emerged to address new demands or roles within HPS, mergers have established not just larger but different institutional types, and old boundaries between sectors are blurred by hybrid forms that increase internal as well as external diversity. Federal and regional factors are associated with variations that cut across other factors. There are new cross-border forms of single institution, and multi-institution alliances. In short, diversity within systems and institutions is vectored by an evolving mix of functional and hierarchical elements. However, primary lines of development are apparent.

The main features of the organizational environment that bear on diversity of institutional mission and type are threefold and inter-connected.

- First, the rise of the multiversity, the large comprehensive research university, to a more dominant role within systems, together with growth the size and scope of individual multiversities.
- Second, an overall reduction (with some national exceptions) in the role of semi-horizontal binary sector distinctions and single-purpose institutions. Is there overall decline in diversity in the horizontal sense? I think 'yes', except for relatively peripheral on-line forms and in some countries, the growing role of for-profit private sectors.
- Third, growing internal diversity within the comprehensive multi-purpose institutions.

These three features of the landscape, or rather their extension and enhancement, were not always present historically, but can be understood as secular tendencies in current higher education systems. I suspect that these three secular tendencies will show in any high participation system of higher education where they can freely emerge.

### ***Triumph of the multiversity form***

First, the increasing dominance of the large comprehensive research multiversity. The multiversity has become more dominant in two related ways. The large multipurpose research university has normative power, increasingly as the sole ideal model of HEI. Also its material weight within national systems has grown. The latter has several manifestations. In national systems, a larger proportion of the system's activity, resources and status is concentrated in multi-disciplinary multi-purpose research universities, or multiversities. Research-intensive multiversities are elevated further above other institutions—the 'World-Class University' movement in many systems signifies that trajectory. Below the genuinely research-focused universities is another layer of comprehensive multi-purposes institutions that now more often carry the title 'university'. In their comprehensive character these institutions mirror the research multiversity. Their prestige is more fraught. The title 'university' no longer carries the guarantees it did. Yet status decline is not the whole story. By adopting multiversity forms institutions in the lower-middle layer of degree granting HEIs partly protect themselves from downward pressures on the value of massifying higher education.

The multiversity tends to include or absorb other institutional forms. It also exhibits a broader range of single institutional configuration and considerably greater internal complexity and diversity than did the predecessor research universities. As systems grow the average size of the research multiversities tends to increase, often markedly, as does that of the less prestigious research-lite multiversities. In many systems, the multiversity becomes more autonomous and self-driving in the corporate sense, though mostly while remaining tethered to state policy and regulation.

In an early and brilliant summary of the emerging form in the United States, *The Uses of the University* (1963/2001a), Clark Kerr coined 'multiversity' to describe what the American research university was then becoming. Features of the multiversity were growth, aggregation of functions and activities, accumulation of social and economic status and resources, external extension and managed internal heterogeneity. It is powered by differing normative principles, including inquiry and knowledge creation, transmission of ideas and values, pastoral care, community service, collegial fellowship and managerial efficiency. It is replete with competing internal interests and external stakeholders. It becomes ever more 'multi' via additional disciplines, fields of training, research agendas and funding, functions, activities, constituencies and personnel. It engages with business, the professions, the arts, government, cities and local communities. The expansion of systems to include the bulk of society is matched by expansion in the size, reach, complexity and connectedness of the central institution.

Kerr's corporatized multiversity has become the global trend. The quasi-corporate form of executive led, strategy driven and performance managed institution is spreading everywhere. Governments support the downward transfer of responsibility and regulated autonomy within the constraints of funding, accountability and audit and have discovered that the form is compatible with much variation in policy specifics, cultural contents and the extent of control. Clark in 1998 defined it as the 'entrepreneurial university'; Marginson and Considine in 2000 as the 'enterprise university'. The term 'World-Class University' (WCU) is unhelpful in analysis as it refers to relative quality—inclusion in the top 100, or 500—not absolute qualities. However, there is no doubt that the multiversity norm was more firmly globally patterned by the credible university comparison in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) in 2003 and the Times Higher market research ranking in 2004, which later split into a commercial duopoly, Times Higher and QS. The template used by both ARWU and Times Higher deeply entrenched the large Anglo-American research university, comprehensive in science and publishing globally in English. Global ranking sustains an informal tier 1 of research multiversities positioned in the world top 100 or 200. Tier 2 is much larger, ranging downwards from research universities with nationally valued professional training in fields such as medicine, law and engineering, to primarily teaching-focused HEIs in Tier 3 whose strategy is grow, spread and market the title 'university', drawing a referred glory from high status institutions. Mohrman, Ma and Baker in 2008 referred to the 'global research university' or GRU. Perhaps the term 'global research multiversity' has it right. It highlights internal heterogeneity as well as reach. It distinguishes the present institution from the smaller and less global elite universities prior to the communicative globalisation that began about 1990.

### ***The multiversity dynamic: size and social power***

In high participation systems, the conventions of size have changed. At a given time all HEIs want to expand their social weight, and accumulation and aggregation are principal means

of doing so, but in elite multiversities the need to sustain student selectivity and concentrate research activity, which is sustained everywhere by small groups of intellectual leaders, sets natural limits on expansion. What is striking is that this equilibrium is now fixed at a *much larger scale*, and managed growth is central to the strategies of many elite HEIs. Some continue to fix themselves at very small scale—for example in 2016 Caltech has 1001 first degree students and 1251 graduates. Princeton is small. But this is exceptional. Size is one of the principal tools of Harvard.

As van Vught (2008) states the multiversity is driven fundamentally by desires for social status and position, and we can add social effect, especially as manifest in social centrality and leadership. Hence the multiversity also wants to acquire public and private resources for the research, infrastructure, teaching programmes and services that underpin status. These twin objectives, status and resources, which produce each other, together explain the multiversity's accumulative logic and quasi-market hungers. The more functions, students, land and buildings, and research glory it acquires, the stronger is the gravitational pull of its status. Every advance of status triggers possible further resources. In this manner the multiversity is shaped between two contrary and compelling logics: the logic of selectivity, which generates status by increasing unit value, and the logic of aggregation of functions, reach and power. It is striking that institutional status is generated through both quantity and quality—on one hand through accumulation/extension, and on the other hand concentration/intensification. These logics are heterogeneous. Yet each needs the other. On one hand, high selectivity that is not coupled with social coverage leads to marginal influence. On the other hand, broad social relations coupled with a level of growth that dissolves zero-sum prestige turns a research multiversity into a solely mass HEI.

Though every multiversity needs resources, the evolution of the multiversity is not governed primarily by economic scarcity. It is driven by the contrary logics of status intensification and status accumulation: quality and quantity. Institution by institution the two drivers, selectivity and aggregation, combine in varying ways. Some HEIs take both paths to status as far as possible. Others focus more on one. All follow selective or aggregative logics variously, in different parts of the operation: the multiversity form is sufficiently loose to permit that. This variation in strategies, along with variation in the contents of what is selective and aggregated, is one key to the individual distinctiveness of each multiversity. There is scope for choice. Yet both the drive to selectivity and the drive to aggregation of function are framed and constrained by the positional market in higher education. The accumulation of status via the multiplication of social reach is limited by the status of rival universities, which restricts the extent to which any HEI can expand its role without becoming so non selective as to lose status.

### ***Reconfigured systems***

The structural reconfiguration of systems makes space for the enlarged and more hegemonic multiversity form. The system redesign that transfixed UK higher education 25 years ago and is still unfolding in the ongoing reduction of specialist HEIs, is a feature of many national systems. As noted, the general patterns are a shrinking in the social roles of non-university sectors, the absorption of specialist HEIs by larger multidisciplinary conglomerates, and the transfer of some separated research academy work into research universities.

A range of combinatory forms develop the size and reach of multiversities, including mergers, multi-site and cross-border institutions, and hybrid structures. As Johnston (2010)



notes there is 'upward drift' to research university functions from HEIs positioned below, and a 'downward drift' of research universities to larger and more heterogeneous teaching and service missions. Increased degree-granting in American community college degrees are paralleled in the United Kingdom and Australia by the growth of degree programs in Further Education, and Vocational Education and Training, respectively, though as in the US the incidence is localised and limited overall. Internationalization and global activity are vary markedly between HEIs and are another primary source of distinctive identity.

In most countries designated sub-degree vocational sectors are maintained, though there are marked variations in their size and weight. Binary sectors at degree level have had mixed fortunes in the last 25 years. They have survived in countries with strong knowledge-intensive manufacturing sectors such as Germany, Australia, Switzerland, South Korea and Taiwan and newly created in China; while binary lines have dissolved or are fragmenting in UK, Australia, Ireland, Denmark and Norway. Vocational second sectors are now more often designated as 'universities' than 'polytechnics', and some acquire a growing role in research. The term 'institute' provides alternate status to 'university' only in a few leading HEIs such as MIT and Caltech in the United States. Variant sectors now mostly carry designations such as 'applied science university' or 'university of technology'.

Amid this picture of growing sameness, there is some diversity on the periphery of the multiversity. We see the growth of for-profit private sectors in some countries, and the development of forms of on-line delivery. Each plays an important role in some emerging countries. However, in high participation systems, systems with over 50 per cent enrolment, both for-profit and online delivery are marginal to the established multiversities and the sub-research multipurpose institutions, though it seems that the margin has widened. The exceptionalism of online and for-profits hints at their potential to subvert the multiversity. But neither has found a way to generate superior positional value—and arguably, it is the desire for social position that is the principal driver of growing popular demand for and participation in higher education.

### ***Internal diversity***

Both internally driven expansion and merger fostered more diverse missions inside multi-purpose HEIs. Consistent with the flexibility and diversity of the multiversity form, one feature of the HPS era is greater internal structural heterogeneity. There are two kinds of combination—multiplicity, heterogeneous functions sharing a common container without losing their distinctiveness; and hybridity, whereby formerly heterogeneous functions are partly or wholly blended, a process that takes time and can be incomplete. The overall tendencies are growth of both size and ambiguity. In some countries more agile and ambiguous structures are facilitated by a shift from state administration to site governance, and everywhere by the evolution of multi-site and multi-level management, information systems and devolved budgets.

The growing internal diversity of multiversities affects some or all of the range of missions, business activities, institutional forms and internal structures, the discipline mix, research activities, levels of study and range of credentials, the heterogeneity of the student body, links to stakeholders, cross-border relations, and forms of academic and non-academic labour. It also extends to more diverse financing arrangements and research activities. Of these manifestations of diversity two are especially important: the increased structural diversity of organizational and academic (departments or schools) units, including cross-disciplinary and problem solving research institutes, often linked to regional

development roles or global challenges in research; and also the increasing heterogeneity of student populations. Many of the larger multiversities take in a more diverse clientele than their predecessors.

### ***Stratification***

Let me say something briefly about stratification, though it is properly the subject of another paper. Horizontal differences in the missions, profiles or nomenclature of HEIs can become vertical differences. The weightiest distinction between HEIs derives from comparisons of research intensity. Research activity affects mission, and is so important in higher education, and aspects are so readily measured and calibrated, for example in research evaluation, rankings and competitive funding rounds, that the research/non-research distinction always has positional implications.

### ***Conditions that enhance the stratification of value, 'stretching' systems vertically***

In the high participation systems project we found that as participation expands there is a secular tendency to greater stratification (though this can be countered by government regulation and funding). As Bourdieu notes, higher education systems tend towards bifurcation between high-demand elite HEIs that enjoy social standing and conduct themselves more autonomously, and lower demand, lower status institutions that are necessarily more heteronomous, responding to state and/or student market. As systems expand, places in elite HEIs shrink as a proportion of total places, competition for entry into the elite segment intensifies. Fine differences between institutions, in student selectivity, research intensity or price are magnified.

### ***Stratification and competition***

Neoliberal policy and regulation have specific implications for institutional configurations and diversity. All else being equal, the combination of expanding participation and enhanced competition in neoliberal quasi-markets is associated with specific effects in relation to diversity, including (1) increased vertical differentiation of HEIs (stratification), (2) reduced horizontal differentiation (diversification), (3) increased convergence of missions through isomorphistic imitation, and (4) some growth in the role of private HEIs, especially for-profit institutions, though as noted this is constrained by the limited role of for-profits in generating positional value. Formal market competition also heightens the tendency to strategic imitation not innovation.

**Conclusions**

What is the overall verdict? As noted, Wang and Zha (2015) identify three structural forms of diversity. HPS are more diverse if they include more institutional types, if the distribution of institutions between the main types is more evenly weighted, and if there is a greater distance in kind between types. Though individual country patterns differ, it appears that overall in the HPS era the first two forms of diversity have decreased. The weakening of non-university sectors and specialist HEIs suggests a reduction in types, and within the typology the large research multiversity is more dominant. On the other hand, the growth in for-profit higher education and diverse online provision, which vary sharply from convention, suggests greater diversity in the distance between institutional types. Yet they remain peripheral to the main game, which is the multipurpose multiversity, ever expanding in role and reach.

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