



Horizontal diversity in higher education systems

Does the growth of participation enhance or diminish it?

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Simon Marginson

Vertical and horizontal diversity in systems

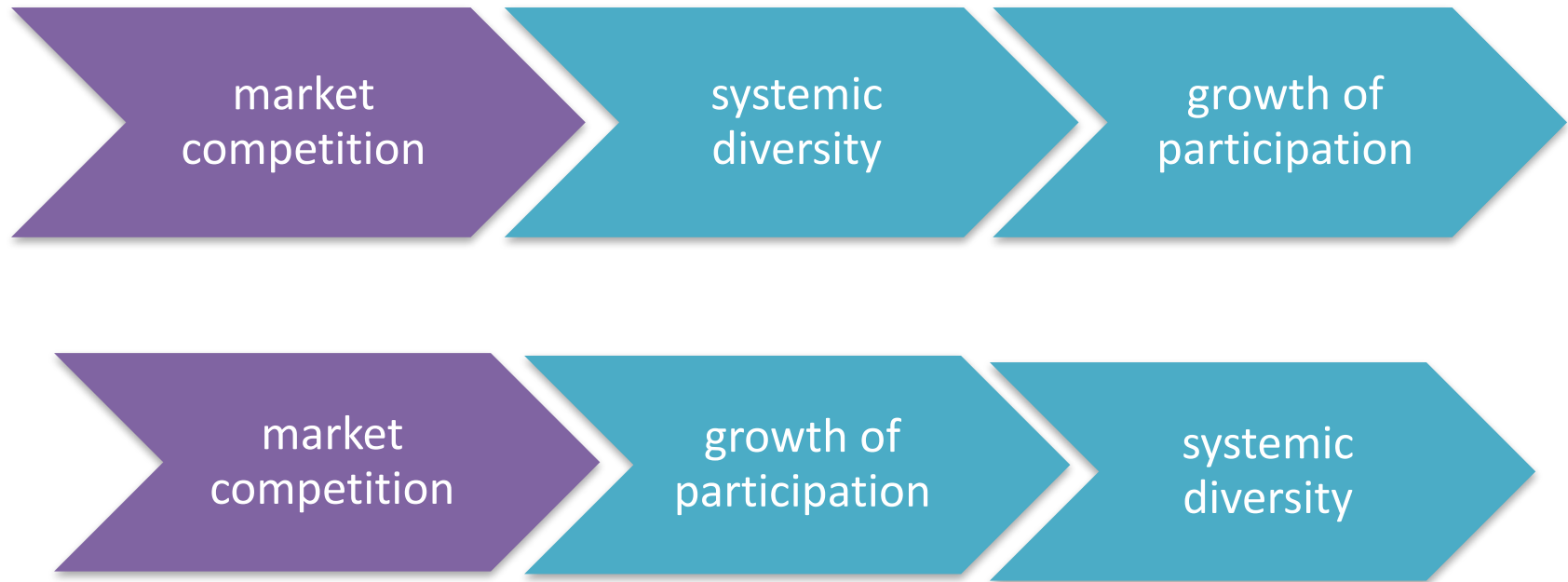
- Vertical diversity (here **stratification**) distinguishes HEIs by ‘quality, reputation and prospective status of graduates’ (Teichler, 1996, p. 118), and also resources
- Horizontal diversity (here **diversity**) refers to ‘the specific profile of knowledge, style of teaching and learning, problem-solving thrust’ (Teichler, 1996, p. 118)
- Horizontal diversity can also include differences in mission, governance or internal organizational culture

Teichler, U. (1996). Diversity in higher education in Germany: The two-type structure. In V. L. Meek, L. Goedegebuure, O. Kivinen and R. Rinne, *The Mockers and the Mocked: Comparative perspectives on differentiation, convergence and diversity in higher education* (p. 117-137)

Diversity, competition and growth: two questions in the literature

1. Does diversity foster growth? Or, does growth lead to greater diversity?
2. Does market competition foster diversity (and hence also growth)? Does market competition directly foster growth (and perhaps also diversity)?

The market diversity 'hypothesis'



e.g. Birnbaum, R. (1983). *Maintaining Diversity in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

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

- Fulton, O. (1996). Differentiation and diversity in a newly unitary system: The case of the UK. In V. L. Meek, L. Goedegebuure, O. Kivinen and R. Rinne, *The Mockers and the Mocked: Comparative perspectives on differentiation, convergence and diversity in higher education* (pp. 163-187). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Huisman, J., Lepori, B., Seeber, M., Frolich, N. and Scordato, L. (2015). Measuring institutional diversity across higher education systems. *Research Evaluation*, 24 (4), pp. 369-379.
- Johnstone, B. (2010). Higher educational diversification in the United States. In Research Institute for Higher Education (RIHE), Hiroshima University, *Diversifying Higher Education Systems in the International and Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 1-21). Hiroshima: RIHE.
- Meek, V. L. (2000). Diversity and marketisation of higher education: Incompatible concepts? *Higher Education Policy*, 13 (1), pp. 23-39.
- Morphew, C. (2000). Institutional diversity, program acquisition and faculty members: Examining academic drift at a new level. *Higher Education Policy*, 13 (1), pp. 55-77.
- Shavit, Y., Arum, R. and Gamoran, A. (eds.) (2007). *Stratification in Higher Education: A comparative study*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- van Vught, F. (2008). "Mission Diversity and Reputation in Higher Education." *Higher Education Policy*, 21(2), 151-174.

- “The dynamics of higher education are first and foremost a result of the competition for reputation. Higher education systems are characterized by a reputation race. In this race, higher education institutions are constantly trying to create the best possible images of themselves as highly regarded universities. And this race is expensive. Higher education institutions will spend all the resources they can find to try to capture an attractive position in the race. In this sense, Bowen's (1980, p. 20) famous law of higher education still holds: ‘in quest of excellence, prestige and influence... each institution raises all the money it can ... [and] spends all it raises”(van Vught, 2008, p. 169).

van Vught, F. (2008). "Mission Diversity and Reputation in Higher Education." *Higher Education Policy*, 21(2), 151-174

A more interesting question

- But is market diversity (for or against) really the point?
- The more interesting question is:

‘What systemic and institutional configurations are naturally typical of higher education in the higher participation systems (HPS) era, and why?’

Systemic and institutional configurations

1. The rise of the multiversity, the large comprehensive research university, to a more dominant role within national systems, together with growth the size and scope of individual multiversities
2. Overall reduction (with some national exceptions) in the role of semi-horizontal binary sector distinctions and single-purpose institutions
3. Growing internal diversity within the comprehensive multi-purpose institutions

It is likely that there is an overall decline in diversity in the horizontal sense, with the (relatively peripheral) exception of on-line forms and in some countries, the growing role of for-profit private sectors

Triumph of the multiversity form

- In national systems, a larger proportion of system 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 multiversity includes or absorb other institutional forms
- It exhibits greater internal complexity and diversity
- Its average size tends to increase
- It often becomes more autonomous and self-driving in the corporate sense, though mostly remains tethered to state policy and regulation
- Below the research multiversity other large multi-disciplinary institutions also develop

The multiversity dynamic: size and social power

- The twin objectives of the multiversity are status and resources. The former is the end, the latter the means
- 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 social power, which generates status through growth
- In short, in stratified systems, institutional status is generated by both quantity and quality

Reconfigured systems

- Shrinking roles of non-university sectors
- Absorption of specialist HEIs, and some separate research academy activity, by larger multidisciplinary conglomerates
- Combinatory forms develop the size and reach of multiversities, including mergers, multi-site and cross-border institutions, and hybrid structures
- The exceptions to this picture are the growing role of online and for-profit forms, but they face a barrier. They lack the gravitas of the multiversity. Neither has found a way to generate superior positional value. Arguably, it is the desire for social position is the main driver of the growth of participation in higher education

Internal diversity

- 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
- Note especially diversity of organizational and academic (departments or schools) units, including cross-disciplinary and problem solving research institutes; and the increasing heterogeneity of student populations

Stratification

- Horizontal differences in the missions, profiles or nomenclature of HEIs can be practised also as vertical differences
- The weightiest distinction between HEIs derives from comparisons of research intensity
- *The secular tendency:* As participation expands there is a secular tendency to greater stratification. Places in elite HEIs shrink as a proportion of total places, competition for entry into the elite segment intensifies and fine differences between institutions, in student selectivity, research intensity and/or price etc., are magnified

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

- *The secular tendency:* growth of participation is naturally associated with increased selectivity of leading institutions
- *Competition policies* foster greater inequalities between institutions in resources and status
- *At top of systems:* Rankings and World-Class University movement push top institutions further above others—unless the concentration on WCUs is balanced with compensating support for lower tier institutions
- *In mass education:* Under-funding of public systems, the use of low-cost expedients such as MOOCs in place of face-to-face learning, expanding role of low quality for-profit sectors

Stratification and competition

- All else being equal, competition between institutions is associated with a growing stratification of resources, and also status—e.g. in North America see Davies and Zarifa (2012)
- Regulation and funding policy can counter this tendency. In some systems governments foster a large ‘middle ground’ of institutions which are partly selective and have some research

Davies, S. and Zarifa, D. (2012). The stratification of universities: Structural inequality in Canada and the United States. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 30, pp. 143–158.

Conclusions

1. It is difficult to separate effects of expanding participation from contextual factors in each system, but the overall tendencies across the world appear to be
 - growth in the importance of large multi-disciplinary multi-purpose institutions,
 - decline in horizontal diversity overall,
 - increase in internal diversity within larger institutions
 - increase in vertical stratification
2. The bulk of the empirical evidence suggests that an enhanced role for markets is associated with an increase in imitating behaviour and the narrowing of mission differences, rather than greater horizontal diversity.