

Commission 4

Institutional Differentiation



“Differentiation is the process in which the diversity of a system increases” – Nico Cloete

“Differentiation is the process by which new entities emerge in a system which leads to greater

Reasons for Differentiation

- **It potentially:**



- broadens pool of student choice & access routes;
- facilitates student mobility (articulation);
- allows for different institutional identities to co-exist;
- allows for greater effectiveness & efficiency;
- encourages institutional innovation & flexibility;
- enables more effective responses to labour market needs;
- high differentiation & high participation could enable greater development, responsiveness.

Why must we move forward on this question

- Policy Ambiguity in current system: funding system only partially supports differentiated outputs;
- Scarce resources imply need to strategically concentrate investment to enhance optimal growth paths of all our institutions; not a 'shotgun approach'
- Window of opportunity for HE to position itself within wider post-school and HRD planning & reforms underway;
- Institutional self-confidence & stability of planning.

Key drivers of Differentiation

- Government Policy – funding, planning & QA
- Market Forces – corporate links, funding;
- Geographical location
- Institutional strategies
- Social or community expectations & pressures
- Internal dynamics, legacies & capacities of institutions

Forms of Differentiation in SA

- **Formal/policy mediated differentiation:**
 - Before 1994: binary divide (universities & technikons)
 - Merger process: 11 'universities', 6 'universities of technology' & 6 'comprehensive universities';
- **Strategic differentiation:** institutions evolved/ing within & across these formal categories in complex and dynamic ways – 'self-differentiation';
- **What is missing** – a coherent policy framework within which this evolution takes place.

SA Public HE institutions grouped together on basis of type & size

| Subgroup | Range | Institutions in group |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Universities | | |
| Large universities | enrolments of 30 000 and above | UP, NWU, UKZN |
| Medium universities | enrolments of 20 000 - 29 999 | UFS, Wits, UCT, SU, |
| Small universities | enrolments below 20 000 | UL, UWC, UFH, RU |
| Universities of technology | | |
| Large UT | enrolments of 30 000 and above | TUT |
| Medium UT | enrolments of 20 000 - 29 999 | CPUT, DUT |
| Small UT | enrolments below 20 000 | VUT, CUT, MUT |
| Comprehensive universities | | |
| Large comprehensive | enrolments of 30 000 and above | Unisa, UJ |
| Medium comprehensive | enrolments of 20 000 - 29 999 | WSU, NMMU |
| Small comprehensive | enrolments below 20 000 | Univen, UZ |

Analysis of Differentiation—Peter Mbatia

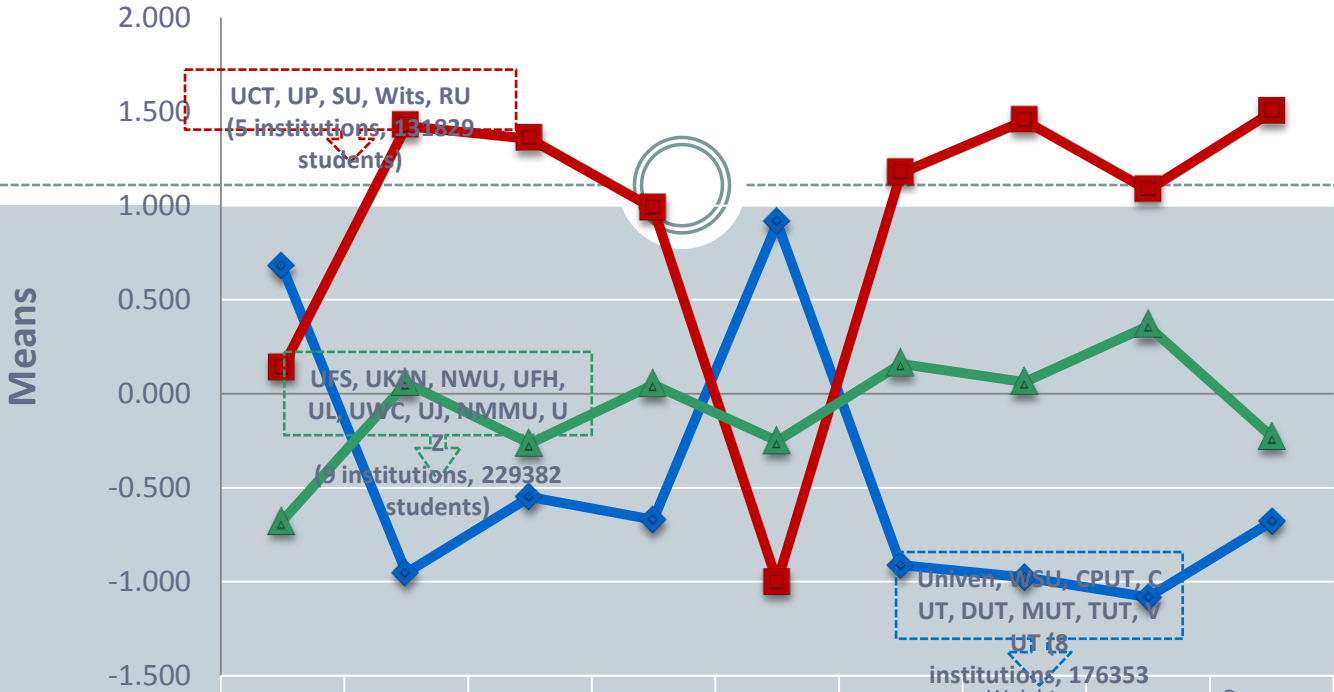


- Differentiation is already a current feature of the HE landscape, not some future occurrence; we are not coherently directing and steering the trajectories of differentiation & many of the categories with which we describe ourselves are being overtaken by shifts on the ground;
- Rural-based universities occupy a crucial space for access and strategic development, and must be provided with adequate funding support within a differentiated HE system;
- Differentiation needs to be accompanied by a funding regime that does justice current individual institutional realities & adequately fund each institution to optimally enhance its growth trajectory.
- Best to see sector as continuum – ranging from specialized research-intensive to largely under-graduate institutions with acceptable & appropriate research & post-graduate niches.

Analyses of Differentiation – Nico Cloete

- ‘Empirical Clustering’ model based on HEMIS data, research publication data & balance sheet analyses of HEI’s;
- Combines selected no. of (6) input & (3) output variables & clustered institutions in relation to how they show up against these variables;
- Input variables: %’s headcount enrolment in SET; M&D headcount enrolments; student: academic staff FTE ratios; permanent staff with doctoral degrees; private income & govt. student fee income
- Output variables: success rates, graduation rates & weighted research output units per permanent staff member

Distribution of input/output clusters



| | % SET enrolments | % M&D enrolments | Success Rates | Graduation Rates | Student : Staff FTE ratio | % Academic staff with D-degrees | Weight research output units/ acad staff | % Private income | Government & fee income per FTE student |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------|---|
| Cluster No. 1 | 0.673 | -0.953 | -0.549 | -0.671 | 0.908 | -0.912 | -0.976 | -1.082 | -0.679 |
| Cluster No. 2 | 0.139 | 1.424 | 1.355 | 0.987 | -1.000 | 1.174 | 1.452 | 1.084 | 1.498 |
| Cluster No. 3 | -0.675 | 0.056 | -0.264 | 0.048 | -0.251 | 0.158 | 0.061 | 0.359 | -0.229 |

Implications of data

- 3 broad clusters emerged from data based on current capacities & performance – i.e. a 3-layered system;
- Provides a particular ‘as is’ analysis of status quo & how it differentiates across the 9 variables;
- 3 clusters seem to perform vastly different purposes in terms of student intake & qualifications outputs;
- Data seems to suggest: a low negative correlation btw student:staff ratio & success; a low positive correlation btw % of academics with doctorates & success rates; very high correlation btw M&D enrolments and research outputs.

Implications continued...

- **Commission felt:**

- the framework shows 'as is' picture, but does not explain what created these differentiated outcomes (legacy of inequality);
- that any prospective differentiated 'model' should not reinforce & reproduce unacceptable inequalities (institutional & social); but should facilitate its transcendence;
- That such a framework for national differentiation should be coherent, but sufficiently flexible to allow for individual institutional trajectories to be negotiated in a realistic & responsive way, taking into account local/regional dynamics;
- That differentiation should not be focused on 'ranking', but on purposes - enabling the system to pursue 'multiple purposes' more effectively & coherently.

Implications continued...

- **Commission felt:**

- Any 'mode' of differentiation must demonstrate a clear capacity of sector to enhance student access & success;
- HE differentiation must be optimally linked to the wider (& evolving) post-secondary education system;
- It must be linked to long-term HRD macro-planning driven by Government with its 30-year time horizon;
- It should not stunt the competitive strengths of research-intensive institutions, whilst it seeks to stabilize & strengthen under-developed institutions & support other institutional types to find their optimal growth paths.

Conclusions:



- **Commission suggested:**

- that ‘empirical clustering’ can offer a basis for comparing institutions within current system, enables us to pose deeper questions about underlying correlations and intra-systemic shifts;
- It offers a heuristic tool to isolate the most fundamental axes of differentiation, but this must be further nuanced to take into account impact of mergers on variables; verify data integrity; identify and define some of the key drivers of ‘transitioning’ within & across 3 clusters;
- It should not be seen as a ‘classification’ (typological) or planning tool – but, with further work, could offer starting points of working towards a conception of an appropriate ‘framework for HE differentiation’ going forward.

Conclusions...



- **Such a framework for differentiation should:**
 - be national, integrative & linked to the wider post-secondary education system, and provide a basis for ‘negotiated’ determinations of individual institutional trajectories - taking into account their local & regional contexts, legacy challenges, current capacities and realistic prospects;
 - Designated categorizations should be seen in less ‘either/or’ terms, but rather as continuum – various combinations of 3 missionary functions, disciplinary foci & teaching, research & engagement specializations;
 - Allow for evolutionary transition across designated categories, which should not be seen as immutable or static; linked to adequate funding, especially for under-capitalized institutions; this must be linked to regional/local economic networks; and, it must enable portability of students, academics and knowledge across the sector;

