

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 diversity” – Peter Mbatia

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

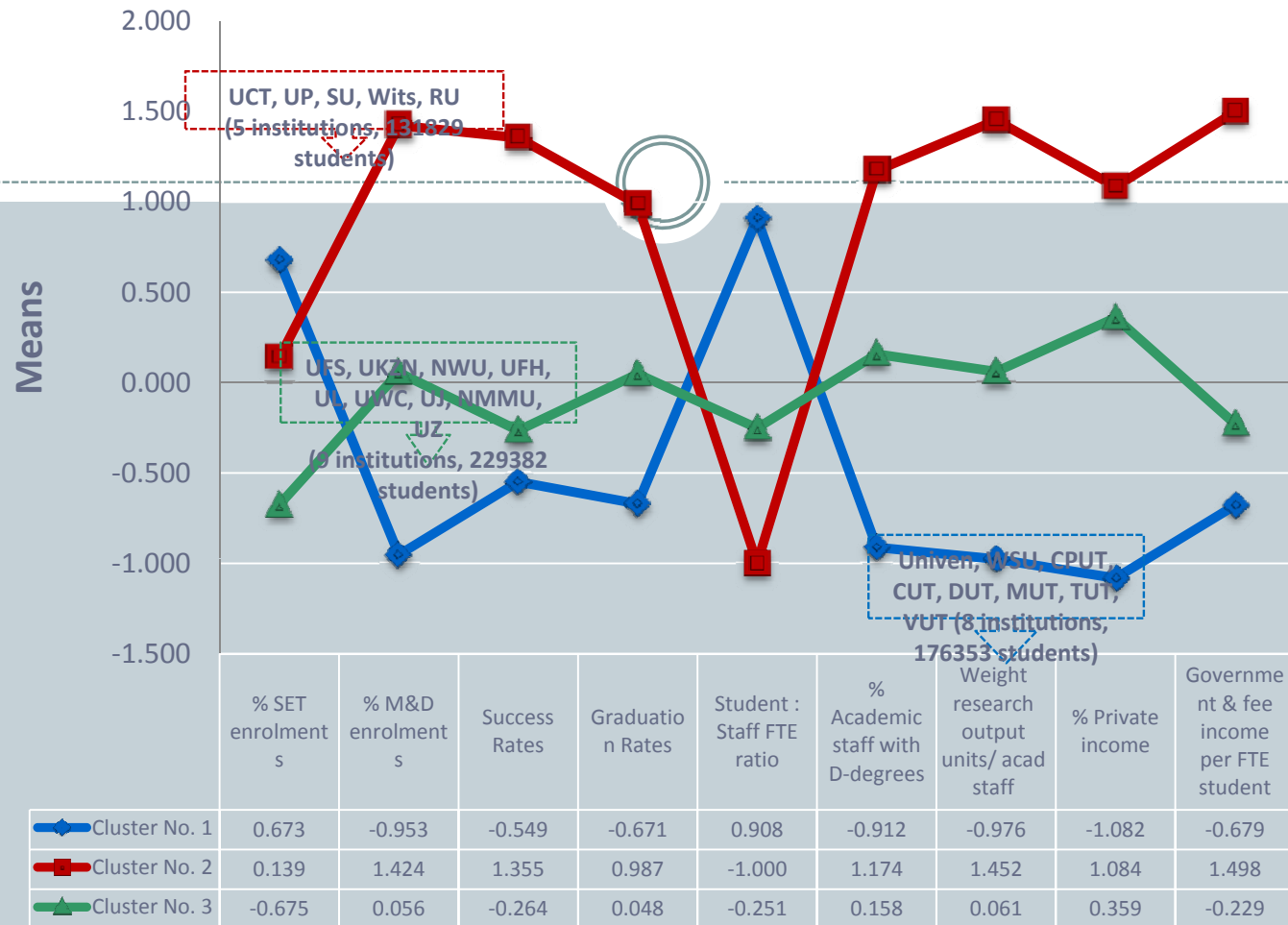


- Differentiation is already a current feature of the HE landscape, not some future occurrence; we are not coherently directing and steering the trajectories of differentiation & many of the categories with which we describe ourselves are being overtaken by shifts on the ground;
- Rural-based universities 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



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;
