



Convergence and Diversity in European Higher Education

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Diversity in higher education: the point of departure

- Is diversity a “public good”?
 - Both normative (democratic) and functional arguments in favour of diversity
- Many notions of diversity: The three most common are:
 - Institutional diversity
 - Student diversity
 - Study Programme diversity
- In Europe, institutional diversity at centre stage, but perhaps student and programme diversity needs greater attention?

Is diversity under pressure?

- What impact does processes such as Bologna, Lisbon, NPM, Globalisation have on diversity?
 - Macro level convergence in structures, policies and strategies
 - Micro level diversity is still not under pressure due to:
 - a) Poor understandings of macro-level initiatives and trends
 - b) Creative interpretations/translations of policies and reform initiatives
 - c) The path-dependency of systems and institutions

What policies and governmental strategies facilitate diversity?

- Jury still out with respect to the respective advantages concerning “state-led” or “market-based” solutions
- Maybe that is a sign that this dichotomy take attention away from the important issues:
 - It is the State that allows the market to play
 - What are the key mechanisms for stimulating diversity?
 - What is the role of the State vs that of HEIs in institutional development/profiles, etc?

Some brief reflections on current trends

- What is the impact of rankings?
 - Rankings narrow down what is measured and have today a negative impact on diversity
 - One could argue that the best response is “more” rankings – not fewer...
- Towards a European typology of HEIs?
 - advantage: new “ideals” will be visible
 - danger: typologies may also put pressure on diversity
- However, it is when you imitate that you innovate, and it is when you try to change that you discover who you are...