Chapter 7
Using the Classification in the European Higher Education Area

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7.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus will be on the potential use of the European classification of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This chapter will explore the challenges both national and European higher education systems are facing in terms of institutional diversity. The basic characteristics of the European Higher Education Area will be explored and analysed and in particular the contribution the European higher education classification can make to this area will be explored. What exactly can the classification contribute to the EHEA, to its diversification or convergence, and in which respects will it help to increase transparency of higher education in Europe?

7.2 Institutional Diversity: A Challenge for the Intertwined European Higher Education Landscape

With rising participation rates and an increasingly wide range of stakeholder demands, European higher education institutions find themselves under rising pressures to diversify their provision. As discussed in Chapter 2, more and more national policy-makers join the choir of those calling for institutional diversity. Such calls can be heard clearly in the UK, for example, where the issue of diversity is the red thread that runs through the most recent White Paper "The Future of Higher Education" (Department for Education and Skills 2003). Combining aims of enhanced research excellence and innovation performance with an agenda of widening participation, the UK White Paper may well be a call for a diversity policy for higher education. In France, long-standing institutional traditions and existing institutional boundaries are being reviewed and revised against the background of diversified needs and international competition. Universities and other higher education institutions, including the formerly secluded *Grandes Ecoles*, are urged to join forces as institutions with complementary profiles in common regional PRES (*Pôle de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur*) and the "Campus" initiative prioritises 10 university clus-

F. van Vught (ed.), *Mapping the Higher Education Landscape*, Higher Education Dynamics 28, 105

ters for substantial research infrastructure support. At the same time, individual types of institutions are being redefined or critically reviewed. Even the established elite flagships, the *Grandes Ecoles*, are being asked to rethink their institutional definitions in light of broadened missions and student clienteles (Veltz 2007). In Germany, the *Exzellenzinitiative* has dispelled the former egalitarian myth of all German universities being equal in quality by selecting the nine highest-performing and strategically-oriented universities for privileged support. In Norway, the question of diversity has been the key focus of a national Higher Education Commission (Stjernø Commission 2008) which has proposed sweeping reforms to address the issue, focussing on two scenarios, a less likely regional model and a more probable differentiation model. The regional model would focus on geography as the basis for mergers of colleges and universities into one (including a reduction of the number of institutions from 38 to 10 larger institutions) while the differentiation model would develop strict guidelines for university classification. These are just a few examples of national systems trying to reshape their higher education landscapes and to redefine institutional profiles. In an age of wider demands and global competition, institutional diversity has become one of the key issues of European higher education policies.

But while there seems to be a growing consensus that institutional diversity is a value to be promoted (Douglas 2004; Guri-Rosenblit et al. 2007; see also Chapter 1 for an inventory of arguments), there is hardly any agreement as to the aspects or degrees of diversity which should be prioritised and at which levels in the system. In different systems, the values of diversity vary between and within institutions, as do the degrees of diversity deemed desirable. At an even more basic level, neither institutional leaders nor system level actors would be in a position to judge how diverse their institutions actually are with respect to different dimensions of higher education. Accordingly, policy-makers would hardly be in a position to measure their own success since the degrees of diversity which exist within their systems are almost unknown, in any regard.

The research literature on institutional diversity, discussed in the first chapters of this book, to a large extent consists of theoretical interpretations of the conditions and drivers of diversification or convergence or of historical accounts of recent developments in national higher education systems. As Huisman et al. (2007) observe "there are many opinions (partial) views, sketchy evaluations of the level of diversity" but "hardly any clear-cut empirical evidence of how and why diversity evolves through time and differs between countries". The empirical studies that have been conducted (and are discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume) must rely on a limited set of indicators due to lack of data at institutional level. For international studies, systematic empirical research is even more constrained given the lack of transnationally comparable data. Hence the few longitudinal studies which trace higher education developments between several countries to ascertain whether diversification or convergence have occurred are limited in their choice of indicators. To make a wider range of internationally comparable data available is thus urgently needed as it would enable researchers, observers and policy-makers to make informed, reliable judgements about the diversity of higher education structures and their developments.

The above-described problems become even more pressing in an increasingly intertwined higher education landscape such as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). While European policy-makers have entered a common process of policy development and seek to extend the mutual readability of each others' systems, they are still challenged by the lack of reliable and comparable data on basic features of institutional provision that could make their systems readable across borders. Thus, the key action lines of the Bologna Process are either aimed at or linked to attempts to increase transparency across national boundaries, across and beyond Europe. The concern of the European higher education classification with transparency of the multiple dimensions of higher education is close in spirit to the transparency agenda of the Bologna Process (see Chapter 3 of this book). As may have been expected, the policy issue of institutional diversity has not only become prominent in individual national higher education debates in Europe, but has also now entered the horizon of the European Bologna Process, as recent Bologna-related conferences confirm (Ghent Bologna seminar 2008, EAIE plenary on The Future of Bologna 2008). In this context, European policy-makers find themselves in a particularly challenging position. On the one hand, they pursue the common aims of creating an intertwined, structurally convergent higher education landscape, the European Higher Education Area. On the other, they would like to ensure and even celebrate the diversity of such a European Higher Education Area.

7.3 The European Higher Education Area

Let us first clarify what is meant by the term "European Higher Education Area." It is commonly associated with the Bologna reform goals and the process accompanying their realisation. While the interpretations of what this means for different national policy discourses may vary greatly, two ingredients are common to all:

1. The vision of a common European Higher Education Area imagines students and academics choosing freely and flexibly where they want to study, teach and conduct research, on the basis of trustworthy information and with the assurance that their performance will be recognised in other parts of Europe. To allow for such free movement and recognition across national boundaries, governments and higher education representative organisations are developing an array of instruments designed to render the structures, aims and even quality of higher education provision more transparent. Moreover, degree structures and quality assurance methods are being made compatible enough to allow for judgements in one system to be "readable" through the eyes of another and thus even transferable if the information reveals comparable profiles and quality standards.
2. For most European and national policy-makers and some higher education leaders the vision of a European Higher Education Area is also associated with a response to growing global competition. In this logic, transparency of structures and quality labels would only be the first step towards revealing room

for improvements, improving efficiency, effectiveness and quality (for most European education ministers, preferably without increasing investment significantly), so as to compete more successfully in attracting students, teachers and researchers from other countries inside or outside of Europe.

Beyond the European and national discourses related to the Bologna aims proper, the European Higher Education Area may also be understood as an interesting new form and environment of policy development in which national policy-makers agree voluntarily to adapt each others' approaches to a common set of goals within a process which is governed by "soft norms". European ministers and associated policy-makers have thus created a highly interrelated group of national systems which are increasingly osmotic and interdependent in their understanding and approaches to key issues of higher education policy. European and different national policy debates and solutions influence each other with shorter and shorter lag times. This could lead to more or less welcome convergence between these systems. Both successes and mistakes are more easily imitated than before. Associated with such dense interrelatedness is the question of whether and how institutions and systems can position themselves more advantageously in this common landscape. However, without reliable data, neither policy-makers nor institutional leaders would be able to ascertain their relative position in this changing landscape. Only with respect to the few Bologna action lines would there be some comparable data to reveal whether convergence has occurred. Otherwise, they could not tell in which respects their policy approaches and explicit or implicit incentives have made their systems or institutions diverge or converge.

What, then, can the classification presented in this book contribute to such an emerging European Higher Education Area and its discontents? First and foremost, it carries the logic of improved transparency and trustworthiness of transnational information flows one step further. So far, the Bologna reforms have focused on transparency by producing more readable degree structures (compatible bachelors and masters and a common transcript, the Diploma Supplement), more transferable parts of courses in the common currency of credits (ECTS), and more compatible Quality Assurance methodologies, standards and guidelines (through the European QA Standards and Guidelines), all of which have concerned and preoccupied higher education institutions. The European higher education classification now attempts to increase transparency further by extending it to the whole gamut of institutional activities and the resulting institutional profiles. At heart, the classification seeks to render the diversity of higher education in Europe as transparent as an indicator-based approach could possibly make it.

The European classification of higher education institutions may thus provide strategically relevant comparative data on institutional performance, at least in so far as scope and level of activity are concerned, to help realistic advantageous institutional profiling. But the information it provides not only helps institutional leaders. It may also help policy-makers to become more aware of major systemic shifts in the higher education landscapes with which they are concerned, including comparisons between different higher education systems.

7.4 Potential Use of the European Higher Education Classification

Hence the European higher education classification offers a range of new opportunities to prepare informed choices for individuals, institutions and national higher education policy-makers.

For individuals, the classification can provide a quick first insight into the level of activity of a given institution in a particular dimension of its provision. Such opportunities may be of interest to a whole range of different individuals, such as students, teachers, doctoral candidates, researchers, institutional leaders, administrators or company representatives interested in partnerships with higher education institutions. Students or researchers wanting to know more about a given institution can find out about the relative distribution between undergraduate or graduate provision, the distribution of programmes over subjects or types of orientation (professional or academic), the volume of activity related to lifelong learning or distance learning, the level of research production and income, the volume of relations with industry or the degree of attention to regional partnerships and continuing education. While these insights will not say much about the individual context a particular researcher or student is interested in, they will provide a picture of the volume of activity and some of the priorities established over time by a certain institution. Even if some definitions may not be exact, such as where the boundaries lie between "professional" of "academic" programmes, the overall map of the institution will still differ in enlightening ways from other institutions so that some suggestion or at least a hypothesis of the institutional character may emerge.

To illustrate the point, one may apply individual examples to the contribution which could be offered by the data reported in Chapter 6. It should be noted that this data (from the classification project survey) cannot be considered representative since it relies on test samples which constitute only a small (though well-distributed) sample of the European Higher Education Area. But it is still useful to illustrate how the sort of the data which the classification will make available when it is fully established will help to inform higher education users in Europe.

As a first example, one may take the prospective doctoral student interested in deciding on his or her next destination for study and research. Of course, prospective doctoral candidates will make their choices based mainly on the reputation of the doctoral supervisors and their research record, and on their impression of the doctoral programme. But they will also be interested to find out what opportunities may be on offer from the institutional environment in which they will work. Here, classification survey data, as provided in the first test samples in the project report (CHEPS 2008) can be of help. The doctoral candidate, for example, may be interested in comparing how strongly the institution is focussed on doctoral education in the first place, since such a focus is likely to result in a wider range of support services and will imply a highly vested interest of the institution's management in the quality of its doctoral provision, and the latter strongly contributes to the institution's profile. Comparing the "doctoral intensity" of different institutions will

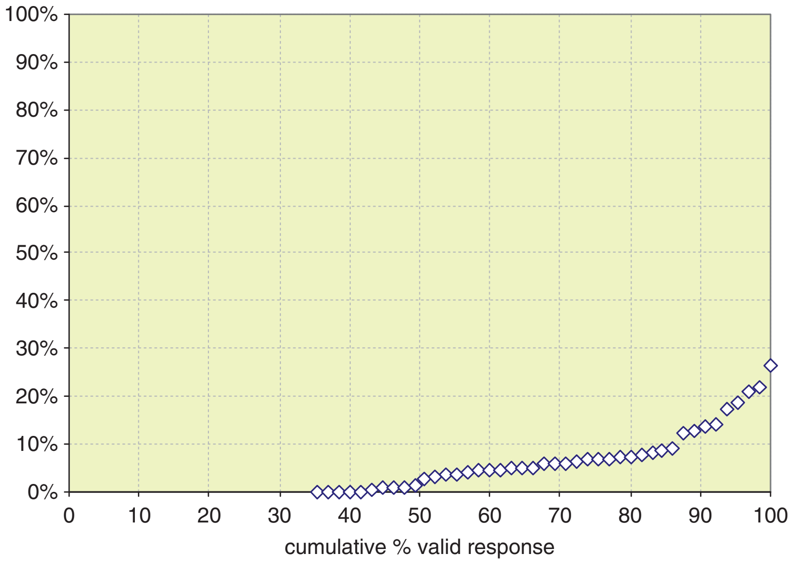

Fig. 7.1 Doctorate degrees awarded as percentage of total number of degrees awarded

give a rather varied picture in Europe, as the test sample of the 67 widely spread institutions shows (Fig. 7.1). Beyond the 35% of institutions which have no doctoral degrees, the vast majority of institutions have less than 10% doctoral degrees in their overall degree structure. While the prospective doctoral student will presumably still choose the future institution on the basis of the quality of its doctoral programme or of an individual research group or scholar as supervisor, he or she may want to check in greater detail whether the institutional support for doctoral students is sufficient for his or her purposes.

Another data set of interest to a prospective doctoral candidate is the number of peer-reviewed publications per academic staff member (Fig. 7.2), since it reflects the overall level of international research intensity at the institution, compared to other institutions in Europe. This may be of relevance if the student is strongly interested in seeking stimulation not just from his or her own supervisor but also from other researchers in the environment and wants to get an overview of the research intensity of the institution, rather than just the immediate research group he or she will probably already be informed about. Again, the range across Europe will be considerable: the test sample suggests that 30% of institutions have very low research intensity, with hardly any peer-reviewed publications and less than 5% of their income for research. Only 40% of higher education institutions have over one peer-reviewed publication per academic staff member per year and over 15% research income. If doctoral students seeks a wider environment of research stimulus, the smaller group of institutions with more than two publications per academic staff per year may appear more lively in this respect. The overall percentage of the institution's income which is dedicated to research (Fig. 7.3) may serve as another

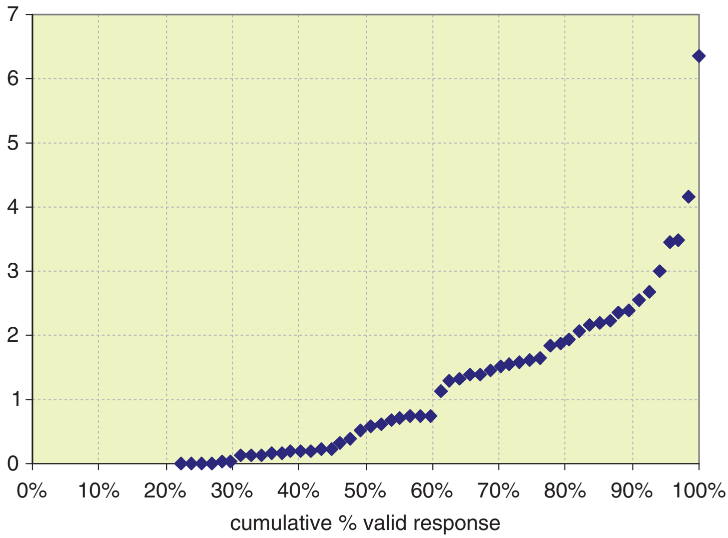

Fig. 7.2 Higher education institutions by the number of peer-reviewed publications per academic staff member

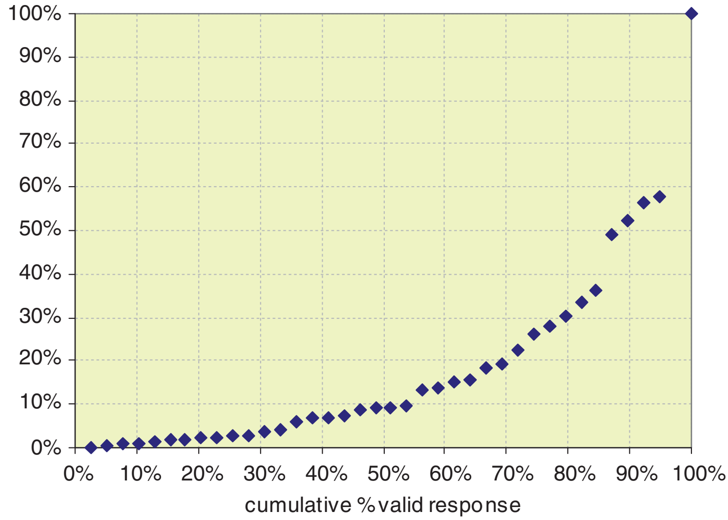

Fig. 7.3 Higher education institutions by research income as a percentage of total income

indicator of relative research intensity to corroborate the picture of the institutional profile in this dimension.

Finally, prospective doctoral students may be innovation disposed and may want to know how vibrant the research environment is from the point of view of

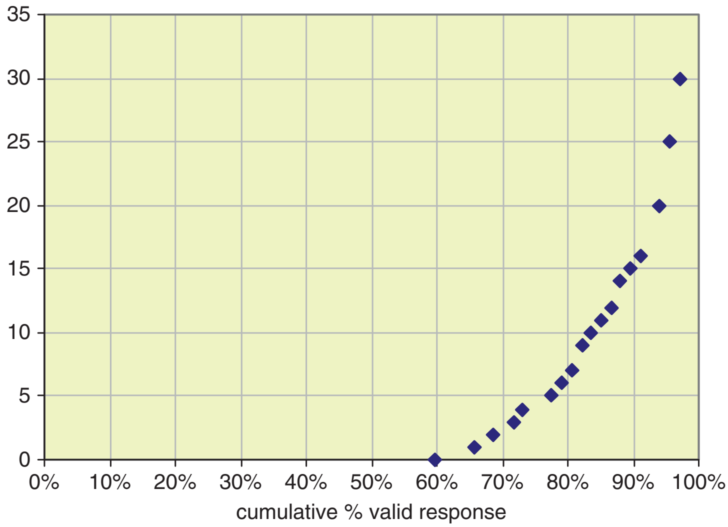

Fig. 7.4 Higher education institutions by number of start-up firms (annual average over last 3 years)

commercialisation and business opportunities, such as start-ups. A high intensity of start-ups would be likely to imply corresponding support services and resources which may be relevant for a student's potential initiatives. Here, European institutions show an even wider range of activity levels, as the test results of the classification suggest (Fig. 7.4). While 60% of sample institutions had no such activities at all, a small number was highly active, reflecting very different environments in this respect.

Researchers may be equally interested in the above-mentioned data comparisons of institutional activity. In addition, when being asked to join a particular institution, for example, they may also be interested in comparing their research resource and support environment with other institutions in Europe. To know, for example that, while over 50% of the higher education institutions receive less than 10% of their research revenues from EU research contracts, you are being invited to join one of the few where more than 50% of the turnover comes from EU research contracts, is important since it may imply certain expectations of your own time investment into EU applications (Fig. 7.5). Such data may also raise questions regarding the research resources available from the institution for infrastructure, maintenance, or as seed money. Similarly, a high degree of research resources from private sector contracts (Fig. 7.6) reflects particular institutional responsiveness toward business concerns. When seen in comparison to the overall institutional range in Europe, such data may become particularly telling. If the prospective institution obtains around 70% of its research revenues from private sources, for example, as is the case for one institution in the test sample, this reflects an institutional profile which is strongly business-facing. A researcher interested in optimal support for applied research and innovation will find a particularly responsive institution here, with a whole range of research support services adapted to IP and contractual questions, whereas one that is most interested in blue-sky basic research would be part of a minority here, which may raise questions as to the relevant support conditions available, e.g. for help in submitting research council and EU research applications. Coupled with the peer-reviewed publication record, such data sets will provide a first sense of the overall mix of research and innovation functions of the institution in comparison to the European spectrum.

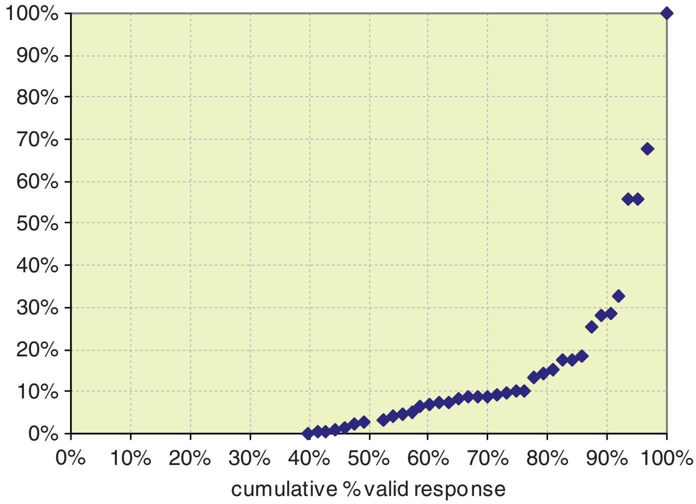

Fig. 7.5 Higher education institutions by revenues from EU research programmes as percentage of total research revenues

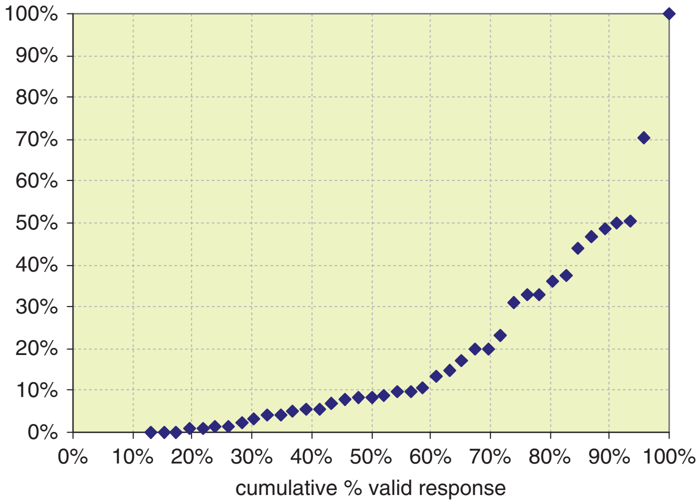

Fig. 7.6 Higher education institutions by privately funded research contracts as percentage of total research revenues

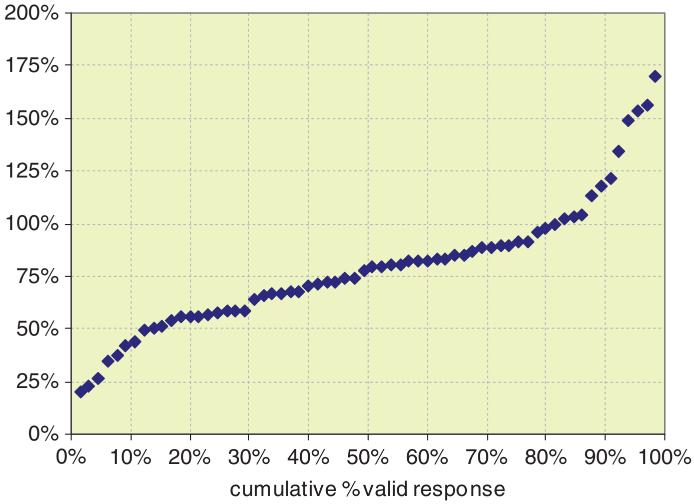

Fig. 7.7 Higher education institutions by ratio non-academic/academic staff

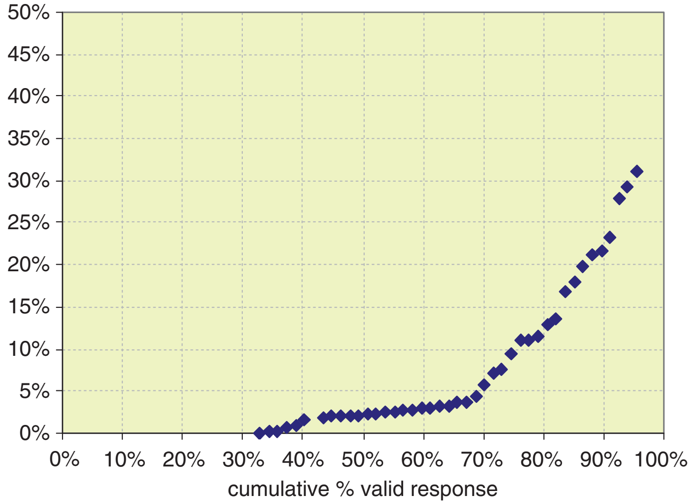

Fig. 7.8 Higher education institutions by percentage of international academic staff

A prospective researcher may also be interested to find out about the ratio between academic staff and non-academic support staff (Fig. 7.7). If comparatively low, it may be worth asking about the support available for research functions. If the researcher is interested in working in a relatively international environment, he or she may want to compare the institutional ratio of international academic staff with those of other European institutions (Fig. 7.8). While the vast majority of European higher education institutions have less than 10% international academic staff, it

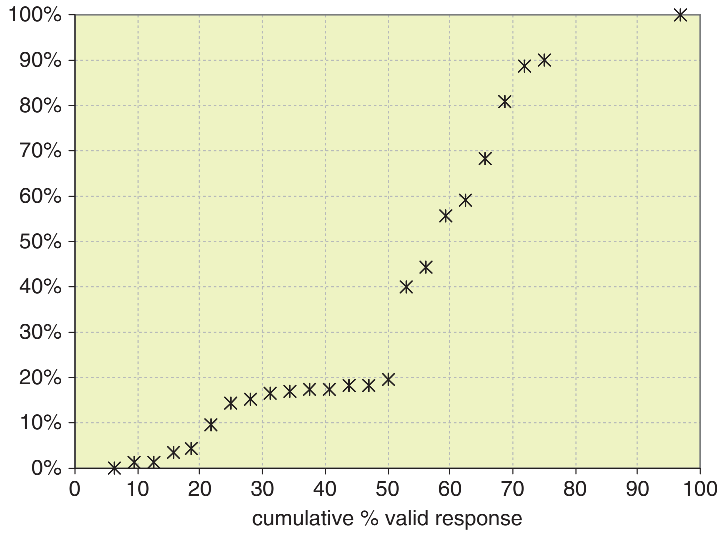

Fig. 7.9 Higher education institutions by percentage of programmes offered as part-time programmes

would be interesting to learn if the prospective institution belongs to that majority or to the small group of institutions where more than 50% of their academic staff come from abroad.

For a company interested in a closer partnership with a given higher education institution for the purpose of continuing professional development of their staff, it may be interesting to find objective data which makes transparent how actively the targeted institution is engaged in delivery of distance learning or part-time programmes (Figs. 7.9 and 7.10) and how many part-time and distance learning students it actually caters for. Here again we find only a small group of institutions that stands out as being highly engaged in this respect, as the test sample suggests. Most institutions have only a small percentage of their provision catering for part-time or distance learners. Some of these may even be regarded as specialised in the sector, offering more than 60% of such programmes. Also the percentage of programmes the institution offers abroad, may be a relevant indicator of its international market success. Companies interested in research cooperation with an institution would rather look at the previously mentioned indicators to obtain an overall sense of comparative institutional activity levels in research and innovation. Additional indicators, such as licensing income and patents filed would add to the overall comparative profile of the institution which can be drawn.

Of course, such insights may also help institutions, or rather their leaders and managers, to obtain a comparative sense of their own position in the European higher education landscape. Institutional leaders and managers may become more aware, for example, of what it takes to compete with the most actively engaged institutions in a particular dimension of activity. They may become more realistic with

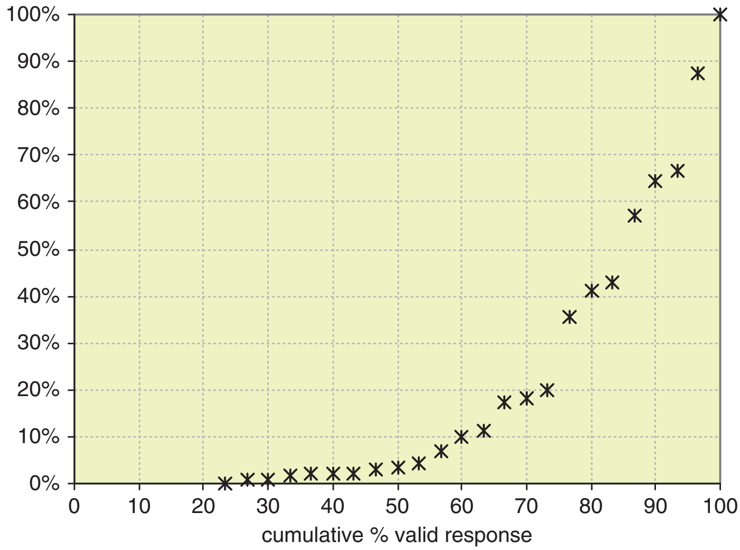

Fig. 7.10 Higher education institutions by percentage of programmes offered as distance programmes

respect to their own strengths and weaknesses through easier volume comparison with other institutions in Europe. Hitherto, international comparisons were only limited to some types of research output and to rather basic data on size of student enrolment and staff. Now, there will be not only be a wider angle onto such research output, but even more importantly, institutions may gain a more complete sense of their own position with respect to a whole range of activities, including innovation activity, programme range and international orientation. They may see more clearly the actual or desirable difference between the weights they place on particular parts of their mission from those chosen by other institutions. Higher education institutions can thus work on their institutional profiles, as the strategic orientations relate to their specific strengths and weaknesses.

To illustrate this point, let us take an institution whose leadership has believed it would be best to concentrate more resources on enhancing its international research profile. Such an institution may find out through the classification that its record with respect to peer-reviewed publications and research contracts is rather low. At the same time, however, it may see that it is very competitively positioned with respect to other aspects of international orientation, e.g. being one of the few institutions to offer 30% of its programmes abroad, having an above-average percentage of international staff compared to its peers (who may be more oriented toward teaching future high-profiles or business innovation activities than toward basic research), and as part of the upper 10th percentile of the most active institutions with respect to business research contracts, number of start-ups, etc. Such an institution could thus present a very convincing case to its key stakeholders and funding agencies of the competitive virtues of its own profile, arguing that it deserves financial support as a competitive institution facing an international market, even though it does not fit into the mould of the traditional basic research university.

From a systemic point of view, such readjustments of institutional priorities in light of comparative profile would be highly desirable since they would help to develop sufficient institutional diversity. Institutional diversity, which is necessary to sustain the diverse societal needs which have to be met by our higher education systems, is easily undermined in national and international contexts that are dominated by values relating to only one aspect of institutional functioning. That this is currently the case, with internationally published academic research being most highly valued in many higher education systems, has been widely commented on (see the previous Chapters 1–5). The European classification of higher education institutions offers a welcome new instrument that would allow international comparability and thus visibility of other aspects of higher education which have hitherto not been available. Since international visibility is becoming increasingly decisive for institutional profiling even in national contexts, the availability of instruments which would enable such visibility of other higher education functions is becoming an urgent issue. The mainstreaming of mission priorities is disconcerting for those who find that, beyond international basic research, other functions may be equally important. Indeed, the test survey confirmed that the spread of institutional identities may be unnecessarily narrow, with a vast majority of institutions, regardless of their institutional profile in different dimensions of higher education activities, finding research intensity the most decisive of the dimensions offered in the classification (Fig. 7.11). In contrast, regional engagement, professional

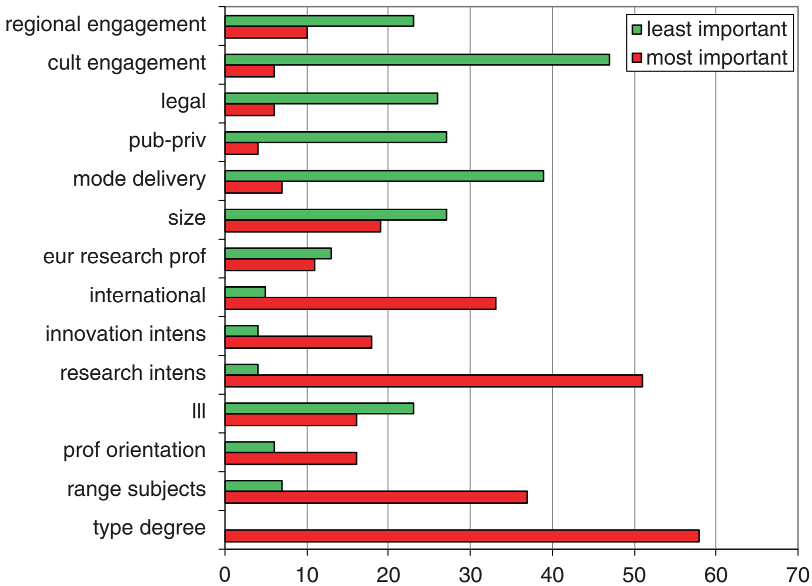

Fig. 7.11 Most and least important dimensions

orientation and innovation intensity were regarded as most important by very few institutions. Unfortunately the classification so far does not offer a dimension which would describe teaching activity in a manner that would allow it to act as a functional equivalent for research intensity. Thus, the respective priorities of the sample institutions cannot be easily derived from this first survey. But a forthcoming comparative study of five European countries on institutional diversity confirms an unnecessary concentration on research in institutional marketing behaviour and reward structures. The study shows that, even for those institutions which define themselves as primarily teaching-driven and show a remarkable volume and range of activities to cater for diverse teaching and learning needs, research is still the most highly placed criteria for hiring and promotion (Reichert 2009). Hence, international visibility of other functions is urgently needed to help broaden the focus and prevent a concentration solely on the research dimension of higher education.

The classification would also help higher education representatives, managers and observers, to distinguish institutional rhetoric from reality. For instance, if one is to take the rhetoric of international orientation seriously – which more than 90% of higher education institutions in Europe seem to espouse if one extrapolates from the test sample – this may require more efforts and investment than hitherto assumed. An institution that has disseminated an image of its international orientation among its members and stakeholders may find that it has to look for a more credible self-description and sense of identity if it finds itself on the lower end of the spectrum of European institutions in this respect, with less than 5% of its staff and less than 10% of degree-seeking students from abroad, less than 3% outgoing or incoming exchange students and hardly any programmes offered abroad, i.e. below average on all essential indicators of international orientation. Both for consumers as for institutional agents, rhetoric can be checked much more easily against reality if there is data that allows easy quantitative comparison across Europe.

For national policy-makers, these comparative pictures of institutional profiles may raise a whole new set of questions. Up to now, few policy-makers have been aware of the full extent to which institutions differ not only across national boundaries, but also within the same national context with respect to volume of activity. In particular, the more “marginal” but increasingly important functions of innovation, continuing education and regional engagement have not been made transparent in transnational and transinstitutional comparisons. Hence, national policy-makers will become more aware of the fact that competitiveness in and attractiveness of higher education do not have to be exclusively determined by research output. Such comparative transparency is likely to result in increased attention to other dimensions of higher education activity in which competitive positions may not have been as clearly known before, and in which progress and success may be more easily achievable.

Moreover, national policy-makers may become more aware of what it takes to compete with others internationally in a particular sphere of activity, including which targets can realistically be achieved, with what resources and in what time span. Indeed, up to now, there is little reliable data to show, for instance, the distribution of institutions with respect to the number of peer-reviewed publications,

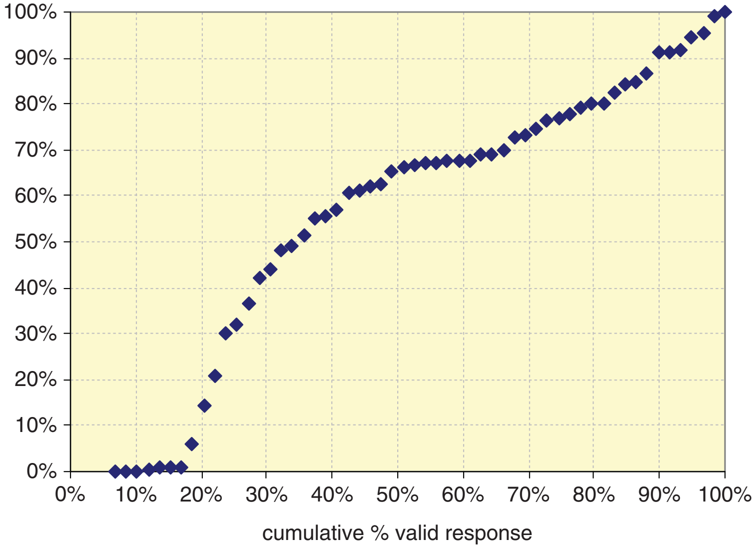

Fig. 7.12 Higher education institutions by percentage of government funding

number of start-up firms, average income for research or average income from tuition as a percentage of total income, nor even the range of institutional profiles with a breakdown of students at different degree levels. Without volume comparison, targets, and the estimates of resources required to achieve them, are often little more than mobilising fictions.

To illustrate the state of relative ignorance to which we are accustomed regarding basic facts of higher education, one may take the test sample data on the public or private character of higher education institutions. While it may be unsurprising that 70% of the institutions receive less than 20% of their research income from privately funded sources, we may be more surprised to learn that 30% of higher education institutions in Europe receive less than 50% of their income from government sources and that 40% receive more than 10% of their income from tuition income (see Figs. 7.12 and 7.13). In a Europe dominated by political rhetoric celebrating the public function of higher education, some discrepancies may be identified between these stated beliefs and the realities of institutional funding. Of course, the current data is derived from a relatively small test sample and should not be regarded as representative yet, but once the classification data schemes become established, such revelations will become possible.

Furthermore, once relative positions of institutions and systems on different dimensions are known, and targets have been set more realistically than was previously possible, reliable monitoring will also become possible. One will be able to trace over time how the efforts of one institution or system to increase volume of activity in a given respect compares with those of others. In an age where regions and nations seek to attract knowledge workers and knowledge-based companies

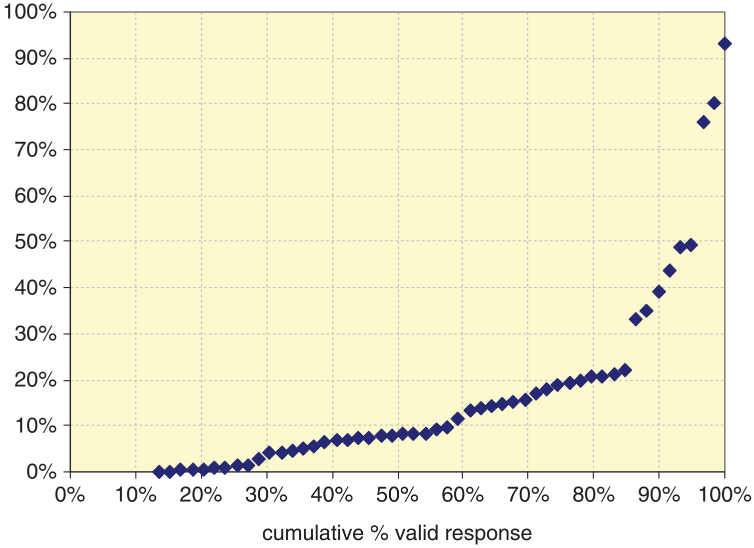

Fig. 7.13 Higher education institutions by tuition fee income as percentage of total income

as well as foreign direct investment in regional or national developments, the comparative volume increases of a national system may be welcome indicators of increased capacity or success.

For observers of the European Higher Education Area, the most exciting perspective offered by the classification relates to the possibilities it offers to elucidate correlations between different types of higher education activities. One may see, to give just one example, whether and to what extent the volume of innovation activity relates to volume of research activity, or whether high levels of innovation activities necessarily go hand in hand with more regional engagement or continuing education activities, as is often assumed. On the basis of such patterns, new questions regarding the determinants of such interrelations may arise. For individual studies, such volume data may also be used to underpin more far-reaching data and inquiries into higher education activities and institutional behaviour. Increasing or decreasing levels of activity may be traced over time and may pose questions regarding the resources and choices that have shaped such developments.

7.5 Conclusion

Assessing the potential use of the European higher education classification by various categories of actors, the conclusion must be that the classification can be a major instrument for the further development of the European Higher Education Area. The classification makes the European higher education scene more transparent and allows its institutional diversity to become visible. In addition, it provides all kinds of strategically relevant information for many stakeholders: students, academics, business and industry, policymakers and certainly also the higher education institutions themselves. It helps these various stakeholders to make realistic and well-informed choices.

However, given the range of opportunities offered by the classification, one should also be aware of its limits and possible misuses. As an indicator-based scheme, the classification can naturally only achieve limited transparency: it seeks to reflect the measurable volume of activity in as many dimensions of institutional activities as possible, which in itself is a highly ambitious goal, given the complexity of the European Higher Education Area. However, as ambitious as this project is, it cannot achieve more than to provide a quantitative picture of institutional provision. It can reflect volume in diverse respects, but it cannot pretend to reflect quality. While volume may be related to quality, the two are not necessarily related. Hence, users of the classification would be reductive in their argumentation, even irresponsible, if they pretended to be able to use the classification to access the *quality* of higher education in a given system or institution.

This does not mean, of course, that measuring volume of activity or output is not already a highly helpful source of information, as pointed out above. But it cannot and should not replace the deeper qualitative judgements that are necessary to guide institutional and individual behaviour. Additional information on programmes, research content and quality, teachers and researcher profiles will be needed to inform the choices and judgements of individuals. Institutions and policy-makers need to see the value of the output as well its relation to resources, constraints, and regional and disciplinary contexts to understand the full quality of an institution. The European higher education classification does not want to replace these qualitative judgements. Instead it helps prepare these judgements by providing a wider quantitative insight into institutional profiles, which facilitates the formulation of helpful questions.

Some deeper questions remain and will remain unanswered for a number of years after the establishment of the European higher education classification. Most importantly, one may ask how such increased transparency with respect to institutional diversity will affect the latter. Will increased transparency on diversity of higher education activities and institutional profiles contribute or even increase diversity of provision by allowing monitoring and by designing targeted policy instruments to set sufficient incentives for the whole range of higher education activities? Or will some functions of higher education, such as internationally oriented research, remain so much more highly valued that the classification will mainly be used to add to the existing data on this dimension (presumably research) and be otherwise ignored? Will institutional leaders and higher education systems compare themselves with the already established prestigious institutions in the European landscape and strive to imitate them or will multiple markets and multiple frameworks of inter-institutional reference emerge, as is the intention of the classification?

As argued in the first chapters of this book, the existing literature seems to suggest that some government regulation or at least strong incentives are needed to counteract value-based mainstreaming and the resulting process of increasing homogeneity. At the same time, the dominance of traditional academic values is not cast in stone and may be mitigated by the confluence of alternative academic values which would allow for multiple orientations of higher education institutions, even emerging from within if sufficient support is also offered from above or from external sources. However, for such diversity of values to emerge, strong signals have to be set, ranging from financial incentives to symbolic recognition. The European higher education classification can provide the first step of making the whole range of higher education activities visible across borders. A decisive role will be played by those who use such information, institutional leaders and policy-makers who are ready to build on more transparent information in order to design differentiated incentives, so as to enhance the European Higher Education Area across all its dimensions.

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