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Change of higher education in response to European pressures :conceptualization and operationalization of Europeanization of higher education

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Abstract

This article focuses on change in higher education in response to environmental pressures, more specifically pressures coming from European integration initiatives with respect to higher education, e.g. the Bologna Process. Significant research attention has so far been focused on the supposed impact of European initiatives on higher education systems and organizations. However, while many of such studies would claim that what they focus on is 'Europeanization of higher education?', few of them provide a clear definition of the concept of Europeanization and an explicit and elaborate theoretical approach. Therefore, the aims of this paper are: (1) to provide a clarification of the concept of 'Europeanization of higher education?', and (2) to provide a systematized and robust analytical framework able to account for identified patterns of change. The article builds on the conceptualization and operationalization of the process of Europeanization developed in international relations and comparative studies literature, using two strands of neo-institutionalism: Europeanization through an external incentives perspective based on rationalist institutionalism and

03.7.2025

Europeanization through a social learning perspective based on sociological institutionalism. Exploration of the explanatory potential of the two Europeanization perspectives focuses on changes in approaches to quality assurance in European countries. An assessment of said explanatory potential, as well as a discussion about the analytical challenges related to using these two Europeanization perspectives is provided in the conclusion. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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