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**Abstract**

A small pilot project suggests that the governance of smaller colleges differs significantly from that of large universities, including the former polytechnics which were incorporated at the same time. The differences do not only relate to size, even though small size allows greater contact between governors and academic activities in their role in relation to "the general educational character" of an institution. Small size also creates possibilities of a "drift" to a greater role for governors in management rather than governance, and key issues emerge of role boundaries and relationships with staff. Smaller colleges have other factors affecting governance. Some have particular specialisms ? music, art, land?based industries and so on ? with their own cultures, shifting employment contexts, and considerable overlap between professionals inside and outside the colleges. The history of some as church colleges also continues to have influence. In general, their size allows a more "familial" climate in decision?making, but that, too, has strengths and weaknesses. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)