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**Title**

In pursuit of excellence? : discursive patterns in European higher education research / Francisco O. Ramirez ; Dijana Tiplic

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**Abstract**

European higher education is awash with educational reform initiatives that purport to transform universities into better-managed higher quality organizations that more directly contribute to national development. This exploratory study examines patterns of research discourse in higher education in Europe. We argue that these patterns are changing in the direction of greater isomorphism with globally favored models of the university. First, we show some global trends that reveal the rise of 'world class universities' and 'higher education and development' discourse. Next, we analyze discursive shifts in European higher education research publications in the period between 1990 and 2009. Our initial analysis of these publications shows changes in the expected direction: we find a growing emphasis on management, organization, and quality and less emphasis on student access to higher education, an earlier equity concern. We propose further research to see whether higher education has become a more consolidated research field over time, perhaps suggesting an erosion of the historical legacies that often informed higher education systems and universities in Europe. Lastly,

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we briefly reflect on the implications of influential world models on comparative studies of higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Ramirez, Francisco O., E.Mail: [ramirez@stanford.edu](mailto:ramirez@stanford.edu)