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Abstract

European institutions of higher education have increasingly sought to improve the accountability and transparency of teaching and research with formal procedures and performance criteria. In a longitudinal analysis conducted in faculties of social sciences and economics at universities in the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, we examined ways in which academics have experienced the expanded use of teaching assessments and its impact on the perceived quality of teaching. Results revealed that teaching assessments in the three countries have become more institutionalized, as scepticism of their principles have been replaced with resilience and pragmatism in assessment instruments and, among individual instructors, with sharpened focus on the operational side of teaching. Although faculty members acknowledged benefits of teaching assessments, they could not envision how the assessments would improve the quality of teaching. In response, we offer a theoretical explanation of those trends that extends the development of micro-institutional theory.

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