

25.5.2026

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Title

The uneasy place of equity in higher education: tracing its (in)significance in academic promotions /

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Publication year

2019

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education. - 78 (2019) 1, S. 133 - 147

Inventory number

48361

Keywords

Ausland : Neuseeland : einzelne Hochschulen ; Ausland : Neuseeland : Studenten, Studium, Lehre

Abstract

Throughout the West, efforts to achieve equity for students in higher education have met with mixed success. Much extant literature focuses on the position and perspectives of students in relation to this wicked problem: our research turns the spotlight onto the role of academic staff. In an effort to understand equity's mixed fortunes more forensically, this article offers a case study from a research-intensive university in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study outlines the current context of ideas about equity in national government and institutional policies, then traces the life of those ideas inside one particular yet ubiquitous institutional process: the promotion of academic staff. Promotion is a potent moment of academic subject formation where, in order to participate, individuals must account for themselves as promotion-worthy through presenting a comprehensive dossier in response to a detailed set of norms. Our research explores the extent to which institutional promotion processes suggest the necessity of an "equity-active academic subject" as well as the kinds of equity-active subjects who emerge. Our analysis of institutional documents and interviews with colleagues involved

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in promotion decision-making processes suggests that, despite an inevitable institutional rhetoric of commitment to equity, the concept occupies an uneasy, even risky, place in the academic promotion process, and that responsibility for equity remains largely stuck to equity bodies. This small study contributes to a deeper understanding of the obstacles—contradictions even—equity faces within university culture. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Barrow, Mark, E-Mail: m.barrow@auckland.ac.nz