

20.1.2025

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**Title**

Excellence and exclusion : the individual costs of institutional competitiveness / Richard Watermeyer ; Mark Olssen

**Publication year**

2016

**Source/Footnote**

In: Minerva. - 54 (2016) 2, S. 201 - 218

**Inventory number**

44507

**Keywords**

Ausland : Großbritannien : Forschung, Hochschullehrer ; Forschungsförderung

**Abstract**

A performance-based funding system like the United Kingdom's 'Research Excellence Framework' (REF) symbolizes the re-rationalization of higher education according to neoliberal ideology and New Public Management technologies. The REF is also significant for disclosing the kinds of behaviour that characterize universities' response to government demands for research auditability. In this paper, we consider the casualties of what Henry Giroux (2014) calls "neoliberalism's war on higher education" or more precisely the deleterious consequences of non-participation in the REF. We also discuss the ways with which higher education's competition fetish, embodied within the REF, affects the instrumentalization of academic research and the diminution of academic freedom, autonomy and criticality. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)