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Abstract

The aim of this article is to outline a theoretical framework to address Higher Education organizational change in a globalized and globalizing age. The paper will start with a brief description of trends characterizing the global landscape and their relationships with Higher Education policies and institutions. Although these trends are well known, their impact on HE institutions is to some large extent ambiguous and open to different and even diverging interpretations. In particular, is possible to identify two main and opposed interpretations concerning globalization outcomes: (1) the convergence thesis, that emphasizes the homogenization processes (2) the divergence thesis that, on the contrary, emphasizes different, pluralistic and localized responses to globalization processes. In terms of organizational change the debate focuses on isomorphic change vs. idiosyncratic strategic responses, translation processes and heterogeneity. Both grasp a part of the truth, but they tend to offer mutually exclusive explanations of responses to wider institutional processes and pressures. The article argues that these perspectives could be integrated in one different, offering an interpretation of

11.7.2025

change dynamics, based on the concept of organizational allomorphy. This concept is derived from linguistics and it used to point out a morphological variant of a same morpheme depending on the context of use. A morphological variant is meant not to be something different or idiosyncratic, but something recognizable as a declension of one definite pattern or form. In organizational terms, this concept point out that, although organizations adapt or translate institutional patterns in the face of their formal structure and arrangements, as well as of their social context, it is possible to identify a common set of institutionalized patterns, or institutional archetypes, which structure the organizational arrangements and behaviors. (HRK / Abstract übernommen), Vairo, Massimiliano, E-Mail: massimiliano.vaira@unito.it