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**Abstract**

The implementation of the governance reform of Portuguese higher education has been developed under the influence of 'new public management' resulting in the loss of collegial governance. Additionally, the need for meta-governance of the higher education system and institutions to monitor institutional performance against policy objectives has become evident. By examining the implementation of the legal framework for higher education on the basis of document analysis covering the period from 2007 to 2011 the 'new governance' perspective allows a broader interpretation of the governance reform outcomes. This has implications for the enhancement of institutional autonomy induced by governance reforms impacting on European higher education systems and highlights the tools approach in public management. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)