

16.1.2025

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Title

Hierarchy and power : a conceptual analysis with particular reference to new public management reforms in German universities / Otto Hüther and Georg Krücken

Publication year

2013

Source/Footnote

In: European journal of higher education. - 3 (2013) 4, S. 307 - 323

Inventory number

35563

Keywords

Hochschule : Verwaltung allgemein ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein ; Hochschulreform : allgemein

Abstract

For more than 20 years, new public management (NPM) has been the guiding governance model of university reforms in Europe. One central aspect of this governance model is to strengthen the hierarchy within the universities. Recent research shows that the formal decision-making authority of university leaders and deans has increased in almost every European country. While these changes at the formal level are well documented in the literature, researchers have given little attention to the institutional protection mechanisms of hierarchy in organizations. The most important institutional protection mechanisms of hierarchy in organizations are power and the related potential for negative and positive sanctions. By discussing the German university system, we ask whether university leaders and/or deans have the power to use hierarchy within their universities. Three types of power are considered: organizational power, personnel power and power over resources. The article shows that in Germany, neither university leaders nor deans have sufficient power over the academics in

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order to exercise hierarchical governance. The absence of power at the university leadership level and at the departmental level seems an important barrier to the implementation of the NPM model in Germany. Our perspective on hierarchy and power allows for further comparative research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)