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**Abstract**

Higher education institutions face today strong pressure from institutional environments to adopt certain structures and management systems for reasons of legitimacy and survival. However, the external pressure is multifaceted, demanding organisational and educational innovations on one side and adjustments to developing national and international standards on the other. By studying a Norwegian university from its establishment in 1969 to 1999, and by extensive triangulation of more qualitative studies on this university in this period, the paper concludes that higher education institutions may handle this dilemma by relating it to the continuous struggle for organisational identity. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)