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**Author**

DIOGO, Sara

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**Abstract**

This article compares recent governance reforms in Finnish and Portuguese higher education (HE) systems and institutions (HEIs). Although Portugal and Finland differ significantly, both the countries have recently undertaken similar HE legislative reforms. This article analyses the contexts and implementation processes of these legal frameworks: Law 62/2007 (RJIES) and Yliopistolaki 558/2009 (New Universities Act), aim at changing institutional governance structures, management and decision-making practices. Findings rely on legal documents and on the voices of practitioners. It is argued that new public management ideology and practice, also disseminated by international organizations' agendas (e.g. the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development ? OECD, and the European Commission), offer an explanation for similarities in national HE policies. In turn, historical and cultural specifics as well as structural characteristics of political-administrative systems may explain differences in policy design, implementation processes and national outcomes.

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(HRK / Abstract übernommen)