

03.4.2025

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Title

The status games they play : unpacking the dynamics of organisational status competition in higher education / Jelena Brankovic

Publication year

2018

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education. - 75 (2018) 4, S. 695 - 709

Inventory number

46877

Keywords

Hochschule : Wettbewerb ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein ; Hochschule : Verfassung und Selbstverwaltung

Abstract

The article uses the concept of organisational status to explore how universities respond to intensifying competition. Although status is not a novel phenomenon in higher education, recent insights show that the concerns with vertical positioning, both nationally and internationally, are gaining prominence with a growing number of universities worldwide. As global competition becomes as fierce as ever, universities' efforts to maintain or advance their position vis-à-vis each other are becoming more salient. The paper draws from extant literature to identify three mechanisms of organisational status construction—categories, intermediaries and affiliations—and offers a set of propositions as to how universities of different status rank are expected to act when seeking to maintain or advance their status. Such activities, it is argued, shape status hierarchies, which, in turn, affect the scope of organisational action. The article contributes to the discussions on competition in higher-education literature and, more broadly, to the theory of organisational action in the tradition of

03.4.2025

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