

23.7.2024

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**Title**

The status of strategic planning in Portuguese higher education institutions : trappings or substance? /

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**Publication year**

2004

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education policy. - 17 (2004) 4, S. 383 - 404

**Inventory number**

18671

**Keywords**

Ausland : Portugal : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Hochschule : Idee und Aufgabe ; Hochschule : gegenwärtige Situation

**Abstract**

Economic, regulatory and social pressures are challenging higher education institutions (HEIs) in the 21st century. Strategic planning is a frequently used method for implementing appropriate institutional responses to changing internal and external conditions. The degree to which strategic planning is being utilized is an important predictor of institutional vitality and prosperity. This article draws on a national study recently conducted on strategic planning throughout Portuguese HEIs. Participants came from public and private universities, polytechnic institutes and other establishments. Data included interviews, an extensive survey and documentary evidence. Research indicates many institutions are engaged in a process of planning to various degrees, and many of those that are not, wish to integrate it into their policy development arsenal. However, claims of strategic planning implementation are tempered by data from the study, which analyzed how far key factors in strategic planning had been addressed by the institutions examined. Accordingly, the number of

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institutions that can legitimately be classified as strategic planners is incongruent with the self-reported findings of the data. A critical discussion from both institutional and system perspectives are brought to bear on the findings. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)