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Author

BREAKWELL, Glynis M.

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Abstract

With key performance indicators (KPIs) part of everyday life in the higher education (HE) sector, universities have become increasingly concerned with league tables and performance indicator-led strategy and planning. The choice an institution makes concerning the KPIs it wishes to be evaluated on depends on its mission and objectives, with a Head of Institution (VC) appointed to deliver against this. As such, this raises the question as to whether institutional performance can be related in any way to the characteristics of its leader. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to identify any empirical justification for the socio-demographic characteristics which those responsible for searching and appointing VCs appear to have favoured over the past 10 years. Also, whether these can be shown to be related to the performance of their institutions. Using data available in the public domain and for UK (excluding Scotland) VCs in service for, at least, some time during 1999?2004 inclusive, evidence for the importance of VC characteristics for institutional performance was limited. Indeed,

12.8.2024

our findings suggest that, whilst the performance of a university may be 'moulded' by the characteristics of its leader, most of the variability is explained by non-leadership factors. We also found highly significant correlations amongst the KPIs used in HE, which has very significant implications for those wishing to differentiate themselves from other institutions. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Breakwell, Glynis M., E-Mail: g.breakwell@bath.ac.uk