Higher Education Reforms and Their Socio-Economic Contexts: Competing Narratives, Deinstitutionalization, and Reinstitutionalization in University Transformations in Poland

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Abstract

The paper analyzes higher education policy in Poland in the last two decades with a focus on a diminishing role of university-produced institutional visions about the future of higher education institutions and an increasing role of government-produced instrumental visions. The processes of deinstitutionalization of traditional academic norms, habits and behaviors in the public sector are closely linked to the dramatic growth of private higher education. Traditional academic rules were weakening in the 1990s and there was no alternative set of academic rules, following the shock of the transition to market economy. The price of this process for public universities was the gradual institutional denigration of the research mission of elite universities. New legislation of 2008-2011 marks the beginning of a transformation from one order into another order, with new governance and funding principles at work.