

Magalhães, António M. (2001), *Higher Education Dilemmas and the Quest for Identity: Politics, Knowledge and Education in an Era of Transition*. Enschede: University of Twente Press.

Abstract:

Higher education is becoming plural and heterogeneous taking on a schizo-like identity: post-secondary, tertiary, university, polytechnic, college, university-college, etc. The book sustains that the identity of the modern university was linked to the fact that it was conceived simultaneously as an instrument of pursuit of knowledge and of the consolidation of the nation-state. It will be argued that the new prevailing form of political steering – regulation through de-regulation - in Western Europe reflects and simultaneously causes the changing nature of higher education. The ‘entrepreneurial narrative’ will be presented as a new identity foundation of higher education.

In a case study on Portugal, the work endeavours to make explicit the relationship between modernization narratives and the development of Portuguese higher education. It is argued that the assumption of modern discourses, while it ignores the national context, has led to a continuous mismatch between them. Contrary to the supposition that market regulation is the ‘best’ way to co-ordinate higher education systems, data will show that it did not bring either more diversity or more regional and social equity to the system. Political hybridism - a conflation of state regulation ingredients with self-regulation components - will be sustained as the main characteristic of the steering devices of the systems.

Finally, one proposes an outlining of higher education identity, i.e., the designing of very general scripts that can provide institutions with a minimum on which they can base their strategic plans and institutional choices without losing their identity.