

Studies in Higher Education

ISSN: 0307-5079 (Print) 1470-174X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cshe20

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To cite this article: Cristina Campanale & Chiara Oppi (06 Oct 2026): Discussion on new public management in universities: a systematic literature review, Studies in Higher Education, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2026.2741634

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2026.2741634

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STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2026.2741634

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Discussion on new public management in universities: a systematic literature review

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews existing research on how universities have institutionalized new public management (NPM) principles and the effects they produced. The findings are interpreted using the main concepts of neo-institutional sociology (NIS), namely, isomorphism, conformity, and institutional logics. Relevant studies were identified through a systematic literature review of high-ranking journals. Hood's, C. (1991. "A Public Management for All Seasons?" *Public Administration* 69 (1): 3–19) categorization of NPM doctrines serves as the research framework for operationalizing universities' responses to NPM reforms; this study adapts the framework to the university context. The results show a significant level of homogeneity in reform implementation, with similar effects across different national contexts. These findings suggest that universities primarily adapt to common reform patterns to gain legitimacy rather than improve technical efficiency. This paper extends Hood's framework to universities and provides an operational view of NPM institutionalization grounded in observable university-specific practices. Furthermore, it contributes to NIS theory by explaining how different isomorphic mechanisms institutionalize NPM in universities. Finally, it provides policymakers and university managers with practical insights for designing effective interventions.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 20 February 2026
Accepted 25 September 2026

KEYWORDS
New public management; university; NPM components; universities' NPM features; systematic literature review

1. Introduction

New public management (NPM) has reshaped public administration by promoting managerial autonomy, efficiency, performance measurement, accountability, and competition as guiding principles for public-sector reform (Hood 1991; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). NPM reforms have taken different forms across countries and sectors; however, they generally aim to replace traditional bureaucratic and professional modes of coordination with more explicit forms of managerial control, output-based evaluation, and responsibility for results (Hood 1991; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Consequently, public organizations have been required to demonstrate efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness to external stakeholders (Hyndman and Lapsley 2016; Power 1997).

These principles have also been applied to higher education, where NPM has reduced public funding, intensified competition, and introduced managerial control, performance metrics, and accountability (Parker 2011; Shepherd 2018). NPM-inspired governance influences internal quality

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assurance, evaluation systems, and resource allocation mechanisms, often emphasizing measurable outputs and formal accountability procedures (Agasisti et al. 2019). These changes have generated tensions between teaching and research, transparency and autonomy, managerial accountability, and collegial governance (Leišytė 2016; Parker 2011). Thus, universities have become an important empirical setting for examining how NPM principles are applied (Deem et al. 2007; Parker 2011). Universities represent a distinctive type of public organization. They are professional organizations where core activities are mainly performed by academics, whose authority is based on disciplinary expertise, peer evaluation, and professional autonomy (Clark 1983). University governance has been traditionally based on collegial decision-making and academic self-regulation; nevertheless, recent reforms have strengthened managerial and accountability mechanisms (Deem et al. 2007). Moreover, universities pursue multiple and partly conflicting missions, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and societal engagement. These missions make university outputs difficult to define and measure because academic work is knowledge-intensive, often long-term, and difficult to capture with quantitative indicators (Kallio and Kallio 2014). Therefore, applying NPM to universities can be understood as a process shaped by professional norms, multiple institutional logics, and ambiguous performance objectives (Cai and Mountford 2022).

NPM's effects cannot be understood without considering the institutional contexts and logics that shape their adoption and interpretation. The debate in *Studies in Higher Education* has shown that managerial reforms affect different dimensions of university life. For example, they reshape academic professionalism and autonomy (Kolsaker 2008), generate differentiated academic responses to managerial tasks (Teelken 2012), and affect the work of university managers, especially regarding strategy and organizational priorities (Davis, Jansen van Rensburg, and Venter 2016). Other studies have shown that managerial reforms influence recruitment and career processes (Paisey and Paisey 2018) and employment conditions (Pineda and Salazar Morales 2024). Overall, this literature shows that NPM-related reforms change formal governance systems and reshape academic work, professional values, career trajectories, and internal power relations.

Despite these contributions, there remains a need for a systematic understanding of how these transformations reflect the institutionalization of NPM principles in universities. This is particularly relevant because NPM ideas and practices continue to endure and change across contexts (Dan, Lægreid, and Špaček 2024). Therefore, clarifying how NPM principles are translated into university-specific features and what effects they produce is important.

This paper presents a systematic literature review (SLR) aimed *at synthesizing and interpreting existing research on how NPM principles have been institutionalized and the effects they have produced in universities*. This aim is articulated in two research questions: (1)What NPM features associated with the university context have been described in the literature? (2)What effects have universities faced upon adopting NPM?

Results are interpreted in terms of neo-institutional sociology (NIS) (Parker 2011), which emphasizes that organizations conform to dominant societal beliefs and institutionalized norms to seek legitimacy. This perspective is suitable for investigating how universities have implemented NPM to satisfy related requirements and 'pursue legitimacy, approval and funding from their general environment and culture (social, economic, political, and institutional) and from organizations and constituents key to their survival and prosperity' (Parker 2011, 435).

This study adapts Hood's (1991) framework of NPM doctrines to classify how NPM principles have been institutionalized in universities and to systematize their effects.

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, although recent reviews have investigated the effects of NPM in the public sector (Funck and Karlsson 2019; Knox and Sharipova 2023), few have focused on universities. Second, this research comprehensively synthesizes NPM in universities by considering the full set of Hood's (1991) NPM components and linking those to university-specific organizational features. Adapting Hood's framework to universities is relevant, given Funck and Karlsson's (2019) observation that such frameworks are often only partially implemented, risking curtailing their use and distorting the knowledge base for future studies. This risk is

particularly relevant in the university context, where NPM principles are translated into organizations characterized by academic autonomy, professional authority, collegial governance, disciplinary communities, and multiple missions such as teaching, research, and the third mission. Third, this research integrates Hood's (1991) NPM doctrines with the NIS perspective (Parker 2011). This approach provides an overview of how managerial reforms have been adopted, legitimized, and translated into university practices, as well as the main effects resulting from these reforms. The NIS conceptualization has been applied to specific cases (Paisey and Paisey 2018) but not to a comprehensive investigation of NPM reforms. Therefore, this research extends the NIS perspective by explaining how different NPM features are institutionalized and associated with distinct organizational effects. Finally, this research provides evidence that can help policymakers and university managers design and implement NPM reforms that align with universities' institutional characteristics and core missions.

2. Analytical framework

2.1. Theoretical framework

From an NIS standpoint, organizations conform to ideals of efficiency, transparency, accountability, and competitiveness to gain legitimacy within their institutional environments rather than to improve performance (Meyer and Rowan 1977) or to achieve educational and research outcomes (Parker 2011). They adopt tools, such as performance measurement systems, to demonstrate rationality and compliance (Euske and Euske 1991).

NIS explains the diffusion of NPM-inspired practices through three forms of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). (i) Coercive isomorphism originates from governmental and regulatory pressures. (ii) Mimetic isomorphism emerges when universities imitate institutions perceived as successful or prestigious and adopt similar managerial structures. (iii) Normative isomorphism emerges from the professionalization of management and the legitimization of managerial norms and techniques through shared professional education and international policy networks. Institutional conformity may cause the decoupling of formal structures adopted for external legitimacy from actual internal practices and values. Universities respond to such scenarios with symbolic compliance to satisfy external demands without fundamentally changing their internal academic dynamics (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

NIS posits that multiple institutional logics can coexist. Institutional logic is 'the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality' (Thornton and Ocasio 1999, 804). Prior studies have analyzed the emergence of accounting practice variations resulting from the interplay among various institutional logics (Ezzamel, Robson, and Stapleton 2012; Lounsbury 2008; Rautiainen and Järvenpää 2012). The presence of multiple logics can create both conflicts and opportunities. For example, competing political, professional, and business logics can lead to revised budgetary and accounting practices that reflect negotiations between efficiency and educational integrity (Rautiainen and Järvenpää 2012). Moreover, Ezzamel, Robson, and Stapleton (2012) showed that conflicts and discussions among different logics could integrate multiple perspectives into accounting practices, thereby helping to manage and mitigate interlogic tensions.

2.2. Research framework

Applying NPM reforms in universities is interpreted as an institutional phenomenon, and the reforms' characteristics can represent their operationalization (i.e. their application in practice).

This review begins with Hood's (1991) seminal work, which provides the original and most recognized classification of the core doctrines of NPM. This framework was developed more than three

decades ago; subsequent public management research has revised, extended, and reconsidered it in light of evolving reform trajectories. Recent contributions have emphasized that NPM has endured, been recombined, and tailored to changing reform agendas (Dan, Lægreid, and Špaček 2024). Other studies have also suggested that contemporary public management reforms should be understood by considering their design, implementation, hybridization, and unintended effects, rather than solely through static representations of reform doctrines (Elston 2024). These contributions show that NPM should be treated as a reform trajectory that continues to evolve across contexts.

Nonetheless, these revisions and extensions of Hood's (1991) framework have mainly been developed in relation to public administration and public-sector reforms, rather than specifically for universities. Given the specificity of the university setting, using revisions of Hood's framework would risk importing categories that may not be grounded in that context.

Therefore, this study employs Hood's (1991) original framework as a baseline for identifying how NPM principles have been institutionalized in universities; the framework has been found useful for analyzing the persistence, adaptation, and institutionalization of NPM components in this specific context.

Hood's framework identifies the distinctive characteristics of NPM (referred to as components) that provide an operational view of NPM institutionalization and demonstrate its application in practice. The components are as follows:

(1) Hands-on professional management: Increased decision-making power for managers and responsibility for managers' actions;
(2) Explicit standards and performance measures: Goals defined to enable performance assessments and accountability;
(3) Increased emphasis on output controls: Resource allocation and rewards linked to performance;
(4) Disaggregation of units in the public sector: Breakdown of organizations into smaller, manageable, specialized units with their own responsibilities and budgets;
(5) Increased competition in the public sector: Market mechanisms such as competitive tendering and contracting out, competition among providers, and customer satisfaction principles;
(6) Private sector styles of management practice: Adoption of business-like methods and corporate managerial practices;
(7) Improved discipline and parsimony in resource use: Cost cutting, budget discipline, waste reduction, and a focus on efficient use of public resources.

Hood's (1991) classification was designed for the public sector rather than universities specifically; therefore, these components were adapted to identify university-specific NPM features. This approach is consistent with Hood's (1995) view of NPM as 'variations on a theme,' as common NPM principles may take different forms across public organizations. This situation is particularly relevant for universities; therefore, Hood's components are used as an analytical starting point rather than as fixed categories.

3. Method

The SLR was chosen to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on universities' NPM features and the effects of NPM adoption, to facilitate insights, critical analysis, and future research directions (Bracci et al. 2019). In line with previous studies (Bisogno et al. 2018; Oppi, Campanale, and Cinquini 2022), we followed the six SLR steps given by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). In the first step, two specific research questions were established, as anticipated in the introduction:

(1) What NPM features associated with the university context have been described in the literature?
(2) What effects have universities faced upon adopting NPM?

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Exclusion criteria	Type of publication	Any paper not classified as an article
	Language	All papers not in English
	2024 ABS Journal list	Any work not published in journals ranked at least 3 in the 'Accounting', 'Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility and Management', or 'Management Development and Education' categories, or in journals of any rank in the 'Public Sector' category.
	Research focus and setting	Any study without an organizational perspective or related to primary and secondary education and private higher education institutions
Inclusion criteria	Research focus	Discussion of the NPM reforms
	Setting	Public universities and higher education institutions Organizational level
	Time frame	All years

Source: Authors' own work.

The second step was to define the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which are presented in Table 1.

The third step was to select journals to review, and we used the Chartered Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Guide 2024. We focused on journals with 4*, 4, and 3 rankings in the 'Accounting,' 'Ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and management,' and 'Management development and education' categories, and on all journals in the 'Public sector.' This review's focus guided the selection of categories: this study examines the institutionalization of NPM in universities from an economic-managerial and organizational perspective; thus, we selected journal categories that align with the review's specific focus. 'Accounting' was included because NPM reforms are often operationalized through accounting, budgeting, performance measurement, and accountability systems. 'Public sector' captures the broader public management and public administration debate on NPM reforms. 'Management development and education' was included to capture studies addressing universities as managed organizations and the implications of managerial reforms for academic work, governance, and professional practices. Finally, 'Ethics, CSR, and management' was included because NPM reforms in universities often raise questions concerning values, responsibility, equity, professional identity, and tensions between managerial and academic logics.

This choice yielded 107 journals. We considered all relevant articles up to October 2024 in the Scopus database.

We combined 'new public management,' 'public sector reform*,' or 'new public sector' with 13 associated terms ('debate,' 'critique*,' 'effect*,' 'critic*,' 'theor*,' 'failure*,' 'outcome*,' 'impact*,' 'shortcoming*,' 'contradiction*,' 'discourse*,' 'success*,' and 'rhetoric*') to generate 39 keyword pairs. These keyword pairs were searched within article titles, abstracts, and keyword lists; these broad terms ensured wide coverage. We refined the search by adding 'academ*', 'educat*' and 'universit*.' Concepts such as managerialism, new managerialism, or governmentalism, were considered part of

Table 2. Article selection.

	Number of articles
Keyword search in titles, abstracts, and keyword lists	3590
Articles not published in journals of interest	*−2312*
Duplicates	*−192*
Total articles that underwent the first screening	1086
Articles not meeting the inclusion criteria	*−904*
Total articles for abstract reading	182
Articles removed due to noncompliance with the purposes of the review	*−107*
Total articles for full reading	75
Articles removed due to noncompliance with the purposes of the review	37
Total articles	38

Source: Authors' own work.

Table 3. NPM components according to Hood (1991) and the university NPM features obtained from the content analysis.

NPM components in the public sector (Hood 1991)	Universities' NPM features (obtained from coding)
1. Hands-on professional management	Managerial accountability
	Organizational autonomy
2. Explicit standards and measures of performance	Performance goals, measures, and targets
3. Greater emphasis on output controls	Bureaucratic policies and procedures
	State control
4. Disaggregation of units in the public sector	New organizational arrangement
5. Greater discipline and parsimony in resource use	Financing
	Concentration
6. Private sector styles of management practice	Audit
	Employment conditions
7. Greater competition in the public sector	Competition
	Consumer-oriented practices

Source: Authors' own work.

the broader debate on managerial reforms in universities; they were not used as primary search terms. Explicit reference to NPM or public-sector reform was used as a qualifying criterion to ensure that the selected studies could be consistently analyzed using Hood's (1991) NPM components.

The fourth step involved screening the results according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, first by reading the abstracts and then by full-text review of 75 articles. Table 2 summarizes this SLR process.

In the fifth step, each of the 38 papers was summarized to retain key information (e.g. year, method, and national context).

In the sixth step, content analysis was performed. The coding was conducted by two academics from two different universities; each has research experience in accounting, public management, and higher education, and familiarity with NPM-related reforms. This positionality supported the contextual interpretation of the studies; however, it could also influence the coding process (Berger 2015). Therefore, we used independent coding and consensus discussion to make the content analysis more transparent and strengthen its trustworthiness (Elo et al. 2014).

Following the approach outlined by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), the papers were manually coded using both deductive and inductive coding approaches. The coding was conducted in three phases. First, deductive coding was used to classify the papers according to Hood's (1991) NPM components (Section 2.1); each paper was read to identify which NPM components pertained to its focus.

Second, university-specific NPM features were identified using inductive coding. In this phase, codes were not predefined; they emerged from the articles' content. This step aimed to revise and align Hood's (1991) components with the university context, yielding a list of 12 university-specific NPM features. Table 3 presents these 12 features within Hood's framework components.

Third, inductive coding categorized the effects of universities' NPM features emerging from the articles. The two researchers coded the papers independently before comparing their interpretations in consensus meetings. Disagreements were discussed collaboratively until agreement was reached on the final codes, labels, and classifications to strengthen reliability (Krippendorff 2018); 28 effects were identified.

4. Results

4.1. Description of the sample

Table 4 presents the 38 papers in the dataset by journal sector, journal type, and number of articles. Most research was published in public-sector journals (n = 14), particularly Public Management Review (n = 4), International Review of Administrative Sciences (n = 2), and Public Administration and Development (n = 2). Studies in Higher Education (n = 11) featured the most publications,

Table 4. Number of papers selected based on journal type.

	Distribution of articles	
Type of journal in ABS Guide 2024	Journal	Number of articles
Public sector	Public Management Review	4
	International Review of Administrative Sciences	2
	Public Administration	2
	International Journal of Public Administration	1
	International Journal of Public Sector Management	1
	Public Administration and Development	1
	Public Money & Management	1
	Public Organization Review	1
	Public Policy and Administration	1
Management development and education	Studies in Higher Education	11
	Management Learning	1
Accounting	Financial Accountability & Management	5
	Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal	2
	Critical Perspectives on Accounting	2
	Abacus	1
Ethics–CSR–management	Gender, Work & Organisation	1
	Journal of Business Ethics	1
Total		*38*

Source: Authors' own work.

with almost all of the reviewed studies in the management development and education field. The accounting field had 10 articles, mainly published in Financial Accountability & Management (n = 5), Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal (n = 2), and Critical Perspectives on Accounting (n = 2). Only two papers were published in journals in the ethics–CSR–management field.

The selected papers predominantly used qualitative research methods (31 of 38 articles), which are focused primarily on single or multiple case studies. The remaining articles adopted quantitative methods (3 articles), mixed-methods approaches (2), or conceptual analyses (2). The studies were conducted in the UK (8 articles), Australia (5), Germany (4), Sweden (4), France (3), Denmark (3), and the Netherlands (2). Other countries included Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Chile, Russia, Kazakhstan, Israel, and Japan, and some articles presented cross-country studies, comparing European countries (Austria, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and the UK) or Anglo-Saxon countries (the US, the UK, and Australia).

4.2. Universities' NPM features and effects

Table 5 describes NPM features and Table 6 their effects. All tables present the number of papers discussing the features and the corresponding reference article numbers (papers by reference number are in the reference list).

4.3. The institutionalization of NPM components and their effects

This section illustrates how universities have institutionalized the NPM principles. The types of institutionalizations are presented below, according to the NPM features illustrated in Table 3 and grouped by Hood's (1991) classification of NPM components.

The adaptation of Hood's (1991) framework to universities addresses Funck and Karlsson's (2019) observation that such frameworks have been used only partially, thereby risking curtailing their use and distorting the knowledge base for future studies. Nevertheless, some of Hood's components have been significantly expanded to align with the university's specificities, while others have been interpreted in broader or different ways.

The results highlight significant conformity in reform implementation across universities, with similar components, features, and effects across different national contexts. Moreover, many NPM

Table 5. Universities' NPM features, descriptions, and article references.

Universities' NPM features	Description	No. of articles	Article reference
Audit	Outcome-based assessment systems that shape bureaucratic architecture through which learning and teaching are managed, leading to a formalized system of surveillance and recording.	1	8
Bureaucratic policies and procedures	Regulations and regulatory reporting goals, bureaucracy, and duplication of reporting	1	6
Competition	Internal market among colleges and universities for teaching, research, and service provision	4	2; 16; 24; 30
Concentration	Concentration of funds among a few universities and selected fields of research	2	26; 32
Consumer-oriented practices	Translation of consumers' (students') interests into performance measurement techniques	2	22; 36
Employment conditions	Employees' culture, contracts, unionism level, attraction from the private sector, administrative training, workload, relevance of administrative duties, roles, wages, turnover, and education level	6	4; 13; 21; 29; 31; 35
Financing	Funding systems based on efficiency and effectiveness, sets of indicators, and financing agreements established among different players	7	15; 16; 18; 26; 32; 34; 37
Managerial accountability	Need to be accountable to supra-organizational bodies and stakeholders for both financial and organizational performance.	1	33
New organizational arrangement	Introduction of business management techniques, market mechanisms, competition, corporatization, professional role changes, professional autonomy, and performance measurements	9	1; 2; 5; 7; 18; 24; 25; 38
Organizational autonomy	Decentralization of decision-making authority from the central level to organizations in terms of budgetary authority, control, and discretion of action	2	11; 13
Performance goals, measures, and targets	Performance goals and targets, cost measures, performance measurement and rewards systems, and standards and rankings	13	2; 3; 10; 11; 12; 16; 17; 19; 20; 27; 28; 30; 34
State control	Top-down rule-based management over organizational activity; centralization of decision-making at the government level	4	9; 14; 16; 23; 38

Source: Authors' own work.

features are intrinsically connected, as we will explain below. Table 7 presents a synthesis of the relationships between universities' NPM features and the effects identified in each selected study.

NPM components vary across continents, with Europe accounting for the largest number of identified NPM components. This distribution reflects the large number of studies conducted in European universities and the extensive implementation of NPM-inspired reforms.

Some NPM features are widely distributed across different geographical contexts (for example, *performance goals, measures, and targets* and *financing*), while other features show a more geographically concentrated distribution.

Europe has the broadest and most diversified implementation of NPM components. For instance, *new organizational arrangements* are primarily observed in Europe (France, Germany, and Poland), with only isolated evidence from Asia (Japan) and South America (Chile), suggesting that organizational restructuring has mainly occurred in Europe.

Similarly, *competition* is reported only in Australia, Germany, and a multinational study involving the US, the UK, and Australia, indicating that market-oriented mechanisms have been implemented selectively rather than systematically. The distribution of *organizational autonomy* and *employment conditions* features also suggests that research concerning workforce management and organizational discretion has primarily occurred in Europe. A distinct geographical pattern emerges for governance-related features. *State control* is particularly prominent in Kazakhstan, with additional

Table 6. Effects, descriptions, and article references.

Negative effect	Description	No. of articles	Article reference
Collaboration and interaction	Shared expertise through informal or formal dialogue between teachers, colleagues, students, and parents	2	16; 24
Conflicts with others	Board member conflicts, disagreements, coalitions, limited cooperation, and resurfacing of prior conflicts	4	10; 17; 31; 32
Decoupling	Differences between external and internal accounting processes and technologies	1	13
Efficiency	Organizational efficiency	2	2; 11
Flexibility in performance measurement systems (PMSs)	Controversies in contrasting requests for PMS changes	1	3
Improved business culture and practice	Benefits of a plurality of values that support change, such as the commitment of professionals themselves and increased problem-solving skills	3	1; 9; 31
Improved decision-making	Better, more efficient decision-making processes supported by information	1	34
Inconsistencies in change management	Limited sharing of changes in organizational culture at all managerial levels	1	6
Increased professionalization	Increased professionalization and specialization of academic personnel who perform strategic processes	1	13
Increased quality of teaching and research	Greater professionalism in research, improved teaching performance, innovative teaching, and better equipment	4	24; 25; 26; 36
Limited effectiveness of PMS	Reduced effectiveness of PMSs in improving university performance	2	19; 23
Limited individual autonomy	Limited freedom in the workplace and academic freedom, stringent administrative requirements, and little time for leadership activities	4	8; 10; 16; 33
Limited innovation in teaching and research	Limited emphasis on innovative teaching and research, restricting the concepts to mere adaptation to the current demands of universities' customers and short-term perspectives	3	16; 19; 23; 32
Limited interdisciplinarity	Reduced interdisciplinarity in knowledge production, teaching, and research; limited success in reflecting real-life challenges and overcoming moral deficits created by the undue influence of one or two disciplines.	1	30
Limited organizational autonomy	Autonomy limitations in goal setting due to directions originating from the central level	2	14; 38
Low willingness to adopt new public management (NPM)	Low willingness to consider NPM principles in decision-making, such as the use of strategic planning, performance measurement, budgets, and indicators	1	34
Mania for metrics	Emphasis on continuous assessments until a specific vocabulary of knowledge is built to legitimize managerial power at the expense of the more traditional and collegial visions of an organization.	1	8
Myopia (short-sightedness)	Numerical considerations (e.g. cost or other measures) prevailing over expertise-informed decisions	2	20; 27
New opportunities	New opportunities in terms of relationships between universities, new funding opportunities, and exploitation of knowledge	1	11
Opportunistic behavior	Counterproductive work behaviors, false information on accountability, and gamification of performance measurements	4	2; 8; 15; 33
Paradoxes	Institutional inconsistencies stemming from institutional and political processes involved in translating consumerist views in universities	1	22
Reduced quality of teaching	Reduced teacher motivation and decreased quality of educational programs related to the attainment of learning needs	5	2; 18; 24; 29; 37
Resource acquisition	Capacity to collect funds from the central government through competitive procedures	1	34
Role conflict	Conflict between the new professional requirements related to NPM and individuals' moral systems	4	10; 28; 30; 33
Superficial use of accounting	Accounting serves as a formalized tool, deployed superficially to get legitimacy, whereas its operational use appears to be of only secondary concern to the organization.	2	7; 8

(*Continued*)

Table 6. Continued.

Negative effect	Description	No. of articles	Article reference
Virtuous practices	Academic practices integrated with moral reflections	1	28
Worsening diversity and equity culture	Masculinization of tasks and marginalization of women, who have limited possibilities to engage in additional work provided by NPM due to work–life balance issues; issues related to poverty; limited opportunities and mobility; and reduced equity in the need-based allocation of resources.	6	4; 10; 15; 26; 29; 35
Worsening of employment conditions	Stress, increased workload, de-professionalization, increased administrative burdens, and outcome-driven pressure	8	5; 6; 8; 12; 18; 21; 27; 29

Source: Authors' own work.

Table 7. Overview of the papers, research aims, universities' NPM features, effects, and their relationship.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
1	Allain E.; Sponem S.; Munck F.	2025	Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal	France	Europe	To examine how the affordances of costing tools affect the institutionalization of costing tools and new managerial logics in pluralistic organizations, such as universities	New organizational arrangement	Improved business culture and practice	The paper describes the costing tool through its role affordances: cost calculation gradually became useful as a justification device for program costs when seeking funding from different stakeholders. This helped institutionalize the tool and made managerial logic more acceptable within a pluralistic university.
2	Argento D., van Helden J.	2021	Public Money & Management	Not specified	Not specified	To discuss how corporatization and commercialization have changed university managerial roles and argue for redesigned roles that balance performance measurement with academic autonomy and meaningful knowledge production	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Opportunistic behavior	The paper discusses metrics and rankings in a corporatized, commercialized university setting. The concern is that quantified research outputs become treated as proxies for quality, putting pressure on academics, especially early-career academics, and compromising academic freedom and self-determination.
							New organizational arrangement	Efficiency	The paper frames corporatization and commercialization as changing university management toward market-facing roles. In this context, universities can enroll more students without proportional increases in teaching budgets, strengthening financial sustainability while making programs more attractive in teaching and research markets.
							Competition	Reduced quality of teaching	The paper connects competitive pressures in teaching and research with declining motivation, weakened collegial relations, and the disappearance of less profitable disciplines. The link with teaching quality is ambivalent: what emerges from student satisfaction surveys may

(*Continued*)

Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
									not coincide with what students need to learn at university, so satisfaction-driven steering can weaken the educational substance of teaching. Commercial university management narrows the academic role and weakens the conditions that support teaching quality.
3	Arnaboldi M., Azzone G.	2010	Critical Perspectives on Accounting	Italy	Europe	To investigate how performance measurement systems are translated into operational use in public-sector reforms through the Good Practice project in Italian universities	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Flexibility in performance measurement systems	This paper analyses performance measurement as a constructed and negotiated process. The PMS remains unstable because indicators, comparability criteria, and technical solutions are repeatedly questioned by different actors, producing translations and revisions rather than a settled performance measurement system.
4	Barry J., Chandler J., Berg E.	2007	Public Administration: An International Quarterly	UK, Sweden	Europe	To examine academic change in Sweden and England by focusing on gender equity, women's movements, and the challenges posed by NPM reforms	Employment conditions	Worsening diversity and equity culture	This paper discusses NPM through work intensification and managerial tasks for academic middle managers. These additional demands spill over into domestic life. They are gendered because women are less able to absorb the extra work without costs for personal life and equality in academic careers.
5	Calderón-Orellana M.; López-Huenante N.; Burgos-Bravo D.; Tralma González G.; Morales Segura M.Á.; Gamonal Aravena J.	2024	International Review of Administrative Sciences	Chile	South America	To investigate the relationship between NPM principles and the career beliefs of non-academic university personnel in Chile	New organizational arrangement	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper focuses on civil service careers for university support staff. Legal, administrative, and budgetary arrangements associated with NPM create political-administrative barriers to career development, so the reform is experienced as worsening employment conditions rather than simply modernizing support staff careers.
6	Christopher J., Leung *P.*	2015		Australia	Oceania	To identify the structural, competency, and behavioral			The paper argues that compliance and reporting requirements

			Financial Accountability & Management			characteristics that create tensions in the move toward a corporate culture in Australian public universities	Bureaucratic policies and procedures	Inconsistency in change management	create a risk-averse culture. The issue is not bureaucracy in the abstract, but the way these procedures undermine responsiveness, creativity, and the capacity to manage university projects efficiently, cost-effectively, and competitively.
							Bureaucratic policies and procedures	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper links burdensome regulations and corporate reporting processes to increased pressure on managers and academics. These processes demand corporate skills and workload models while threatening academic autonomy, collegiality, intellectual freedom, and opportunities for creative work.
7	Conrath-Hargreaves A., Wüstemann S.	2019	Abacus	Germany	Europe	To examine how accounting is used to manage the co-existence of institutional logics in a German higher education institution undergoing corporatization and what impact this has on the organization	New organizational arrangement	Superficial use of accounting	This paper describes accounting as shaped by competing institutional logics. Business-like accounting practices are adopted, but mainly to secure legitimacy and signal alignment with business logic while the state logic remains dominant; operational use in everyday management is therefore secondary and superficial.
8	Craig R., Amernic J., Tourish D.	2014	Financial Accountability & Management	Not specified	Not specified	To demonstrate what university audit culture is and the way it operates in public universities	Audit	Opportunistic behavior	Within audit culture, academics learn to game performance evaluations and manage scores, so effort shifts from substantive academic work toward strategic compliance with measurable indicators.
							Audit	Superficial use of accounting	The paper presents audit culture as replacing trust and collegial control with bureaucratic control. Accounting and audit-like practices operate as formal accountability devices, but they do not necessarily support meaningful academic judgment or substantive university management.

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
							Audit	Mania for metrics	The paper connects audit culture with marketplace ideology and commercialization. The point is that quantified indicators and rankings become central to academic evaluation, producing an obsessive focus on measurable outputs and contributing to a loss of contact with the realities of academic work.
							Audit	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper uses a psychosis metaphor to describe an extreme audit culture in a modern public university. Surveillance, reporting, and performance pressure produce a paranoid organizational climate rather than supporting trust-based academic work.
							Audit	Limited individual autonomy	The paper frames the issue as academic freedom versus the death of the teacher-scholar. Audit culture constrains discretion because academics must orient themselves to scores, quantified evaluation, and externally imposed accountability criteria rather than to autonomous scholarly judgment.
9	Dahan A.	2015	International Review of Administrative Sciences	France	Europe	To explore the relationship between values, practices, and organizational change in public professional organizations through the reform of doctoral training in France	State control	Improved business culture and practice	This paper studies the reform of doctoral training through professional values and organizational change dynamics. Central control over doctoral student selection opened recruitment practices, stimulated reflection on existing routines, and encouraged some academics to adopt new practices compatible with broader professional values.
10	Davies A., Thomas R.	2002		UK.	Europe	To examine how the introduction of NPM in UK higher education	Performance goals,	Conflicts with others	This paper analyses output measurement within

			Critical Perspectives on Accounting			affects professional identities and academic service, with particular attention to gender implications	measures, and targets		managerialism. Pressure to publish, generate income, and become measurable performers makes the academic culture more instrumental, individualized, and competitive, weakening collegiality and producing conflicts among academics.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Role conflict	The paper shows that output measurement reconstitutes academic work around standardized efficiency and accountability. Activities that were less visible or measurable, such as student support, teaching, and reflective practice, were neglected in favor of publications.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Worsening diversity and equity culture	The paper interprets managerialism as gendered. Output measurement and performance discourses privilege competitiveness, instrumentality, and individualism, which they associate with masculinized academic subjectivity; women who do not fit this profile become marginalized and silenced.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Limited individual autonomy	This paper links managerial accountability and output measurement to reduced academic discretion. Academics report less freedom over daily work and the type and direction of research they could pursue, as research activities are increasingly monitored, evaluated, and held accountable through managerial systems.
11	De Boer H.F., Enders J., Leisyte L.	2007	Public Administration: An International Quarterly	The Netherlands	Europe	To assess the extent to which Dutch universities have undergone organizational transformation, focusing on identity, hierarchy, and rationality	Organizational autonomy	New opportunities	The paper describes Dutch universities as more autonomous and complete organizations. Organizational autonomy enables boundary construction, alliances, consortia, mergers, holdings, and strategic profiling,

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
									opening opportunities for universities to build stronger institutional identities and pursue market-oriented activities.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Efficiency	The paper discusses quality assessment mechanisms as part of the rationalization of universities. Evaluation reports, indicators, and performance-based agreements make teaching and research more visible to managers, who use them for strategic decisions, benchmarking, and internal fund allocation.
12	Figueira C., Theodorakopoulos N., Caselli G.	2018	Studies in Higher Education	UK.	Europe	To explore what faculty understand by academic risk taking and the way they enact this understanding in their academic tasks	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper focuses on academic risk taking as tied to identity, values, and emotional effort. NPM expectations privilege certain behaviors, and when these conflict with academics' sense of doing what is right, they generate skepticism, helplessness, demotivation, and difficult identity work.
13	Frølich N., Christensen T., Stensaker B.	2019	Public Policy and Administration	Norway	Europe	To examine how universities with different internal governance models organize and structure strategic development processes and how these models relate to universities' strategic capacity	Employment conditions	Decoupling	The paper shows that stronger administrative duties can decouple formal governance models from the internal dynamics of academic work. Academic leaders become increasingly focused on administrative oversight, which distances leadership from how change unfolds within academic communities.
							Organizational autonomy	Increased professionalization	The paper associates organizational autonomy with strengthened strategic capacity. Administrative staff assume more prominent roles in performance evaluation, risk-based analysis, and strategy development, thereby professionalizing internal

									management and expanding administrative and managerial capabilities.
14	Guba K., Gerashchenko D.	2022	Studies in Higher Education	Russia	Europe/ Asia	To examine whether Russian reforms shifting rector selection from election to appointment changed the composition of university leadership, including replacement, external recruitment, disciplinary background, and academic credentials	State control	Limited organizational autonomy	This paper analyses the renewal of Russian university leaders through changes in rector recruitment. The move from academic elections to state appointments was intended to strengthen leadership, but in practice limited universities' organizational autonomy.
15	Guthrie J., Neumann R.	2007	Public Management Review	Australia	Oceania	To investigate the intended and unintended consequences of the performance-driven environment in Australian higher education, focusing on performance mechanisms and information	Financing	Worsening diversity and equity culture	This paper describes a shift in Australian universities from publicly funded, academic-driven institutions toward market-driven organizations. Funding logics based on the rate of return, return on investment, and time to market favor profitable students and disciplines, to the detriment of less profitable but socially important areas.
							Financing	Opportunistic behavior	The paper shows that financing reforms shape behavior through what is measured and rewarded. Academics and universities concentrate on teaching, research, and disciplinary activities that attract funding, encouraging opportunistic alignment with incentives rather than broader academic or public good values.
16	Horta H., Santos J.M.	2020	Studies in Higher Education	Australia, UK, and US	Europe, North America, and Oceania	To examine how organizational factors, especially autonomy, collegiality, and organizational commitment, shape social science academics' research agendas and their potential for multidisciplinary, collaborative, and riskier research	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Limited innovation in teaching and research	The paper discusses measurable outcomes, such as publications, citations, and policy or social impact. These performance expectations push academics toward short-term, externally legible results and discourage risky, long-term, or less predictable research agendas.
							Financing	Limited innovation in teaching and research	The paper links competition for funding with conservative success criteria. Because funding is awarded based on measurable and relatively safe indicators,

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
									academics are pushed toward mainstream research trajectories and away from riskier or more creative research directions.
							Financing	Collaboration and interaction	The paper shows that performance-based funding can encourage collaboration when joint publications and cooperative research are rewarded. The positive effect depends on how the funding regime is designed and whether collaboration is valued rather than merely counted.
							State control	Limited individual autonomy	The paper associates state steering with tighter control over research agendas. Centralized control narrows academics' ability to define their own research directions, limiting autonomy and discouraging creative or risky exploration.
							Competition	Limited innovation in teaching and research	The paper connects competition with weaker collegiality and mutual support. When academics compete for resources, recognition, and positions, the collective conditions that sustain innovative research agendas are reduced.
17	Jeanes E., Loacker B., Sliwa M.	2019	Studies in Higher Education	Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and the UK	Europe	To explore the complexities and challenges of researcher collaboration under academic performance measurement regimes in management and organization studies	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Conflicts with others	This paper analyses collaborative work under a regime of performance measurement. Publish-or-perish pressures and academic hierarchies shape collaboration unevenly, often privileging senior scholars and producing tensions for junior colleagues rather than purely collegial cooperation.
18	Jelonek M., Mazur S.	2020	Management Learning	Poland	Europe	To examine how Polish public economics universities adapted to higher education reform, especially the new funding	Financing	Reduced quality of teaching	The paper describes reforms that pushed economics universities to prioritize research because funding and institutional status depended on research

						algorithm and teaching professorship career path			performance. Teaching becomes less central in organizational priorities, with negative implications for teaching quality.
							New organizational arrangement	Reduced quality of teaching	The paper examines the introduction of teaching professorships and the creation of separate career paths. Although intended to elevate teaching, these roles were often used to reassign less productive researchers, reducing the prestige and perceived quality of teaching-oriented careers.
							New organizational arrangement	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper shows that separating research and teaching careers can worsen academics' employment experience. Teaching paths are perceived as less prestigious than research careers, diminishing the status and career prospects of academics placed in teaching roles.
19	Kure N., Nørreklit H., Røge K.M.	2020	Financial Accountability & Management	Denmark	Europe	To examine whether the Danish objective and results-based management framework has the conceptual qualities needed for effective performance management of universities	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Limited innovation in teaching and research	This paper analyses objective and results-based management through the conceptual qualities of performance contracts. Because it is unclear what is being measured, the system may restrict academic work and innovation rather than bring universities closer to higher-quality education.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Limited effectiveness of PMS	The paper argues that objective and results-based management can create an illusion of management. Indicators and contracts appear to provide accountability and innovation. Still, when they lack conceptual clarity and rely excessively on quantitative metrics, they weaken the PMS as a tool for meaningful university steering.
20	Lewis B.R., Stiles D.	2004	Public Management Review	UK.	Europe	To critically examine transparent costing in higher education as	Performance goals,	Myopia	This paper discusses a transparent costing system intended to improve decision-making and

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
						part of the NPM ethos and its implications	measures, and targets		accountability. However, narrow commercial cost information integrated into the system may obscure non-commercial rationales for cross-subsidization and a wider portfolio of university activities.
21	Lips-Wiersma M.	2006	Public Administration and Development	The Netherlands	Europe	To study the impact of retreats on employees and the organization in a higher education institution operating in an NPM context	Employment conditions	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper studies reflection on lasting values in an NPM context. Increased workloads, surveillance, and wear and tear make it difficult for academics to align managerial demands with deeper professional or spiritual values, leading to stress and a deteriorating working life.
22	Modell S.	2005	Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal	Sweden	Europe	To examine the political and institutional processes surrounding the construction of consumer-oriented performance measurement practices in the Swedish university sector	Consumer-oriented practices	Paradoxes	This paper analyses students-as-consumers at the institutional field level. Consumer-oriented practices are only partially institutionalized: deregulated and competitive logics coexist alongside limited, quantifiable performance measurement, creating inconsistencies in performance measurement.
23	Monobayeva A., Howard C.	2015	International Journal of Public Sector Management	Kazakhstan	Asia	To assess whether post-Soviet republics are ready for NPM-based administrative modernization, using Kazakhstan's implementation of Bologna higher education reforms as a case	State control	Limited effectiveness of PMS	The paper emphasizes the continued dominance of central ministries over curricula and degree structures. This central control prevents universities from developing the managerial culture and capacity needed to use performance management systems effectively.
							State control	Limited innovation in teaching and research	The paper links centralized steering to limited educational modernization. Continued ministerial control constrains institutional autonomy, limiting innovation in curricula, research directions, and adaptive academic practices.
24	Muyters G., Broucker B., De Witte K.	2022		Germany	Europe	To assess whether network governance is suitable for			The paper focuses on network governance as a response to the

			International Journal of Public Administration			addressing organizational complexity and competing institutional logics in higher education institutions and what characterizes such a network model	New organizational arrangement	Increased quality of teaching and research	complexity of higher education. Cooperative dynamics among institutions support dialogue and joint initiatives, thereby improving educational provision.
							New organizational arrangement	Collaboration and interaction	The paper describes network governance as creating spaces for cooperation rather than competition. Network governance created spaces for dialogue and win-win solutions among higher education actors.
							Competition	Reduced quality of teaching	This paper contrasts network governance with competitive pressures. When academics and institutions are pushed to compete, collegial work and cooperation are weakened, reducing opportunities for collaborative teaching initiatives and harming teaching quality.
25	Nande F., Weber M.-L., Bouchet S.	2022	Public Organization Review	France	Europe	To examine whether autonomy is a necessary condition for innovative performance and whether autonomy must be combined with other individual, social, and organizational resources	New organizational arrangement	Increased quality of teaching and research	The paper examines innovative performance through job autonomy. Autonomy gives teachers room to use educational technologies, interactive methods, and creative approaches, so organizational arrangements that preserve autonomy support teaching innovation and quality.
26	Neumann R., Guthrie J.	2004	Public Management Review	Australia	Oceania	To investigate the management of research and doctoral education in the Australian public education sector under corporatization	Concentration	Increased quality of teaching and research	This paper discusses the concentration of research funds and governmental effort. Directing higher levels of funding to selected universities and fields can provide better equipment, professional staff support, and stronger research environments.
							Financing	Worsening diversity and equity culture	This paper analyzes doctoral education in the knowledge economy, where reduced public funding and increased private contributions reshape access to education. Fees, loans, and industry-oriented funding can restrict doctoral participation, especially for lower-income

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
									students, women, part-time students, and less-resourced disciplines.
27	Parker L.; Martin-Sardesai A.; Guthrie J.	2023	Financial Accountability & Management	Australia	Oceania	To examine how neoliberalism has penetrated Australian universities, how NPM manifests in operational and management control, and how neoliberalism and NPM affect funding and financial strategies	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Myopia	The paper describes the commercialization of the Australian public university as an accounting transition. Performance and accounting measures encourage short-term, low-cost strategies rather than sustainable long-term academic development.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper links the accountingized transition with stronger managerial and entrepreneurial control over academics. Quantitative measures, surveillance, and workload pressure intensify academic labor and subject them to managerially desirable project areas and partnerships.
28	Pianezzi D., Nørreklit H., Cinquini L.	2020	Journal of Business Ethics	Denmark	Europe	To explain why NPM-oriented institutional changes have encountered limited resistance and considerable compliance by focusing on academics' moral agency and moral character	Performance goals, measures, and targets	Role conflict	Performance-based expectations may impose evaluative standards that clash with academics' professional values and identity. In particular, institutional demands for measurable performance can conflict with commitments to student support, collegiality, reflective practice, and responsible scholarship, producing tensions between what academics are expected to do and how they understand their role as scholars and teachers.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Virtuous practices	Performance-based appraisal systems may have moral potential when academics interpret institutional change as an opportunity to reshape their moral character. In this sense, appraisal can expose inequalities and power imbalances and

									support fairer, more virtuous forms of academic collaboration.
29	Pietilä M.	2019	Studies in Higher Education	Finland	Europe	To understand how academics perceive tenure-track systems, interpret performance evaluation criteria, and experience tensions in balancing research, teaching, external funding, and private life	Employment conditions	Worsening of employment conditions	The paper examines the experiences and expectations of the tenure-track. Continuous evaluation, unclear criteria, and uncertainty about achieving tenure create stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and concerns about long-term job security.
							Employment conditions	Reduced quality of teaching	The paper shows that tenure-track evaluations primarily reward research outputs and funding acquisition. Because academics must balance research, teaching, and external funding expectations, teaching receives less time and recognition, leading academics to see teaching as a less valued responsibility.
							Employment conditions	Worsening diversity and equity culture	This paper links tenure-track employment conditions to work–life balance. Intense work rhythms and uncertain evaluation requirements disadvantage academics with family or personal commitments.
30	Ryan S., Neumann R.	2013	Studies in Higher Education	Australia	Oceania	To examine how government policy and institutional change associated with NPM affect engagement in interdisciplinary teaching and research in graduate business schools	Competition	Limited interdisciplinarity	This paper analyses interdisciplinarity in graduate business schools under NPM. Competition for funding and revenue-generating programs reduces space for interdisciplinary teaching and research, despite the value of interdisciplinarity in addressing real-life challenges.
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Limited interdisciplinarity	The paper shows that research assessment exercises and rankings give greater weight to disciplinary publication performance. Academics were recruited, managed, and rewarded within disciplinary logics rather than interdisciplinary ones.

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N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
							Competition	Role conflict	The paper links competition and research rankings to a weakened sense of identification with a multidisciplinary school. Rewards shift toward individual research behavior, creating a role conflict between disciplinary performance expectations and broader interdisciplinary institutional goals.
31	Shepherd S.	2018	Studies in Higher Education	UK.	Europe	To clarify the concept of managerialism by distinguishing it from neoliberalism and NPM and to develop an ideal-type model of its core principles for analyzing how managerialism is enacted in organizational practice	Employment conditions	Improved business culture and practice	The paper conceptualizes managerialism as a belief system centered on managers' special contributions, rights, and powers. Senior managers (i.e. vice-chancellors and pro vice-chancellors) increasingly accepted university management as necessary and beneficial, thereby professionalizing and legitimizing it as a distinct function in higher education.
							Employment conditions	Conflicts with others	The paper shows that managerialism separates managers from frontline academic work. A distinct managerial group (i.e. vice-chancellors and pro vice-chancellors) develops its own interests and language, producing conflicts with academics whose work is governed from a distance.
32	Silander C., Haake U.	2017	Studies in Higher Education	Sweden	Europe	To examine how changing research assessment and funding systems affect the internal organization of research and research priorities in Swedish higher education institutions, focusing on how research profiling is translated into local strategies	Financing	Limited innovation in teaching and research	The paper examines profiling research strategies. Funding and profiling pressures steer academics toward mainstream research priorities and conservative success criteria.
							Concentration	Conflicts with others	The paper shows that concentrated or prioritized funding through profiling creates internal divisions. Those included in priority areas receive resources, while others feel excluded,

									generating conflicts around resource distribution and academic value.
33	Solbrekke T.D., Englund T.	2011	Studies in Higher Education	Not specified	Not specified	To discuss different meanings of professional responsibility and accountability in higher education and argue for bringing professional responsibility back into professional formation and governance	Managerial accountability	Role conflict	The paper frames the issue as a balance between professional responsibility and accountability. Managerial accountability requires academics to reconcile internal professional judgment with external public accountability demands.
							Managerial accountability	Limited individual autonomy	The paper criticizes accountability practices that focus on what can be measured and standardized. Professional discretion and judgment are reduced, leading to compliance, conformity, and passivity toward predetermined standards.
							Managerial accountability	Opportunistic behavior	The paper argues that when accountability systems are experienced as detached from meaningful professional practice, they generate skepticism and survival-oriented compliance. Technicization and instrumentalism can push professionals toward utilitarian survival strategies rather than responsible professional action.
34	Tahar S., Boutellier R.	2013	Public Management Review	Switzerland	Europe	Analyze the creation of the Swiss higher education system funding model and assess, through a contingency perspective, whether high-tech or high-touch NPM funding configurations better fit the nature of scientific work	Financing	Improved decision-making	This paper distinguishes high-touch from high-tech resource allocation. High-touch allocation relies on meetings, interaction, and contextual knowledge, enabling more informed and effective budgetary decisions in uncertain academic environments.
							Financing	Resource acquisition	The paper shows that high-touch resource allocation can also support resource acquisition. Collaboration among committees, central offices, and academic actors makes the organization more proactive in seeking and securing funding.

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Table 7. Continued.

N. of the source	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Continent	Research aim	NPM feature	Effect	Relationship between the NPM feature and its effect
							Performance goals, measures, and targets	Low willingness to NPM adoption	The paper contrasts high-touch allocation with high-tech, indicator-based funding. In ambiguous scientific environments, high-tech funding indicators provide limited support for decision-making, leading to resistance to NPM-style resource allocation. The misfit between indicators and scientific work further reinforces this resistance.
35	Thomas R., Davies A.	2002	Gender, Work & Organisation	UK.	Europe	To explore how NPM initiatives influence women academics' day-to-day experiences and professional identities and how they respond to NPM as a basis for theorizing resistance in public service organizations	Employment conditions	Worsening diversity and equity culture	This paper analyses the gendered reconstitution of academic subjectivities under NPM. Work intensification and competitive performance cultures privilege those able to devote extensive time to work, disadvantaging women with heavier domestic responsibilities.
36	Wasserman V., Berkovich I.	2022	Studies in Higher Education	Israel	Asia	To examine how librarians respond to the pressures generated by NPM and digital knowledge and reconstruct their professional identity and legitimacy by developing new forms of occupational capital through cultural, esthetic, and professional distinction strategies	Consumer-oriented practices	Increased quality of teaching and research	A service-oriented approach that viewed students as clients renewed library spaces, cultural activities, and digital expertise, thereby strengthening the library's academic role and service quality.
37	Wilkesmann U., Lauer S.	2020	Studies in Higher Education	Germany	Europe	To examine whether the influence of teaching motivation on professors' instructional design changed with the implementation of NPM and how motivational and governance factors affect academic teaching	Financing	Reduced quality of teaching	This paper connects performance-based budgets and bonuses with academic teaching motivation. Because indicators and incentives prioritize research outputs over teaching quality, academics receive little incentive to improve their teaching.
38	Yamamoto K.	2004	Financial Accountability & Management	Japan	Asia	To examine the corporatization of Japanese national universities, asking whether it mainly reflects downsizing-oriented public-sector reform or autonomy-enhancing governance reform,	State control	Limited organizational autonomy	The paper describes the corporatization of national universities as a formal separation from the government within a framework set by the ministry. Universities become

	and whether corporatization operates as reform rhetoric			autonomous in administration but not in goal setting and strategic control.
		New organizational arrangement	Limited organizational autonomy	The paper also treats corporatization as agencification through independent administrative institutions. This grants operational autonomy in exchange for stronger accountability for results, but strategic goals and reform direction remain centrally controlled.

Source: Authors' own work.

evidence from Japan, France, Russia, and the multinational study indicating that this component is more characteristic of Asian and post-Soviet administrative contexts than of Western European ones. Conversely, Australia is characterized by a particularly strong emphasis on *financing* and *performance goals, measures, and targets*.

4.3.1. Hands-on professional management

According to Hood (1991), this component is associated with greater decision-making power for managers and consequent responsibility for actions. Under NPM reforms, university managers have taken on greater responsibility as governments sought to improve efficiency, accountability, and strategic control over universities. Managers became responsible for implementing performance measurement systems, allocating resources, monitoring results, and enhancing institutional competitiveness. This shift reflected a transition from governance based on professional self-regulation toward models emphasizing managerial oversight and accountability (Argento and van Helden 2021). This NPM idea is institutionalized through increased *organizational autonomy*, with higher *managerial accountability* as a cornerstone. The literature does not provide other types of institutionalizations; thus, universities have applied this NPM concept in similar ways.

Regarding *organizational autonomy*, universities have introduced new projects and institutional rebranding efforts and have expanded international collaborations to increase their capacity to compete and raise funding. Furthermore, universities have been granted greater discretion in student admissions and application of tuition fees (De Boer, Enders, and Leisyte 2007).

Increased *organizational autonomy* implies *increased professionalization of administrative staff*, as strategic decision-making and enhanced accountability requires improved management practices (Frølich, Christensen, and Stensaker 2019).

Organizational autonomy is connected to *managerial accountabilit*y for results. This relationship can lead to *role conflict* when the demands of professional responsibility – acting according to professional judgment and ethical principles – clash with those of accountability, such as complying with procedures, meeting deadlines, and meeting quantitative performance standards (Solbrekke and Englund 2011, 856).

Despite the above discussion, implementing performance measures, bureaucracy, and control might limit autonomy, as discussed below.

4.3.2. Explicit standards and measures of performance

According to Hood (1991), this component refers to the definition of goals, targets, and indicators of success, expressed primarily in quantitative terms. The institutionalization of this component involved introducing *performance goals, measures, and targets* for universities and academics. We can observe a trade-off between this component and the *hands-on professional management* component, as performance measures, by assigning goals to achieve, limit autonomy.

First, when applied in universities, performance measurement generates interactions and negotiations among institutional actors, thereby shaping how performance indicators are defined, interpreted, and used. This situation makes performance measurement a dynamic process of organizational learning and governance rather than a purely technical exercise, thereby generating *flexibility in performance measurement systems* (Arnaboldi and Azzone 2010). Previous studies also attribute this flexibility to competing institutional logics operating within universities (Ezzamel, Robson, and Stapleton 2012; Lounsbury 2008; Rautiainen and Järvenpää 2012).

Performance metrics can provide objective, data-driven insights for strategic decision-making and resource allocation (De Boer, Enders, and Leisyte 2007), thereby promoting fairness by revealing inequalities and power imbalances in academic collaborations (Pianezzi, Nørreklit, and Cinquini 2020).

Conversely, performance measures generate *limited individual autonomy* (Davies and Thomas 2002) and stimulate opposition by academics who want to preserve their autonomy (Tahar and Boutellier 2013) and thus show *low willingness to adopt NPM*. Performance measures might encourage

academics to adopt *opportunistic behavior* and prioritize only measured goals (Argento and van Helden 2021) or short-term strategies to meet goals (*myopia*) (Lewis and Stiles 2004; Parker, Martin-Sardesai, and Guthrie 2021). Additionally, by encouraging a focus on measured outputs, performance measures contribute to *limited innovation in teaching and research*, thereby preventing opportunities for innovation (Kure, Nørreklit, and Røge 2020).

There is also the risk that academics reinforce hierarchical relationships and dependencies between senior and junior academics, finalized to meet performance goals (Jeanes, Loacker, and Śliwa 2019), and support individualism and competition rather than collaboration (Davies and Thomas 2002), thereby creating the potential for *conflict with others*. The scarce collaboration narrows disciplinary focus and hinders interdisciplinarity (*limited interdisciplinarity*) (Ryan and Neumann 2013), thereby causing missed opportunities for knowledge exchange and reinforcing *limited innovation in teaching and research* (Horta and Santos 2020).

Finally, performance goals involve many activities that increase academics' workloads (Figueira, Theodorakopoulos, and Caselli 2018; Parker, Martin-Sardesai, and Guthrie 2021), thereby generating a *worsening of employment conditions,* especially for women because this increased workload reinforces competitive, masculine academic norms (*worsening diversity and equity culture*) (Davies and Thomas 2002). Possible conflicts between personal academic values and efficiency demands may also reinforce *role conflicts* (Davies and Thomas 2002; Pianezzi, Nørreklit, and Cinquini 2020).

As discussed, the use of performance measures has not achieved the expected improvements in efficiency and quality under NPM reforms.

4.3.3. Greater emphasis on output controls

Hood (1991) refers to this component as introducing resource allocation and output controls, rewarding measured performance, and breaking down centralized, bureaucracy-wide personnel management to stress results rather than procedures. It is institutionalized in universities through the introduction of *bureaucratic policies and procedures* and through increased *state control*. Bureaucracy contrasts with the autonomy advocated by reforms that would, conversely, require flexibility.

The increase in documents, reports, and procedures supporting output control intensifies pressure for professionalism while constraining creativity, innovation, and skill development, thereby causing *worsening of employment conditions*. Increased managerial responsibilities, when coupled with limited managerial capabilities, may undermine the effectiveness of managerial actions and, ultimately, the success of the overall reforms (*inconsistency in change management*) (Christopher and Leung 2015).

State control further generates *limited individual autonomy* for academics (Horta and Santos 2020), *limited organizational autonomy* in goal setting (Yamamoto 2004) and in leadership selection (Guba and Gerashchenko 2022), and discourages innovation in teaching and research (*limited innovation in teaching and research*) (Monobayeva and Howard 2015). Additionally, when reforms are implemented without adequate managerial capacities and organizational cultures, autonomy, accountability, and performance orientation are only partially achieved (*limited effectiveness of performance measurement systems*) (Monobayeva and Howard 2015).

Dahan (2015) showed that doctoral training reform *improved business culture and practice* by replacing informal, relationship-based doctoral selection with more formalized, transparent, and competitive procedures. Although this broadened access and standardized recruitment, academics argued that formal criteria could overlook academics' personal knowledge and creativity.

4.3.4. Disaggregation of units in the public sector

This component involves restructuring previously integrated and centralized organizations into smaller units focused on specific services or outputs, operating with decentralized budgets, and interacting through arm's-length relationships (Hood 1991) with the aim to make public organizations more manageable. It is the only NPM component with an explicit organizational perspective, although it does not fully capture the organizational changes observed in universities. Rather than

extensive decentralization, universities mainly introduced control and recruitment mechanisms to support effective and efficient decision-making.

The university-specific features grouped within this component mainly concern *new organizational arrangements*, including the introduction of new techniques, competition, corporatization, and new procedures. Although these reforms were expected to increase autonomy through decentralization, the evidence shows that they often resulted in *limited organizational autonomy*.

Yamamoto (2004) reported the corporatization of Japanese universities as a reform intended to enhance autonomy, accountability, and competitiveness while improving efficiency and reducing public expenditure. However, performance evaluation and results-based funding strengthen *state control* and further *limited organizational autonomy*. Conversely, Argento and van Helden (2021) found that corporatization introduced professionalized managerial roles, CEO-like governance structures, supervisory boards with external members, and private-enterprise forms of control, improving *efficiency* by increasing student enrollment while reducing teaching budgets.

Conrath-Hargreaves and Wüstemann (2019) found that business-like accounting and management practices were introduced to enhance legitimacy and demonstrate accountability. However, traditional state logics persisted, resulting in symbolic rather than substantive reforms (*superficial use of accounting*).

Jelonek and Mazur (2020) discussed the introduction of teaching-focused academic career paths aimed at improving teaching quality, which introduced a dichotomy between teaching and research academics: they found that this reform diverted less productive researchers into teaching paths, lowering the perceived value of a teaching career compared to research positions (*reduced teaching quality*) resulting in employee dissatisfaction and a *worsening of employment conditions.* Further, career flexibility and merit-based systems for administrative staff compromise job stability and generate frustration, thus generating a *worsening of employment conditions* (Calderón-Orellana et al. 2024).

Muyters, Broucker, and de Witte (2022) described an alternative organizational model based on network governance, collaboration, resource sharing and joint accountability in Flanders which increases *collaboration and interaction* while fostering an *increased quality of teaching and research*. Notably, Nande, Weber, and Bouchet (2022) consider academics' autonomy an additional form of institutionalization: they reported that reforms increasing academics' autonomy can foster innovative teaching approaches, thereby contributing to an *increased quality of teaching and research*. Finally, new accounting tools supporting data-driven decision-making, transparency, and resource allocation strengthened leaders' negotiation capabilities and professionalism (*improved business culture and practice*) (Allain, Sponem, and Munck 2025).

4.3.5. Greater discipline and parsimony in resource use

This component emphasizes cost containment, workforce discipline, and the reduction of organizational burdens associated with external or collective claims (Hood 1991). In universities, it is institutionalized by changing the financing systems (*financing*) or by *concentration* of resources in certain universities or activities. *Financing* is generally performance-based and therefore closely linked to the component *Explicit standards and measures of performance*.

Guthrie and Neumann (2007), Neumann and Guthrie (2004), Silander and Haake (2017) and Horta and Santos (2020) described the transformation of funding mechanisms in universities with similar results. New funding mechanisms increasingly relied on performance indicators while expanding revenues through student fees, research grants, international enrollment, and commercial activities. This led to a shift towards more profitable fields (*opportunistic behavior*), a focus on mainstream research, and concentration of resources on profitable projects, generating conflicts over funding priorities and marginalizing less profitable disciplines (*limited innovation in teaching and research, concentration, conflict with others*) (Horta and Santos 2020; Silander and Haake 2017).

Furthermore, although equity remained part of the funding framework through inclusion indicators, the growing emphasis on market competition and revenue generation created tensions

between economic efficiency and broader social equity objectives (*worsening diversity and equity culture*) (Guthrie and Neumann 2007; Neumann and Guthrie 2004). Conversely, *concentration* of funding can improve teaching and research quality by providing stronger peer groups, better equipment and greater professionalism (*increased quality of teaching and research*) (Neumann and Guthrie 2004).

Jelonek and Mazur (2020) found that Polish universities responded to NPM-inspired reforms through instrumental compliance rather than substantive change. The new funding algorithm (*financing)* encouraged universities to reduce student enrollment to avoid financial penalties, while the introduction of the teaching professor career track was used as a mechanism to reassign less research-productive academics to teaching-only positions, resulting in *reduced quality of teaching*. Wilkesmann and Lauer (2020) showed that performance-based *financing* increasingly prioritized research over teaching (*reduced quality of teaching*).

Conversely, Tahar and Boutellier (2013) reported that 'The high-touch funding approach' (*financing*), which allocates resources through strategic dialogue, peer review, and qualitative assessment, rather than fixed quantitative formulas, supports autonomy and long-term development. They found that this allocation method could support decision-making, internal cooperation, and proactive fundraising (*resource acquisition* and *improved decision-making*).

4.3.6. Private sector styles of management practice

This component refers to the use of tools, techniques, and procedures typical of the private sector. In universities, it has been institutionalized through *audits* and changes in *employment conditions*. Both features involve performance measures, autonomy, accountability, and control.

Regarding *audit,* Craig, Amernic, and Tourish (2014), found that these practices can lead to *opportunistic behavior*, the *superficial use of accounting*, a *mania for metrics*, *worsening of employment conditions,* and *limited individual autonomy*. Audit culture constrains academic freedom, encourages gaming behavior, weakens trust and collegiality and ultimately undermines the academic community.

New *employment conditions* encompass changes in recruitment and hiring procedures, approaches to human resource management, and employees' working conditions. Pietilä (2019) described the introduction of tenure-track employment in Finland. Although tenure-track provides clearer prospects, it also intensified continuous evaluation, heavy workloads and performance pressure, contributing to the *worsening of employment conditions*. Its emphasis on research output and external funding also diverts attention from teaching, leading to a *reduced quality of teaching*. As another case of changed *employment conditions,* Barry, Chandler, and Berg (2007) discussed hierarchical management, audit practices, and performance-based evaluation structures that replaced collegial governance and professional autonomy. These changes increase pressure to achieve measurable outputs while disadvantaging women, whose greater involvement in teaching, student support, and administrative activities is less rewarded within performance systems (*worsening diversity and equity culture*). Pietilä (2019) found similar results, while Thomas and Davies (2002) reported also that these changes undermine work–life balance, particularly for women.

Lips-Wiersma (2006) showed that NPM has reduced well-being, weakened motivation, and worsened workplace relationships, contributing to *worsening of employment conditions*. They reported that complementary measures, such as spiritual retreats, introduced to mitigate the negative effectsf of NPM, temporarily mitigate the stress caused by NPM but are insufficient to reduce these effects.

Frølich, Christensen, and Stensaker (2019) found that the Norwegian acquisition system strengthened professional administrative support for strategic process but, by emphasizing external accountability, reduced academic leaders' involvement in internal decision-making and created a *decupling* between leadership and academic activities.

Finally, Shepherd (2018) found that separating academic and managerial careers increasingly promotes academics into senior management positions, where they become more detached from

Table 8. Relationship between universities' NPM features and their effects, with the referenced article indicated in the intersecting cells.

NPM Features	Effects																														
	Collaboration and interaction	Conflicts with others	Decoupling	Efficiency	Flexibility in performance measurement systems	Improved business culture and practice	Improved decision-making	Inconsistency in change management	Increased professionalization	Increased quality of teaching and research	Limited effectiveness of performance measurement systems	Limited individual autonomy	Limited innovation in teaching and research	Limited interdisciplinarity	Limited organizational autonomy	Low willingness to adopt NPM	Mania for metrics	Myopia	New opportunities	Opportunistic behavior	Paradoxes	Reduced quality of teaching	Resource acquisition	Role conflict	Superficial use of accounting	Virtuous practices	Worsening diversity and equity culture	Worsening of employment conditions	Total effects	No. of articles
Audit												8					8			8					8			8	*5*	*1*
Bureaucratic policies and procedures								6																				6	*2*	*1*
Competition													16	30								2;24		30					*5*	*4*
Concentration		32								26																			*2*	*2*
Consumer-oriented practices										36											22								*2*	*2*
Employment conditions		31	13			31																29					4;29;35	21;29	*9*	*6*
Financing	16						34						16;32							15		18;37	34				15;26		*10*	*7*
Managerial accountability												33								33				33					*3*	*1*
New organizational arrangement	24			2		1				24;25					38							18			7			5;18	*10*	*8*
Organizational autonomy									13										11										*2*	*2*
Performance goals, measures, and targets		10;17		11	3						19	10	16;19	30		34		20;27		2				10;28		28	10	12; 27	*19*	*13*
State control						9					23	16	23		14;38														*6*	*5*
Total features	2	3	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	4	1	4	1	3	2	1	3	5		

Source: Authors' own work.

teaching and research and adopt managerial values and practices centered on strategic leadership, performance, and organizational control (*improved business culture and practices*).

4.3.7. Greater competition in the public sector

This component considers that rivalry among providers of public services is the key to achieving lower costs and better standards (Hood 1991). It is institutionalized in universities through the application of *competition* and *consumer-oriented practices*, which reflect *Private sector styles of management practice*.

Competition refers to rivalry among universities and academics for research funding, publications, academic recognition, and institutional resources (Horta and Santos 2020). Evidence suggests that a competitive culture undermines collegiality, cooperation and mutual support, with, as a consequence, *limited innovation in teaching and research* (Horta and Santos 2020), and *reduced quality of teaching* (Argento and van Helden 2021; Muyters, Broucker, and de Witte 2022).

Ryan and Neumann (2013) highlight the *role conflict* arising from *competition* related to competing expectations placed on business school academics. Furthermore, although academics are encouraged to pursue interdisciplinary and practice-oriented activities, career advancement depends mainly on disciplinary publications and performance metrics, leading them to prioritize measurable research outputs at the expense of teaching, collegiality, and interdisciplinary initiatives (*limited interdisciplinarity*).

Consumer-oriented practices based on students-as-consumers logic often rely on quantifiable performance metrics, rankings, and league tables. Modell (2005) found that these mechanisms may produce negative effects in the form of institutional inconsistencies and *paradoxes*. However, these practices can also produce *increased quality of teaching and research*, when they enhance services provided to students, such as digitalized library services (Wasserman and Berkovich 2022).

Table 8 presents a matrix of the main intersections between universities' NPM features and associated effects.

5. Discussion

This SLR synthesized existing knowledge on NPM institutionalization in universities and its effects. The review clarifies which NPM features have been examined in previous studies, how these features operate as concrete expressions of NPM institutionalization in the university context, and the effects they produce.

Although recent reviews have examined the effects of NPM in the public sector (e.g. Funck and Karlsson 2019; Knox and Sharipova 2023), few have focused on the effects of NPM for universities and none have interpreted NPM features as ways to express the institutionalization of NPM principles.

Regarding the first research question, focused on the characteristics of NPM in universities, the adaptation of Hood's (1991) classification enabled the identification of how broadly NPM components are institutionalized in universities through specific organizational practices. *Performance goals, measures, and targets* constitute the most investigated feature, followed by *new organizational arrangements*, *financing*, *employment conditions*, *competition*, and *state control*. Overall, the findings reveal a persistent tension between increased autonomy and intensified accountability and control (De Boer, Enders, and Leisyte 2007; Parker 2011).

The second research question concerns the effects of NPM reforms. *Worsening of employment conditions*, *worsening diversity and equity culture*, and *reduced quality of teaching* are the most frequent effects, as *audit* culture, *bureaucratic policies and procedures,* political-administrative barriers, career paths and performance measurement systems intensify workload and stress, job insecurity, control and surveillance (Calderón-Orellana et al. 2024; Christopher and Leung 2015; Craig, Amernic, and Tourish 2014; Figueira, Theodorakopoulos, and Caselli 2018; Jelonek and Mazur 2020; Parker, Martin-Sardesai, and Guthrie 2021; Pietilä 2019). Hence the institutionalization of NPM in universities often produces consequences that exceed its formal objectives, reshaping

academic work, professional identities, and internal power relations, generating tensions between managerial reform objectives and universities' values.

Furthermore, NPM reforms generate multiple and complex effects: a single feature may lead to multiple effects, and one effect may stem from different features.

Interpreted through the NIS lens, results show that NPM reforms in universities are institutional rather than merely managerial. This explains why similar reforms tend to produce recurrent organizational consequences across different university contexts. Isomorphism, decoupling, and multiple institutional logics provide insights into how managerial reforms are diffused, adapted, and contested. The observed conformity in reform implementation across universities, with similar features and effects across different national contexts, reflects the institutional mechanisms through which NPM is legitimized, reproduced, and experienced in universities.

First, the results suggest that universities' adaptation to common patterns is driven more by legitimacy than by technical efficiency. Improvements in efficiency and in teaching and research quality are less frequent than reductions in employment conditions, diversity and equity culture, and teaching quality,

Consistent with Meyer and Rowan (1977), ideals of efficiency, transparency, accountability, and competitiveness rarely lead to substantial performance improvements and are more often associated with unexpected effects. Positive effects emerge in isolated cases: participative financing systems improved decision-making (Tahar and Boutellier 2013), corporatization and performance measurement systems generate efficiency gains (Argento and van Helden 2021; De Boer, Enders, and Leisyte 2007). *Improved business practices* were identified in only three studies (Allain, Sponem, and Munck 2025; Dahan 2015; Shepherd 2018). Overall, NPM reforms appear to operate more often as legitimation mechanisms than as effective means to efficiency and improved practices.

Second, despite variations across contexts, universities show considerable conformity in adapting to external expectations to gain legitimacy. This may indicate that, although NPM reforms emphasize autonomy, strict reform goals may limit organizational responses, thereby reducing autonomy.

Third, the similarity among universities, which display common characteristics and effects, although predominantly negative, suggests isomorphism. Consistent with Parker (2011), all three types of isomorphism emerge. For example, the extensive use of measures and metrics, the superficial use of accounting, and conflicts that arise suggest that these initiatives are driven by external pressure and not by an intrinsic motivation of universities to apply NPM principles. Mimetic isomorphism can also be observed in relation to initiatives imported from the private sector. For instance, mania for metrics reflects coercive isomorphism as a response to reforms, while the imitation of private sector measures indicates mimetic isomorphism. In contrast, normative isomorphism appears to lead to improvements for universities. Improvements in business culture or virtuous practices may reflect the development of new values and practices within an organization, promoted by internal groups, and these are associated with positive effects. This suggests that different isomorphic mechanisms may not have equivalent consequences.

According to NIS, organizations seek legitimacy, approval, and funding from their institutional environments (Euske and Euske 1991; Fogarty 1996). However, in attempting to conform to NPM requirements, universities may prioritize formal compliance with interventions over substantive benefit. Interventions may be therefore implemented with limited attention to organizational context, producing weak effectiveness, limited innovation, short-termism and tensions with existing cultures. Formal structures and processes may also become decoupled from actual organizational practices (Parker 2011), so efforts to comply with reforms outweigh their intended objectives.

Fourth, another discussion concerns the logics and values underlying institutionalization. The interaction of competing logics, such as financial self-sufficiency, market orientation, mass education, and responsiveness to societal values (Parker 2011) can generate both risks and opportunities, with potentialities for performance management improvements (Rautiainen and Järvenpää 2012).

Performance measurement, for example, may become a dynamic and flexible process of organizational learning and governance rather than a purely technical exercise (Arnaboldi and Azzone 2010), reflecting the interplay of different institutional logics and the consequent variations in tools (Ezzamel, Robson, and Stapleton 2012; Lounsbury 2008; Rautiainen and Järvenpää 2012). Conversely, limited dialogue among logics may generate role conflicts (Ryan and Neumann 2013), worsen working conditions and hinder educational goals (Figueira, Theodorakopoulos, and Caselli 2018; Parker, Martin-Sardesai, and Guthrie 2021). Effective collaboration between logics can in turn generate opportunities such as improved efficiency, and teaching and research quality (De Boer, Enders, and Leisyte 2007). The effects of NPM require adopting managerial tools while considering whether they are imposed as compliance mechanisms or negotiated within universities' institutional logics.

6. Conclusions

This research makes several contributions to the NPM domain. First, it addresses Funck and Karlsson's (2019) concern about the selective use of Hood's (1991) framework, by considering the full set of Hood's components. By organizing the existing knowledge on NPM in universities and linking Hood's components to university-specific features and associated effects, this SLR shows how broad NPM doctrines are translated into concrete organizational practices.

The study also provides an operational view of NIS institutionalization. By integrating Hood's (1991) framework with the identified university-specific NPM features it is possible to observe institutionalization through practices such as autonomy, market mechanisms, organizational arrangements, and changes in employment conditions. This operationalization reveals the gap between reform rhetoric and organizational outcomes: reforms promoted through ideals of autonomy, efficiency, accountability, and quality improvement often produce unintended effects, such as worsening employment conditions, reduced teaching quality, tensions with diversity and equity, and limited innovation.

This study also advances the NIS-based debate (Parker 2011) by showing that NPM institutionalization in universities involves different isomorphic mechanisms and effects. In particular, the findings reveal an autonomy-control paradox: reforms are formally promoted to increase universities' autonomy but simultaneously, by strengthening accountability and compliance pressures, reduce autonomy. Their effects also depend on whether NPM institutionalization forms are imposed or negotiated within universities' competing institutional logics. This finding moves the debate beyond a simple positive/negative assessment of NPM, toward a more nuanced understanding of the institutional conditions under which reforms support or undermine universities' missions.

This research suggests that policymakers and public managers should move beyond interventions centered mainly on formal accountability and measurable outputs. Reform design should consider how NPM features interact with academic work, professional values, organizational capacities, and competing institutional logics.

This study has limitations. The inductive classifications of NPM features and effects are subject to the researchers' interpretations. Additionally, the review examines individual relationships rather than interactions among multiple features and effects. Future research should conduct case studies or surveys to explore how NPM features interact to produce specific effects, particularly across performance measurement, financing, audits, employment conditions, and ethical issues.

A further limitation concerns the journal selection, which reflects an economic and managerial perspective and may have increased the prominence of themes such as performance measurement, accountability, financing, and control. Future reviews could extend the analysis to education policy, sociology of education and broader higher education journals.

An additional limitation inheres in the SLR's characteristics and concerns the keywords selected (Snyder 2019), which may have excluded contributions about managerialism and governmentalism.

Future reviews could include these related concepts to compare how the literature on NPM and other public management reforms describes university reforms and their effects.

Overall, this study shows that NPM reforms may both support and hinder the achievement of their intended goals. Their effects depend on how reform principles are translated into university practices. This persistent tension is central to the review's contribution: the institutionalization of NPM in universities often generates a gap between reform rhetoric and effects. Reforms promoted in the name of autonomy, efficiency, accountability, and quality improvement may simultaneously increase control and compliance pressures, worsen employment conditions and conflict with academic and professional values. Therefore, this study offers a structured understanding of how NPM is translated, legitimized, and experienced in universities, providing a basis for reforms that are more sensitive to the institutional specificities of higher education.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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