



**Higher Education in the UK and the USA since Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan:
Converging Models?**

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Access and the rise of accountability in the governance of public universities in the US

Abstract

Since the 1990s, as a consequence of changes in federal funding and the new financial responsibilities assigned to state governments, US states have had to adjust their higher education policy and governance, and define more precisely the objectives they expected their public colleges and universities to meet. In spite of a diversity of situations, some general trends can be defined. This paper first studies the evolution of state governance of higher education in the US, as states have had to decrease their share of the budgets of public higher education institutions and at the same time strive to maintain some degree of affordability. They have done so by getting more involved in defining general policies for higher education, setting common goals and accountability measures related to student success. The analysis focuses on three very different states, California, Illinois and West Virginia, and compares the state governance choices made and their implementation of performance assessment. The paper finally considers the consequences of accountability policies on access to higher education in the US.