

Moving behind research metrics

Responsible research evaluations at Danish Universities

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Moving beyond research metrics

Responsible research evaluations at Danish Universities

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Too often, research assessments are driven by the metrics at hand rather than what is valued about the entity that is being evaluated. The PARE project (Probing 5 arguments for responsible evaluation on HE leaders) examines attitudes and behaviour among HE leaders in working with research assessments.

Introduction

The need for responsible research evaluation is surfacing on international agendas in the form of eg. the Hong Kong principles for assessing researchers. By these initiatives, universities are incited to seek to adopt new approaches to research evaluation. One such approach is the value-driven framework for responsible evaluation SCOPE (fig. 1), developed by the INORMS Research Evaluation Group (REG).

In the study, we investigate how Danish HE leaders perceive, initiate, and work with research assessments.

Results

Results showed Danish HE leaders to be experienced in working with research assessments, but to initiate these mostly in reactive ways and driven by metrics (figs 2 and 3). HE leaders were aware that their current practice was not optimal but felt constrained by lack of resources (both time and money), stakeholder pressure (eg. from funders) and a general inertia in established monitoring and evaluation systems.

Attitudes towards the INORMS REG framework SCOPE were positive. SCOPE was seen as a most welcome checklist for working with research assessments in a professional and responsible way. Neither SCOPE nor other frameworks or guides, such as DORA, were mentioned unprompted. Qualitative evaluations were seen as the gold standard.



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Method

We interviewed 10 Danish HE leaders from among:

- all Danish universities (6 from broad; 4 from specialized universities)
- All disciplines (4 science/technology; 2 health; 4 humanities/social science)
- Two management levels (5 deans; 5 department heads)

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, prompting also the SCOPE framework (fig 1). All interviews were conducted online and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Data were transcribed and coded inductively by two independent coders.

Figure 1. The SCOPE Framework

<https://inorms.net/scope-framework-for-research-evaluation/>



Figure 2. Starting point for evaluation and experience

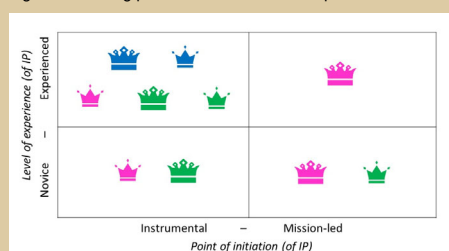
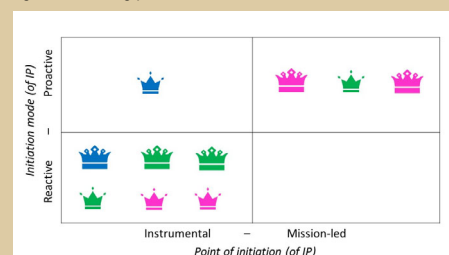


Figure 3. Starting point for evaluation and mode of initiation



Implications

More widespread knowledge among HE leaders of frameworks and guidelines for responsible research assessment has the potential for enabling changes in current evaluation practices of Danish HE institutions and will, eventually, also lift the quality of evaluations carried out. To increase knowledge, frameworks such as SCOPE should be promoted more, and preferably also comprise use cases that show in a very practical way how responsible practice can be implemented and how systemic barriers such as the institutional inertia from long established routine monitoring systems can be overcome.

References

International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS). www.inorms.net

SCOPE framework for responsible research evaluation - Full guide, one-page overview and five-minute video. Includes also: SCOPE Mini case study: Creating awareness about responsible research evaluation: SCOPE used in interviews with Higher Education (HE) leaders in Denmark. <https://inorms.net/scope-framework-for-research-evaluation/>