Science audited: Indicator-based systems for research evaluation and resource allocation

Åström, Fredrik

2018

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
Science audited: Indicator-based systems for research evaluation and resource allocation

FREDRIK ÅSTRÖM
The Project

- Evaluation and governance of the public sector (Riksbankens jubileumsfond, The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences)

- PIs: Fredrik Åström & Björn Hammarfelt

- Evaluation practices
  - Systems and indicators
  - Stakeholders
  - Infrastructures

- Effects on research
  - Adaption strategies: entering the evaluation discourse
    » Publication behavior
    » Selection of projects
    » Using indicators
Performance-based Research Funding Systems at Swedish Universities (Hammarfelt et.al. 2016)

• Background: national PRFS since 2009
• Local use of PRFS at 26 Swedish HEIs
  – Great variations in terms of:
    » Levels: individual, department, faculty
    » Indicators: publication based, citation based
  – Poorly documented
  – Seldom evaluated
  – Loose connection to organizational goals
(Metrics based) Evaluation in Peer Review
(Hammarfelt & Rushforth 2017; Hammarfelt 2017)

• External evaluations of candidates for academic positions in
  – Biomedicine
  – Economics
  – History

• Use of bibliometric indicators
  – Indicators as judgement devices
  – ’Citizen bibliometrics’
    » Variation in-between fields
    » Negotiating a variety of indicators, related to field practices and norms

• The valuation of publications in evaluating careers
  – Authorship
  – Publication prestige
  – Temporality of research
  – Reputation in the field
  – Boundary keeping
Effects on Research Practices and Disciplinary Norms (Hammarfelt & Haddow in press)

- Questionnaire on metrics use and publication practices among Australian and Swedish humanities scholars
  - Use of various indicators and rankings
    » In AUS 62 % of scholars, in SWE 14 %
    » In institutional policies, in CVs and applications, for general promotion of their work
  - Critical, but feeling pressure to adapt
  - Tension between disciplinary quality criteria and formalized indicators
Effects on Research Practices and Disciplinary Norms, pt 2 (Nästesjö 2017)

- Bibliometric study of, and interviews with, humanities scholars at Lund University
  - No radical shift in publication practices
  - Disciplinary differences, career stage & 'academic age'
  - Humanities scholars increasingly adapting to dominant trends in academia and research evaluation
  - Part of a re-negotiation of disciplinary norms and quality criteria
Problematizing Research Evaluation Practices

Infrastructures (Åström 2016)

“a number of possible distributions of tasks and properties between hardware, software and people” (Star & Bowker, 2006, p. 232).

• Interacting systems and structures
• The stakeholders
• Problematizing a distinction between evaluatees, evaluators and auxilliary stakeholders
Problematizing Research Evaluation Practices, pt 2

• The indicators
  – Organizational vs disciplinary evaluation
  – In relation to organizational practices and goals, e.g.
    » The purpose of evaluation
    » Documentation and ‘quality control’
  – The competencies of the commissioning authority
  – A sense of what the indicators signify for the commissioning authority
  – Evaluation criteria vs incentive structures

• Scholarly Publishing: Communication vs Academic merit and reward
Problematizing Research Evaluation Practices, pt 3

• ‘The metric culture’
  – Evaluation criteria and the shaping of disciplines: the interplay between research practices and the creation of evaluation practices
  – (Quantitative) Evaluation criteria coming:
    » Out of external evaluation practices (e.g. national PRFS)?
    » Out of changing practices in fields/disciplines, assuming the necessity of adaption

    » The “Tension between disciplinary quality criteria and formalized indicators”
    vs
    “a re-negotiation of disciplinary norms and quality criteria”