



Tieteellisten seurain
valtuuskunta

Framework for impact assessment in Finland

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Impact Assessment workshop

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Aims of the Impact Assessment project 2023 (TSV)

- There is no national framework for research assessment in Finland.
- My talk today is based on the aims and background thinking of **development project on impact assessment (Publication Forum, TSV)**.
- First project year aims at development plan for national recommendations for impact assessment.
- The idea is to develop a model, which could offer a joint framework for impact assessments in Finland, and at the same time be adaptable to the universities' own profiles and needs.
- Although the focus of this project is on universities, as our **profound interest is to understand better the phenomenon of societal impact of research and the possibilities and challenges to demonstrate and report it for assessment purposes**, the project will serve also polytechnics and other research organisations, funders and learned societies.

Starting points for developing impact assessment framework in Finland

- **University Act** obligates universities to evaluate themselves.
- Universities' **autonomy**: Universities are free to decide on the content and ways they conduct their research assessments.
- The funding model for the universities in Finland plays relatively big a role in academia: compared to other countries, it is exceptionally strongly based on measured outputs (Auranen 2014; Kivistö et al., 2019).
- In regard to societal impact of publications, funding model takes into account not only international publishing, but also national publishing and also non-peer reviewed outputs, including those targeted at professional and general audiences.
- Open access publications are also given an additional weight, which is expected to promote the opening up of pathways to societal impact.
- Aspect of societal impact of universities can also be taken into account in the strategic development part of the model.

Elements of impact agenda (Muhonen 2022)

	Dominant impact discourse	“Untold impact stories”
Disciplinary approach	STEM	SSH
Characteristics of knowledge	applied research	basic research
Evaluation model	summative	formative
Characteristics of impact	extraordinary impacts	everyday impacts
Focus	effects and changes	activities, processes, conditions for impact creation
Stakeholders	industry and policymakers	general public
“Storyteller”	researchers	stakeholders



Disciplinary approach: STEM vs. SSH

Understanding of SSH impact and its evaluation has increased, but the dominant way to understand impact is still STEM-driven.

Acknowledging this imbalance of different disciplines but want to take a step further by studying the possible joint challenges of SSH and STEM impact assessments.

Question of the **Arts**?

Characteristics of knowledge: applied & basic research

The Impact agenda is built on the idea of rewarding research on applied orientation. How to recognize the potential of curiosity driven research leading to impact jackpots in the longer run?

Evaluation model: summative & formative

What is the core aim of the assessment?

To what extent the results of assessments need to be comparable?

Characteristics of impact: extraordinary & everyday impacts

Does the impact case study methodology leave room for reporting indirect, diffuse or modest everyday impacts? Impacts resulting from several researchers work (**incrementalism**)?

Focus: effects and changes vs. engagement activities

What constitutes impact?

Acknowledging the hint of arbitrariness involved in impact processes: impact is not only about researchers and the quality of research, but also about the changes in stakeholders' agenda.

Stakeholders: industry & policymakers vs. general public

How to demonstrate changes in increasing understanding on different social phenomena? (**challenge of attribution**)

The role “sources to corroborate impact” / evidence plays in the impact agenda

“Storytellers”: professionals vs. researchers

Who gets the power of defining impact? **Dilemma of fabrication:** How to avoid situation where impact assessment practices move further away from a realm of research? How to make sure that assessments encourage research in its own terms?

Aims of the Impact Assessment project 2023 (TSV)

The state of the art and needs of impact evaluation: 2 surveys

- Survey for the researchers: Discipline-specific understanding of impact creation, mechanisms, challenges of demonstrating impacts, conditions for impact creation provided by universities.
- Survey for the universities and other research organisations: state of the art and needs concerning development of impact assessment

2. International and national best practices

- University level evaluations: The UK, The Netherlands, Poland
- Discipline-based impact evaluations: Norway
- Project level evaluations: Strategic Research Council, Finland

3. Developing evaluation

- Developing qualitative evaluation in the line with the aims of CoARA.
- Developing (quantitative) indicators. This links also to developing databases.
- Considering the options of linking impact evaluation to the other goals of higher education and science policies, such as the goals of sustainable development

4. Development plan for 2024-2025 (follow-up project)

- Development plan for national recommendations for impact evaluation

Literature

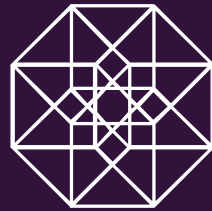
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Thank you!