

Proposal for Presentation at the 19th Nordic Workshop on Bibliometrics and Research Policy in Reykjavik

Title: „Validity Issues of Bibliometric and Performance Indicators: What we can Learn from the Case of the Humanities“

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Abstract:

In order to assure or enhance research quality, many universities implemented assessment procedures using bibliometric and other performance indicators. These procedures are mostly developed in a data-driven manner and not much is known about what the indicators in these procedures actually measure. However, if we want to measure, we should know what we want to measure and we should also know what the indicators are supposed to measure. This very basic understanding of validity lies at the heart of measurement. We use the conceptualization of research quality from the perspective of humanities scholars as an example and propose a measurement approach that links indicators to quality criteria. We provide evidence that there are several validity issues of research indicators as they do not measure what is deemed research quality. Hence, it is no surprise that humanities scholars – and also scholars from other disciplines – are against quantitative research assessment. However, bibliometric or research indicators as such are not necessarily invalid. In order for bibliometric and research indicators to be powerful instruments for research management, validity issues must be addressed and resolved. We propose a method for this aim that takes into account other disciplines and other stakeholders of science policy.