

The effect of bibliometric performance systems on Danish economists and political scientists

Background

- The tickle down effect: macro-level indicators are frequently used at the individual level
- Bibliometric performance systems influence how researchers publish, especially in the social sciences and the humanities ➡ fewer monographs and anthologies
- Performance indicators changes how researchers think about and plan research
- Bibliometric performance systems pressures national/non-English research

Purpose

- The study explores
 - how bibliometric performance systems and indicators influence Danish economists and political scientists
 - how researchers adapt and shape their research and publishing behaviour according to these performance systems and indicators.



Method

Qualitative in-depth interview focusing on:

- Research collaboration
- Co-authorship
- Publishing
- Reward system
- Career
- Publish-or-perish

Duration: 1-3.5 hours

Interviewees: 3-50 years of research experience

Generation reference	Professional rank	Age	Political scientist	Economists
Junior researchers	PhD students /postdoc	30-35	PD_01	PD_03
			PD_02	PD_04
			PD_07	PD_05
Senior researchers	Associate professor	30-59	AP_01	AP_02
			AP_03	AP_05
			AP_04	
	Professor	49-69	PR_03	PR_01
	Senior professor	70-79	PE_02	PE_01

Recruitment norms and official publishing ranking lists:

Economic:

The economics department applies the Academic Journal Guide (CABS, 2015) with five levels, where 4* is the best level. This journal list is a part of their recruitment and promotion policy, which states that in tenure decisions the main research assessment should be based on articles published in journals at level 3, 4 or 4*, while assessments of candidate for full professorships are primarily based on articles published in level 4 or 4*.

Political Science:

The political science department uses the Danish Bibliometric Research Indicator (BFI) publishing list, which currently has two levels, where level 2 is the best. The department has added a third level, which consists of 32 journals. If the researchers publish in one of these journals, they receive a personal financial bonus. The selection of important or central journals are even narrower in the recruitments postings for tenure positions, where articles published in one of five journals would carry more weight.

"Yes, there is a crazy amount of focus on [level 2], and even more on the in-house level 3 (...), which we definitely aim for. For example, [my colleague] and I have... we could have submitted (the article) somewhere else, but it was very intentional that we (chose this journal) (...), since it [fits the subject of the article]. Thus, we left out other (journals) of the consideration, which have a similar impact factor but of some mysterious reason are not level 2" (political scientist, PD_07).

"I think articles have a greater value than books, especially if you have to (advance), since it is much more difficult to get books published" (political scientist, PR_03)

"Back in the day, when I started at the department (...), people went to a yearly [workshop] (...), but they never presented or published any papers... it was a sad affair. Then we were a few people who started sending in papers and got them accepted, and then afterwards... we turned the papers into articles" (...).

The people in the old gang were friendly and nice and skilled and talented, but they never had to publish articles. They did not need it... to pursue a career. So, something has changed. Today we would never imagine having a professor without any scientific production" (economist, PE_01).

"Well, books count very little here (...), but of course, they also count, but they do not count as much (...) Well, I actually do not know, it is hard.... But books do not count as much as articles, they are discontinued" (economist, PE_01)

"The articles are definitely the main focus in my field. It matters... a little... to publish an international book, but focus is mainly on the articles. I also do some Danish communication. However, if you look at what you are evaluated on then it is a hopeless deed" (political scientist, AP_04).



"[The departmental official ranking lists] does not really match me or my profile" (political scientist, AP_03).

Conclusion:

The preliminary findings demonstrate how researchers adapt their research and publishing behaviour according to how they get the best "score" in the performance systems. The systems diminish the focus on national research, since research publish in the local language typically gets less "points" in the performance system, than research publish internationally. Overall, these systems creates a competitive environment with greater focus on publishing instead of on the research it-self.

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