List of

Projects on SSH Scholars’ Notions of Research Quality in Participating Countries

ENRESSH Report

Michael Ochsner, FORS, Lausanne and ETH Zurich, Switzerland
Ioana Galleron, Paris III University, France
Arleen Ionescu, University of Ploiesti, Romania


WG to which the report/deliverable is related: WG 1
Grant period to which the report/deliverable is related: Grant Period 1

Version 1.4, July 2017
Executive summary

What does research quality mean? This question becomes important when research is evaluated but remains largely unanswered, especially regarding the social sciences and humanities (SSH). This report gives an overview on empirical projects that explicitly investigate the notions of research quality of SSH scholars. Such projects are scarce and often not much known, yet of high importance as only with knowledge on what is to be measured, we can find adequate indicators for research quality.

The report concludes that there is a growing interest in studies on SSH research evaluation and its methods and thus an increasing number of projects on such topics. However, the question what exactly research quality means in the eyes of the scholars regarding their every-day practice remains under-researched even though it stands at the centre of research evaluation. Therefore, Work Group 1 should fill this gap of knowledge.

Keywords

Perceptions of Quality, SSH Scholars, Bottom-up, Project Overview
Introduction

In the last decades, a shift in university management practices towards accountability and new public management all over Europe came along with the implementation of research assessment and evaluation procedures. While at first, research assessment concerned mainly the natural and life sciences due to the costly character of research in these disciplines (see e.g. Krull & Tepperwien, 2016), lately the social sciences and humanities (SSH) are also subject to systematic evaluation. The methods commonly used for research evaluation, i.e. bibliometric approaches, relate to the practices in the natural and life sciences. However, such bibliometric approaches to research evaluation lead to unsatisfactory results when applied to social sciences and humanities as bibliometric research shows (see, e.g., Hicks, 2004; Glänzel, 1996; Larivière, Gingras & Archambault, 2004; Nederhof, 2006; Nederhof, Zwaan, de Bruin & Dekker, 1989). This is due to several reasons, such as different and more diverse publication practices (Hicks, 2004; Mutz, 2013), different research habits and practices, a regional or local orientation and the use of diverse languages (for an overview, see Nederhof, 2006). But most importantly, there has been more than a hundred years of scientific inquiry on research practices in the natural and life sciences while knowledge on how research is conducted in the SSH is scarce (see, e.g., Hemlin, 1996). Especially what characterizes good SSH research remains largely unknown terrain, even in research exercises that do not resort to bibliometric approaches. What does research quality really mean? This question becomes highly important when research is evaluated but remains largely unanswered (see e.g. Brooks, 2005), especially regarding the social sciences and humanities.

While many stakeholders are involved in research evaluation, the notions of research quality of the SSH scholars themselves are of pivotal importance if the quality of SSH research is to be judged. However, there is a lack of research on quality perceptions of SSH scholars. Given the inadequacy of current methods for research evaluation regarding SSH disciplines, there were a couple of initiatives in Europe focusing on research evaluation practices in the SSH and how to adapt the methods for a more adequate use in the evaluation of SSH research (for an overview, see Ochsner, Hug & Galleron 2017). Many of them investigate how to adapt bibliometric measures to fit to the SSH (e.g. Gimenez-Toledo et al., 2016; Hammarfeldt, 2012; Lauer, 2016; Sivertsen, 2016), others focus on how to improve evaluation of SSH grant proposals (see, e.g., König, 2016; Krull & Tepperwien, 2016).

In this report, we focus on empirical projects that explicitly investigate the notions of research quality of SSH scholars. Such projects are scarce and often not much known, yet of high importance as only with knowledge on what is to be measured, we can find adequate indicators for research quality.

This report serves as a starting point for the work in Work Group 1 “Conceptual Frameworks for Research Evaluation Practices in the SSH” of the COST-Action 15137 “European Network for Research Evaluation in the SSH (ENRESSH)”. It is based on a list assembled in April-June 2016 and was continuously expanded as new countries joined the Action. It covers recent projects that started between 2000 and
2015, the fifteen years before the Action started. It will not only provide literature on this central topic of the Work Group but also draw a map on what is done in this regard in the different participating countries. This will help to widen the network as much as to bring together the knowledge gained through these projects. Therefore, this report is not a comprehensive bibliography of research on SSH scholars’ notions of research quality, but the list will be continued during the lifetime of the Action and will feed into the final reports and bibliography.

Because projects on SSH scholars’ notions of quality are very scarce, we also included projects that take a bottom-up approach to describe dissemination practices in the SSH or propose alternative evaluation procedures. The report is structured as follows: The first part will list projects on quality perceptions of SSH scholars in participating countries sorted by country. The second part will add selected projects on dissemination practices or alternative evaluation procedures. The third part concludes drawing a map of research on notions of research quality in Europe.

References


PART I: List of Projects on SSH Scholars’ Notions of Quality in Europe

Belgium

La notion de « qualité » des publications dans l’évaluation de la recherche et des chercheurs en SHS.

Marc Vanholsbeeck, Université Libre de Bruxelles
Period: 2008-2016
The project was the PhD project of Marc Vanholsbeeck.

Publications:

Websites, Further information:

Croatia

Research activity, collaboration and orientation in social science in Croatia and other post-socialist European countries

Institute of Social Research, Institute of Economics, Faculties of Law, Psychology, Political Science and Education of the University of Zagreb
Period: 2015-2019
The project studies many aspects of SSH research production using quantitative (bibliometrics, survey, social network analysis) and qualitative (interviews) methods. To provide a comprehensive comparative description of the state of social sciences in Croatia, the project includes 10 EU post-socialist countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia) as well as ex-Yugoslav countries (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia).

Publication(s):


Websites, Further information:
http://www.idi.hr/racoss/index_en.html

Germany

European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI)

Ingrid Gogolin, University of Hamburg

The mission of this project was to develop new approaches for the evaluation of quality of educational research publications. EERQI aimed to develop a prototype framework for the intelligent combination of new indicators and methodologies for the assessment of quality in educational research texts, make this framework operational on a multilingual basis (starting with English, German, French and Swedish), test the transferability of the EERQI framework to another field of social sciences and the humanities.

Publications:


Italy

OLTRE - The evaluation of legal research monographs

Ginevra Peruginelli, Sebastiano Faro & Tommaso Agnoloni, Institute of Theory and Techniques of Legal Information of the National Research Council

Period: 2015-2016

The project is focused on assessment of legal studies with a particular attention to the role of research monographs. The aim is to describe the state of the art in Italy in this discipline and to determine the variables and indicators that have greater consensus among Italian researchers. To achieve this goal, a national survey (all Italian legal scholars) and a comparative analysis of different countries have been carried out.

Websites, Further information:
http://www.ittig.cnr.it/progetti/valutazione-monografia-giuridica/
ROBINA - The Role of Book in non-bibliometric areas

Tiziana Lipiello, Antonella Basso, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia, Italy
Ioana Galleron, Geoffrey Williams, Université de Bretagne-Sud, France

Period: 2015-2017
The definition of book/monograph in non-bibliometric areas, based on perception of scholars in Italy and in Europe and on Quantitative (databases, statistical analyses) and on Qualitative (Questionnaires, Focus Groups, Computer assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software). The impact of research evaluation protocols on publication habits, and more precisely on book publishing.

Publication:

France

The social sciences and humanities in the face of standards for quality research A study of academic judgment in a French evaluation agency

Clémentine Gozlan, Science Po, Paris, France

Period: 2012-2016
Based on qualitative and quantitative data, this project analysed how evaluators in the disciplines of literature and geography mobilise a set of heterogeneous resources to build their judgment in evaluations of a national evaluation agency, the AERES, and how they enforce their disciplinary standards within a very constrained evaluation framework. Analysing the mechanisms by which the members of two disciplines tend to invalidate the Agency's norms or conform to its value scale, this paper reflects on the way academics (re)define the legitimacy of their professional practices when the rules of scientific consecration are subject to normalization.

Publications:

Websites, Further information:
http://www.cso.edu/cv_equipe.asp?per_id=187

QualiSHS – Critères de qualité de la recherché dans les sciences humaines et sociales : perceptions et pratiques

A project supported by the "Réseau national des MSH". Coordinating MSH: MSHB; participating MSH: ISH Lyon and MSH Alpes. Research units involved: LICORN, PACTE, LAHRA, UPEC. PI: Ioana Galleron, Geoffrey Williams, LICORN, France

Period: 2013-2014
The project aimed at:
(1) collect perceptions and identify concepts of quality about SSH research in the SSH community; (2) identify disciplinary differences between SSH disciplines with regards to the conceptualisation of research quality; (3) understanding how
research quality concepts are generated; (4) explore the relationship between concepts of quality and evaluation practices in France.
Considering the timeframe and the awarded financing, the project concentrated particularly on the fourth goal. It gathered and analysed evaluation reports produced by AERES about SSH research units. These reports show that the main criteria for quality during the evaluation exercise taken into consideration was the „coherence“ of the considered research units; there was no attempt to qualify what a „publication de qualité“ means, even if the expression came out often in the reports. 

**Publications:**
Short description of the project in:

**Spain**

**Opinion of researchers in Social Sciences and Humanities about the evaluation systems. Qualitative approach**
Elea Giménez-Toledo, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)
Period: 2011-2013
Content analysis of answers from a survey where researchers gave their opinion on different aspects of evaluation processes

**Publications:**

**Websites, Further information:**

**Switzerland**

**Developing and Testing Research Quality Criteria in the Humanities, with an emphasis on Literature Studies and Art History**
Michael Ochsner, Sven E. Hug & Hans-Dieter Daniel, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich
Period: 2009-2014
The project served to develop a framework for quality criteria for SSH research based on scholars' notions of quality. The output was a catalogue of generic discipline-specific quality criteria for three humanities disciplines, including a collection of indicators for research performance linked to quality criteria.

**Publications:**


Websites, Further information:

Application of Bottom-Up-Criteria in the Assessment of Grant Proposals of Junior Researchers

Sven E. Hug, Michael Ochsner & Hans-Dieter Daniel, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich

Period: 2015-2017

Based on quality perceptions of all scholars in the humanities disciplines in Switzerland, an evaluation sheet for peer review for grant applications is created.

Websites, Further information:

Assessment of legal research in Switzerland

Andreas Lienhard, Fabian Amschwand & Eva Herrmann, University of Bern
Thierry Tanquerel, Alexander Flückiger & Karin Byland, University of Geneva

Period: 2013-2016

This project is exploring the field of assessment of legal research in Switzerland. The exploratory study is based on an analysis of legal norms, a survey amongst the relevant stakeholders (legal scholars, editors of law journals, law school deans, lawyers) in Switzerland and an international comparative analysis. Seven "situations" in which legal research is being assessed were defined. Within this framework, methods and criteria for assessing the quality of legal research were identified and analysed.

Publications:


Websites, Further information:
http://www.rechtswissenschaft.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/qualitaetssicherung/qualitaet_in_der_forschung/index_ger.html
http://www.unige.ch/droit/cetel/recherches/evalRecherche.html

Resource-oriented instrument for the visualisation of humanities research on the example of theology

Wolfgang Schatz, Silvia Martens, University of Luzern
Désirée Donzallaz, University of Fribourg

Period: 2013-2016

The project’s goal is the adequate visualisation and positioning of theological research as an example for a humanities discipline. Firstly, quality criteria and indicators are developed in close collaboration with the scholars in the field. Secondly, a technical instrument will be developed in the form of a web-based software.

Websites, Further information:

Quality of research

Judith Czellar, Jaques Lanarès, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Period: 2009-2013

Traditional bibliometric indicators are considered too limited for some research areas such as humanities and social sciences because they mostly reveal a specific aspect of academic performance (quantity of publications) and tend to ignore a significant part of research production. The project investigated the links between practices for assessing academic performance, bibliometric methods’ use and underlying values of research quality within the scientific community of University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Publications:
United Kingdom

**Expressions of Excellence in applied and practice-based research**

Critics of education research in the recent years have pointed the finger at what they saw as its low quality, impact, and ‘value for money’. In the context of the Research Assessment Exercise, particular concerns have been raised about applied and practice-based educational research and how best to assess its quality. argues that quality in applied and practice-based research cannot be reduced to narrow definitions of ‘scientificity’, ‘impact’ or economic efficiency. It proposes an account of quality in applied and practice-based educational research which encompasses methodological and theoretical solidity, use and impact, but also dialogue, deliberation, participation, ethics and personal growth.

**Publications:**


**Definitions of Originality, Significance and Rigour**

The various panels and sub-panels convened to undertake the evaluations in the 2008 United Kingdom Research Assessment Exercise were asked to provide their own interpretations of both the criteria and the categories. The paper analyses those, and finds that they are no less subjective than the generic descriptions provided by the central organisation.

**Publications:**
PART II: Projects and publications on SSH dissemination practices and SSH-specific evaluation (selection)

Austria

Specifities of law studies and their effect on research assessment

Belgium

A critical discussion of the tendency to align the (performance based) funding of the humanities on the bibliometrics in usage in the STEM.

Centre for Research & Development Monitoring (Expertisecentrum Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsmonitoring, ECOOM)

Website:
https://www.ecoom.be/nl/research/publications/Sociale%20en%20Humane%20wetenschappen

Colloques de l’Institut lacchos
"Intellection – 14"
"Intellection – 20"
Penser la Science – Séminaires Ilya Prigogine
*L'évaluation de la recherche en question(s)*. Bruxelles: Académie royale de 
Belgique.

Czech Republic

Ethnography of University Departments: Mass higher education in institutional settings
geopolitics of research assessment. *Science, Technology & Human Values, 37*(2), 
286-311.

Šima, K. (2015). Evidence in Czech research evaluation policy: measured and 

The changing structure of academic time

Denmark/the Netherlands

Metric Assessment of Monographs
Zuccala, A. A., & Cornacchia, R. (2016) Data matching, integration, and interoper-
ability for a metric assessment of monographs. *Scientometrics, 108*(1), 465–
484.

Book Reviews in Evaluations
evaluations. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and 

Estonia

Bibliometric analysis of Estonian folklore research
Lauk, K. (2016). Bibliometric analysis of Estonian folklore research and folklore: 
Electronic Journal of Folklore. TRAMES, 20(70/65), 1, 3-16.

Bibliometric analysis of Estonian historical sciences
77–81.10.3152/147154499781777531.

Finland

Disciplinary differences in publishing practices
France

IMPRESSHS – Impacts de la recherche dans les SHS : études de case en Bretagne

Germany

Research Rating by the Wissenschaftsrat

Italy

CAVIB Scholar: Coverage, reliability and validity of Google Scholar bibliometric indicators. The case of social sciences in Italy

Assessment of the presence and availability of monographs using online library catalogues.

EVA: Extraction, validation and analysis of Google Scholar data for non-bibliometric scientific sectors
Israel

**Funding research in the humanities: challenges and opportunities roundtable**

*Website:*

Lithuania

**Database Lituanistika**

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

**Publication and Research Conditions in the Social Sciences**

The Netherlands

**Judging Research on its Merits**

**Quality Indicators for Research in the Humanities**

Norway

**SSH Publication Patterns**
Poland

Contemporary Polish Humanities in the face of the Challenges of Scientometric


Portugal

SSH scholars’ perceptions on quality assessment

A bottom-up approach to building a publication indicator for the SSH

Romania

SSH scholars’ perception on quality research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and quality of higher education in Romania


Slovenia

Social mechanisms for establishing and maintaining of scientific collaboration

Cooperation networks in Slovene science


Spain

Assessment of scientific publishers and books on Humanities and Social Sciences: qualitative and quantitative indicators

Citations in Spanish journals of Modern and Contemporary History published between 2000 and 2005: methods of extraction, normalization and diffusion; Bibliometric indices; Social and thematic networks. [Las citas en revistas españolas de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea publicadas entre 2000 y 2005: métodos de extracción, homologación y difusión; índices bibliométricos; redes sociales y temáticas]

Creating and studies of the CAAC (collections and archives of contemporary art) Cuenca as a methodological model for research excellence in Fine Arts

Development of an Observatory of research activity of Spanish universities in the period 2002-2009, based on R & D & i indicators. [Desarrollo de un observatorio de la actividad investigadora de las universidades españolas en el período 2002-2009, a partir de indicadores de I+D+i]
In Recs: Impact indexes for Spanish journals in Social Sciences and Humanities 2007-2014, EC³ Evaluación de la Ciencia y de la Comunicación Científica
Website: http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/

Knowledge organization systems in research evaluation. Implications for Social Sciences and Humanities

Multidimensional analysis of specialization in publications of Social Sciences and Humanities

RESH/DICE: Public information system providing quantitative and qualitative indicators for Spanish journals in Social Sciences and Humanities

Scholarly Publishers Indicators

Spanish scientific-technical ebook from the perspective of four relevant agents in the book publishing sector
Spain/the Netherlands

**Library catalog analysis as a tool in studies of social sciences and humanities**

Switzerland

**Measuring Research Output in Communication Sciences and Educational Sciences between international benchmarks, cultural differences and social relevance**

**Décrire et mesurer la fécondité de la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales à partir d'études de cas**

**Scientometrics 2.0: Wissenschaftliche Reputation und Vernetzung**

Switzerland/the Netherlands

**Assessment of legal research in a European comparative perspective**
*Website:*
http://www.rechtswissenschaft.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/qualitaetssicherung/qualitaet_in_der_forschung/index_ger.html
PART III: Conclusion

There is not a lot of current research on the SSH scholars’ notions of research quality in participating countries (see figure 1). There is a focus on Western European countries, in which projects on the investigation of scholars’ notions of quality were funded: Spain, France, UK, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy build a block of neighbouring countries with Croatia almost sharing a border with this block.

Collecting the projects, we found that there is a growing interest in studies on SSH research evaluation and its methods and thus an increasing number of projects on such topics. However, the question what exactly research quality means in the eyes of the scholars regarding their every-day practice remains under-researched even though it stands at the centre of research evaluation. Therefore, Work Group 1 should fill this gap of knowledge and focus on this important topic, investigating notions of research quality of SSH scholars in Europe, thus helping to increase the validity of research evaluations.

Regarding the fact that there are several projects in many European countries on how SSH research is disseminated, on how SSH research is evaluated and on research practices in general from a descriptive point of view, this report will be expanded during the life-time of the Action by including a wider range of projects that relate to research quality in the SSH and its relation to research evaluation.

![Figure 1: Projects on SSH scholars’ notions of quality in Europe.](image)
Appendix: Projects on SSH scholars’ notions of quality that started in 2016 after the launch of ENRESSH

Czech Republic

In search of lost time: Temporal pressure and its epistemic implications in contemporary Czech academia

Filip Vostal
Period: 2016-2018
There is an apparently pervasive sense in the contemporary scientific world that things are speeding-up incessantly. Scientists report chronic busyness and insufficient time for research, they need to publish more papers, meet deadlines and press ahead. Engaging with sociological analyses of time this project scrutinizes the texture and implications of such experience. It will do so by examining causes and manifestation of temporal pressure in the lives of early career scientists in the Czech Republic. It aims to explore the personal, and particularly, epistemic implications of changing academic temporalities as they relate to broader shifts in contemporary organization and management of science. The ethnographic investigation will focus on the ways in which temporal pressure affects knowledge production within selected disciplines (physics and economics) of Czech scientific institutions. Overall, the project aims to tackle the question of whether scientific hyper-productivity and its associated temporal demands have progressive conservative consequences for science.

Norway

Centre for Research Quality and Policy Impact Studies (R-QUEST) at NIFU

NIFU, Oslo with six other institutions from Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and UK
Period: 2016-2024
R-QUEST constitutes an 8-year commitment to explore the nature and mechanisms of research quality – funded by the RCN FORINNPOL initiative. The centre will address three closely related questions:
What is research quality? How are notions of research quality negotiated, established and practiced, and what are the mechanisms through which these notions affect policy?
What are the drivers of high quality research, and what is the role of policy in developing outstanding research?
What are the effects of high quality research on the society?

Websites, Further information:
http://www.r-quest.no/research-partners/