External Control and Collegial Feedback: Regarding a Constitutive Tension in Institutional Research Evaluation

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Abstract

Evaluations are typically analyzed as external control mechanisms. In the case of science assessment, it is often left aside that colleagues operate these evaluations. Therefore, they are structured as self-control with two functions: next to ensuring control they provide evaluatees with feedback to facilitate future improvements for individual research and organizational development. These two functions produce a constitutive tension hardly to be brought into a stable equilibrium. We use the example of institutional research evaluations to illustrate how evaluators attempt to provide, and evaluatees hope to gain collegial feedback even within an external control context. The argument is backed up by examining three differently structured evaluation procedures, and accordingly, different degrees of tension: those of the Leibniz Association in Germany, the Standard Evaluation Protocol in the Netherlands and the Research Assessment Exercise in the United Kingdom.

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