Research management: Doing it right

Introduction

Significant sums of money are invested in development research. The aim is to improve living standards in poorer countries by providing answers to common societal problems. To do this, research needs to be managed efficiently and effectively. This implies that researchers should have excellent managerial skills in addition to being highly skilled in their respective disciplines.

The purpose

For research to be effective and deliver optimal returns, it needs to be managed in accordance with sound management principles. However, many researchers have no specific training in research management. This fact sheet provides a synthesis of the study that aims to uncover the means by which capacity development in research management is being delivered and to make recommendations for how it might be improved. It provides an overview of capacity development actions to be undertaken by EU Member States and Associated States within their research programmes to improve research management, thereby improving the overall quality of research.

Headline facts

- Research management as a concept has no clear definition. Many people have different interpretations of what it entails. Unsurprisingly, there is very little published material on the topic of research management.

- Regarding capacity development, there is no specific training programme aimed at producing research managers. People who manage research both at programme and project level learn the management aspects on the job.

- Within research projects, there is a large amount of capacity development aimed at improving scientific research capacity. Most of this is delivered through provision of PhD and to a lesser extent, MSc fellowships.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations aimed at different research actors were made. Examples of these include:

For the funding agency:

- Prepare guidelines for research managers that provide a framework for good practice.

- Routinely provide guidance about what is an acceptable level of capacity development activity within a project/programme.

- Make arrangements to get research used by practitioners and policy makers.

At project level:

- Every research project should have guidelines in place for assuring quality.

- The research consortium should include, wherever possible, a variety of stakeholders including government officials.

At the individual researcher level:

- Every project/programme should have a capacity development thread integrated into it.

- Research managers should devise a system to build research management capability within the younger members of the research team.

- Training courses should be provided in a variety of skills including generic skills and where possible, be linked directly to research projects.

Further information

This is one of a series of SPLASH fact sheets available on the SPLASH website **www.splash-era.net**

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