

Research assessment within a diamond OA framework



Perspective on assessment and how it can contribute to bolstering diamond

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Introduction

- Research assessment reform key to shaping the research landscape
- Consensus that research evaluation needs to be reformed
- Consensus that the research enterprise manage tension while
 - maintaining research quality
 - upholding research integrity
 - being inclusive and diverse and
 - safeguarding both basic and applied research
- Narrow and simplistic set of evaluative metrics not satisfactory
- Distorted incentives of achievements

Brief overview of Research Assessment in South Africa

- 26 public universities
- Primary contributors to the nation's research output
- Accounting for less than 1% of global research output
- Government plays central role in funding research
- Primarily by subsidizing publications in journals and conference proceedings
- Beyond direct subsidies, the National Research Foundation tasked with
 - *“promoting and supporting research through funding, human resource development and the provision of necessary research facilities”*
- To further enhance research quality, the NRF employs a rating system that categorises researchers based on the impact of their recent work

Brief overview of Research Assessment in South Africa

There seems to be a disconnect between aligning research assessment practices with open access priorities and policies

Brief overview of Open Access/Diamond Open Access in South Africa

- Growth of Open Access in South Africa in recent years
- Remains obstacles
- Range of open science initiatives over the last 20 years

2009 South Africa joined the SciELO program

2012 The Berlin 10 Open Access Conference is held by Stellenbosch University. The conference focused on removing financial barriers that limit access

2015 The NRF mandated that authors receiving funding should deposit their work in an institutional repository with an embargo period of 12 months

2017 The African Open Science Platform is launched

2019 The Dept of Science and Innovation publish a White Paper that places science, technology, and innovation at the top of the country's agenda. Open Access represents a small but very important part of this.

2024 Open Science in the South 2024 is co-hosted by the NRF in Cape Town

2024 2nd Global Summit on DOA hosted at UCT

Rebutting the misperceptions of prestige or lack thereof

- Persistent perception amongst researchers that Open Access journals are inferior
- Especially pronounced with DOA, which often lack inclusion in mainstream indices
- Research-performing and funding organisations continue to rely heavily on metrics
- Reliance on JIF or Wos indexing often favours subscription-based journals
- Must develop alternative approaches to research evaluation that go beyond Impact Factors
- Recognising the value of DOA in research assessments lies in addressing and challenging this perception of inferiority

Challenges

- Benefits of diamond not crystal clear
- Neither gold nor hybrid has broken the dominance of the major commercial publishers
- Lost faith in the so-called transformative agreements
- Diamond OA now seen as the next big thing
- Misconceptions needs to be addressed:
 - understanding of publishing model's costs
 - assessment of sustainability business model
- Equity remains vague
- The risk is another cycle of high hope

Strategies for recognizing DOA in research evaluation

- Relationship between OA and assessment is complicated
- Integration into research policies of funding agencies, governments, and institutions
- Promotion of quality in Diamond OA
- Inclusion in university incentive and reward structures
- Promote and monitor the progress of OA/DOA policies and quality standards
- Including OA publications in the assessment and excluding closed publications
- Follow international responsible assessment guidelines, e.g. DOAR declaration
- OA should be part of research assessment
- Researchers should also be rewarded for open science practices

Conclusion

- Recognise that both peer review and OA contribute to the quality of research
- Incentives should be aimed at encouraging researchers and institutions to publish in open access journals and books
- Both qualitative and quantitative assessments are important to ensure diversity of research output
- Maximizing inclusion and diversity
- Optimizing research as a public good
- Responding to a fast-changing world, including the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning

Thank you
Enkosi
Dankie