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The many faces of research profiling : academic leaders' conceptions of research steering / Maria Pietilä

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Abstract

The article examines academic leaders' conceptions of research profiling. Global science policies, including the Finnish governmental policy, promote the identification of areas of research excellence and recommend resource concentration on them. However, as active agents, leaders may have competing, even conflicting views on the pros and cons of the institutional norm of selective research excellence and research steering. Drawing on the ideas of micro-level institutionalism, this study seeks answers to the following questions: What kinds of conceptions of research profiling do the academic leaders have? How are these connected to the goals that the leaders are trying to achieve with profiling? The data comprised 15 interviews with leaders at different organisational levels in two Finnish research universities. Two general conceptions of research profiling were identified: profiling as an instrument of strategic management and profiling as symbolic management. The conceptions were connected to various rationales, such as strengthening research and communicating to the external environment. By emphasising the variability and incoherence of leaders' conceptions and the

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underlying rationalities, the study contributes to understanding how academic leaders make sense of the complex issues they face and how they cope with various demands. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)