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Author

TUIRE, Palonen

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Exploring invisible scientific communities : studying network relations within an educational research community ; a Finnish case

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Abstract

The present study focused on making invisible colleges of educational science in Finland visible through analysing networking relations between scientific research communities. The study aims at developing methods to analyse the intensity and focus of social collaboration between educational research groups in order to understand internal relations of scientific discipline and support scientific evaluation with information about participation and informal communication beyond quantity of published products. Informal and formal networking connections of the professors of education in Finland were examined by using different methods of social network analysis. The results of the study revealed that the informal information flow between professors of education concentrated within universities whereas more formal collaborative relations (e.g. citations) cross boundaries between universities. The educational research was structured as three distinct invisible colleges (learning researchers, research on teaching, and the sociology of education). Furthermore, the professors differed considerably in terms of informal collaborative relations and citations. Only a few central

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actors dominated educational research in receiving the majority of the citations, whereas some professors appeared to be completely isolated from other educational research network. We conclude that social network analysis opens up a new promising perspective, which can be used in analysing and assessing different branches of science. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Tuire, Palonen, E-mail: tuire.palonen@utu.fi