

Title: Reflections on the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), research methodology, and the case for reform

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Summary:

In this paper I, first, provide an empirical case study of preparations for the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as a lived experience from the viewpoint of a researcher in Human Resource Management (HRM) at a quality management research department. Second, I surface some issues involved in research methodology that arise from these preparations, namely on the nature of reality (what is seen as 'quality' research in HRM), relationships between the knower and known (the role of personal bias and gatekeepers in the process), and the role of values (as a determinant of both research quality and personal bias). Lastly, I make a case for reform of how research quality is both defined and assessed by stakeholders in HRM in future (in terms of validity and reliability). This includes the need for greater transparency, clear criteria of assessment, and the inclusion of all people management stakeholders in the assessment process. (150 words)

How I plan to develop the paper prior to discussion/presentation at the conference:

1. I will provide more data to support the thesis advanced above through a case study.
2. I will expand the paper to discuss the role of academic journals in HRM in the research assessment process.
3. I will use Lukes' (2005) notion of agenda setting in his third dimension of power to expand on the points made above. These include attempts made at domination by certain groups in the process; the elaboration of non-events which appear significant; a supposed consensus of quality that is imposed on researchers; and issues of seemingly submissive and subordinate identities on the part of researchers themselves.