Developing Open RDI and Education

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According to recent evaluations, Open Science has reached mixed maturity levels in the universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland. As a novel development in the Finnish context, Open Education is also defined as part of openness in the higher education sector. A nationwide development project called “Open Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) work, open learning, and the innovation ecosystem of Finnish UAS” is currently in place to support Open RDI (Research, Development and Innovation) and Open Education.

Future actions to promote Open RDI and Education will be defined based on a survey and interviews carried out in the Finnish UAS sector during 2018 and 2019. The aim of both studies was to define the need for services that support Open RDI and Open Education, and to identify knowledge gaps within the selected universities.

Two methods were selected for data collection: 1) a web-based survey among all the Finnish universities of applied sciences and 2) qualitative interviews in the selected universities. The survey was designed according to the general principles of the development project, while the interview themes were defined via a co-creation process among topic specialists with reference to the previous survey results.

Survey study

The survey was targeted at UAS staff working with RDI activities, such as lecturers, managers and RDI experts. A total of 275 responses were received from 21 universities. Of the respondents, 62% used most of their working time in RDI tasks. The respondents represented quite equally all the disciplines in the Finnish UAS sector. Over half of the respondents (68%) estimated that they know what Open RDI activities mean. However, comprehension of concepts such as data management plan, as well as research infrastructure user policies, was remarkable lower (some 30% of the respondents agreed of slightly agreed with the statement that they comprehend the respective concepts). The results support understanding of the current state-of-art in expertise, practices and opinions of Open RDI among the experts in the Finnish universities of applied sciences.

Interview study

The interview data was collected from 9 UAS. 77 respondents were interviewed either individually or in focus groups. The respondents were university lecturers (n=23), researchers and project workers (n=31) and other

staff members (n=23). The results of the interviews show that there are several knowledge gaps related to how to handle data safely, where to store data, how to anonymise data, how to use licensing, and where to find open data and open education material, among other issues. The concept of a data management plan was familiar to one third and ethical review processes to 40 % of respondents. Open science and open data was discussed throughout the interviews and the results showed that there was a little or no information on how openness affects collecting, storing and sharing data.

Helpdesk model

The results of the data analysis, combining survey and interview data, will be used to set up a new national Helpdesk model. This Helpdesk model is a service network, which will offer expert help and instructions for staff and students by solving judicial, ethical and down-to-earth questions. The service network will continue its operation also after the project as an established practice.

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