



Narratives of *excellence*

as predictors of change in the architecture of research fields


Marija Brajdić Vuković, University of Zagreb



Project APROFRAME, methodology




- University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, HrZZ funded project called „Academic Profession Competence Framework: Between New Requirements and Possibilities” (2014-2017)
- Qualitative sequel of the project – narrative research methodology – life history narrative interviews
- 13 young Croatian academics, average age 30
- Sampled by maximum variation, 5 disciplines (social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, biomedicine and health, technical and biotechnical sciences) and size of academic institution (big and smaller universities)



Conceptual framework and methodology of narrative research

- Research question: ‘How’ young academics experience and perceive adopting of different competencies in the context of their disciplines/ institutions and their private life situations (life histories)
- Conceptual background: disciplinary/institutional cultures (micro, mezzo and macro levels of analysis), Glösers’ (2012) middle range theory – influence of governance on research content
- Narrative key words: *stories, ephiphanies, lived (embodied) experiences, chronology*



Analysis of narrative and narrative analysis, emergent themes related to *excellence*

- Analysis of narratives – initial coding/coding over the data
- Narrative analysis – Mishler-Labov model, within the story emic approach (abstract, orientation, complicating activity-event (epiphany), evaluation, result-outcome, coda)
- Emergent theme, epiphanies within research:

Complicating activity – event in life histories very often directly and indirectly related to the policies of excellence – negative way



1. Ephanies and thick descriptions

- Complicating events/turning points are related mostly to changes in science and higher education policies, in a negative way
- Thick descriptions of own's career decisions are very often related to formal requirements for advancement in the field/institution
- Formal advancement criteria are perceived as „empty numbers”, „quality dumpers”
- Resolving of crises – rational instrumental approach



Specific topic: Centre of scientific excellence

- A young academic spoke about CSE in her narrative
- CSE was mentioned throughout the narrative in different phases of life histories and for different reasons
- Proposal for case studies of how CSE change institutions and disciplines

Croatian Centres of scientific excellence



CENTRES OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Centre of Research Excellence gathers and crosslinks the best scientists in a particular field at a national level that are focused on contemporary research topic. They also have to be internationally competitive and recognizable group in terms of quality and scope of scientific production, capable of effective international cooperation and have to give significant contribution to the development of science, higher education and the economy at the national level.

Research organization or its organizational part or a group of scientists are declared to be a Centre of Research Excellence by Minister of Science, on the proposal of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technology Development, with the consent of the named scientific organization or a group of scientists and based on evaluation made in compliance with the law that regulates quality assurance in science and higher education and procedure which must include international assessment.

The objective of the establishment of Centres of Research Excellence is to identify and evaluate researchers and research that are innovative, have the potential of the discovery, that are possible milestones in research and, at the same time, are internationally relevant in terms of quality and vision and in line with the strategic needs and priorities of the Republic of Croatia and objectives of the Strategy Europe 2020 and Strategy for Education, Science and Technology.

Centres of Research Excellence are established for a period of five years. Status of the Centre may be prolonged for the next five years, based on a new evaluation process.

The following 13 Centres of Research Excellence have been established in the Republic of Croatia in the period 2014-2015:



Conclusions

- Limitations: Croatian, post-socialist academic system in a slow and peculiar transformation
- So called policies of excellence that are based on quantitative results, result in: rational instrumental behaviour of exhausted academics, dramatically change architecture of institutions/disciplinary fields
- Thorough impact analysis needed



Thank you for your
attention!