

## **Quality Podcast 2021: Quality management of research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities**

**Saija Halminen:** Welcome to listen to Laatuporina of the University of Lapland. A podcast series that aims to go through, for example, the university's quality management and auditing for operational development. In this episode, we have the topic of managing the quality of research, development and innovation and artistic activities.

The University of Lapland is university of science and arts. Scientific and artistic research is, in principle, free, but the activities are guided by the university's strategy, strategic choices and enablers. The research profile of the university is crystallized in the transformation of the Arctic and the North. Research, development and innovation activities are carried out through the university's own strategy and profile areas. High quality, reliable and effective research requires responsibility at all stages of research. Responsible research covers and combines the perspectives of good scientific practice, research ethics, responsible science communication and open science. The launch of university-level projects combines research and researcher training in university faculties and departments and enables the emergence of multidisciplinary projects that cross the boundaries of the faculties and units. In addition to university-level projects, the quality of university research is affected by individual research processes and their implementation. Funding services support the preparation and implementation of research and development projects. Research quality management is part of the strategic guidance and development of activities, the aim of which is to serve research work and related postgraduate training, the acquisition of research funding and the publication of research results in national and international forums.

Recently, the university's research portal was published, which contains information on experts, publications, artistic outputs and research and development projects, as well as other activities of researchers, such as working as experts. Artistic activities are linked to the university's overall strategy, which strategic choices are global Arctic responsibility, sustainable tourism, future services and distance management. Artistic activities are closely linked to teaching and research at the university and enable high-quality teaching and the production of new knowledge through art-driven methods. When combined with research activities, artistic activities centrally profiles faculty and university. As guests in the studio we have today Osmo Rätti, Satu Miettinen and Satu Pesola. Would you like to introduce yourselves at first?

**Osmo Rätti:** Yes, I am Osmo Rätti and the current task is Vice-Rector for Research.

**Satu Miettinen:** And I am Satu Miettinen, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, professor of service design, and then I am also an artist.

**Satu Pesola:** Hello everyone. Satu Pesola, Director of Research Support Services. After all, we now have these joint research, development and innovation services providing both houses with these research services.

**Saija Halminen:** Thank you. In this episode, we go again with a question formula. So we have a few questions here. Let's start with Osmo's first question: where you think quality research comes from?

**Osmo Rätti:** This is an interesting question. It immediately occurred to me that this is like you would ask for a recipe on how to make a hit song. And that's a little harder thing to do, I guess no one's ever figured it out before. But if you start thinking about where quality research comes from, the first thing that comes out of that recipe is this enthusiastic researcher. So that's the starting point

where we start. That is not enough, but there must also be a good research idea of what is going to be implemented. Then, if you consider how to go from there, resources are, of course, quite an essential thing here. Perhaps most importantly, I would like to mention time resource. It is perhaps the resource that is most often also completely forgotten to mention. We assume that time is unlimited or it is not realized at all that research takes time.

Well, after we have an enthusiastic researcher, a good research idea and time, then of course you need some kind of research environment. Of course, space and tools are needed as a physical research environment, depending on the field of research which there is, of course. There must be some kind of operating environment. Then, no research is actually only carried out by a researcher, but the researcher needs support very much, and that manifests itself in different services. In other words, services must be available and all service processes should be as clear as possible. And if we now consider what kind of services a researcher needs. During the preparatory phase of the study, research services will then provide help with budget preparation and the content of applications. So it could be this kind of technical writing. Then, of course, IT services are usually needed today. At the very least, we need a computer to do it. The library provides services; literature is needed and then, of course, at some point it will be published. That then has its own patterns. Financial management services are one essential and communication is of the utmost importance that we are now doing here too. Communication is always the most important. Then we are looking at human resources management services, and I am sure that many things have not yet been mentioned on this list, but perhaps this describes how diverse support a researcher needs to carry out his or her work.

Then there is one thing that — and I do not know about its necessity, but certainly facilitates and supports the conduct of research — is this community and communality. So researcher belongs to something and it would be good for the researcher to think that he or she is part of something whole, that is at least a research group. It's a small whole and they probably work very closely throughout all the time. But when you go into slightly bigger entities, there are faculties or units, which is where the researcher belongs to. And then on top of that maybe there's that university as a whole. And then of course, quite a lot of that quality is determined on how the researcher positions himself or herself in this whole. It would be a good if this community, where the researcher belongs to, would be supportive and you would gain recognition from your work.

And then perhaps the next step is to move forward, so what is needed for this high-quality research next is a strategy. In short, the strategy is a common direction, so that the researcher does not have to consider for himself or herself which way to go. And if you think from the university's point of view, let's turn that perspective into a university perspective, then it's good that those researchers are somehow pushing in the same direction and not each one a little here and there. So if there is some kind of common direction, then it will certainly make it easier to do research. And, of course, from the university's point of view, the strategy helps to allocate resources correctly, so that we know where to put those shots. And then there is the observation that this is a circle, a positive spiral. If all this is in order, it will help the researcher to stay enthusiastic about his or her own work and from there comes those good research ideas, and that circle will continue. So it is a bit of a snowball or ring like this that repeats itself when it succeeds.

**Saija Halminen:** Yes, really good points. How then is quality or quality management taken into account in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and development of research?

**Osmo Rätti:** This is where the questioning immediately leads to mentioning planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, development. That is the traditional circle of how to take things forward, so plan, implement, evaluate and develop. When we look at all of these, the best

way to ensure quality in planning and implementation is that at that stage the processes is clear and documented. So that researchers or other study participants do not need to wonder how these things work. And the services are available and those services are of high quality and adequate.

Then, if we move on to that monitoring and evaluation, then it is a development tool and they are actually the result of this planning and implementation. And monitoring and evaluation; I personally would like to divide these a little so that monitoring is kind of short-term activity and the evaluation is then that we evaluate the results of the operation over a slightly longer period of time. In other words, monitoring can be quite continuous on a daily basis. It may even be possible to monitor something within hours, but the university organization is such that very little happens in an hour. So monitoring usually takes place on a monthly or annual basis. Monitoring and evaluation should be systematic, and then it should be rather carefully thought out that what is measured. That essential things are measured, that time is not spent monitoring and evaluating irrelevant issues, but trying to evaluate the right things.

Then there is the development. If you start thinking about it here, then the development should always be based on knowledge and some kind of analysis. So there's no point in going into development if you don't know where we are and maybe you should have a little bit of information in mind that where we are going. So strategy may come to mind that one should then reflect the development efforts in the jointly agreed direction that we are going.

One essential thing to ensure the quality of research — and I am sure this applies to other sectors too such as education, art, anything — is that the management system and steering practices are in order and should be clear and justified. And the responsibilities and division of labor should be clear. We know whose property everything is. And if we now think that how that research manifests itself in the end results. This is mainly reflected in the research side in the form of publications. So how we reach publication is through research projects. And those objectives are, of course, to be able to obtain competitive research funding. That's where the quality comes in nicely through this competition, whether you like it or not. So that it can be measured that way as well. Publications, it is where we are able to measure quality. Then in addition to doctoral degrees and number of doctoral examinations, the feedback system is probably quite relevant there.

Then these quite general quality aspects, which should cut through in research, are the principle of open science. So the aim is to ensure that publications are transparent. They are available to everyone as quickly as possible. Then in all assessments, responsibility for recruiting or evaluating research should work responsibly and comply with the principals involved. Of course, good scientific practice should be followed. And take care of the research ethics that those things are in order. And then in communication responsibility, so that communication is truthful and reliable. So there is a lot of quality management already. I'm sure there's a lot more to add to this, but perhaps this is sufficient in this context.

**Saija Halminen:** Thank you Osmo. Then Satu let's go a little to the arts. So where you think high-quality artistic activity comes from?

**Satu Miettinen:** Artistic activities as a concept is, shall we say bit tricky, when it is so diverse and extensive. In a few words, we could somehow concretize what that artistic activity is. When you think about artistic activities in our faculty, one might think of such an axis. That the other extreme has a very engineered interface where industrial design, interaction design is done. This is a very technological enterprise interface and there results can be in different user interfaces, concepts,

plans, graphic looks, these types of things. If you then think about the other end of the axis, there's autonomous art, free art. It is a very broad spectrum of this kind within which that artistic activity is carried out. When we start thinking about how to set such frameworks, that what is happening inside it is somehow of a high quality and follows those principles of high-quality action. That can be indeed done. In my opinion, it follows a great deal of similar issues, as Osmo pointed out in his speech. There is quite a lot of planning for that activity, and that artistic activity also supports the university's strategy. There are, in a way, guidelines that can be relied on and which can give support and stepping stones for the activities.

But then there are such special features of artistic activity too. Artistic activity is very strongly committed to different equipment, workshops, spaces. The fact that this activity is qualitative starts from the very safety of these environments, processes, supervision too. It starts with the systematic development of operations, from the fact that how these workshops, equipment, facilities, environments work. And then, if you consider the results of the activity, there are similar principles there for quality assurance. There is an really strong use of peer-review and it is common in all arts sectors and the same principle is being followed here. If you consider that we have very extensive exhibition activities in the faculty. We have an exhibition committee which then curates the proposals that will be shown to the public. And, of course, then we also have some art criticism that we write about what is shown and that is how feedback is received on the topicality and value of the artistic activity, placement for example in the field of contemporary art. Similarly, the quality comes from the fact that artistic activities are planned as part of working hours. It is always part of the annual planning of working time and it is considered what the results of the working time used will be.

One big part in the field on art, of course, is also applying for funding. This funding is conditional on passing the peer-review. That peer-review, for example in order to obtain money for the promotion of art for its own activities already requires going through quite large gates. That is because so few proposals submitted receives funding. In a way, from there one receives that kind of big feedback. However, the practices of peer-review is quite similar, whether scientific or artistic publication. You will have to draw up a plan for that project, work that you intend to carry out and leave it to the evaluation and usually at least two if not more evaluators will pronounce something about that your work, give it score. If you think that, me for example am part of this National Commission on The Diversity of Art, so we already have about ten people saying something about those works. One could say that it is even tougher than this double blind review policy because there is an even bigger sieve you have to go through. This is, of course, due to the fact that there is less art funding than science funding, that is why those who pass through this sieve can say that they are the names that are already located there, at least in the national field of contemporary art.

But here, as a Dean, you have to look at a variety of things, because part of this is indeed this type of free art and, in a way, exhibition activities, but then we get a lot of other kinds of artistic activities too. If you think about how to control whether the Sampo Rosenlew's forest machine is being high-quality, it's a trickier job. But even there will be a starting point that the facilities and equipment are in order. Then, in such industrial design, there are many rewards for companies to apply for, so companies try to apply prizes for their activities. Of course, we are always terribly taken and happy if a student who graduated from us receives some prestigious award like this, then it feels like we've been done something about it. The results of the activities are systematically monitored so that, in a way, the quality and quantity of the activities are monitored even at the university level every year. How extensive our activities have been. I think there is a great lot of quality artistic work here, and all the time we try to develop the conditions for it to be even higher quality.

**Saija Halminen:** Yes, thank you. The next question is how quality management supports the effectiveness and interaction of artistic activities in education, but also in society?

**Satu Miettinen:** Well, this is my favorite topic of course, so now I try to limit the answer so that it won't be too long. Of course, artistic activity is very much located there in the society. We usually have quite a few projects in the Faculty of Arts where these partners are municipalities, different organizations, companies. We are pretty much attached to that interface of society and this artistic activity is a big part of our project activities. If you somehow try to concretize this it means that a lot of projects have been done, for example, in art education. Of course, there is a service design, which is then one of my favorite topics, but let's not go there now to discuss it. It is typical of them to have a social challenge of some kind, to which we attempt to find some kind of solutions. The solution is quite an ambitious word, but at least there is a debate about what could be done. This may then be done at the very level of activity, that projects are carried out with pupils, institutions, people, enterprises. It's like it's working at grassroots level. That way, there's going to be quite a lot of that — how to say it — the surface of understanding what's going on in society and being involved in it. But then, especially now we do also a lot of policy work. We have several Horizon projects, one big part of which is influencing politics.

And in this context, we also cooperate a lot with the Lapland Federation, for example. For example, we have this kind of 'Region arts' project, in which with the European sub-regions we work together to see how financial instruments can be given more account of the art, artistic work and the changing power of its society. In a way, this activity is quite naturally placed in that social context. When you go back to how the quality is then applied, how can this type of activity be there to create that quality. There are quite the same things I have already said in the previous question, that there are systematic procedures, that the work that has been done is monitored and evaluated. One big thing that has been on the wallpaper a lot in recent years is the ethical principles of art. They are currently being developed nationally and, of course, we have also been involved in this development. We must also act responsibly in this field of art. It may be such — how you would say it — a bit of a challenging thing, because then there is that freedom of art and the autonomy of art, but it does not take away that ethical responsibility.

And then if you consider that art and artistic activity is pretty much located in that interface of research as well. What have been gratifying in the last couple of years, is that Finnish Academy has been paying attention to artistic research and it has been systematically developed. That's when you go back to the interface where you do that artistic activity in research, then we follow the ethical and qualitative practices of research that Osmo very well illustrated. In a way, that's how quality management comes into us. Perhaps however, this kind of artistic activity linked to education in society follows the university's strategy and monitors the university's practices. We plan the content of the education because that quality management, especially at the interface of education, comes quite a lot from its curriculum work. It is very planned and its quality is ensured by quite a few indicators, that how many degree results we get out of there, and how well our education fits in business life, how our students find employment. This artistic activity, when we are in Faculty of Arts, can not be completely separated from teaching, because it is part of the content of teaching and the practices which are being a question there. I would say that such a thing must also be the basics of quality management within teaching. If you think about this kind of teaching of design in particular, this user orientation and this iterative process, in which you plan that, is implemented, evaluated, developed. It is automatically included in a wide range of processes there.

**Saija Halminen:** Thank you. Satu, where do high-quality project finance services come from?

**Satu Pesola:** They are probably born of competent and clear research support services. And we, in this new model of ours, operate in such a way that each specialist is responsible for their own financial instruments and obligation to update their skills with regard to these financial instruments and to share information with other team members regarding their own financial instruments. And each financial instrument has at least two or three people who bear responsibility for preparing research, development and innovation projects for researchers and teachers in cooperation with them. That, perhaps is that briefly, so that we have names and faces that every researcher teacher knows who is in contact with regard to the financial instrument in question. And if a researcher don't know who to contact, we help them to do that according to his or her research topic.

**Saija Halminen:** Yes. And the second question is, how do research and development areas support and promote the effectiveness of research development and innovation and artistic activities?

**Satu Pesola:** If you start looking at it from the point of view of research first, such high-quality research projects will naturally strengthen the university's research. In particular, in the field of international projects, this cooperation with other European and global universities will also strengthen our abilities of our researchers. Perhaps another aspect of this is that this competition between universities at the level of European, even globally and especially in Finland, has recently become stronger, which is reflected, for example, in the reduction in the lead rate of Horisontti programmes. This competition has become tougher between universities, European and global, and also within Finland, so the university's profile as a research university requires high-quality research projects. And then if you look at this issue within the province and within the university, then the university participates or the higher education institutions participate very actively in this regional development work of the province through various research, development and innovation projects, as well as in the development of business life.

And those things in our province are led by the Lapland Federation and the ELY Centre, with whom we have very active cooperation on the research side. And then if we look at this from a metric perspective, that we are also strongly profiled as a research university, not just as a teaching university, then we are actually being measured by two clear metrics. There is the number of these research and development projects and the amount of euros, which we also report to the Ministry of Education. That's maybe that in briefly.

**Saija Halminen:** Thank you very much for your answers.