The New World Kirkpatrick Model as an Evaluation Tool for a Publication Writing Programme

Authors : Eleanor Nel

Abstract : Research output is an indicator of institutional performance (and quality), resulting in increased pressure on academic institutions to perform in the research arena. Research output is further utilised to obtain research funding. Resultantly, academic institutions face significant pressure from governing bodies to provide evidence on the return for research investments. Research output has thus become a substantial discourse within institutions, mainly due to the processes linked to evaluating research output and the associated allocation of research funding. This focus on research outputs often surpasses the development of robust, widely accepted tools to additionally measure research impact at institutions. A publication writing programme, for enhancing research output, was launched at a South African university in 2011. Significant amounts of time, money, and energy have since been invested in the programme. Although participants provided feedback after each session, no formal review was conducted to evaluate the research output directly associated with the programme. Concerns in higher education about training costs, learning results, and the effect on society have increased the focus on value for money and the need to improve training, research performance, and productivity. Furthermore, universities rely on efficient and reliable monitoring and evaluation systems, in addition to the need to demonstrate accountability. While publishing does not occur immediately, achieving a return on investment from the intervention is critical. A multi-method study, guided by the New World Kirkpatrick Model (NWKM), was conducted to determine the impact of the publication writing programme for the period of 2011 to 2018. Quantitative results indicated a total of 314 academics participating in 72 workshops over the study period. To better understand the quantitative results, an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants from a particular faculty as a convenience sample. The purpose of the research was to collect information to develop a comprehensive framework for impact evaluation that could be used to enhance the current design and delivery of the programme. The qualitative findings highlighted the critical role of a multi-stakeholder strategy in strengthening support before, during, and after a publication writing programme to improve the impact and research outputs. Furthermore, monitoring on-the-job learning is critical to ingrain the new skills academics have learned during the writing workshops and to encourage them to be accountable and empowered. The NWKM additionally provided essential pointers on how to link the results more effectively from publication writing programmes to institutional strategic objectives to improve research performance and quality, as well as what should be included in a comprehensive evaluation framework.
Keywords : evaluation, framework, impact, research output