Scientists in charge: the side effects of hybrid careers between research and science policy

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INTRODUCTION

Science policy is the terrain of “hybrid careers”: important positions in the governance of science are held by researchers who have accumulated experience and recognition in a scientific specialty.

This paper addresses the policy implications of hybrid careers. The main goals are to identify the side effects on:

• Organizational arrangements in science policy
• Ideas implemented in the governance of science

METHODOLOGY

75 professional life stories: hybrid careers in the Spanish R&D system (1975-2004)

Type of positions. Scientists in:
• Administration (universities, public labs)
• Policy making (planning, funding, evaluation)
• Politics (ministries, regional governments)

How to study professional life stories:
• Follow the professional path (CV)
• Focus on key positions along the path
• Get a narrative about decision making experiences - Check it with policy documents

WHY SCIENTISTS GET INVOLVED IN THE GOVERNANCE OF SCIENCE?

• Technical reasons: management experience is better acquired working as a researcher.
• Institutional reasons: acknowledged researchers are more legitimated for decision making in science policy.

Consequences on the profile of science policy positions:
• Few science policy professionals
• High rotation
• Prevalence of tacit knowledge

WHAT HAPPEN TO SCIENTISTS IN SCIENCE POLICY POSITIONS?

Scientists out of research work may lose key resources.

3 social mechanisms:
• Organizational: loss of human and financial resources
• Cognitive: loss of scientific competence
• Institutional: loss of recognition by peers

Reactions of researchers in hybrid careers:
• The try to keep in touch with the lab.
• They do not spend much time far from the research work

CONCLUSIONS

Hybrid careers can have important consequences for the governance of science. Unintended effects should be taken into account.

Crucial dilemma:
• How many science policy professionals are needed?
• Should scientists get involved in science policy on a regular basis?
• What is the optimal balance?

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