
Interview med professor Jakob Elder – hovedtaler på REG LABs årskonference den 8. maj

I forbindelse med REG LABs årskonference den 8. maj om effekter og sammenhæng i erhvervs- og innovationssystemet har REG LAB stillet nogle enkle spørgsmål til professor Jacob Edler, Executive Director, Manchester Institute of Innovation Research. Jakob Elder vil være hovedtaler på REG LABs årskonference den 8. maj.

Jakob Elder har stået i spidsen for et omfattende projekt om effekter af erhvervs- og innovationsprogrammer. Projektet var finansieret af NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts). I alt har der været deltagelse af 12 professorer, og projektet har bl.a. resulteret i 20 rapporter om effekterne. Vi har stillet Jakob Elder tre spørgsmål som opvarmning til årskonferencen.

Question: What was the purpose of your large European project on evaluation?

The COMPENDIUM is a study funded by NESTA (<http://www.nesta.org.uk/>) a UK charity in London. The idea was to try to systematically synthesis the existing evidence on impact of innovation policy, in order to learn for future policy making. In order to do so, we have developed a typology of instruments following instruments objectives rather than implementing modalities.

For each of the 18 types defined we conducted a meta evaluation, analysing existing academic literature and evaluation reports.

For each type of instrument we drafted an individual report, which included a discussion of the basic rationale, an assessment of the evidence we have, a summary of the evidence and a conclusion with the main lessons in terms of evaluation quality and instrument impact.



The University of Manchester

In addition to those 18 reports, we drafted one report on “policy-mies” and an overall synthesis report across all instruments.

Question: In short what were the most interesting findings?

The most interesting, if not unexpected, finding is that innovation policy instruments are highly context dependent. No type of program is designed exactly the same way, each program is implemented within an idiosyncratic portfolio of other instruments, and in each country the

context conditions and capabilities of target groups are different.

This makes it extremely problematic to derive simple lessons as to “what works”. Thus, the policy making community and the evaluation community must be extremely careful in transferring lessons from one context to the other. For a commentary for different types of programs I refer to the executive summary of the synthesis report (<http://innovation-policy.org.uk/compendium/section/Default.aspx?topicid=37>).

Question: How far have we come in terms of measuring effects on innovation programs?

We have come a long way in understanding the effects and rationales of innovation policy programs. As the above mentioned executive summary states the “Compendium reveals how far evaluation methodology has come – and what its limitations are – in identifying the effects and preconditions for innovation policy instruments to operate effectively and efficiently.

A wide range of innovation-related evaluation studies is now available. Yet, the Compendium also finds many evaluation gaps. The available evaluations tend to emphasise narrowly defined and easily measured effects, with far less attention to behavioural and longer-term outcomes.

Unintended and detrimental effects tend not to be deeply probed, and evaluations are often insufficiently explicit about underlying rationales, causal assumptions and context conditions. Furthermore, while the importance of innovation and innovation support measures has grown, with innovation policy measures now implemented across a whole range of policy areas, such measures are either not fully evaluated or not evaluated in terms of their innovation effects.

Nonetheless, a series of insights can be drawn from the current body of available research and assessment on the effects of innovation policy, and – with appropriate caveats – there is significant potential for policy learning. The Compendium not only exploits this existing evidence on innovation policy but also highlights deficiencies in evaluation approaches and methods that can be used to improve the future production of evidence for innovation policymaking.

Professor Jakob Elder



In particular, and in addition to more explicit attention to rationales, assumptions, and context we stress the importance of a more systematically linking innovation policy intervention (including indirect innovation policies) to longer-term behavioral effects and to economic growth, job creation and societal challenges.

Moreover, while innovation policy evaluation evidence is available from a series of countries, there is great national variability in approaches. Opportunities for greater international learning, coordination and collaboration in evaluation could thus usefully be explored and exploited.”

Tilmeld dig årskonferencen [her](#).

Se programmet [her](#).

Marts 2014, kresten@reglab.dk

