

Peer Review in research funding: The role of scientific expert knowledge

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AND THE USE OF KNOWLEDGE

There is much confusion about role and meaning of peer review today. This deficit is surprising, given the fact that peer review has become something like a mantra within the various scientific communities. It's most controversial deployment today is in research funding, where it is revered by some and loathed by others. The starting point for this paper is a puzzle: How is it that peer review, as a decision-making principle that absolutely relies on scientific judgement, still flourishes in a time when politicians generally expect proof for their investment in research? In answering this question, and based on an extensive review of existing literature on peer review in research funding, this paper suggests a comprehensive conceptual framework that allows us to a) understand peer review in research funding as distinctively different to other deployments of the same principle; b) distinguish analytically between the principle, the implementation, and the orchestration of peer review; and c) to conceptualize peer review in research funding as one of the neuralgic borderlines between the world of policy-making and the world of science.