

NITheCS COLLOQUIUM: Postdoctoral research fellows at South African public universities: Key findings from a national study

Prof Heidi Prozesky (Stellenbosch University)

DATE: Monday, 20 May 2024 | 16h00–17h00 SAST

VENUES:

- Neelsie Cinema, Stellenbosch University
- Online

ABSTRACT

Over the past number of years, the South African higher education sector has invested increasingly in postdoctoral research fellows (or 'postdocs') as a significant human resource capability. However, until now, our current knowledge of these postdocs at a national level has been limited. This presentation will highlight the key findings produced by the first national study of postdocs at South African public universities, conducted by the Centre for Evaluation, Science and Technology at Stellenbosch University. The study comprised a national survey of postdocs, supplemented by institutional data collection, a bibliometric study, policy dialogues, as well as an analysis of existing data and policy documents. A broad range of topics will be covered in the presentation, starting with trends in the number and profile of postdocs, and proceeding to their prior career trajectories and reasons for taking a postdoc position; funding and conditions of service; publication output; teaching and supervision of students; and their assessment of their position and supervisor. In conclusion, postdocs' plans in terms of their careers and migration will be discussed. The evidence and recommendations provided would be useful to supervisors, hosts and funders of postdocs in their aim to fully realise the potential of this important group of emerging scholars.

BIOGRAPHY

Prof Heidi Prozesky is affiliated with the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University, as well as with the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Scientometrics and STI Policy hosted by CREST. She holds a PhD in Sociology, on the topic of gender differences in the publication output of South African scientists. She has published more than 35 peer-reviewed outputs in journals, edited collections, and conference proceedings; contributed to approximately 20 contract and technical reports; and presented close to 80 papers at national and international conferences, workshops and seminars. More than 20 doctoral and master's students have completed their studies under her supervision. During the past decade, she has been involved in various large-scale research projects, mostly focused on the topic of human resources for science, technology, and innovation in South Africa. As a sociologist of science, she employs both quantitative and qualitative strategies to investigate her main research interests, namely early-career researchers and women in science.



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