

**MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE VALORIZATION CENTERS**

**Platform 2.**

**Olena CHERNIAVSKA,**

Doctor of Economics, Professor,

*DiTELC Switzerland - Swiss Center of Excellence in Digital*

*Transformation and Ecosystem Leadership*

**KNOWLEDGE VALORIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A FRAMEWORK  
INFORMED BY THE EIT HEI IMPACT CAMPUS**

**Abstract**

Recent scholarship on knowledge valorization indicates that “societal” and “policy” impact is rarely a stable object awaiting measurement; it is more plausibly treated as a situated accomplishment—assembled through policy vocabularies, evaluation devices, organizational arrangements, intermediary roles, and researcher narratives. This article develops a conceptual framework for knowledge valorization in higher education, informed by the design logic of the EIT HEI IMPACT-Campus project and its Knowledge Valorization Centres (KVCs). The argument is that KVCs can be read not only as operational units for transfer and entrepreneurship support, but also as institutional arrangements that structure what counts as value, which pathways remain legible, and which kinds of knowledge-work become governable.

**1. From “impact measurement” to institutional meaning-making**

If impact were merely an attribute of research outputs, why do policy systems repeatedly struggle to agree on what should be assessed and why? National-level studies illustrate that impact categories are contested and internally plural. In Finland, the same strategic and expert discourse can sustain conflicting frames: a managerial–indicator frame oriented toward controllability and accountability, and an interpretive–enlightenment frame oriented toward slow diffusion, organizational learning, and dialogue with public arenas (Lauronen, 2022). Comparable tensions appear when “social relevance” and “knowledge mobilization” operate as managerial shorthand that narrows university purposes into instrumental usefulness (Naidorf, 2014).

This line of evidence motivates a shift: valorization should be studied as *institutional meaning-making under conditions of accountability*, rather than as a technical problem of indicator selection.

## **2. Evaluation regimes as structuring forces**

The UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) exemplifies how evaluation arrangements reorganize universities and reshape the narratable forms of value. The incorporation of “impact beyond academia” has encouraged new internal roles and structures, and it has amplified retrospective causal storytelling that is often ill-suited to critical, exploratory, or context-dependent knowledge (Laing et al., 2018). Comparative conceptual work similarly shows that dominant impact frameworks frequently rest on simplified linear models of research–policy relations, underplaying political selection of evidence and the co-constitution of research and governance fields (Boswell & Smith, 2017).

The implication is not that evaluation is “bad,” but that it is performative: it configures visibility, legitimacy, and incentives, thereby shaping what institutions learn to present as valuable.

## **3. Processual and artefact-based approaches to valorization**

A significant strand of research proposes moving from distal outcomes toward process-sensitive approaches. One influential distinction contrasts outcome-oriented assessment with process-oriented assessment, arguing that the latter—focused on exchange practices and productive interactions—better aligns with how influence actually emerges and becomes sustainable (Upton et al., 2014).

Miettinen, Tuunainen, and Esko (2015) develop a three-dimensional framework that clarifies why process matters: impact depends on (a) epistemic understanding, (b) mediating artefacts that materialize that understanding (methods, protocols, digital tools, educational products), and (c) interactional–institutional arrangements with users. Empirical work in educational sciences further supports this view, showing that long-term trajectories are produced through configurations of diagnostics, learning materials, and institutional agreements, rather than through isolated dissemination acts (Esko & Miettinen, 2019).

## **4. The IMPACT-Campus lens: KVCs as institutional designs**

The **EIT HEI IMPACT-Campus** project positions KVCs as a pan-European network mechanism intended to strengthen higher education institutions' capacity for sustainable entrepreneurship and digital transformation. Reading this through the literature above, KVCs can be interpreted as *institutional designs for valorization*—settings in which value categories are negotiated, stabilized, and operationalized through roles, routines, and artefacts.

The project's own internal documentation (IVAP; Deliverables 2.1 and 2.2; thesis-stage text) can be treated as a primary source for how the initiative conceptualizes its mechanisms: not as an alternative to peer-reviewed scholarship, but as an empirical anchor for the framework proposed here (Cherniavska & DiTELC Switzerland, 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). In that reading, the **KVS Charter** (Deliverable 2.1) functions as a codification device—defining the scope, principles, and organizational commitments through which KVCs become comparable and governable across partner settings. The **Sense-Making Sessions** (Deliverable 2.2) function as a reflexive device—creating a structured space where tacit assumptions, conflicting expectations, and pathway logics can be articulated and aligned across stakeholders.

Such design choices resonate with system-oriented approaches to policy impact in which learning, feedback, and distributed responsibility matter at least as much as output counting (Althaus et al., 2021), and with assessment approaches that place co-creation and interactional equity at the center of societal impact reasoning (Gerke et al., 2023).

### **5. Capability as a missing variable: impact literacy and tacit knowledge**

One might ask: if valorization is enacted through people and relationships, what capabilities make the architecture work? Bayley and Phipps (2019) argue that “research impact literacy” is a core competence set that enables actors to plan, interpret, and critically appraise impact pathways. Relatedly, Mitchell, Harvey, and Wood (2022) show that a large share of influence is mediated through tacit knowledge – embodied know-how, trust relations, and contextual judgment – that is systematically underrepresented in dominant reporting genres.

Within the IMPACT-Campus logic, Sense-Making Sessions can be read as an intentional response to these problems: an institutional mechanism that develops shared interpretive capacity and surfaces tacit dimensions into discussable, transferable, and improvable practice (Cherniavska & DiTELC Switzerland, 2025b). This matters for higher education because the most durable forms of valorization often hinge on the “soft” parts—relational continuity, interpretive alignment, and artefact adoption—rather than on easily attributable end-results.

## **6. Conclusion**

A framework informed by IMPACT-Campus suggests three analytically grounded propositions for studying knowledge valorization in higher education:

1. **Valorization is multi-level meaning-making:** it is produced across policy vocabularies, organizational structures, intermediary practices, and researcher narratives (Lauronen, 2022; Naidorf, 2014).

2. **Tools and regimes are constitutive:** evaluation formats and governance devices structure what becomes legible as value, thereby shaping incentives and institutional learning (Boswell & Smith, 2017; Laing et al., 2018).

3. **Future-oriented designs privilege processes and capabilities:** robust valorization architectures attend to productive interactions, mediating artefacts, and impact literacy, not only to end-point indicators (Miettinen et al., 2015; Bayley & Phipps, 2019).

In this sense, IMPACT-Campus is useful not only as a project instance, but as a conceptual prompt: it foregrounds the institutional design question—how higher education organizes the conditions under which knowledge becomes socially valuable, governable, and sustainable.

## **References**

Althaus, C., Carson, L., Sullivan, H., & van Wanrooy, B. (2021). Research and education in public sector practice: A systems approach to understanding policy impact. *Policy Design and Practice*, 4(3), 309–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2021.1977478>

Bayley, J., & Phipps, D. (2019). Building the concept of research impact literacy. *Evidence & Policy*, 15(4), 597–606. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426417X15034894876108>

Boswell, C., & Smith, K. E. (2017). Rethinking policy 'impact': Four models of research–policy relations. *Palgrave Communications*, 3, Article 20. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-017-0042-z>

Cherniavska, O., & DiTELC Switzerland. (2024). *Innovation vision action plan (IVAP) for IMPACT-Campus: Knowledge valorization centres for sustainable entrepreneurship and digital transformation* [Project proposal submitted to the EIT Higher Education Initiative Call 2024, Strand A]. Zurich, Switzerland: DiTELC Switzerland.

Cherniavska, O., & DiTELC Switzerland. (2025a). *Deliverable 2.1: KVS knowledge valorization centers charter* [Project deliverable]. Zurich, Switzerland: DiTELC Switzerland.

Cherniavska, O., & DiTELC Switzerland. (2025b). *Deliverable 2.2: IMPACT-Campus sense-making sessions* [Project deliverable]. Zurich, Switzerland: DiTELC Switzerland.

Cherniavska, O., & DiTELC Switzerland. (2025c). *IMPACT-Campus: Knowledge valorization centres for sustainable entrepreneurship and digital transformation* [Thesis text (project stage document)]. Zurich, Switzerland: DiTELC Switzerland.

EIT Higher Education Initiative. (n.d.). *IMPACT-Campus*. <https://eit-hei.eu/projects/impact-campus/> [EIT Higher Education Initiative](https://eit-hei.eu/)

Esko, T., & Miettinen, R. (2019). Scholarly understanding, mediating artefacts and the social impact of research in the educational sciences. *Research Evaluation*, 28(4), 295–303. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvz018>

Gerke, D.-M., Uude, K., & Kliewe, T. (2023). Co-creation and societal impact: Toward a generic framework for research impact assessment. *Evaluation*, 29(4), 489–508. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13563890231195906>

Laing, K., Mazzoli Smith, L., & Todd, L. (2018). The impact agenda and critical social research in education: Hitting the target but missing the spot? *Policy Futures in Education*, 16(2), 169–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317742214>

Lauronen, J.-P. (2022). Tension in interpretations of the social impact of the social sciences: Walking a tightrope between divergent conceptualizations of research utilization. *SAGE Open*, 12(2), 21582440221089967. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221089967>

Mitchell, V. W., Harvey, W. S., & Wood, G. (2022). Where does all the 'know-how' go? The role of tacit knowledge in research impact. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(5), 1664–1678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1937066>

Naidorf, J. C. (2014). Knowledge utility: From social relevance to knowledge mobilization. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22, Article 89. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22n89.2014>

Upton, S., Vallance, P., & Goddard, J. (2014). From outcomes to process: Evidence for a new approach to research impact assessment. *Research Evaluation*, 23(4), 352–365. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvu021>