Getting Research Into Policy?

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1. Introduction

Bridging research and policy is predicated on the notion that there is a 'weak link' between these two elements. This chapter investigates a number of views seeking to explain this weak link. Often, the lack of impact of researchers is located in their poor understanding of policy-making dynamics. Accordingly, a second focus to the discussion here is upon the policy process. However, there are no clear steps, strategies, tool-kits or guidelines that will guarantee successful use of research by decision-makers. Instead, the method and degree of 'knowledge utilisation' is shaped by a host of factors that are peculiar to leadership styles, institutional architecture and political culture of a country or policy domain.

2. Knowledge for Development

Over the past decade, there has been an extraordinary degree of interest in the way knowledge can be used in policy development. Moreover, the pressing policy problems confronted by developing and transition countries are increasingly represented as a lack of knowledge or as difficulties in accessing knowledge. More specifically, addressing the impact or relevance of *research* to policy is a fashionable subject. 'Research' will be treated in this chapter as a codified, scholarly and professional mode of knowledge production that has its prime institutional loci in universities, policy analysis units of government departments or international organisations and private research institutes and produced by academics, think tank experts and development professionals.

Into the new millennium, the relevance of research has been recognised by a number of development agencies. To mention a few initiatives: In the health field, COHRED (the Council on Health Research for Development 2000) has organised a national health 'Research Capacity Strengthening' workshop in Kenya while the European Science Foundation recently funded a study of policy transfer in health through the diffusion of knowledge and research on 'best practice'[2]. In the last half of 2001, Uppsala University organised a conference on 'Aid and Academia: Reassessing the Relationship', addressing

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[2] See website: http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/research/freeman/sociallearninghealth

the relationship between universities, NGOs and development agencies; the UK ESRC convened another conference on the theme of 'Research and its Impact on Policy', while Harvard University in conjunction with the Third World Academy of Sciences sponsored an international conference on the globalisation of research and development.[3]

The diversity of activity and publication in this area is apparent. Many research institutes and think tanks have conducted in-house analyses of how to 'sell' policy analysis or develop strategies to influence governments. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has generated studies and tool-kits to measure the impact of research on policy-making (see *inter alia*, Ryan, 1999; Park 1998). Other examples include the policy process studies undertaken by the International Institute for Environment and Development (Garret & Islam, 1998) and the Institute of Development Studies (Keeley, 1999) in the United Kingdom; and for the US Office of Naval Defence (Kostoff, 1997). The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida (2001) convened a commission on development-related research. Similarly, development agencies such as the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO, 2001) and the IDRC in Canada are sponsoring evaluations into how their sponsored research feeds into policy and knowledge management. There are also internet resources with advice on the policy-research nexus at web-sites such as 'www.gdnet.org' and 'www.eldis.org'. Why, at this point in time, has knowledge come to play such a central role in development questions? There are a number of factors.

Firstly, over the past quarter decade, there has been the withdrawal of the state from the production, financing and delivery of public services. More emphasis has been placed on the private sector, the role of civil society and partnerships in the delivery of development programmes. This has necessitated development of a research and/or analytic capacity within NGOs and private contractors. This is compounded by demands from donors and governments for improved transparency, monitoring and evaluation and dovetails with the trend towards professionalisation in many NGOs.

Secondly, as funding towards development assistance has declined in OECD countries, financially strapped development agencies have needed to 'reinvent' themselves in a manner commensurate with fewer resources at their disposal. Partnerships to promote 'knowledge sharing', the discourse of 'knowledge for development' or the emphasis on 'knowledge management' and 'evidence-based policy' is symptomatic of funding constraints as well as a move towards development assistance that draws upon the resources, expertise and local knowledge of target communities.

Thirdly, development matters and transborder policy issues involving a high component of technical and scientific knowledge give individual experts and scholarly associations indirect entrée into policy making. Societal and policy/political understanding of matters such as genetically modified organisms, the impact of TRIPs on developing countries, the merits of different telecommunications infrastructure, policy crises wrought by developments such as HIV/AIDS, pollution and ecological destruction rest upon (social)

[3] http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/r&dconf/description.htm

scientific knowledge. Policy making increasingly relies upon the expert judgement and policy recommendations of scientists and advisors where elected representatives and 'generalist' bureaucrats do not have the scientific knowledge of a highly technical policy issue and are making policy decisions in circumstances of relative uncertainty.

Finally, development questions are increasingly questions of global concern that are met with responses on a multilateral basis. However, collective action at the global level is frustrated by the lack of global institutions of global governance and regulation along with continued strength of state sovereignty. Consequently, more informal partnerships, alliances, coalitions or regimes fill the institutional void for global public policies. One of the binding agents, or glue, for these arrangements is the sharing of knowledge. Advances in communication technology and the transnational mobility of development professionals have made knowledge sharing more feasible.

Research is recognised as an important form of codified knowledge that is incorporated into policy deliberations. It helps establish standards and modes of verification in service design and delivery. However, research capacity and quality remains under-developed in a number of developing countries.

The Knowledge Development of the GDN

The GDN is one of the grander manifestations of the knowledge paradigm of development. The GDN objective is to 'create, share and apply knowledge' (www.gdnet.org). The Network attempts to allow greater scope for 'home-grown' policy, information-sharing and enhanced research capacity in and between developing countries. It is intended to incorporate the 'research community' more efficiently into development policy. As outlined in greater detail in the chapter by Sarah Clarke and Lyn Squire, the Network is composed primarily of university research centres and think tanks to promote the generation and sharing of knowledge between developing and transitional countries.

In all three GDN conferences to-date, the Network has sought to examine the manner in which research might have an impact on policy making. The inaugural conference in Bonn organised a plenary session as well as seven panels addressing the theme. Indeed, the conference title was 'Bridging Knowledge and Policy'. Some of the papers that addressed the issues and examples of the socio-political and economic impact of research in development and transition were captured in an edited volume (Stone, 2000). Similarly, many ideas about the need to disseminate and communicate not only research products, but also strategies and techniques to make research more amenable for policy use, were fed into the development of the GDN web-site.

Likewise, the second conference in Tokyo brought together a number scholars and policy practitioners to discuss the research-policy nexus.[4] The sessions showed that questions

[4] These sessions were:

1. Policy Entrepreneurship in International Development

about research impact are a subset of wider (and much-studied) questions about what policy is and how it happens. On the supply-side, researchers are concerned to improve dissemination and the quality of interaction with policy-makers. On the demand-side, policy-makers are concerned with how to achieve quick, cost-effective and efficient access to a wide range of research advice. However, the supply and demand interaction does not take place in a vacuum but within policy environments and around institutions which shape the opportunities for research utilisation.

Following the Tokyo conference, three people took the agenda forward. Inge Kaul, Director of the Office of Development Studies based at the United Nations Development Programme, Simon Maxwell, Director of the Overseas Development Institute in London, and myself at the University of Warwick, drafted a proposal that was presented to the UK Department for International Development (DfID). In the funding proposal, the primary practical challenge identified was how to make existing knowledge on the policy process available to researchers thereby helping them use the results constructively in their own policy work, and to develop a better understanding of the needs and constraints of policy-makers. There was also a research challenge: to learn from the experiences of how research and policy relate to each other in practice.

In July 2000, a workshop entitled 'Bridging Research and Policy was convened at the University of Warwick. The following section provides a summary of the some of the issues addressed in the background paper produced for the workshop. It was attended by people from academia, independent research institutes or think tanks, private consulting firms, international organisations, government departments, politics, and donor organisations.[5] The participants debated the problems encountered by the (potential) users of research – politicians, bureaucrats, NGO leaders, international civil servants – as well as the problems of communication and access to the policy process faced by the producers of research – academics, think tanks, consultants, etc.

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2. Informal Diplomacy and Non-Official Policy Development
3. Networking Networks
4. Building Policy Research Capacity in the New Era of Knowledge Sharing
5. Guidance for Governance: Nurturing Alternative Sources of Policy Advice in Developing Countries
6. Bridge Building: The Need for Issue Specific Strategies.

The 'Guidance for Governance' session drew upon an initiative of the Japan Centre for International Exchange independent of the GDN but dove tailed with the Network's interests. A book has since been published (Stares & Weaver, 2001). Similarly, papers from the 'Networking Networks' and 'Informal Diplomacy" sessions have been published in the journal *Global Networks* (see Stone 2002).

[5] The priorities and issues for workshop deliberation were:

(a) How to collate and disseminate information about the policy process;
(b) Determining case studies on 'best practice', on both the supply and demand sides;
(c) Identifying approaches to encourage and support researchers in their policy work;
(d) Outlining strategies to encourage and support policy-makers in their interaction with researchers;
(e) Developing methods that would support a self-reflection process; and
(f) Synthesising lessons for future policy work.
(g)

Rather than coming to definitive conclusions as to how miscommunication could be resolved or how research could be better utilised, an appreciation of how varying interpretations of policy making provide different parameters of understanding of the research-policy nexus came to the fore. In short, there are no answers or solutions that can be rationally devised. This is not to diminish efforts to improve or 'build bridges' between policy and research. It is to recognise that different policy environments, institutional structures and political arrangements produce different sets of opportunities and constraints for dialogue, call forth varying strategies for policy researchers and have dramatically diverse implications from one political system and/or policy sector to the next. Not only is the demand for research, analysis and policy advice extremely diverse, it is feasible neither to generalise about how research is utilised in policy nor why some forms of research are favoured over other sources. This realisation is one line of thinking behind post workshop activity advocating the need for co-ordinated case studies that can illustrate the diverse ways in which research influences policy.[6]

3. 'Bridging' Policy and Research

The relationship between researchers (social scientists) and policy-makers (governments) is an uneasy one. Both researchers and policy-makers might be accused of holding unrealistic expectations of the other. Yet, it is frequently stated that research has a great deal to contribute to policy formulation and improve decision-making. Indeed, many governments and international organisations devote considerable financial resources to both in-house and contracted research. For example, the Danish Commission stated that research could 'safeguard the quality of aid' through both the 'accumulation of experience and scientific knowledge' as well as through 'knowledge management'. This ideal picture is quickly qualified by the Commission recounting the perceptions of the two different communities of researchers and policy makers. That is, researchers often consider that there is no political audience for their work despite the important observations they make and policy relevant explanations they develop. By contrast, policy-makers often consider that what researchers contribute is not relevant, too esoteric and asking theoretical questions that do not resonate with the needs of policy makers. 'Where the one group feels nobody listens, the other feels their opposite numbers have little to say' (Danida, 2001: 9).

There has been much written on this dilemma. The sociology of knowledge is a well-established field of inquiry. More recently, the 'ideational turn' in political science and international relations has resulted in some wider studies of 'ideas and politics'. Increasingly psychology is addressing practical applications of theories about cognition with real-world decision-making. Exploration of how business and political leaders make decisions in the face of high levels of risk would rest to a large extent upon cognition;

[6] Additionally, the GDN has hosted two electronic discussions on how research and policy interact. The first – GDN Priorities – is archived at http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/forum_gdn.html The second discussion took place October through December 2001 as a follow-up activity from the Warwick workshop.

that is, the processes through which we perceive, reason about and act. Two social science journals – *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion and Utilization* and *Knowledge, Technology and Policy*[7] – have addressed the research/policy nexus for decades. More recently, the 'knowledge management' literature (often with roots in organisation theory) has burgeoned. Economics is often considered to have huge impact on policy. There is, however, less reflection within the discipline of when, how or why (see Bergik *et al*, 1997). Instead, renditions of John Maynard Keynes' famous dictum tend to suffice as an explanation for the influence of economics.

> "The ideas of economists and political philosophers… are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority who hear voices in the air are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back" (Keynes 1936: 383).

Nevertheless, there have been studies of some types of organisations that seek to 'bridge' the policy and research worlds. 'Think tanks', for example, are a form of research organisation that directly seeks to influence policy on which there is an extensive literature (see *inter alia*, McGann & Weaver 2000; Stone 2000; Stone, Denham & Garnett 2002). There is also a relatively extensive literature on the activities of philanthropic foundations in both advancing knowledge and in its utilisation (Gemelli 1998; Berman 1983). Universities, in contrast, have often been stereotyped as engaged in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. Little attention has been paid to other types of research organisation. Consultancy firms, for example, are involved with public policy as a consequence of the 'new public management'. Furthermore, there are many large and globally active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and pressure groups (such as Greenpeace and Transparency International) which both undertake research and attempt to use the findings to influence policy-making. Also overlooked is the policy role of government research bureaux, both those within departments, and autonomous non-departmental public bodies (quangos) (but see Stares and Weaver, 2001).

As noted earlier, there is a research endeavour here and considerable scope remains to synthesise elements of these social science literatures to address the contemporary policy roles of experts and research organisations. Moreover, a corrective is needed for the overwhelming bias towards analysis of OECD policy systems and knowledge structures to recognise the different circumstances and constraints faced by developing countries.

Yet, an evaluation of the research functions of these different organisations would seem to provide one basis for contesting the commonly held view articulated by Danida and others that researchers and policy makers live in different worlds. One task of the researcher is to critically contest established assumptions. Increasingly, a capacity to not

[7] In the early 1990s, *Knowledge and Policy* was re-named *Knowledge, Technology and Policy* and has developed a very different focus – on quite specific and technical issues – than the general theoretical discussions of knowledge transfer and utilisation that previously characterised this journal.

only understand but also undertake rigorous research is a professional requirement for NGO leaders, officers of professional associations and government bureaucrats. More researchers are becoming practitioners – co-opted onto advisory committees, joining government for limited terms or acting as consultants to international organisations. The dividing line is very blurred in many policy instances. Furthermore, a synthesis of various academic perspectives and of analyses of organisations would highlight the lack of communication between disciplines and the existence of different 'communities of practice' in addressing the research/policy nexus. Different groups of researchers and practitioners have addressed similar questions in isolation from each other. This has resulted in different conceptualisations of the relationship between research and development and generated different recommendations for 'bridging research and policy'.

Twelve Ways of Conceiving Research-Policy Dynamics

There are a number of different perspectives and explanations as to why research is or is not utilised in policy making. These perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Taken together they provide a multi-faceted picture of the research-policy nexus indicating that there are many possible routes to 'bridging' research and policy. This is because the starting point, or guiding assumptions, about the nature of the problem differ dramatically.

1. The problem can be defined as a *public goods problem*, where there is an inadequate supply of policy relevant research (Squire 2000). One solution is intervention with capacity building programmes and public support for the creation of policy relevant research. This approach is grounded in the belief that there is currently insufficient information for policy planning. The incorporation of research into policy deliberations once it is generated tends to be assumed. In other words an increase in supply will generate its own demand.

2. Rather than a lack of research, the problem can be portrayed as one of a *lack of access* to research, data and analysis for both researchers and policy makers. This view considers that there is wealth of research and analysis available but recognises that there is differential or inequitable access to knowledge. Recommendations to improve both access to and the diffusion of knowledge follow. This could include making material available electronically through web-sites and email distribution lists; providing scholarships, training programmes and exchanges to facilitate access to knowledge for developing country scholars and leaders. The differential distribution of knowledge resources has also prompted programmes facilitating research collaboration such as North-South partnerships (KFPE, 1998).

3. The problem can be defined as the *poor policy comprehension of researchers* towards both the policy process and how research might be relevant to this process. Research recommendations can be impossible to implement because

political realities (such as cost-effectiveness) are not addressed. The problem is located in the quality of supply. Overcoming this lack of understanding requires researchers to study the policy process, to find approaches to demonstrate the relevance of research, and to build methodologies for evaluating research relevance. Methodologies include case studies, examples of 'best practice', and targeting research at different points in the policy process. From the demand side, recognition of the disincentives and disinclination of researchers to draw out the policy implications of their research can be found with social science funding regimes attaching conditions to grants requiring researchers to interact with 'user groups' in industry or government. However, this kind of analysis and practice has been stronger identifying problems on the supply side rather than addressing the kinds of institutional and professional changes that need to take place within government.

4. The problem can be represented as *ineffective communication by researchers* of their work. Researchers usually cannot and often do not want to provide the unequivocal answers or solutions which policy-makers demand. Again, the problem is located in the quality of supply but where the emphasis is on style of presentation and the development of 'narratives' that help sell research. Improved communications strategies are consequently encouraged. Media training, strategies for marketing research, packaging research findings for a lay audience – these are researchers 'tools'. A more sophisticated approach emphasises the agency of 'policy entrepreneurs' – people who have a talent for creating 'narratives' or story lines that simplify complicated research findings for public consumption and policy use.

5. The problem can be identifeed as the *ignorance of politicians* or over-stretched bureaucrats about the existence of policy relevant research. Decision-makers have limited time and resources. Consequently, they employ information from trusted sources – usually in-house or close to the centre of power – to help generate simple and understandable recommendations about complex problems. They may be unaware of cutting-edge research. One solution – 'building bridges' or constructing 'conveyor belts' – takes form in, for example, conferences and workshops, or the appointment of specialists to government committees. However, this is primarily a one-way process of feeding research into policy assuming decision-makers will be receptive to the best available information.

6. There is a tendency for *anti-intellectualism in government* that mitigates against the use of research in policy-making, while the policy process itself is riddled with a fear of the critical power of ideas (ESRC/DfEE 2000: 16). This problem can be exacerbated in developing countries, where "official information is usually deliberately kept out of reach of researchers", making it difficult for them to provide research that is relevant to current policy issues (Kwabia Boateng, GDN Priorities, 3rd November 1999).

7. The problem can be conceived in terms of policy makers and leaders being dismissive, unresponsive or incapable of using research. Research is a lengthy process, whereas political problems usually require immediate attention. Politicians are driven by immediate political concerns in "a 'pressure cooker' environment". In this scenario, the character of demand is flawed. This problem requires improvement in *governmental capacity* to absorb research, as well as in the capacities, personnel and resources of the state structure more generally. This necessitates training programmes to help make bureaucrats or political leaders 'intelligent customers' of research. Changes in political culture may also be needed. More extreme conditions (such as the censorship and oppression of researchers) are not uncommon in some developing and/or undemocratic states. Solutions to this – freedom of information/speech – are problematically dependent on the significant strengthening of democratic institutions.

8. The problem can located in the *politicisation of research*. The rhetoric of research is often one that is claims to be 'neutral', 'objective' or at least dispassionate. Research findings are easy to abuse, either through selective use, de-contextualisation, or misquotation. Decision-makers might do this in order to reinforce existing policy preferences or prejudices. Alternatively, they gather and utilise information to support their policy positions during the discussion of specific solutions as well as to legitimise decision outcomes once they are made. Research often produces information that is unintelligible, irrelevant, unassimilable or strongly discrepant – and will be either discarded by decision-makers or construed by them in ways that are consistent with their preconceptions. Moreover, multiple sources of policy advice compete for the attention of policy-makers. Governments, for example, face departmental policy advice, advice from cabinet office and executive agencies, party-political advice, political advice from policy units, the recommendations of parliamentary committees or blue ribbon commissions, and outside advice – generating the potential for conflicting advice and necessitating political choice.

9. The problem can be defined as *societal disconnection* of both researchers and decision-makers from each other and from those who the research is about or intended for, to the extent that effective implementation is undermined. First, decision-makers are more likely to use internal sources of information. External sources of research are likely to be discounted. In some scenarios, 'group think' may result. Second, where there is a constructive dialogue between decision-makers and experts, there may be joint technocratic distance from the general public. The recommendations lead to a focus on, for example, 'participatory rural analysis', 'street-level bureaucracy' and encouraging 'public understanding of science'.

10. The problem can be conceived of as not simply a question of research having a direct policy impact, but one of broader patterns of socio-political, economic and cultural influence over the long term. For instance, an organisation or group of researchers may have huge impact on the media but little or no input into policy

development. This leads to questioning of the *domains of research relevance*, impact and influence. In this perspective, the relationship and status of 'science' in relation to society is constantly evolving where in OECD countries, public deference to expert knowledge is less apparent (Nowotony, *et al*, 2000). Furthermore, research may take a generation to reveal its influence. The 'enlightenment model' falls into this category and is discussed in greater detail below.

11. The problem can be defined as one of power relations. This generates concerns about the *contested validity of knowledge(s)*, issues of censorship and control, and the question of ideology. The social and political context is important to understanding up take of research. Institutional arrangements, the nature of regime in power, the culture of public debate (or lack of it) and prevailing idea of truth or hegemony, structure what is considered 'relevant' or 'useful' knowledge. This is a fertile area of scholarship where theoretical developments in social theory, anthropology, development methodologies and economics have all pointed to the close relation that exists between knowledge and power (Baumann 1999).

12. The problem can be viewed as one of the validity of research, and problems relating to the question: what is knowable? Attention is then focused on different epistemologies and 'ways of knowing'. The most common distinction is drawn between indigenous understandings of the world, and Western rationalist (scientific) approaches. This perspective prompts more participatory approaches to research, and emphasises multiple domains and types of knowledge, with differing logics and epistemologies.

Depending on the way in which the problem of research-policy dynamics is understood and interpreted has implications for the methods adopted to improve the relationship. Different strategies are adopted. If the problem is located on the supply side, as in points 1-4, then approaches to improve research communication and dissemination are adopted. This could involve initiatives such as the establishment of research reporting services (on web-sites and traditional media); encouraging 'policy entrepreneur' styles in research institutions and training activities for researchers such as media workshops and exercises in public speaking; how to write a policy brief, etc. In this context the role of the 'policy entrepreneur' is crucial. The product of the researcher is not usually in a format that can be used by policy makers. Consequently, an intermediary – a 'research broker' or 'policy entrepreneur'— with a flair for interpreting and communicating the technical or theoretical work is needed. This is usually an individual but sometimes an organisation such as think tank plays a similar role in marketing knowledge or synthesizing and popularising research. Successful policy entrepreneurs are said to exert 'agenda-setting' potential; that is, a power to shape understanding of problems, definition of issues and a capacity to draw political attention to certain sources of knowledge and expertise. A common position in these perspectives is that initiative and action comes from the research end in efforts to customise research for policy – the consumers tend to be portrayed as relatively passive absorbers of research.

If the problem is located on the demand side, as in points 5-8, then strategies focus on improved awareness and absorption of research inside government and developing a culture of 'policy learning'. It becomes necessary to expand research management expertise. Measures that might allow government agencies to become 'intelligent consumers' of research include: the establishment of policy evaluation units; sabbaticals for civil servants in a university or research institute; the creation of civil service colleges; in-house training on research management and 'evidence based policy' as well as the creation of 'public sector MBAs'. Yet, such measures assume that knowledge utilisation in government is a technical problem that can be resolved with technical 'fixes' and 'tools'.

However, a larger part of the problem lies in understanding flaws and imperfections in the policy process, especially the 'implementation gap'. This gap in the execution of policy is the difference between the policy-makers objectives and what actually happens at the point of policy delivery. Policy-makers have a 'control deficit' that results from not implementing the policies themselves but being reliant upon local government officials, NGOs or others. Consequently, a simple top-down hierarchical view of policy implementation from executive down through ministries and departmental agencies cannot be assumed. Policy is thrown off course by factors such as bureaucratic incompetence and/or resistance as well as inadequate resources or inaccurate or incomplete research resulting in flawed policy design. Modification of policy is inevitable in the implementation phase where 'street level' bureaucrats at the 'coal face' play an important role mediating policy between the centre and the local environment, between decision-making elites and the public, and in their discretionary powers. In the 'aftermath' of policy formulation the 'appropriate research and evidence-based policies may be put in place but their proper implementation is a different story altogether' (Jennifer Liguton, 21st November 2001)

To an extent, this dilemma can be lessened through effective monitoring and evaluation that promotes policy learning and co-ordination at all levels of administration. Learning from evaluation occurs when policy-makers' understanding of the policy process changes, or when they modify policy because of knowledge about past policy experiences. Policy analysis and evaluation is a part of policy making where researchers can potentially play a more apparent role. For example, ratification and monitoring of international agreements creates new policy spaces into which research can move. More generally, 'research editors' are needed in government to sort out useful, rigorous and high quality research from poor standard or irrelevant research. Consequently, public agencies need to have strong administrative capacity for effective evaluation and policy analysis.

Rather than a matter of developing appropriate research dissemination techniques, 'bridging' strategies or improving governmental policy analysis capacity that identify problems in supply and demand, explanations 8-12 see the problem rooted in wider social and political context. Socio-cultural explanations stress the need for long term engagement of researchers with policy makers that create common understandings and identities. This implies developing practices that take researchers beyond supplying and/or brokering research in a one-way direction and allow a more productive exchange

between decision-makers and implementers on what does and does not work in the transition from theory to practice. Practices could include mechanisms that bring researchers into government such as through internships, co-option onto advisory committees and official patronage of policy research networks as well as broader practices that encourage societal interaction. There is a 'capacity building' element to knowledge utilisation but constructivists and post-modernists see knowledge-in-policy as a more organic process.

Constructivists focus on the social construction of policy problems, policy belief systems and identity. The emphasis is on common understandings and shared identities as the dynamic for change. This positive identification among actors challenges the notion that interests are objectively discernible. Instead, interests evolve and are formed by interactions over time. Institutions and policies are formed around mutual understanding and policy change is explained by the meaning that states or individual policy actors attribute to an action or development. Accordingly, researchers are one set of actors producing and articulating shared sets of meaning. Policy change arises through increased propensity for co-operation and collective action.

Post-modern approaches often emphasise how language or discourse shapes the understanding of problems, and hence the nature of problem solving. The emphasis is on how language shapes not only policy agendas but also perception. Policy discourses mark out an arena where people 'take up subject positions and identities, create relations to one another and construct worldviews'. These discourses generate 'effects of truth'; that is, 'normalizing or naturalizing specific ways of thinking and doing things, often with a claim to scientific or other expertise'. Discourses 'internalize' power and knowledge (Krause Hansen *et al*, 2002). In other words, it is not external events in an 'objective reality' that prompt change but how these events are events are perceived, interpreted and articulated (see Garnett, 1999: 3). Power resides not simply in research and advice that is synchronised with the policy preferences of political leaders, but also in the way that research can provide a foundation for 'counter-discourses' and the formation of alternative sites of resistance.

These approaches do not separate the world of research and the world of policy making but see knowledge and power as inter-related. The very idea of 'bridging research and policy' is a false one as it presents a biased view of two autonomous communities. As a consequence, there is less agonising in these perspectives about the 'weak link between research and policy'. Instead, research and policy are viewed as mutually constitutive in the sense that knowledge is power. Indeed, there is less concern for how knowledge is used, and the instrumentalism that that position entails, and greater interest in the longer term and atmospheric character of dominant thinking and regimes of truth, and the contests with other knowledges.

To varying degree, the twelve perspectives employ theoretical assumptions about either the relationship of knowledge to state and society, the nature of communication or the economic forces of supply and demand. However, most of the above conceptions

implicitly ignore the policy process, treating the dynamics of policy as a 'black box' into which research, analysis or data is inserted, consumed and out of which come decisions, legislation and policy. This input-output model not only reinforces the metaphorical image of two worlds that need to be 'bridged' but it also does not capture how the messy process of policy shapes and modifies how or why research is used, abused or ignored.

4. Five Models of Knowledge Utilisation.

This section briefly outlines some mainstream models of knowledge utilisation that explicitly build in an account of what policy is and how it happens. The first model – the rational comprehensive model – is an ideal type. The remaining four attempt to provide more realistic accounts of how, when and why knowledge is used in decision-making.[8]

The discussion circumvents the much criticised 'stages' model of the policy process. This traditional way of conceptualising the 'policy cycle' is to divide it into four neat stages – problem definition and agenda setting; formal decision-making; policy implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. The advantage of the policy cycle approach is that breaks down a very complicated process into manageable stages that can be investigated alone or in their relationship to other stages of the process. It aids theory building as it provides scope for case studies and comparative analysis. However, it depicts a linear model of policy moving from one stage to the next stages and should be treated as no more than a heuristic device.

In reality, policy making is messy. A "divided, dichotomous and linear sequence" of policy making from problem identification through analysis to implementation is unrealistic. It is more accurate to conceptualise the policy process as "a chaos of purposes and accidents", in which "policy implementers interact with policy-makers, by adapting new policies, co-opting the embodied project designs, or simply ignoring new policies…" (Juma and Clarke 1995). Indeed, drought, famine, earthquakes, war, insurgency, and other policy crises such as 'foot and mouth' disease ensure that disorder and unpredictability in the policy-making process is commonplace. The policy cycle model does highlight the need for different kinds of data collection, research and analysis at different times in the policy-making process. However, this model cannot explain why policy change occurs, or when research might play a decisive role.

The Rational Model

The rational (or rational-comprehensive) model is 'rational' in the sense that it depicts a logical and ordered sequence of policy-making phases. It is 'comprehensive' in the sense

[8] Although relevant, the neo-institutionalist perspective is not included here as it is discussed by Sarah Clarke and Lyn Squire in another chapter in this volume. As has been noted elsewhere, 'the way that scientific advice is used is heavily influenced by the way the official advisory system is put together' (ESRC 1999: 5).

that it canvases, assesses and compares all options, calculating all the social, political and economic costs and benefits of a public policy. The central principle is the collection and analysis of all data. Extensive communication and consultation is required, and because policy-making is construed of as 'problem-solving', 'expert' participation is essential. The role of the researcher (or policy analyst) is to research and present all policy options. As this model encourages the full examination of all policy options and 'evidence-based policy-making, it mitigates tendencies for conservatism and habit in policy-making.

However, this model assumes that researchers have both time and access to full information, and that this information will allow the best policy option to be identified. Knowledge is seen as neutral or apolitical, and consequently technocracy and cliques of 'experts' can result. This model also assumes that decision-makers will be persuaded by the most accurate or scientifically plausible option. However, the aims of policy-makers are often limited to satisfying immediate public demands, not to maximising long-term social gains. Rather than searching out all policy alternatives, research often stops as soon as a workable option is identified. Furthermore, the combination of 'sunk costs' in existing policies, the cost (time and resources) of compiling and assessing information, and the (generally) poor predictive capacity of (social) science result in less than 'comprehensive' outcomes from the policy-making process.

Recognising that there are practical constraints on rational decision-making Herbert Simon developed a model of the policy process premised on the notions of 'bounded rationality' and 'satisficing' (for an overview see Parsons, 1995). This approach focuses on the boundary between rational and the non-rational aspects of human social behaviour. Decision-makers, accepting the limits of their situation, choose compromise policies that satisfy (rather than maximise) organisational goals, and which are acceptable in the face of competing demands. This modification of the rational model of policy recognises that individual and organisational rationality are limited by factors such as: organisational and individual values; limits to the ability to compare options or evaluate the range of research findings; social and cultural difficulty in identifying the 'correct' decision; and organisational constraints on the pursuit of certain courses of action.

'Muddling Through'

Incrementalism in policy-making is the polar opposite of the rational model. Lindblom (1980) has extensively criticised the rational model for being a poor guide to policy-making reality. Instead, policy-making is viewed as a series of steps in which policies are gradually modified ('incrementalism'). Lindblom took up the notion of 'satisficing', arguing that policy-makers are generally conservative in decision-making, and that policy is generally a matter of 'muddling through'. There is rarely the time, resources or inclination to conduct comprehensive research with the aim of informing the policy-making process. Civil servants and politicians are entirely pragmatic, aiming to ensure that government can function, cope with pressure group demands, and deal with crises as they arise. Pragmatism in policy-making tends toward the avoidance of costly

innovations or departures from routine practice, and either the marginal alteration of existing policies or reactive policies to problems that have already arisen.

Researchers are likely to be sidelined in the policy-making process. Some of the problems of 'incrementalism' for researchers involve: reinforcement of pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces; stifling of creativity and discounting of new ideas as unrealistic; and a low emphasis on developing clear goals and plans. Difficult problems requiring radical changes to resolve are ignored. Even crucial research findings may be ignored given costly investments in existing policies. Political crises (scandals or tragedies) are required before a major re-evaluation of policy occurs.

In this model, good policy is not rational in the sense that it is based on the full assessment of all options, but rather is simply whatever works. Policy-making revolves around the marginal alteration of existing policies, and is reactive, with action only occurring once a problem has arisen. Researchers are only one relatively weak force for policy change.

The Knowledge Utilisation School

Knowledge 'trickles through' into consciousness. The knowledge utilisation school views knowledge as cumulative. Knowledge about practice, over time, becomes practice, in a process of knowledge diffusion termed 'enlightenment'. While research is rarely convincing or comprehensive enough to exercise a determining impact on policy-making, accumulated research findings gradually alters decision-makers perceptions of both the causes of problems and the likely effects of policy interventions. The activities of numerous research and policy-making actors, including Commissions of Inquiry, individual policy entrepreneurs, the research staff of government agencies, the media, interest groups and issue networks are important in this process (Weiss & Bucuvalas 1980: 101-05). Advancement in knowledge will therefore eventually be reflected in incremental changes in policy. That is, decision-makers slowly become 'enlightened'.[9]

However, as in the rational model, knowledge is viewed as apolitical, and it is assumed that authoritative knowledge will eventually prevail. Consequently, this perspective outlines the processes by which knowledge is simplified and transmitted, but does not analyse the dynamics of what kind of knowledge finds its way into policy and who influences this. The social and political context in which knowledge is created and used is effectively excluded.

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[9] This approach with its emphasis on diffusion can be contrasted with 'garbage can' ideas of the policy process which envisage a more opportunistic and chaotic process whereby new ideas or research enters policy. Instead of knowledge gradually changing policy thinking, garbage can explanations see decisions made as if decision-makers reach into a garbage can – drawing a problem with one hand and a solution with the other, and the two are joined together. Old or rejected Cabinet submissions or policy proposals can be passed off as solutions to new problems. Privatisation is an example of a pre-conceived solution looking for or manipulating problems. Solutions (research) 'chase' public problems.

Policy Paradigms

A 'policy paradigm' is "an overarching framework of ideas that structures policy making in a particular field" (Hall 1990: 59). Through these paradigms (or dominant sets of ideas) researchers, and crucially, policy-makers, view politics, economics and society, as well as their own role in these spheres. The paradigm serves to define the problems that are to be addressed, and what policies or instruments are appropriate to resolving them. In this approach socio-economic and political factors become the main determinants of whether knowledge is acceptable. Ruling coalitions or powerful political interest groups exercise a crucial impact on the kind of research, analysis and advice that is selected in policy-making through their influence over these paradigms. Research becomes subordinate to political interests, a resource to be used in furthering those interests.

A paradigm is largely taken for granted and rarely subject to scrutiny. However, political problems and increased policy failure generate interest in alternative paradigms, and "politicians will have particularly strong incentives to seek out and embrace ideas that challenge the policies of their opponents" (Hall, 1990: 73). Policy-making under policy paradigms is characterised therefore by long periods of incremental change, punctuated by brief periods of major change. Three different orders of policy change or learning that take place within this framework:

- *First order* change is based on 'satisficing' (minor adjustments to policies). The legitimacy of the overall policy framework is not questioned.

- *Second order* change and learning arises when 'satisficing' fails. Limited experimentation and new policy techniques occur, while the re-assessment of existing policy generates evaluative research, and thereby suggests further alternative approaches. However, the policy orthodoxy and its objectives are not questioned, only the way that these are achieved. Policy-learning takes place within the existing policy paradigm.

- *Third order* change (or 'social learning') involves a radical shift in the thinking that informs policy. If the existing policy paradigm generates problems that first and second order changes cannot resolve the authority and coherence of the paradigm is threatened, and a 'paradigm shift' occurs. Problems are redefined, new interpretative frameworks are developed, and policy learning from external sources takes place. The shift from Keynesianism to Neo-liberalism is an example of this. Crucially, a paradigm shift in policy (and/or institutions) is the basis of a new period of stability (Parsons 1995: 203-4). The role of researchers is to provide the foundations for alternative paradigms.

This approach specifically raises the question of whom does knowledge serve? Power interests are central. However, knowledge is used as a tool to serve political and economic interests. Knowledge is not seen as having independent power.

Network Approaches

The study of policy networks is enjoying a renaissance in social science. These approaches also bring a more sophisticated understanding of *where policy happens*. The previous approaches tend to assume state sovereignty in policy making. However, studies of transnational networks that emerge between institutions, countries or within regions such as ASEAN help raise understanding that policy is made in domains other than the state. Global policy processes have emerged as governments, international organisations, and other non-state actors respond to policy problems that transcend national boundaries. Cross border movement (be it money, pollution or refugees) or pollution/overuse of oceans or the atmosphere for example have led to new, informal forms of governance that complement the formal authority of the state, public sector hierarchies, international organisations and markets. Public policy (though still dependent on the state) must recognise the role of non-state actors, as well as these complex and flexible structures of governance or 'global public policy networks' (Reinicke *et al* 2000). These are alliances of government agencies, international organisations, corporations and elements of civil society for the delivery of public goods.

Within these networks, researchers co-operate and interact with decision-makers, as this is recognised as an effective way to achieve common goals. Researchers can provide important information and analytic resources, initiate and undertake research, and develop network infrastructure (such as newsletters, databases, conferences and web-sites). They also provide the conceptual language, and help create common ideas and arguments that educate network participants into the values or consensus of the network. Networks with decision-makers as active participants have the potential to influence policy in both local and global domains. Even without such political involvement, the norms, values and aspirations of networks can have significant impact on the climate of elite opinion and culture of public debate.

Some of the key network concepts include advocacy coalitions, transnational advocacy networks, discourse communities/coalitions, and epistemic communities.[10] In this chapter, it is not possible to do justice to the complexity of these concepts, suffice to make two important points. Firstly, concepts such as epistemic communities and discourse coalitions emphasise the independent power of ideas. That is, 'consensual knowledge' and 'policy narratives' can have autonomous power in shaping policy and creating the categories through which meaning is given to phenomena. The development of new interpretative frameworks propels policy change.

Secondly, where other network concepts are more cautious in attributing independent force to concepts, greater emphasis is given to the cognitive dimension of policy making and/or the normative content of policy. For example, advocacy coalitions are groups of policy actors from a variety of institutions who share a set of policy beliefs within a particular policy sector (for example, health, education or defence). Policy change results

[10] For an overview of network approaches see Stone 2002.

from a combination of competition between coalitions within a system and external events impinging upon the system. This approach leads to a focus on the belief systems of policy elites, and the conditions under which policy-oriented learning takes place. By contrast, transnational advocacy networks (TANs) emphasise the role of values and principled action. They are bound together by shared values, dense exchanges of information and services, and a shared discourse. These coalitions seek to shape the climate of public debate and influence global policy agendas. TANs are called advocacy networks because 'advocates plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition' (Keck & Sikkink, 1998: 8). They muster research, analysis and expert commentary in support of their cause.[11] Competing advocacy coalitions and TANs can result in situations where expertise is not 'objective knowledge' but 'contested information'. Policy becomes a battle of ideas.

Participation in policy networks and private regimes can be dependent on resources and commitment. A question for southern researchers is their ability to be included in these transnational policy communities and the dominance of Northern actors in regional and global policy debates and in international research associations.

5. Research Irrelevance and the Limits to Policy.

Ideas matter. Yet, ideas also do not matter as these models of knowledge utilisation reveal. Additionally, these models complicate our understanding policy. None of them is 'correct'. Instead, the models emphasise different features of how knowledge is modified by a policy context. A government agency consulting and commissioning researchers will not necessarily adopt and incorporate the resulting scientific advice into decision-making. Furthermore, in those instances where ideas or policy recommendations from outside government are seriously considered, they are invariably modified and adapted by internal bureaucratic dynamics and other political considerations.

Research institutions can have some medium term impact on government in the sense that they may be a stepping stone in a political career. In other words, think tanks, universities and other civil society research institutions can serve as political training grounds, grooming emerging political leaders in policy debates prior to an opportunity arising for them to move into formal political sphere. One example is the spread of ideas or paradigms through the US education system, with 'The Chicago Boys' influencing Latin American policy-making with monetarist ideas (Valdes 1995). Similarly, the free market think tanks are frequently identified as a key source of ideas and thinking that helped undermine the Keynesian policy paradigm (Fischer and Forrester 1993). However, long-term policy impact is notoriously difficult to prove.

[11] Examples of TANs include the coalitions of supporters that form around transnational issues such as child labour in the production of Western consumer goods, the international campaign to ban land-mines or concern about 'blood diamonds'.

This chapter does not seek to present a negative view of research utilisation. As one of the first contributors to the 'GDN bridging policy and research e-discussion' noted, 'there are enlightened bureaucrats, planners and politicians who want to link research and policy making' (Sakti Pal, 25th October, 2001). Other e-contributors considered that the administrative setting can positively influence the uptake of research, especially the presence of in-house governmental research units (Nijinkeu, 30th October 2001) and many recounted instances where research had made a difference in policy making and implementation.

However, the stories in the e-discussion and elsewhere cannot be boiled down to an essence or set of steps that will ensure policy research success. As one e-contributor put it: '"policy" and "research" cannot be defined very specifically nor can the nexus between them' (Gul Najam Jamy, 6th November 2001). Too many factors come into play making general statements about how to bridge policy and research a risky endeavour.

Finally, research is not a panacea for policy. Social and economic problems will persist. It is a 'romantic notion that if research and policy work together from the onset one can see better results' (Gul Najam Jamy, 6th November 2001). Politics, values and ideology are an inevitable part of policy making and are reflected in the funding/commissioning of research, the values of the researcher, and the political selection and application of research. Research has social consequences beyond that which is examined. Research legitimises those who commissioned or funded it. It legitimises social and economic issues as 'public policy problems'. The normative dimension of research and policy making cannot be ignored. Reference to 'knowledge' or 'research' does not signify a single body of thinking, data or literature that is commonly recognised and accepted. To the contrary, it implies a struggle between different 'knowledges' or what are often described as 'discourses', 'worldviews' and 'regimes of truth'. Accordingly for many, the issue is not simply the creation and dissemination of knowledge, but the kind of knowledge that is produced and the kind of knowledge that dominates. Questions about the process of policy change through research input, and the advocacy of what is deemed to be international 'best practice' or 'cutting edge research', come to focus on the 'mobilisation of bias', and on why some ideas are selected and others systematically ignored.

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