Supporting public policy production in public health by sharing evidence

Policy Stage Model
Punctuated Equilibrium Model

François Benoit, Lead
National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy
This presentation will not be:

- A criticism of policy makers
- A rejection of policy
- An universal recipe
The anecdote

• “There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.”

  - John Maynard Keynes

Two quotations attributed to Bismarck

Laws... like, sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made
Attributed to Otto von Bismarck
Politics is the art of the possible

-Also attributed to Otto von Bismarck
A context-sensitive approach

A
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approach

Actors
Problem
Knowledge
Stages
American case:
Evidence and policy makers

- Attitude:
  - Proactive
  - Skeptical

- Policy results:
  - Evidence considered
  - No link to evidence

Attitudes: Evidence & Research

40% Skeptics

60% ‘Proactives’

Photo © istock/Alex Slobodkin
Interest…but missed opportunities

Attitudes: Evidence & Research

40% Skeptics

60% Proactives

Photo © istock/Alex Slobodkin
Actual: Evidence & Research

53%  
Absence

47%  
Presence

Photo © istock/Alex Slobodkin
Why?
Many systematic reviews

**Review article**
Health policy-makers’ perceptions of their use of evidence: a systematic review

Simon Innvar, Gunn Vist, Mari Trommald, Andrew Oxman
Health Services Research Unit, National Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway

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The Use of Research Evidence in Public Health Decision Making Processes: Systematic Review
Lois Orton, Ffion Lloyd-Williams, David Taylor-Robinson, Martin O’Flaherty, Simon Capewell
Published: July 26, 2011 • DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0021704 • Featured in PLOS Collections

Oliver et al. BMC Health Services Research 2014, 14:2
http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/14/2

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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**
A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers
Kathryn Oliver¹, Simon Innvar², Theo Lorenc³, Jenny Woodman⁴ and James Thomas⁵

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2002
(45 papers)

2011
(18 papers)

2014
(145 papers)
What works, according to policy makers?

- Personal contact between researchers and policy makers (13/24).
- Research timeliness and relevance (13/24).
- Summary with clear recommendations (11/24).
- Good quality research (6/24).
- Research confirming existing policies or supporting decision makers’ personal views (6/24).
- Pressure from community or constituents (4/24).
- Research with effectiveness data (3/24).

Facilitators for evidence use by decision makers

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Nelson et al., 1997; Nutley et al., 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intermediary affiliation</td>
<td>Dunn, 1980; Nelson et al., 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Applicability of the research question to the decision maker’s</td>
<td>Beyer &amp; Trice, 1982; Zigler, 1998</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>situation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Feldman, Nadash, &amp; Gursen, 2001; Hird, 2005; Nutley et al., 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Facilitating infrastructure</td>
<td>Weiss et al., 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Decision makers’ participation in the research process</td>
<td>Nutley et al., 2007; Lomas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Facilitators for evidence use by decision makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Use of narratives and anecdotes</td>
<td>Nelson et al., 1987; Nutley et al., 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Clear and concise presentation</td>
<td>Beyer &amp; Trice, 1982; Feldman et al., 2001; Greenberg et al., 2003; Greenberg &amp; Mandell, 1991; Nelson et al., 1987; Nutley et al., 2007; Weiss &amp; Bucuvalas, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Personal relationship between researcher and Decision maker</td>
<td>Bimber, 1996; Hird, 2005; Huberman, 1987; Innvaer et al., 2007; Oh, 1997, Weiss et al., 2008</td>
</tr>
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## Facilitators for evidence use by decision makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Timely for decision making</th>
<th>Beyer &amp; Trice, 1982; Feldman et al., 2001; Greenberg et al., 2003; Innvaer et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 1987; Nutley et al., 2007; Weiss &amp; Bucuvalas, 1980</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Type of organization</td>
<td>Beyer &amp; Trice, 1982; Dunn, 1980; Hird, 2005; Nelson et al., 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Use of economic data</td>
<td>Huston, 2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two main explanatory factors for research use by policy makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linear relation between production and use of knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge push</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assumes that high-quality research will automatically lead to higher uptake and use by decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Content-related attributes of the research influence its use by decision makers. For example: notability, complexity, validity and reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissemination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Type of research output (results) explains research utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dissemination efforts explain research utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demand pull explanation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy makers identify problems and define the needs, and they ask researchers to conduct studies that will generate alternatives or solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational interests explanation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal and organizational interests are important factor in impeding research utilization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural differences between decision makers and researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two communities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adaptation of research required: more readable and appealing reports, make more specific recommendations and focus on factors amenable to interventions by users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction explanation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The more sustained and intense the interactions between researchers and users, the more likely it is that utilization will occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Important factors are the so-called linkage mechanisms and dissemination efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More studies but not more certainty

- Access to quality research
- Researcher-decision maker collaboration
- Decision makers’ skills in understanding research
Steering away from the cookbook

- Decision makers are making their decisions based on ‘evidence’
- Researchers have to understand what evidence decision makers need and when they need it.

Different kinds of knowing

The seven useful ‘knows’ for public policy

- Know what the problem is
- Know what works
- Know how to implement the solution
- Know who to involve
- Know when to intervene
- Know where to allocate resources
- Know why humans act: symbolism, values, policy, ethics

Adapted from d’Ekblom, 2011, and Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007)
Evidence and public policies
First policy model: Stages Model

- A lens to approach public policy

Diagram:
- Information gathering
- Problem identification
- Choice of policy option
- Linking consequences and actions
- Determining each option’s impacts
Simple and linear...at first sight
In reality: non predictive
Evidence and public policy stages

- Each stage (‘moment’) requires specific information
- Better linkages between those stages and transferred evidence should increase the relevance of the information and its use in public policies


### Type of evidence by stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda setting</th>
<th>Problem structuring</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying a problem situation and collecting evidence indicating the magnitude of the problem. This information is intended for decision makers as well as other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Documenting the importance of a problem and its determinants.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Challenging frameworks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identifying the decisive, relevant data for characterizing the problem</td>
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<td><strong>Forecasting</strong></td>
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- Indicating which levers and policies will allow for intervention.
- Determining the consequences of existing or proposed policies and documenting their impacts on health and its determinants (using, for example, tools such as health impact assessment).
- Detailing the impacts of each option.
- Documenting and specifying the future costs and benefits of all strategic scenarios using information generated by forecasting.

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<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monitoring</strong></td>
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- Documenting the consequences of previously-adopted policies and participating in their implementation.
- Producing analyses, but also applying technical skills, expert knowledge and practical experience, with an emphasis on the possibility of applying the evidence gathered across different contexts.

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<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developing monitoring mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Revealing discrepancies between the policy's expected and actual results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Performing complex evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example

Addiction (1996) 91(9), 1265–1270

REVIEW

The analysis of policy: understanding the process of policy development
## Type of strategy: agenda setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Information to be transmitted by public health actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
<td><strong>Problem structuring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Researchers can influence the policy process at this stage by taking every opportunity to provide evidence to politicians, public servants, Royal Commissions and so on, in a form that is readily understood by these various groups. Consideration can also be given to providing the evidence under the auspices of groups that carry more political credibility than the individual” (Ryder 1996:1266)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Type of strategy: policy formulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Information to be transmitted by public health actors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy formulation</td>
<td><strong>Forecasting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A decision maker in Western Australia “wished to ban smoking in all the betting venues under the control of the board. Realizing that suggesting such a policy from the point of view of public health would not convince key players in the decision making process, the policy was marketed (a term used deliberately) in business terms, as a move that would attract customers because of the smoke-free atmosphere.” (Ryder 1996:1268)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence and public policies: the «usual suspects »
Evidence and public policies: considering policy analysts
Literature on policy analysts

• Descriptive:
  – Training, variable access to data and evidence, attitude vis-à-vis evidence-based policymaking, health determinants (Howlett & Fraser, 2009; Howlett, 2011; Lavis, 2002; Lavis et al., 2003; Léon, Ouimet, Lavis, Grimshaw, & Gagnon, 2013)

• Analysts’ types and roles and the window of opportunity to influence public policies

Documents used by analysts

Information monitoring newsletters 50.50%
Benchmarking reports & scoreboards 28.91%
Public opinion reports 21.76%
Policy & program evaluation reports 24.21%
Formal lobbying submissions by external associations 25.10%
Doctoral dissertations and master’s theses 9.77%
Academic books/chapters 34.14%
Academic research reports 35.15%
Articles published in scientific journals 55.69%
Government policy statements & programs 48.75%
Government action plans & strategies 47.70%
Laws & regulations 66.69%
Briefing notes 79.38%
Press reviews

Civil servants from departments of labor were particularly likely to cite the media as an important source of knowledge about the determinants of health.


Photo Credit: © istock/malerapaso
### Decision-maker, evidence and policy stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Crusader</th>
<th>Pragmatist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda setting</strong></td>
<td>Internal initiatives</td>
<td>Externally motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem recognized by:</td>
<td>Internal signals</td>
<td>External signals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem defined by:</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy formulation</strong></td>
<td>Focus on the means</td>
<td>Focus on the ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information collection</td>
<td>Inductive analysis</td>
<td>Problem to solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Substance-oriented</td>
<td>Process-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Looks for compliance</td>
<td>Wants to know what is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Convictions are central</td>
<td>Groups or information are central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the goals met?</td>
<td>Is everybody happy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability and ability to claim success</td>
<td>Influence groups: should the goals be revisited?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public policies: Ever-changing or forever still still

Photo Credit: © istock/leonid_tit
Punctuated Equilibrium

- Changes come from punctuations
- Pluralism:
  - Many interests are claiming for the policy-makers’ attention
  - Short and selective attention span from policy-maker.
  - Change occurs only when policy-makers have their eye on it.
Punctuated Equilibrium

• Default: incrementalism (marginal change)
  – Problems and definitions are established by experts from the dominant coalition

• Exception: the change
  – Brought about by
    • Exogenous shock: event, report, statistical report, media crisis (Kingdon,1995)
    • Venue shopping
Public policies in a complex system

- Output is never proportionate to input
- Any change is affected by negative feedback loops (opposing the change) and positive feedback loops (multiplying it)
- Change happens when it can overcome the friction from the status quo.
- The change (punctuation) is sudden.
Public policies in a complex system

- Complexity should not drive us to abandon the project of producing evidence-based public policies.
- But underline the need to adapt our production to evidence.
- The value of interactive feedback for implementation

In summary
A scan...rather quick

- **Actors**
  - Interest, type, activity

- **Policy stage**
  - Problem recognition or seeking solution

- **Knowledge**
  - What?
  - When?

- **Type of change**
  - Feeding the status quo
  - Imagine change


Interested?
More resources at www.ncchpp.ca