The use of research in the policymaking process

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Overview

1. Introduction: Context and the growing demand for research
2. Questions what is research? How can utilisation be enhanced?
3. Models and typologies of research and knowledge utilisation
4. Barriers and catalysts to utilisation
5. A new model for utilisation
6. Conclusions

Context

Work Package 2 - What research needs to be undertaken

Work Package 3 - Best Practice synthesis and who to undertake research

Work Package 4 - How to establish an observatory

Work Package 5 - Why is research useful?

SUPPLY

DEMAND

Growing demand for research

- In many countries there has been a growing demand for evidence based policy development.
- There has been a growth in managerialism and accountability, the use of targets and performance management is becoming pervasive.
- National and international Statistical Offices are collecting and comparing performance and user perception data.

But is research used and does it have an impact?

Questions:

What is research?

How can research use in policymaking be enhanced?

But what is research?

"Expert knowledge, published research, stakeholder consultations, previous policy evaluations, outcomes form consultations, costings from policy options, outputs form statistical modelling"

Research Evidence Definition UK Cabinet Office.

Is knowledge research evidence?

Are statistics research?

What is the difference between information, research and knowledge?

Knowledge Definitions

	Knowledge Type		How obtained?
1	Organisational		Gained from organising public services, through governance and regulation activities
2	Practitioner		Gained from providing public services, tends to be tacit, personal context specfic
3	Service User		Gained from experience of and reflection on using public services, often tacit
4	Research		Gained systematically within a planned strategy, provided by evaluations, reports etc
5	Policy Community		Gained from wider policy context, residing in the government agencies and ministries

Walter et al, 2004

Emphasises individual, institutional and group knowledge

How is research used?

Boaz and Nutley identified four main uses for research.

- The design and development of public policy
- To assess the impact of policy interventions
- To improve policy implementation
- Identification of tomorrows issues

Combining these uses and better differentiating the utilisation of research was an important goal in the development of a new model

Models of research utilisation

There are at least ten models of research utilisation

Systems oriented models	number of common
Practitioner oriented models	rchers and users
Consumer oriented models	r demand
Action research model	Ir

Walter et al. 2004 Models

- **Research Based Practitioner model** It is the responsibility of the individual practitioner to keep abreast of research used to inform day-to-day activities. Research use is a linear process of accessing, appraising and applying. Assumes professional autonomy.
- **Organisational Excellence model** Key to use rests with organisations (leadership and management). Supported by a research-minded culture. Ongoing learning within organisations.
- **Embedded Research model** Use is achieved by embedding research in systems and processes. Ensuring use lies with policymakers and delivery managers.

Walter et al found:-

- The models are not mutually exclusive.
- limited success of all three models.
- The *individual practitioner model* is dependent on practitioners having capacity to access and interpret research.
- The *organisational excellence model* was relatively common but limited evidence of its effectiveness in practice.
- The *embedded research model* is not widely adopted and remains undeveloped.

So what does work?

Research utilisation studies suffer from four common problems.

- The composition of the population being studied
- Specification of the term ‘use’
- Problems associated with defining and measuring factors influencing use
- Problems with the inability of respondents to report and explain behaviour accurately

Results from impact studies

Studies investigating the use of research in policymaking are relatively limited.

- Percy-Smith et al (696 research users) 69% reported use effectively for developing new policy initiatives, 70% for improving services. But only 38% were able to identify a single influential piece of research.
- Landry et al (833 government officials). Six stage research utilisation methodology, found university research used more extensively than commonly assumed.

Factors affecting utilisation

Studies provide a number of relatively consistent clues to what works.

- Landry et al's research examined factors against a variety of models. The most important factor in organisational models was the *user's context.*
- Important factors against two community models :-
  - Adaptation of research outputs to user's needs
  - User's acquisition efforts
  - Links between users and researchers
- Surprisingly projects focusing on user needs did not affect utilisation. Policy interventions should not attempt to induce researchers to shift the focus of projects.

Barriers to research utilisation

Policymaker/consumer barriers

- Lack of time to read
- Lack of skills to understand research
- Lack of autonomy in applying research
- Uncertainty about validity of research
- Mis-trust between users and researchers
- Population instability

Researcher barriers

- Too long to produce research, not timely
- Poor accessibility of research
- Inadequate dissemination
- Poor substance of evidence provided
- Lack of local focus
- Differing methodological quality
- Few overviews of bodies of research

Catalysts for utilisation

Policymaker/consumer catalysts

- Respected professionals to champion research
- Collaborative approach to the creation and use of research
- Personal contact and trust between consumers and researchers

Researcher catalysts

- Accessibility of research and main findings
- Make clear the implications for policymaking
- Active dissemination
- Complex research needs face-to-face dissemination
- Working together after the use of research in policy making to evaluate impact
- Better understanding by researchers of political culture

Implications for eGOVERNET

Improving communication

- eGOVERNET will provide some insight to the research requirements of policymakers. Work packages should also try to find best practices in improving communication at the individual and institutional levels.

Building institutional bridges

- Greatest benefits arise from sustained interaction between policy makers. But how can this process be institutionalised? Is it within the eGOVERNET remit to intervene?

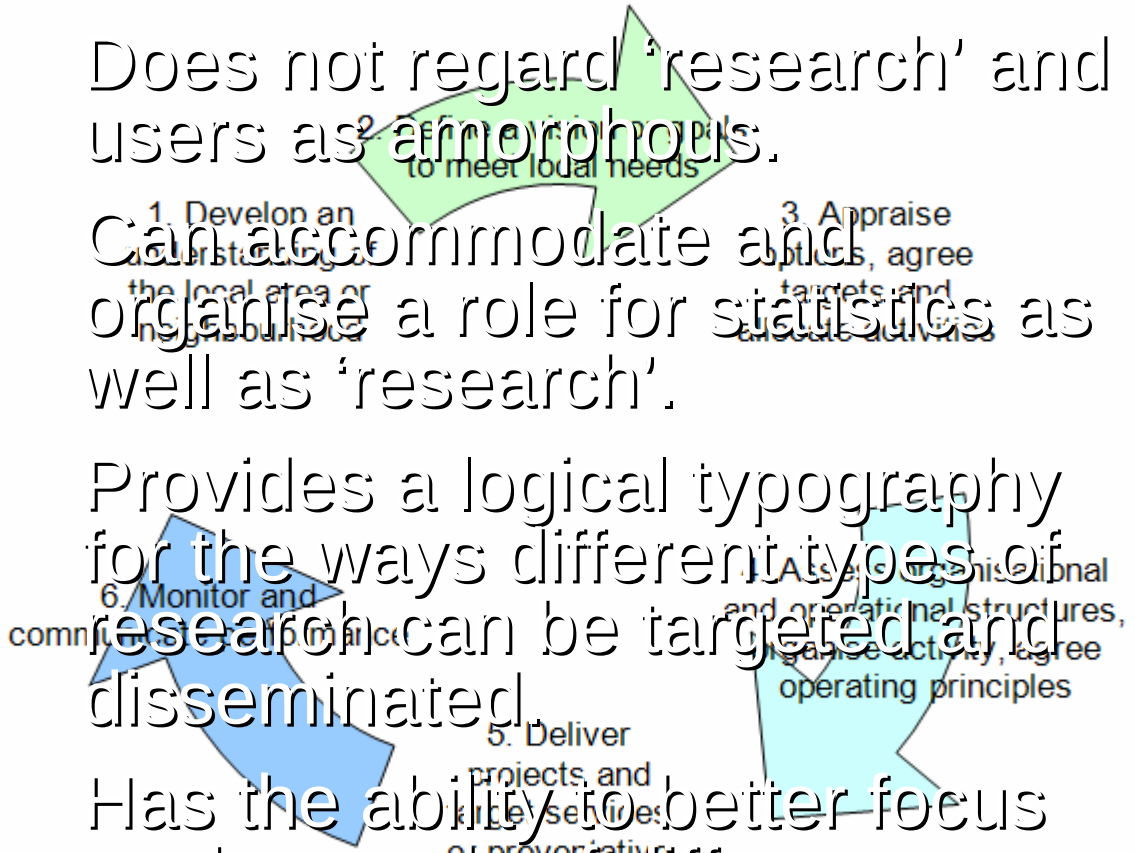
A new model to better capture the role of research in the policy design and development process

Need to add an outer layer for national and regional organisational context and the societal context

An Inner core for the individual, organisational and institutional context

The new model

- Does not regard 'research' and users as amorphous.
- Can accommodate and organise a role for statistics as well as 'research'.
- Provides a logical typography for the ways different types of research can be targeted and disseminated.
- Has the ability to better focus on the needs of different users.
- Accommodates individual and organisational contexts.



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Stage of the policy design and delivery process	Research and researcher requirements	Statistical requirements of policymakers	Research and statistics sharing activities between partners
Strategy design	A broad range contextual research is required. Ideally, up-to-date or time-series research to better understand current and future needs, opportunities and the local/national environment.	A broad range of up-to-date information is required, at fine geographical detail for targeting to enable policymakers to better understand baselines and trends in neighbourhoods.	Research and statistical information can be shared to enhance understanding and enhance visioning activities. Sharing this information will usually be non-contentious.
Operations and delivery	Research focused on the services or initiatives being developed is required. Operations and organisational research focusing on the initiative or service being delivered can be important.	Individual and/or household statistics are required by service providers to enable them to 'join-up' and enhance services or better target those in need.	Sharing individual and/or household information within administrations and between partners can be contentious. Data sharing is important to enhance targeting and joined up delivery but it can be difficult to overcome legal and technical problems.
Evaluation and performance monitoring	Researchers provide analytical skills and perceived independence for many evaluation studies. Numerous researchers analyse evaluation studies to enhance understanding and develop new theoretical perspectives.	Robust statistics collected in a consistent way to enable comparison over time is essential to ensure accountability. Data usually concerns or is derived from outputs of service delivery.	Data sharing is less contentious because most information will be aggregated by service or geographical area. Local 'political' and/or legal concerns may determine what data is shared with partners, citizens and researchers.

Conclusions

Four key themes from the report

- There are subtle but important differences between information, research and knowledge
- Most models are simplistic – polar, two groups -supply and demand, researchers and users
- Key barriers relate to time, validity/understanding and dissemination
- Key catalysts relate to relationships, active bespoke dissemination for user needs
- New model differentiates between user groups, provides a focus to better meet user needs