



Getting Research into Policy and Practice

Summary of Key Themes

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Social science that makes a difference



HSRC
Human Sciences
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This presentation is

- A summary of the key themes to emerge from Day 1 of a two day seminar on **G**etting **R**esearch into **P**olicy and **P**ractice
- Second day was a series of case studies (difficult to summarise)
- Seminar was focused on HIV policy/evidence
- My rankings!

Fundamental Issues

- Policy is about politics, politics is about power
- **Those who have the power make decisions**
- Purpose of evidence is to improve the effectiveness of policy
 - Competing priorities and limited resources – i.e. allocative efficiency
 - Facilitate accountability – assuming democracy
 - Protect human rights
- Need to engage with each other as human beings through dialogue, by building relationships and establishing meanings

Key Issues

- Human Rights are protected through respect, responsibility and voluntarism
 - A relationship that is 2 way (active citizenship)
- Accessibility
 - Of research (physical, intellectually)
 - Of the players in the policy system
 - Of the system
- Politics of the moment ... and events, dear boy (context)
- Quality of evidence...probabilistic and uncertain nature of knowledge (static and objective?)

Strategizing

- Getting on the same wavelength as decision makers (...or just key decision makers)
 - Using the flow, rather than going against it
- Use research to alter power balances
- Focus on alliances and adversaries - specific to the issue and the context
 - Some of your most NB allies are in government
- Strategic management of evidence
 - Cost and time to sell ... key activity
 - Fine line between non-partisan and advocacy – once that line is blurry it risks disappearing

Know the enemy...

- Policy driver is often an individual, given authority – how it is wielded depends on the person...who operates in a context. Consider:
 - Command she has of expertise and relationships
 - The hierarchy the policy driver is constrained by and accountable to
 - They are not known to use evidence
 - They have to facilitate a wide range of stakeholders and most will welcome help doing this

Some tasks at hand

- The limestone analogy – e.g. Taylor report
- By their own admission - Government not good at listening to advice
- Academics need to understand how government works and accept what can't be changed
- Research needs to be a shared *experience*... starting with the asking of the research question –
 - Knowledge is our *responsive capacity*, not a product

If I may, for this (CSIR) forum?

1. Concept of *informed* policy debate and *quality* evidence... how do we know it is not policy based evidence?...[Dogs wag their own tails]
2. Time is time we need to produce evidence quicker – by implementing monitoring systems when policy is implemented?
3. The role of Web 2.0? Cheap, wide coverage, evidence stays alive, role in *shifting the consensus*?

Goodhart's Law

- Once a social or economic indicator is made a target for the purpose of conducting social or economic policy, then it will lose the information content that would qualify it to play such a role
- when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure