

RESEARCH TO POLICY - THE PROCESS AND THE GAPS

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Supporting Use of Research Evidence for Policy in
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OUTLINE

- Policies and the policy-making process
- Why use research evidence for policy/decisions
- Why research may not be used in policy/decision making (some gaps)
- How does research turn into policy (more gaps revealed)
- How can the journalist assist this process?

POLICIES AND THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

- **A public policy** is a deliberate and (usually) careful decision that provides guidance for addressing a selected public concern
- **Policy development** therefore is a decision-making process that helps address identified goals, problems or concerns.
 - At its core, policy development entails the selection of a destination or a desired objective
- Policy development is a complex process
 - Context sensitive
 - Actors (never the same even for a single policy)
 - Content

WHY USE RESEARCH FOR DECISIONS/POLICIES

Economically

- helping to identify cost effective policy decisions based on sound evidence
- ensure that public investment in research is wisely spent by maximizing the use made of the findings

Morally

- if we are going to intervene in people's lives, we have a responsibility to do so based on the best possible evidence of positive outcomes to maximize benefit and limit harm

Politically

- public expectations in some areas such as medical interventions, are that policies will reflect evidence, making it important for politicians to at least appear to use research

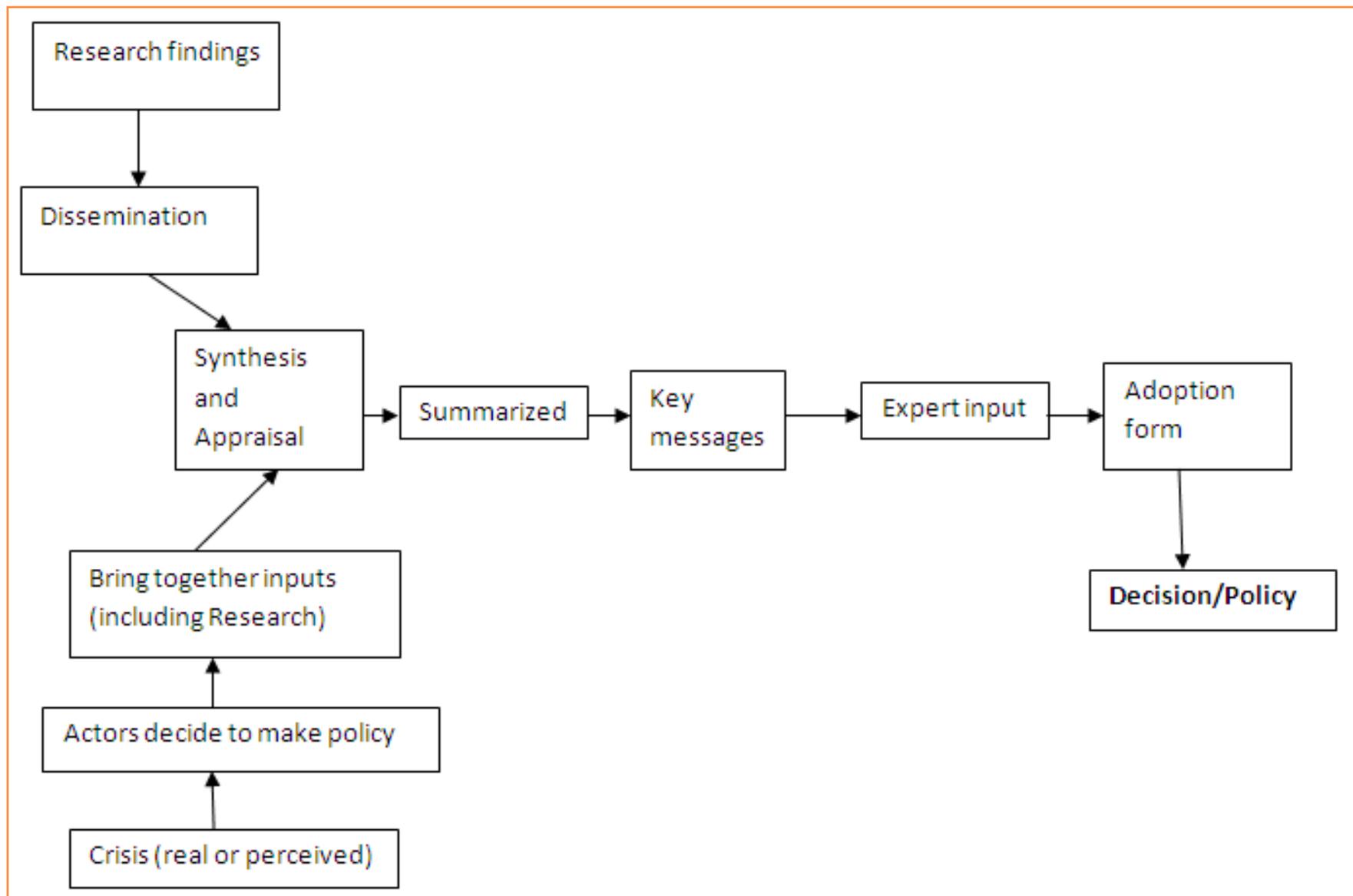
WHY RESEARCH MAY NOT BE USED IN POLICY/DECISION MAKING

- Several studies have demonstrated that senior civil servants and politicians **rank academic research bottom** of the sources that they consult in the policy-making process
- Policy process is complex with many factors
 - Research competes with many other factors that contribute to the process
 - Politics
 - Interest group pressure
 - Other types of information
 - Funding
 - Institutional constraints
 - Values
 - External events
 - Time
- Research not valued by the end-users

WHY RESEARCH MAY NOT BE USED IN POLICY/DECISION MAKING

- Time/Timing/Timeliness
 - how much time there is to make the decision
 - the research may be released at a time when the issue is not priority or when if issue is priority, there may not be an appropriate research feeding into the process
- Reluctance of researchers to go one step further and identify policy implications (researchers do not see this as their role)
- Research findings are commonly communicated in ways that are not accessible or meaningful to the non-specialist

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY



HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY II

- Dissemination
 - Publication, press release, conference/seminar, newsletter bulletin, targeted mails/calls, databases
 - Most research stops at this point
- For research to move beyond dissemination, there needs to be a demand for it (PUSH vs PULL)
 - Issue has to be on the policy formulation agenda
- Then Research will move to synthesis process
- To synthesize you have to locate the research first
 - Pool of research (Systematic Reviews)
 - Single research
 - Timing
 - Urgent/Critical issue
 - Best available evidence

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY III

- Research syntheses are systematic and transparent summaries of the best available evidence relevant to a specific policy decision.
- SURE/EVIPNet uses the term “research synthesis” to emphasize our focus on **systematically** summarizing research evidence relevant to **priority** health policy decisions in Low and Middle Income Countries.
- The EVIPNet research syntheses will build on systematic reviews and will include additional information to support decision-making in a specific context.
- Syntheses should be done as well as possible given resource and time constraints and they should include contextual factors

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY IV

- Contextualization is important because countries are at different stages in their development, with differences in capacity and funding
- No research should be taken as a one-size fits all.
- Contextualization of the research evidence may include among other things
 - incorporation of context-specific evidence
 - consideration of impacts on equity
 - scaling up activities
 - monitoring and evaluation

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY V

○ Appraisal

- This is necessary because not all research is good quality research especially depending on the methods used to carry it out
- Research may be appraised in different ways from a quick expert perusal to standardized methods like GRADE, AMSTAR etc
- These will grade the research into very low, low, moderate and high quality research evidence depending on
Study design, risk of bias, how precise the findings were etc

GRADING RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Quality of evidence	Interpretation
++++ High	We are confident that the true effect lies close to what was found in this research
+++ Moderate	The true effect is likely to be close to what was found but there is a possibility that it is substantially different
++ Low	The true effect may be substantially different from what was found
+ Very Low	We are very uncertain about the effect

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY VI

- Summaries are made from the best available research evidence and in a language that is user-friendly
- SUPPORT summaries, SURE rapid responses etc
 - Typically short
 - Precise and to the point
 - Easy to peruse for information
 - Half a page of bulleted key messages
 - References for further information

HOW DOES RESEARCH TURN INTO POLICY VII

- Expert input
 - Reviews
 - Dialogues
- Adoption form
 - It is reshaped by the other information or context that the policy/decision maker is working with or within
 - It may be adopted as presented from the synthesis process or get modified
 - **It may also end at this point!!** and not get used

HOW CAN THE JOURNALIST HELP?

- Work as a KT platform-increase interaction between producers (researchers) and the users (decision makers)
- Draw attention to topical issues
 - basing the writing on research facts
- Research may need backing up by the power and influence of journalism against its competitors
- Journalism should push the end users (decision makers) to learn to value research for decisions
- It could be a channel for feedback in the decision process (decision makers back to researchers)

REFERENCES

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THANK YOU!