Lessons Learned: Research & Policy in International Development

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Outline

• Role of research in policy-making
• Perspectives of researchers & policy-makers … implications
• Reforming agricultural policy: some lessons
Role of research in policy-making
The linear logical model…

Identify problem
→ Commission research
→ Analyse results
→ Choose best option
→ Establish policy
→ Implement policy
→ Evaluation

…in reality…

• ‘The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies’ ¹

• ‘Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa’ ²

• ‘Research is more often regarded as the opposite of action rather than a response to ignorance’ ³

³ Surr (2003), DFID Research Review
Theory: a short list

- Disjointed Incrementalism, Lindblom
- Policy narratives, Roe
- ‘Room for manoeuvre’, Clay & Schaffer
- Systems of Innovation Model, (NSI)
- ‘Street level bureaucrats’, Lipsky
- Policy as social experiments, Rondene
- Policy streams and policy windows, Kingdon
- Social Epidemics, Gladwell
- The RAPID Framework …

RAPID Framework

**External Influences**
Socio-economic & cultural influences, donor policies etc

**The political context** – political & economic structures & processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change, etc.

The **links** between policy and research communities – networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge, etc.

The **evidence** – credibility, degree it challenges received wisdom, research methods, simplicity of message, presentation & communication, etc.
A Practical Framework

External Influences

- Campaigning, Lobbying
- Scientific information exchange & validation
- Media, Advocacy, Networking
- Research, learning & thinking

Politics and Policymaking

Policy analysis, & research

evidence

Differing Perspectives ...

Differing Notions of Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers’ Evidence</th>
<th>Policy Makers’ Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Scientific’ (Context free)</td>
<td>• Colloquial (Contextual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proven empirically</td>
<td>• Anything that seems reasonable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theoretically driven</td>
<td>• Policy relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As long as it takes</td>
<td>• Timely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caveats &amp; qualifications</td>
<td>• Clear Message</td>
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Source: Phil Davies Impact to Insight Meeting, ODI, 2005
Policy makers are…

…practically incapable of using research-based evidence because of the 5 Ss…

- Speed
- Superficiality
- Spin
- Secrecy
- Scientific Ignorance

Vincent Cable – Lib. Democrat MP & Shadow Chancellor
More at: www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Meetings/Evidence

Maximising Influence

- Be strategic, focus on key issues, understand policy agenda
- Be practical & helpful
- Communicate better: dare to simplify
- Work in teams & networks
Lessons from Agricultural Reform

Binswanger & Deininger 1997 JEL
• Fiscal crises restrain elites & force reform
• Multiple sins of inequality … social & economic, political & institutional … path dependency

Birner & Resnick 2005 — framework combining
• Advocacy Coalitions
• Political Resource Theory
• Policy Windows

Reforms in Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

• Reforms to farm policy undertaken as part of overall reforms …
• … response to perceived national crisis
• & implemented by new governments with mandate for change.

– Political will is, not surprisingly, a necessary condition.
Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

- Design of reforms and implementation:
  - Much depends on **context**, including **external conditions** such as world market prices.
  - Scope for change, esp. **sequence & pace**, may be as much a matter of administrative feasibility as choice…

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So much depends on **what we do** and the **context**

**Changing Public Roles**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening economy to international market</td>
<td>Fate of domestic sectors producing uncompetitive tradables</td>
<td>Competitiveness of economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linking potentially competitive sectors to internat market</td>
<td>Prices in internat markets for products &amp; inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat of state, advance of markets</td>
<td>Overcoming vested interests: business with state support &amp; entrenched ideas in public agencies</td>
<td>Political will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State agencies to regulate markets</td>
<td>Building competence of civil servants with little experience</td>
<td>Competence &amp; experience of public service</td>
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...& Changing Private Roles

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Private sector supply of inputs, marketing & financial services | Enabling environment  
Overcome co-ordination failures  
Ensure institutions set standards | Experience & ability of established businesses  
Dev of economic institutions |
| Farmers learning about markets & demand | Stiff challenge when the markets are international info & capital available to players | Farmers’ experience in exporting, literacy, numeracy, access to info & capital |
| Producer organisation | Building competent and accountable associations | Experience of farmer organisation |

Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

• Design of reforms and implementation (con’d):
  – Where outcomes are uncertain & state capacity limited, …
  – … gradual approaches that allow for learning better than swift & comprehensive — ‘big bang’ — packages