

The Researcher and the Policy-Maker - Between the idea and reality falls the shadow

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Chronic Disease Prevention
Evaluation,

Ministry of Health,
Government of British Columbia

Know what ↔ Know how

KT is not a
new
phenomenon



Early experiments in transportation

Purpose - shed light on the shadow

- Life in a government bureaucracy - basic realities
- KT interfaces to government
- Political maxims





My job - knowledge transfer

- find academic research
- assess evidence
- interpret and adapt it
- advocating
- monitoring and evaluating
- transforming management issues





The politics of governing

Any political system must strike a balance between two desirable characteristics - the ability of the government to take action and the need for the people to restrain their leaders from taking action.

An excess of freedom of action can lead to arbitrariness, a lack of accountability, and even dictatorship.

An excess of restraint can lead to paralysis.

The perfect balance has remained an elusive goal.

Deber & Vayda, 1985

Research and evaluation value neutral?

- What will be investigated?
- Questions phrased?
- Information collected?
- Analyzed?
- Conclusions?
- Dissemination?

*“Decision-making, of course, is a euphemism for the allocation of resources - **money, position, authority, etc.** Thus, to the extent that information is an instrument, basis, or excuse for changing power relationships within or among institutions, doing research and evaluation is a political activity”*

-Cohen et.al.

Barriers

Undue haste

Need to spend money by year end

Personnel turnover/rotation - evaluation style

Vague legislation/mandate

Understaffing

Conflicts between levels of government

Divorce of implementation from policy

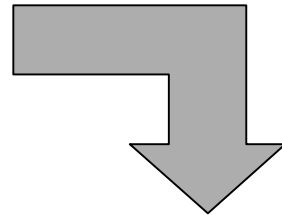
Social Science Evidence → Shapes Policy Decisions

A political leader with a preference for that direction comes to power, is able to build coalitions to support it, and hires advisors already in touch with those ideas through social and political networks that reach into university campuses and other research institutions.



Research Transfer:

the process and activities by which high quality, relevant research information is **accessed, understood and applied** by decision makers to make the best possible policy, planning and service delivery decisions.



Make health research more **accessible, useful and relevant** to decision makers to promote knowledge-based decision making.

Is it Accessible?

Typical University Hierarchy

President

Vice Presidents

Deans &
Assistant Deans

Departmental
Directors

Teaching &
Research Faculty

Post-Docs, Sessionals
Project Coordinators

Typical Government Hierarchy

Minister

Deputy Minister

Assistant Deputy Ministers

Executive Directors
& Directors

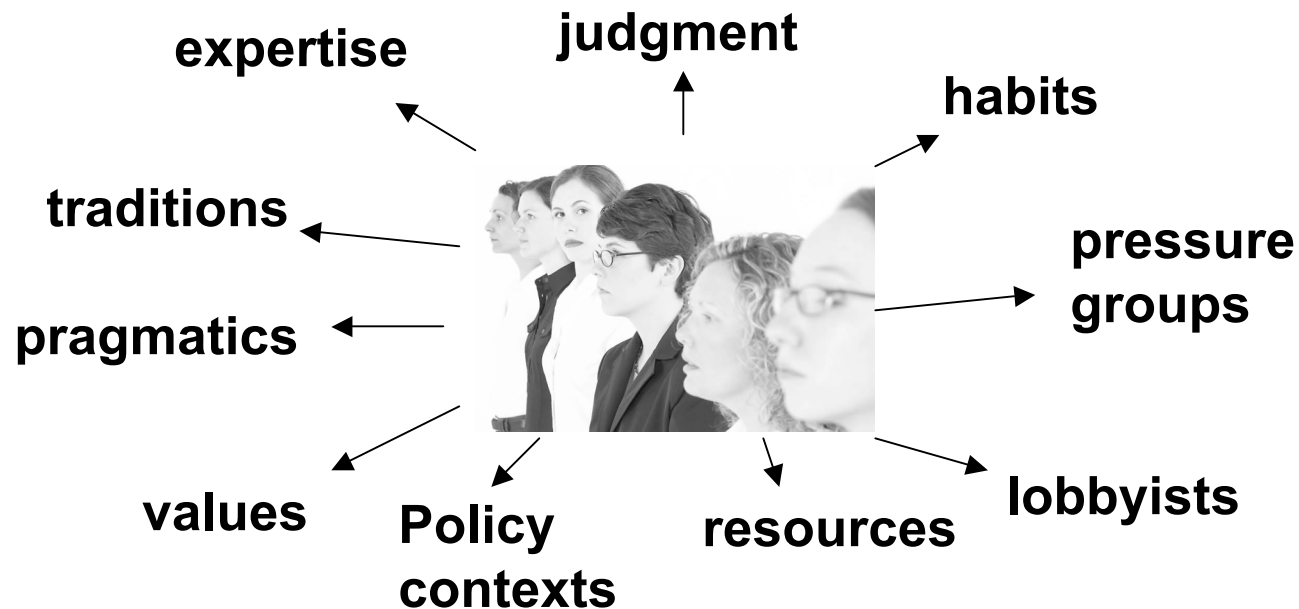
Managers

Research analysts,
policy analysts, admin.
officers

Where do upper level decision-makers access information?

- **Internal sources, written by their own and other similar organizations,**
- **conferences and seminars,**
- **guidelines and assessment reports**
- **research sources.**

Why else would we have so many data analysts and policy analysts in government.



**Is it useful and
understood?**

In communication, brevity is
everything.

Confucius

$$\sqrt{r^2}$$

$$R^2_{adj} = 1 - \left(\frac{n-1}{n-p} \right) (1 - R^2)$$

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2$$

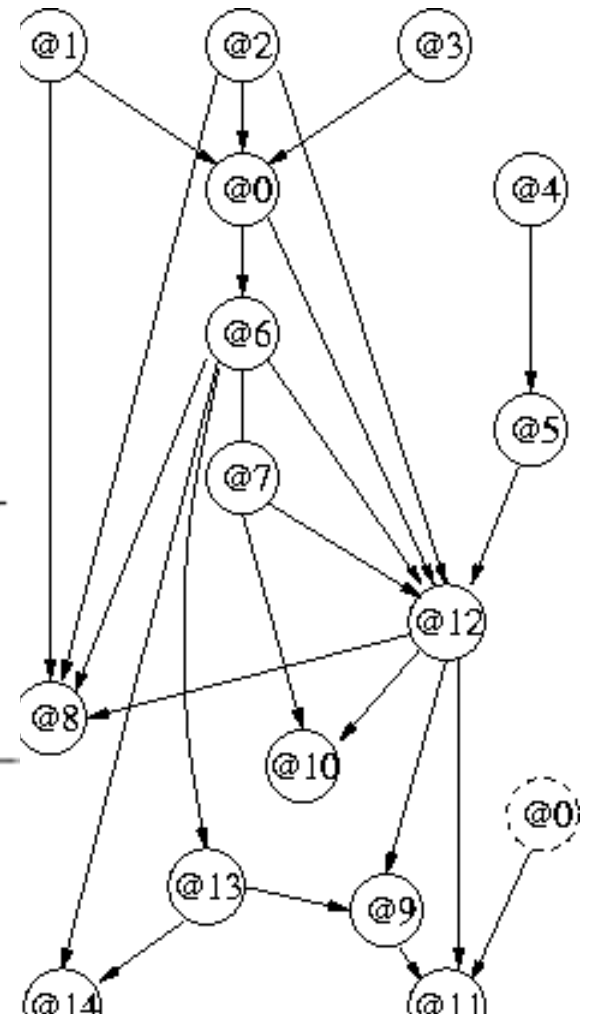
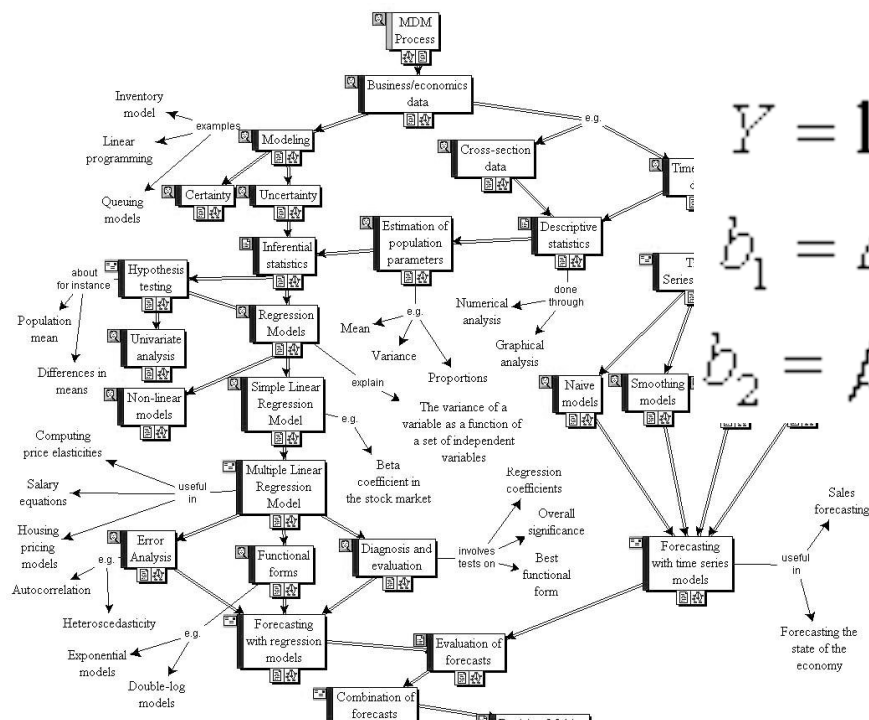
with

$$Y = \ln T_{50}, \quad b_0 = \ln A$$

$$b_1 = \Delta H, \quad X_1 = 1/kT$$

$$b_2 = \beta, \quad \text{and } x_2 = \ln V$$

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{k=1}^n w_k}{\sum_{k=1}^n T_k}$$



$$\text{Prob} = \frac{1}{2.178^{-(k + aA + bB + cC)} + 1}$$

$$\text{Prob} = \frac{2.178^{-(k + aA + bB + cC)}}{1 + 2.178^{-(k + aA + bB + cC)}}$$

$$\text{Prob} = \frac{\text{Odds}}{1 + \text{Odds}}$$

$$\text{Log}_{2.178} \text{Odds} = (k + aA + bB + cC)$$

$$n_i = n \exp \left\{ -\lambda q_i^p \right\}$$

$$\overline{R}_{cali} = 37.80 + e^{2.952 - 0.294h_i} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \overline{i=1} \\ \sum_{i=1}^n x_i z_i = a \sum_{i=1}^n x_i + b \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 + c \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i \end{array} \right.$$

$$C_p = \frac{RSS_p}{\hat{\sigma}^2} + 2p - n \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \sum_{i=1}^n y_i z_i = a \sum_{i=1}^n y_i + b \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i + c \sum_{i=1}^n y_i^2 \end{array} \right.$$

$$i = a \sum_{i=1}^n 1 + b \sum_{i=1}^n x_i + c \sum_{i=1}^n y_i$$

Simplicity is better

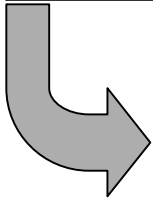
Researchers may need and use sophisticated and complex statistical techniques to enhance analytic power or uncover nuances in data, but simple and straightforward presentations are needed to give decision makers and intended users access to research findings.

Is it Applied?

Is it politically feasible?

- “budget neutral”?
- affordable
- community values
- media
- opposition

Decision-makers expect punishment for decisions that impose costs or take away existing benefits, far more than they expect rewards for providing new benefits.



They fear active opposition from consumers of exiting programs or policies

Maxims

- ✓ Not all information is useful
- ✓ Not all people are information users
- ✓ Information targeted at use is more likely to hit the target
- ✓ Only credible information is ultimately powerful



Not all information is useful

- What affects them and in their control
- timely, relevant, and accurate information - reduce uncertainty and increase control
- soft data about an important issue

Not all people are information users

- getting the right information to the right people
- 20-50-30 rule

Info targeted at use more likely to hit target

- no one wants to get caught with less information than competitors for power.
- intended use by intended users
- the "real" work of research

Credible information

- no effort to establish credibility is ever lost.

In conclusion: things government could do.

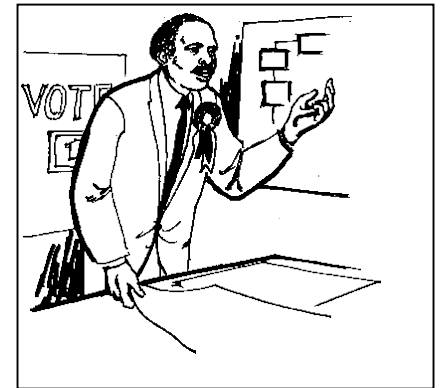
1. require citation of research in policy documents
2. establish a process to communicate needs and priorities to the research community
3. develop key contact list for researchers and orientation for researchers to policy and decision-making processes

Take Home Message

**Relevant
Research**



**Learning
Organization**



Creating knowledge and formulating policy are two different processes