



Understanding the Policy Making Process for Research Impact

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Academic Research and Impact on Policy

- Academic research findings do have an impact on policy.
- Academic research findings are not the only impact on policy.
- Not all research findings that could have a positive impact are taken up by decision makers.
- Policy making is an inherently value-laden process – policy makers want to do what they think is right which is not the same as implementing what has been shown to work. Advocacy needs to take account of this.
- Policy makers are influenced by a number of different groups and this variously includes powerful interest groups (business organisations, trade unions), civil society, development partners, international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF).



A Typology of Academic Research

Academic Research

Mainly to contribute to academic knowledge

Policy Research

To address problems identified by policy makers

Radical Research

Critical of established ideas

Public Research

Participatory/co-research with civil society

The Policy Making Process

1

Three Streams

1. the Problem Stream – a problem is recognised as a public issue/ social problem – something that can only be remediated/solved by collective (government) action.

2. the Policy Stream – policy ideas that can address social problems.

3 the Politics Stream – advocacy.

Interest groups, civil society, academics, politicians, national and international organisations, the media and public opinion are all involved in all three streams.

Academics aim to do research to demonstrate that there is a public issue /problem that needs addressing and/or to do research to show how an issue/problem can be remediated/solved.

The Policy Making Process

2

Linking a problem/issue, a policy and successfully advocating to government for the policy.

This means that the government has to be receptive to the advocacy – that the policy is addressing an issue that the government wants solved, that it is a priority issue and that it is in line with the philosophy of the government

Windows of opportunity to advocate policy open and close very quickly - windows generally open after an election or because of new issues being recognised. Advocacy can also be addressed to political parties when they are in opposition and when they are writing their manifestos.



Research and Policy Impact

Importance of understanding the policy-making process which differs between countries.

Using this understanding to embed the pathway to impact in research from the outset.

Recognising that governments are inundated with recommendations for policy and crafting policy recommendations to maximise likelihood of interest. Having politicians/senior civil servants/influential organisations supporting the advocacy can be important.

Being prepared for when a window of opportunity opens.

Policy Advocacy in International Development 1

The policy-making process differs in LMICs from that in the Global North and differs between countries.

Official Development Partners (OECD countries that provide aid and international organisation like the, the UN, World Bank and IMF) often have a strong influence on policy in general or in specific sectors. This especially the case in aid dependent countries – more than 10% of GNI from aid.

In authoritarian countries civil society, the media and public opinion have little influence with NGOs generally constrained to deliver services. In these countries Official Development Partners and International NGOs often play a similar role to civil society and interest groups in more democratic societies.

Also in many authoritarian countries policy making takes place behind closed doors making it difficult to know how policy decisions are made.

Local NGOs even where they are operating in more democratic countries or on issues that are 'safe' to advocate on often do not have the capacity or capability to advocate for policies.



Policy Advocacy in International Development 2

All governments have policy documents setting out what their priorities are – look at these carefully.

The Sustainable Development Goals are shared across LMHICs with targets for 2030 – link policy advocacy to these.

Working with Development Partners and International NGOs as allies or directing advocacy to them can facilitate advocacy with governments. They often have established channels of influence.

Academics, because of their expertise, are often commissioned by Development Partners and International NGOs to write reports and policy recommendations that the commissioning organisations use for advocacy.

Development Partners and International NGOs have influence because they have resources to invest in LMICs – policy developments in LMICs often depend on Development Partners allocating resources.

Policies that are not supported by Development partners may not be adopted even if they are a priority for a government because of lack of resources.