Organizational Change – Getting Research Into Policy and Practice

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EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Helping people make better decisions and achieve better outcomes, by using the best available evidence from research and other sources, and

- *Integrating* research with decision makers' knowledge, skills, experience, expertise and judgement

- Acknowledging:

  ➢ available resources
  ➢ bureaucratic cultures
  ➢ other influences (lobbyists and pressure groups)
  ➢ timelines and immediacy of decision making

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POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

- "Decision making is a process, not an event".

- Seeing policy making as a rational process "fails to do justice to the ethereal nature of that diffuse, haphazard, and somewhat volatile process called decision making."

- "The unit of research transfer should rarely be the single study but should, rather, be the summary and synthesis of knowledge across the entire spectrum of stages in the process."

* Lomas, J., 2000, *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Spring, 140-144.

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TYPES OF RESEARCH USE

Instrumental Use
Involves acting on research results in specific, direct ways.

Conceptual Use
Involves using research results for general enlightenment; results influence actions, but in less specific, more indirect ways than in instrumental use

Symbolic Use
Involves using research results to legitimate and sustain pre-determined positions.

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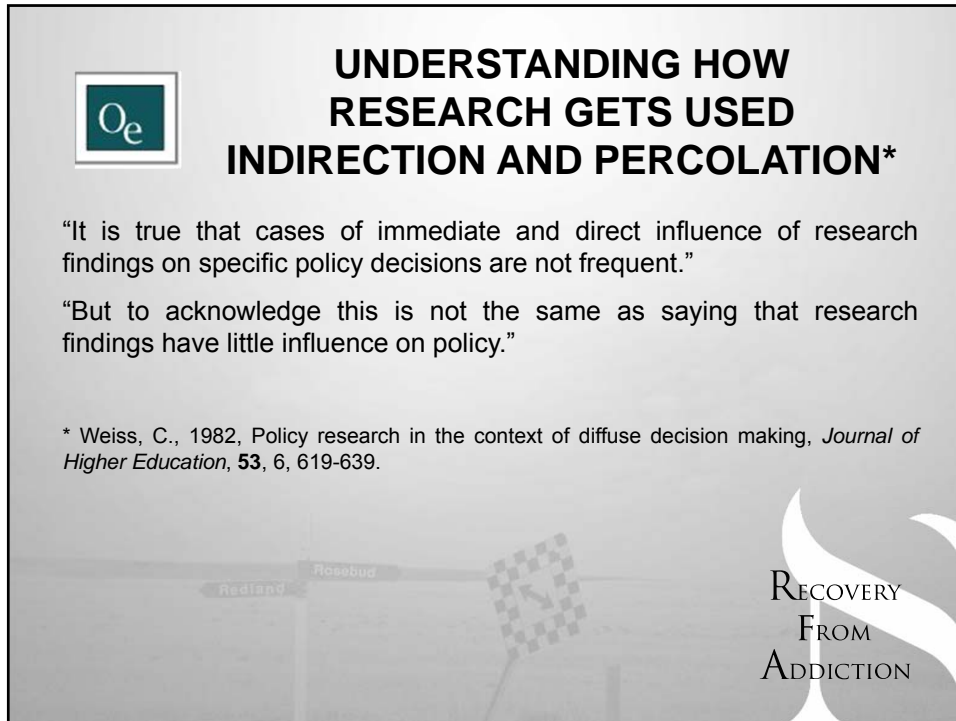
UNDERSTANDING HOW RESEARCH GETS USED INDIRECTION AND PERCOLATION*

"It is true that cases of immediate and direct influence of research findings on specific policy decisions are not frequent."

"But to acknowledge this is not the same as saying that research findings have little influence on policy."

* Weiss, C., 1982, Policy research in the context of diffuse decision making, *Journal of Higher Education*, **53**, 6, 619-639.
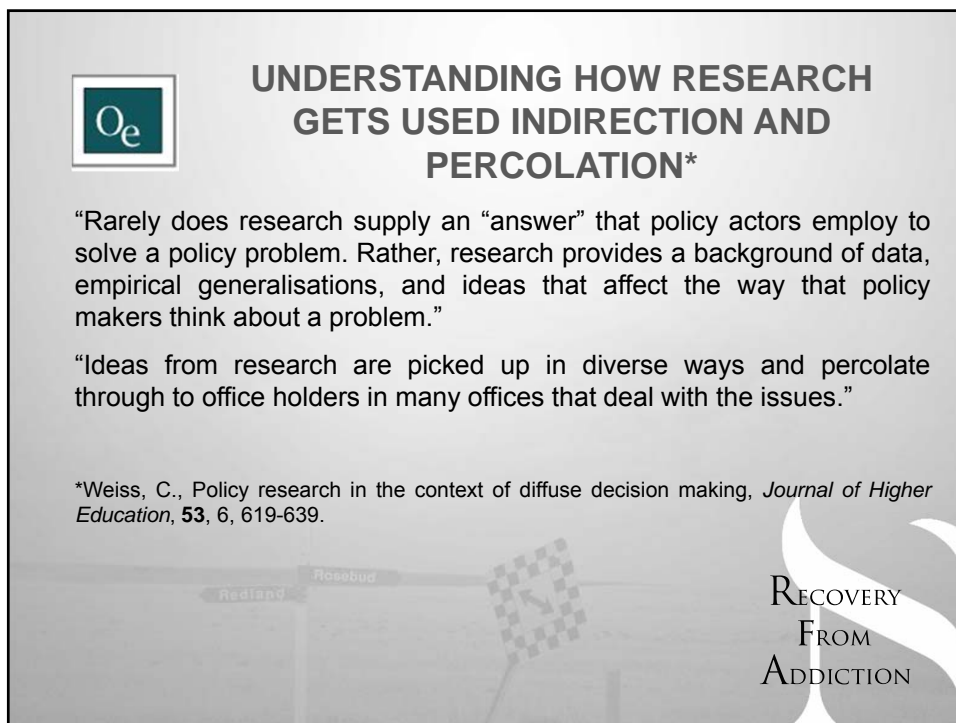
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UNDERSTANDING HOW RESEARCH GETS USED INDIRECTION AND PERCOLATION*

"Rarely does research supply an "answer" that policy actors employ to solve a policy problem. Rather, research provides a background of data, empirical generalisations, and ideas that affect the way that policy makers think about a problem."

"Ideas from research are picked up in diverse ways and percolate through to office holders in many offices that deal with the issues."

*Weiss, C., Policy research in the context of diffuse decision making, *Journal of Higher Education*, **53**, 6, 619-639.

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HOW RESEARCH GETS USED: INTERPERSONAL NETWORKS AND INTERACTION*

Clinicians rarely accessed and used explicit evidence from research or other sources directly, but relied on "mindlines"—collectively reinforced, internalised, tacit guidelines. These were informed by brief reading but mainly by their own and their colleagues' experience, their interactions with each other and with opinion leaders, patients, and pharmaceutical representatives, and other sources of largely tacit knowledge.

* Gabbay and le May, 2004, *British Medical Journal*, **329**, 1013.

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HOW RESEARCH GETS USED: INTERPERSONAL NETWORKS AND INTERACTION*

"Knowledge depends for its circulation on interpersonal networks, and will only diffuse if these social features are taken into account and barriers overcome."

* Greenhalgh T, et al, 2004 *Milbank Quarterly,* 82, *581-629.*

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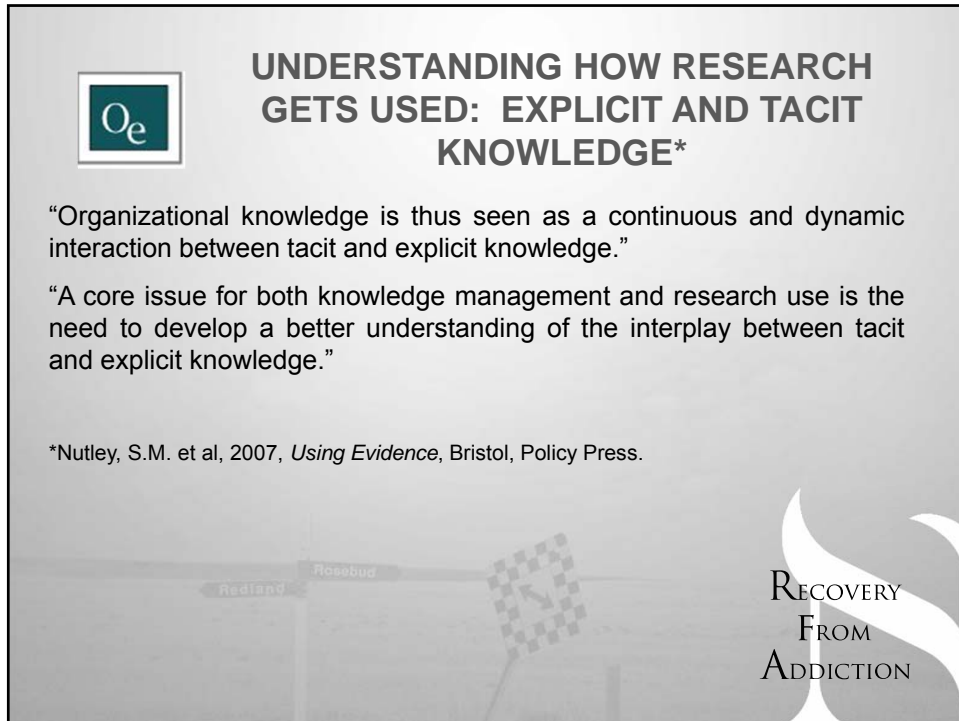
UNDERSTANDING HOW RESEARCH GETS USED: EXPLICIT AND TACIT KNOWLEDGE*

"Organizational knowledge is thus seen as a continuous and dynamic interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge."

"A core issue for both knowledge management and research use is the need to develop a better understanding of the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge."

*Nutley, S.M. et al, 2007, *Using Evidence*, Bristol, Policy Press.

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CAUTION!

Relying on percolation, indirection, and passive

diffusion of research evidence is not enough

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TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

THE PASSIVE DIFFUSION MODEL

Assumes:
- that publishing research = use of research
- that policy makers actively seek out research evidence
- that policy makers select and appraise evidence appropriately
- that policy makers make research-driven, probabilistic decisions

These assumptions are not substantiated by evidence from studies of research utilization

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

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THE ACTIVE DISSEMINATION MODEL

An improvement on the passive diffusion model

Recognises that:
- The stock and flow of research evidence requires synthesis
- Research evidence needs to be made accessible
- Research evidence needs 'retailers'/'entrepreneurs'
- Research retailers must have credibility and authority
- Research evidence requires dissemination via guidelines

However, receiving and absorbing research ≠ research use

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

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COORDINATED-IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

- Involves careful evaluation of what drives the potential users' behaviour

- Recognises that even synthesized and accessible information is not the only source of evidence/guidance

- Competition from other sources of information requires the synthesis of evidence to be *actively managed*.

- Recognises the role of informal networks and day-to-day contacts with colleagues and influential sources

- Research evidence must be *carefully embedded* in multiple routes of influence

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

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ROUTES TO INFLUENCE

Multiple stakeholders/partners:

- Politicians (legislative, not just executive)
- Policymakers and special advisers
- Front line delivery staff
- Citizens
- Special interest groups
- Civil society organisations
- Lobbyist and pressure groups
- Judiciary

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ROUTES TO INFLUENCE

Multiple media:

- Print media (summaries)
- Electronic media (summaries)
- Interpersonal relationships
- Social networking mechanisms
- Guidelines/Best Practice summaries
- Co-ordinating agents/agencies

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RESEARCH USE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

- Incentives to use high quality evidence
- Strategic planning of policy/practice and research
- Finding the 'KT Moment'
- Making research evidence accessible
- Using knowledge brokers

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INCENTIVISING RESEARCHERS KEY COMPETENCIES (PSG)

Built Into Appraisal and Rewards Systems

- Meet policy makers' needs
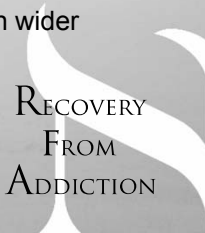- Works in partnership with other analysts and policy makers
- Critically evaluate data and information
- Synthesize and use data from a variety of sources
- Help to make sound evidence-based decisions
- Understand the bigger picture - think imaginatively
- Communicate written and oral information clearly/concisely

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STRATEGIC PLANNING OF POLICY/PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Alberta/ Canada 2015 → Alberta/ Canada 2020 → Alberta/ Canada 2025 → Alberta/ Canada 2050

What will the key policy and practice issues be in Alberta/Canada in these time periods?

What research knowledge will be needed in these time periods?

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FINDING THE 'KT MOMENT'

- Working with the policy timetable - e.g.
  - ➢ Legislative timetable
  - ➢ Impact Assessments
  - ➢ Government's Spending Review/Allocation Process
  - ➢ International agreements and obligations
- Identifying opportunities for pilots/policy trials
- Using research to inform the implementation and delivery of policy and public services

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MAKING RESEARCH EVIDENCE ACCESSIBLE

- Physical access to research evidence
- Cognitive access to research evidence (research literacy)
- Overcoming organisational restraints on external evidence
- Building research knowledge infrastructures (RKIs)
- Building trust civil servants and reseachers
- Filling communication gaps between researchers and civil servants
- Synchronising time horizons

Source. Ouimet M., et al, 2009

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UK POLICYMAKERS VIEWS OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Too:

- Long
- Verbose
- Detailed
- Dense
- Impenetrable
- Too much jargon
- Methodological
- Untimely
- Irrelevant for Policy

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WHAT USERS WANT FROM RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

- 'Graded entry' to presentations of research (1:3:25)
- Well written summaries, with a clear message
- Indications of relevance for decision making
- But not specific recommendations ("give me a steer")
- Contextual factors that affect local applicability
- Information about the benefits, harms/risks and costs of interventions
- Messages that are simple and unclouded by jargon
- Aligned to decision making timescales

Sources: Petticrew et al, 2004; Lavis et al, 2005; Dobbins et al, 2007; Rosenbaum, 2010

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USING KNOWLEDGE BROKERS

Knowledge Systems Brokering:

Brokering as a way of *facilitating or managing* the creation, diffusion and use of knowledge.

Transactional Brokering

Focuses on the interface between the 'creators' and 'users' of knowledge and *seeks to foster links* between the two.

Social Change Brokering

Brokering is designed to enhance access to knowledge by *providing training to knowledge users*- capacity building

Recovery From Addiction

SUMMARY

- Good decision making requires good evidence
- Aligned with judgement and factors other than evidence
- Research is not the only source of evidence
- Evidence requires active management and brokering
- Evidence must be clear and accessible
- Look for the 'KT Moment' – strategically and operationally
- Decision makers need incentives/rewards to use evidence
- These are organizational and individual challenges

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TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE