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Engaging stakeholders with evidence and uncertainty: juggling the politics

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Evaluating Research Uptake and Impact: Juggling
Evidence, Politics and Uncertainty

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The team

Spanning research, development practice & humanitarian aid

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Oliver S, Roche C, Stewart R, Bangpan M, Dickson K, Pells K, Cartwright N, Hargreaves J, Gough D (2018) Stakeholder Engagement for Development Impact Evaluation and Evidence Synthesis. CEDIL Inception Paper3: London <https://cedilprogramme.org/publications/stakeholder-engagement-for-development-impact-evaluation-and-evidence-synthesis/>

INTERESTS, POWER & POLITICS

**Making
decisions**

Decision-makers seeking evidence

Researchers offering evidence

**Conducting
research**

IDEAS, CULTURE &
WORLD VIEWS

INSTITUTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS
& ALLIANCES

Interest, power and politics

The challenges

- Interests & power unequally distributed
- Research that is available comes influenced by interests & money
- Decision-making committees influenced by hierarchies

Possible solutions

- Apply an equity lens to research¹ and translation²
- Inclusive exercises for setting systematic review agendas^{3,4}
- Time & facilitation to share & consider all relevant knowledge⁴

¹Nasser et al. (2013) An equity lens can ensure an equity-oriented approach to agenda setting and priority setting of Cochrane Reviews. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 66 511e521

²Tugwell et al. (2017) Setting priorities for knowledge translation of Cochrane reviews for health equity: Evidence for Equity. *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2017) 16:208
DOI 10.1186/s12939-017-0697-5

³Fadlallah R (2020) A common framework of steps and criteria for prioritizing topics for evidence syntheses: a systematic review. [Journal of Clinical Epidemiology](#) (120) 67-85

⁴Manafò E, Petermann L, Vandall-Walker V, Mason-Lai P (2018) Patient and public engagement in priority setting: A systematic rapid review of the literature. *PLoS ONE* 13(3): e0193579. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193579>

⁵Oliver et al. (2018). Effective and efficient committee work: A Systematic overview of multidisciplinary literatures. *Evidence Base*, 2018 (2), 1-21. DOI: 10.21307/eb-2018-002

Institutions, relationships and alliances

The challenges

- Available research often seen as irrelevant or inaccessible
- Embedding systems and innovation are mutually challenging
- Sustainability – moving with the times

Possible solutions

- Research with input from potential users for greater impact
- Regular reflection about what embedding strengthens and what it excludes
- Embedding innovation¹ and public value²

¹ Williams I (2011) Organizational readiness for innovation in health care: some lessons from the recent literature. Health Services Management Research 2011; 00: 1–6. DOI: 10.1258/hsmr.2011.011014

²Faulkner & Kaufman (2017) Avoiding Theoretical Stagnation: A Systematic Review and Framework for Measuring Public Value. Australian Journal of Public Administration <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8500.12251>

Ideas, cultures and world views

The challenges

- Generalisable knowledge ≠ locally rooted knowledge for decisions
- Knowledge for technical decisions ≠ knowledge for social decisions
- Institutional procedures largely driven by professional norms
- International procedures largely driven by global north

Possible solutions

Governance of knowledge generation and use:

- Scope of legitimate knowledge: generalisable AND locally rooted; functional, emotional & spiritual¹
- Processes: language & ‘working’ cultures
- Time: time horizons; enough time for questioning, listening, reflecting together & cultivating relationships; at mutually convenient times

¹Castleden HE, Martin D, Cunsolo A, Harper S, Hart C, Sylvestre P, Stefanelli R, Day L, and Lauridsen K () Implementing Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems (Part 2): “You Have to Take a Backseat” and Abandon the Arrogance of Expertise. The International Indigenous Policy Journal 8(4), DOI: 10.18584/iipj.2017.8.4.6

Conclusions and challenging questions

When assessing research uptake or use:

- Politics (with a small 'p') is inescapable
- Inequalities are inherent in
 - in the content of the research used, and
 - in the procedures for research uptake
- So, do evidence institutions embed
 - Inclusive membership and processes for appraising and debating evidence?
 - Regular collective reflection and evaluation?
 - Procedures for addressing inequalities and power relations, such as skilled facilitation?
 - Incentives for inclusion, curiosity and seeking multiple perspectives?
 - A culture conducive to looking outwards, through informal norms and behaviours as much as formal 'rules'?

Thank you

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