



Cátedra UNESCO-ICDE
Movimiento Educativo
Abierto para América Latina



Tecnológico
de Monterrey

The Impact of Research on Development Policy and Practice

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Dr. Roger W. Harris

- Visiting Professor Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
- Started multi-award-winning eBario ICT4D project
- Founded the Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries
- Independent ICT4D consultant
- Focus on ICTs for Indigenous Peoples' development
- Practitioner/academic “pracademic”

Today's Agenda

- The Issue
- The Problem
- What we Know
- Some Solution Opportunities
- Two Examples

The Issue

Research, Policy and Practice

- UK's Department for International Development (DFID):
 - research can have powerful influences on policies
 - essential element in reducing poverty
 - crucial for evidence-based approaches to international development
- UK's Economic and Social Research Council:
 - expect research to have scientific, societal and economic impact
 - require Pathways to Impact

The Problem

Two Communities

Researchers

- Policy engagement not their role
- Prefer to avoid it
- No incentives for outreaching
- Don't have the skills



Practitioners & Policy-makers

- Research is neither relevant nor accessible
- Researchers don't agree
- Different values, time-scales, reward systems and professional ties.



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Two 'Impacts'

Researchers

- Journal impact factor
- Citation rates
- Proxy for quality and importance

Practitioners & Policy-makers

- Inform policy
- Shape professional practice
- Stimulate social change



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The Implications

- Knowledge transfer not legitimate scholarship
- Institutions discourage societal impact from their research
- Researchers become performers
- Promotes conformity, stifles innovation



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What we Know

Influence Factors From a Literature Review*

1. INTENT
2. COMMUNICATION
3. ICTS
4. INTERMEDIARIES
5. POLICY ENTREPRENEURS
6. NETWORKS
7. INCENTIVES
8. POLITICAL CONTEXT
9. DEMAND
10. ENGAGEMENT

* HARRIS, R. W. (2015). THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH ON DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE: THIS MUCH WE KNOW. A LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ICT4D. IN A. CHIB, J. MAY, & R. BARRANTES (EDS.), IMPACT OF INFORMATION SOCIETY RESEARCH IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH (PP. 19–41). SINGAPORE: SPRINGER SCIENCE + BUSINESS MEDIA

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

1. INTENT

2. COMMUNICATION

3. ICTs

4. INTERMEDIARIES

5. POLICY

ENTREPRENEURS

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- Researchers should have the intent to influence policy and/or practice
- Must be expressly included in the research objectives
- Could be the prime reason for conducting the research
- Useless on its own

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- Single most influential factor
- Non-trivial; C4D a sub-field of International Development
- Plain language
- Strategise effectively
- Start early

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- 3. ICTs**
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- Blur the line between academia and other writers
- Enable rapid communication of research, as it unfolds
- Researchers are still discouraged from publishing online
- Understand the online behaviour of the target audiences

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- Between researchers and audiences
- Compensate for systemic inadequacies in academia
- Think-tanks synthesise, interpret, match-make, stimulate demand
- Lacking in many countries

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- Advance a particular policy
- Promote research findings
- Requires:
 - Political awareness
 - Telling compelling stories
 - Networking effectively
 - Communicating constantly

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- Research findings circulate through various networks
- Policy streams, policy communities, epistemic communities, think tank networks and advocacy coalitions
- Indirectly influence discourse
- Local, national, regional and global

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- Low for academics
- Low for practitioners
- Low for policy-makers
- Outreach as an after-thought
- Needed for closer engagement between all stakeholders

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- Researchers need to understand political processes
- Accept that research is political
- Evidence that resonates with policy makers' assumptions will have greater impact

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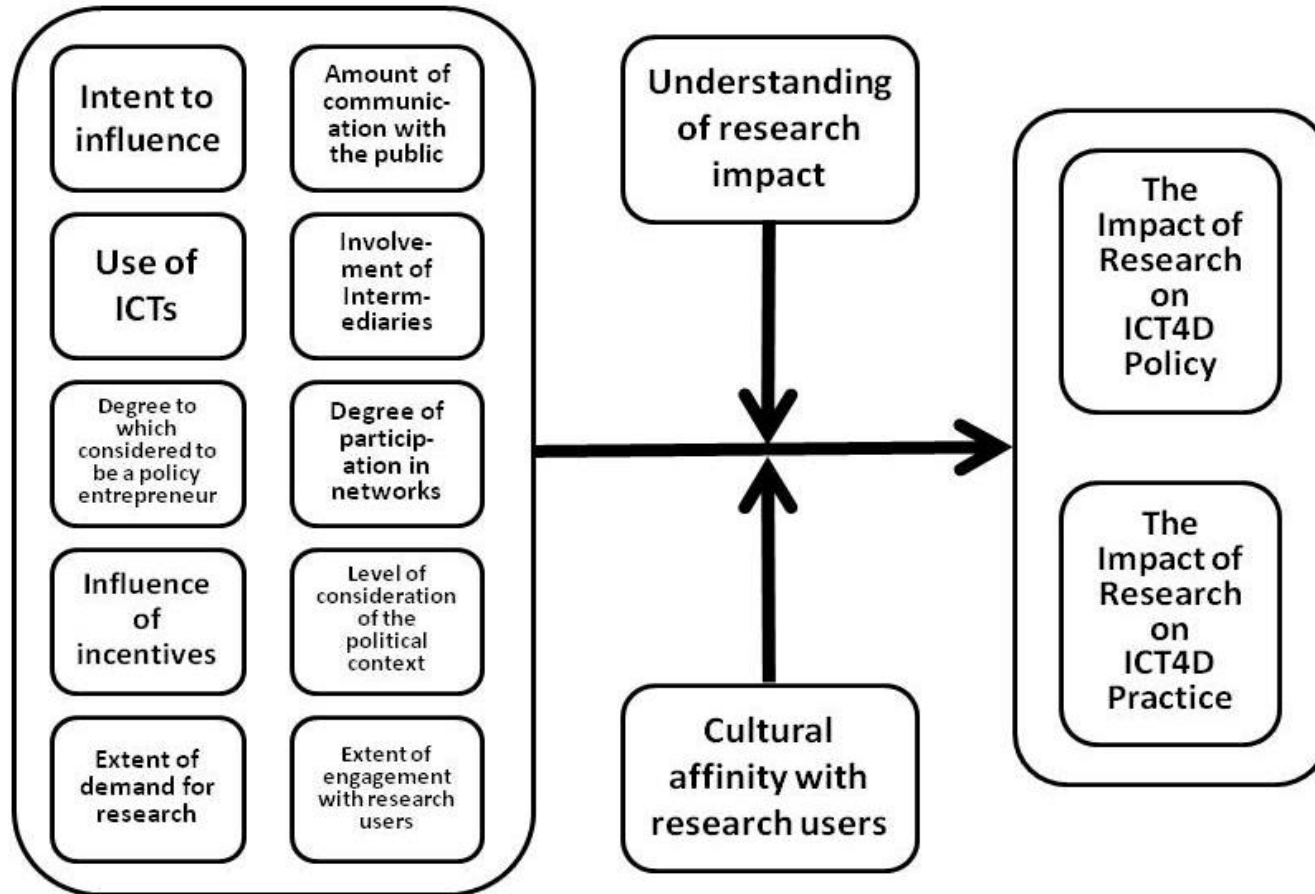
- Understand the demand for research
- Participate in activities that stimulate demand
- We know more about how to improve the supply of evidence than we do about how to improve the demand for it

Influencing Policy and Practice with Research

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- Closer relationships between researchers and research users
- Co-creation of content
- Few academics see user engagement having any consequence for measuring their performance
- Low priority

How ICT4D Research Fails the Poor*



How ICT4D Research Fails the Poor



How ICT4D Research Fails the Poor

- Almost all agree that research-based evidence is important for shaping policy & professional practice
- But three quarters agree that their institutions emphasize peer-reviewed publications over communications with the public
- Only one quarter to one half engage in activity that might result in policy and/or practice influence

Not only International Development

- **BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT ACADEMICS**
 - 88% aware of importance of doing research in collaboration with professionals
 - 36% feel incentivised to do so
 - 26% have the necessary resources¹
- **CLIMATE SCIENTISTS**
 - “imperative for more scientists to directly engage with the public and policymakers”²

¹ London School of Economics:

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2017/11/20/the-business-of-impact-academic-reward-and-incentive-cultures-continue-to-stifle-relationships-between-business-and-management-researchers-and-society/>

² BioScience:

<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/bix133/4644513>

Some Solution Opportunities

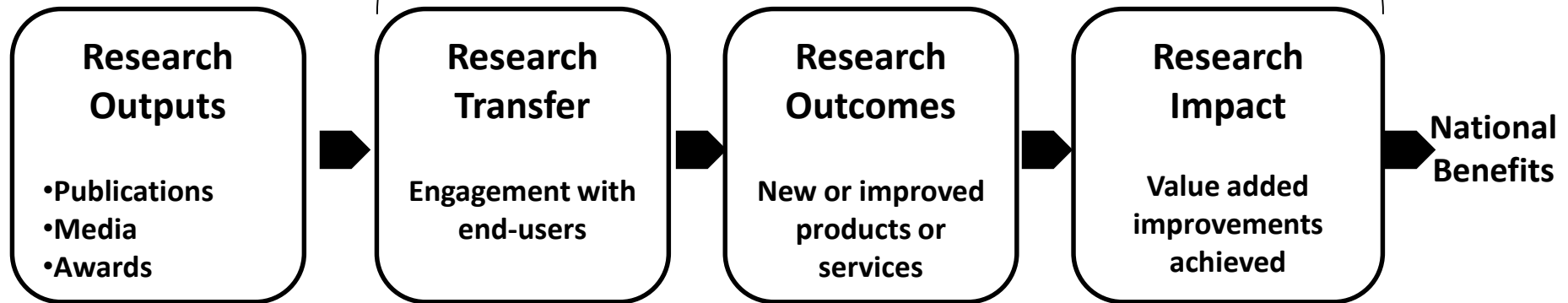
Understanding Policy Processes

- Complex
- Non-linear, non-sequential and non-logical
- Rarely affected by the presentation of information alone
- Rarely impacted directly by research
- Many actors interact within an intricate network of communication and exchange

Pathways to Impact

Traditional Quality Domain

Full Scope of Research Impact



- Activities that will increase the likelihood of potential economic and societal impacts being achieved
- The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy by:
 - fostering global economic performance, and competitiveness
 - increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
 - enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

Attributes of Successful Pathways to Impact

- Commitment to realising both academic and non academic research impacts.
- Involvement of users and beneficiaries from outset
- Understanding their needs
- Analysis of demand for research outputs
- Strategy for engagement with audiences

Better Communication

I'll pause for a moment to let this information sink in.



- Academic institutions should engage with the public and demonstrate the impact of their research
- Increases the need for communications skills
- Works best with a coherent communication strategy

Writing Policy Papers

What differentiates policy science from academia:

1. Designing solutions for real-world problems
 - Recommendations with a framework for implementation
 - Towards desirable outcomes
2. Value-driven arguments
 - Data as evidence to support your position

Policy Paper Template:

- Title
- Table of contents
- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Problem description
- Argumentation
- Policy options
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Two Examples

Policy: Radio Bario

- Malaysia's first community radio station
- Took one year to get a license
- Application was non-threatening
- Government liberalised broadcasting policy



Engagement: eBorneo Knowledge Fair

- Researchers engage with their audiences
- Community, officials, politicians, professionals
- Surface problems, test solutions, design research
- Co-create knowledge



Structured Communication

1. Programme Decisions
 - a. Broad Goal
 - b. Objective
 - c. Decision Makers
2. Context
 - a. Internal and External Scans and Position
3. Strategic Choices
 - a. Audiences
 - b. Their Readiness
 - c. Their Core Concerns
 - d. Overall Theme
 - e. Key Messages
 - f. Messengers
3. Communications Activities
 - a. Tactics
 - b. Timeline
 - c. Assignments
 - d. Budget
4. Measurements of Success

Thank You