W01 / The utilization of public policy knowledge and advice

Topic : Other

Chair : Arco Timmermans (Leiden University)

Second Chair : José Real-Dato (Universidad de Almería)

Third Chair : Marleen Brans (KU Leuven)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The papers we like to invite for this workshop can have one or more of the following focal points:

Ø Perceptions and utilization of scientific public policy knowledge by practitioners working in policy-making institutions such as the different branches of government and political parties.

Ø Perceptions and utilization of scientific public policy knowledge by practitioners in organizations or groups trying to influence the policy process, such as interest groups, civil society organizations, and lobbying and public affairs consultants.

Ø Types and formats of scientific public policy knowledge preferred and used by practitioners, choice for commissioned research and advice or for ‘shopping’ for knowledge.

Ø Ways in which scientific knowledge in the field of public policy is incorporated in policy learning by organizations, the degree to which this happens and the heuristics or systems used for this.

Ø Established and ongoing relationships between organizations in practice and providers of scientific public policy knowledge, patterns that emerge.

Ø Effects of organizational structure and culture such as mission and goals, size, information capacity, hierarchy, and public or private status on the utilization of public policy knowledge and advice.

Ø Standards, relevant competencies or larger competency frameworks existing or emerging for specific occupational or professional groups that provide incentives (and enforcement) for utilizing scientific knowledge in their work, recruitment criteria or strategies for staff, such as educational background and scientific skills obtained.

Ø Effects of polarization and politicization of issues on the use of public policy knowledge and advice.

Ø Ways in which organizations or groups in practice in the policy process deal with the increasingly blurred boundary line between validated scientific knowledge and disinformation and alternative facts.

ABSTRACT

This workshop focuses on how and under which conditions scientific knowledge produced in the field of public policy is incorporated and used by practitioners involved in the policy process. These practitioners comprise two categories of information professions: on the one hand all government branches and agencies with formal responsibilities in the policy process; on the other all those actors trying to influence the policy process, such as stakeholders engaging in lobbying or advocacy and think tanks. How do these types of information professions recognize and utilize scientific knowledge on public policy, and what are the conditions for it? In what way do these categories of practitioners obtain, demand, select and utilize or deliberately discard this knowledge? The workshop specifies knowledge utilization to scientific knowledge produced in the field of public policy. The demarcation of scientific public public policy knowledge is not limited to political and administrative structures, players and processes, but includes also more substantive policy domain knowledge as for example on international and EU affairs, social policy, economic policy, environment, civil rights, and immigration. This underexplored territory includes the sources and providers of public policy knowledge, types of knowledge producing institutions such as universities, research centres, advisory bodies, think tanks, etc.. It also includes types of knowledge and the features of these types, such as fundamental or applied research, theory-driven or problem-driven, and commissioned or non-commissioned research. The workshops invites contributions on the utilization of various kinds of scientific public policy knowledge and advice by information professions within and outside government. It explores the perceptions and behavior towards knowledge and advice and the cultural and organizations conditions for this.

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:00 (AULA 9)

From ‘Speaking Truth to Power’ to ‘Evidence Free(d) Policymaking? The New Faces of the Science-Policy Nexus

Marleen Brans (KU Leuven)

Sonja Blum (Universität Bielefeld)

Contestations about the authority of scientific knowledge in processes of policymaking are nothing new. They have existed since the earliest beginnings of modern policy research and policy analysis in the 1950s, despite the early dominance of assumptions of a rather direct and linear process of research utilization, and despite widespread early acceptance of Wildavsky’s (1979) characterization of policy research as ‘the art and craft of speaking truth to power’. Indeed, the relevant literature has acknowledged from the outset that social science has sometimes had little actual impact on policy, even before an outright politicization of policy research due to calls to restore the primacy of politics, as it is partly identified today (Blum and Brans, 2017).

At the start of the millennium, the future of knowledge utilization was looking up. The evidence-based policy making hype had governments across the world invest in all kinds of policy-science interfaces to better inform policies with a view to making them ‘work’ and more effective (e.g., Nutley et al., 2010). Yet, a decade later, this (still existing!) movement has been increasingly accompanied by contestations of the classic science-policy nexus. On the one hand, policy research has come under fire for the alleged political use of scientific evidence and the tendency to increase political influence on knowledge production (Straßheim and Kettunen, 2014). On the other hand, notions like ‘alternative facts’ and ‘fake news’ indicate something qualitatively new, as they go beyond policymakers ‘just not listening’ to scientific evidence, radicalizing the latter into explicitly and principly refusing to make use of scientific evidence, and into saying that they have had ‘enough of experts’ (Gove, Sky News, June 2016). This evidence-freed policymaking, goes beyond mere evidence-free policymaking. It is not limited to the ‘non-use’ of evidence, but extends up to the ‘use of non-use’ in political argumentation.

Despite these developments towards the politicization of policy research on the one hand and rejection of policy research on the other, evidence-based policy-making is not dead, as the new behavioral turn in policy research has been attracting increasing attention in government programs.

In this paper, we discuss the most significant changes that have occurred in the science-policy nexus since the 1960s. We identify and review three contemporary types vis-à-vis the classical understanding of ‘speaking truth to power’. We argue that multiple types remain active in parallel, even if some types feature more prominently in the frontstage of policy making at some points in time rather than others. In section 2, we take some space to review the ‘classical’ face of the science policy nexus, and the literature’s distinctions between types of use of scientific evidence, types of policy advice, and types of roles of researchers. These distinctions serve as points of reference for discussing in section 3 what the science-policy nexus looks like under the extreme case of evidence-freed policy making. In section 4 we focus on three such contemporary variants of the nexus, respectively (1) evidence-free(d) policymaking, (2) policy-based evidence-making, and the (3) meteoric rise of the behavioral insight movement as a new but narrowed type of evidence-based policymaking. Section 5 draws conclusions on the multiple faces of the science-policy nexus and will also reflect on how the use of evidence in Covid-19 policy-making squares with the classic view on the science-policy nexus.

The Role of Scientists in Public Policy: Case Study of the Hydrobiologist in the Introduction of Yangtze River Ten Year Fishing Ban

Peng Gao (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Since 2021, China has implemented a Ten-Year Fishing Ban (TYFB) in the Yangtze River and its main tributaries to address its worsening biodiversity crisis. This policy has wide-ranging impacts, affecting biodiversity, fisheries development, the resettlement of 231,000 fishermen, and the enforcement against illegal fishing. In the policy process, scientists from the Institute of Hydrobiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences played an important role. Since 2006, they have recognized the deterioration of ecological diversity in the Yangtze River Basin, and advocated for a perennial fishing ban. Their efforts, including research reports, seminars, and suggestion letters, ended up with the adoption of their recommendations.

This paper explores two questions: how to define this group of scientists in public policy literature? How to explain their role, together with other key factors, in the implementation of the TYFB?

We identified the scientists as an epistemic community as they unanimously believe that overfishing and illegal fishing have led to the depletion of fishery resources in the Yangtze River, and that the only solution is to implement a TYFB. This is consistent with Haas's (1992) definition of epistemic community. Intuitively, Haas's causal mechanism on how epistemic community affects decision-making (Epistemic Community Approach, ECA) can be adopted to explain their role in this policy process. (Haas, 1992; Löblová, 2018). However, we found that although it intuitively explains the role of scientists, it ignores the important role of other factors, such as the determination of the ruling party, public sentiment, public opinion, etc., which are elements in the political stream of Kingdon's (1984) multiple streams framework (MSF). Therefore, we applied MSF, especially the political stream, to explain the importance of political decision-making and public sentiment that are ignored in ECA. It seems the role of scientists is clearer if we combine MSF and ECA.

This study provides in-depth analysis through process-tracing of news report, and interviews. The study found that both ECA and MSF can explain the role of scientists to a certain extent, but ignore the issue of feasibility. We defined the factors behind feasibility as policy capacity, and showed that apart from scientists' efforts and political stream, the enhancement of government's policy capacity in relocating the livelihoods of fishermen and patrolling the vast area of Yangtze River are also essential in promoting the introduction of this policy. Therefore, we adopted and operationalized the definitions of different capacities from Wu et al. (2015), integrating these into a unified framework that mixes ECA and MSF for a more comprehensive understanding of the policy process.

Our contributions are three-folded: first, we discovered the empirical flaws of ECA and MSF. Second, we solved these limitations by considering the elements of policy capacity and propose a more comprehensive framework merging the strength of MSF, ECA and the issue of policy capacity to better explain epistemic community's role. Third, the modified framework leads us to propose several hypotheses, setting a direction for future research.

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 9)

The impact of knowledge brokering organisations: The case of the UK What Works Centres

Paul Vallance (Cardiff University)

Eleanor MacKillop (Cardiff University)

James Downe (Cardiff University)

A common response to the question of effectively utilising scientific public policy knowledge to influence the policy process is to establish organisations that are dedicated to facilitating engagement between research and policy (Torres and Steponavi?ius, 2022). These organisations perform important knowledge-brokering functions, but the precise nature and extent of their impacts on policy decisions and outcomes typically remain unclear (MacKillop et al. 2020). This is in-part because it is difficult to attribute specific impacts to intermediary actors within the wider networks and policy advisory systems in which they operate (Brans and Timmermans, 2022). Reflecting this, methodological frameworks for assessing such impacts have proposed a narrower focus on tracking the ‘contributions’ of actors to the uptake of research (Morton, 2005) or their ‘productive interactions’ with other actors as part of the non-linear processes through which knowledge is transferred and utilised (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011). However, a lack of theoretical and empirical understanding of how these interactions generate change over time within complex policy systems is still a significant constraint on the evaluation of knowledge brokering organisations (Hopkins et al. 2021).

This paper addresses this problem by studying a network of government-supported but independent ‘What Works Centres’ (WWCs) established in the UK over the past decade. The fourteen centres that make up this network vary in terms of their specialist policy area (e.g. health, education, crime reduction, homelessness, local economic growth), organisational and funding model, geographical focus, and ways of working with stakeholders to support evidence-based policy and practice (Sanders and Breckon, 2023). Despite the high profile of this network in the UK, evaluation of the impact the centres are having on policy and practice remains at an early stage of development (Gough et al. 2018). The research reported in this paper (carried out by members of one of the WWCs) aims to feed into the development of this evaluation through a qualitative study of impact across the network. A total of 46 interviews with members of WWCs and their key external stakeholders were conducted, transcribed, and analysed. Our research questions are i) How do the WWCs contribute to policy and/or practice across different contexts? ii) How do they relate these contributions to the ways in which they define, measure, and demonstrate their impact?

The findings from these interviews show that the impacts of these centres derive from their interaction with stakeholders in three interrelated areas: i) evidence mobilisation, ii) influencing policy and/or professional practice, and iii) building network and system capacity. Despite differences in the form that these practices take between the WWCs, these findings point to the need to view their impacts within a relational and systemic perspective that accounts for how the knowledge they broker is utilised in policy processes. The interviews also highlight the diversity of ways in which the centres currently define, plan for, and measure their impact. Given this methodological plurality (Pedersen et al. 2020), the paper concludes by considering whether common means of assessing impact should be developed and applied across the WWC network.

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'Politically palatable, actionable insights': Place-based public health knowledge mobilisation in Australia and the UK

Alison Clarke (University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne)

Peter McCue (University of New South Wales)

Our paper explores knowledge mobilisation opportunities and challenges from two perspectives on opposite sides of the world: that of a long-established physical activity policy officer community of practice in New South Wales, Australia; and a recently created knowledge brokerage organisation focused in north-east England.

We invite discussion as to what lessons have been learned from decades of knowledge exchange practice, and consider to what extent these lessons are transferrable to new initiatives worldwide. In particular, we focus on the tensions between what can be perceived as the opposing poles of 'policy pragmatism' and 'academic rigour' as all parties work towards their goal of politically palatable, actionable insights for policy implementation.

Case study one: Australia

Similar to many other allied health sectors, physical activity researchers have long called for stronger links with policymakers to assist evidence translation (Racine et al., 2023). One longstanding (approx. 25 years) policy officer-led community of practice is the Australian National Physical Activity Network (NPAN). NPAN consists of mostly State and National Government policy officers concerned with increasing community physical activity levels.

The network was instigated as a formal National Government grant funding and information-sharing reporting framework. However, when NPAN's financial reporting purposes were discontinued in 2013, rather than disband, members agreed that the information exchange opportunities were valuable enough to reconstitute the group as an informal community of practice. NPAN has continued to meet quarterly ever since.

NPAN members have instigated various processes to promote knowledge mobilisation between policy officers and academics. Examples include convening NPAN meetings within sector conferences; inviting presentations from leading academics to inform current policy issues; and proactively seeking NPAN consultation and/or representation as part of academic-led work such as physical activity guideline development. Academics in turn, have utilised NPAN as a source of physical activity policy information (Nau et al., 2022).

Case study two: England

The Insights North East (INE) partnership was established in 2022 to support regional knowledge mobilisation between universities and policymakers across north-east England. During our first year of operation, INE has identified that a key barrier to collaborative knowledge mobilisation is identifying—on

both sides—the exact nature of the challenges that are being addressed, alongside potential research questions.

It can often be difficult to go beyond restating the problem and reach the next step of offering actionable, place-relevant insights that align with local policy frameworks. This finding aligns with previous work that both highlights a distinct knowledge gap between the policy and research communities, and argues that the greater engagement of policymakers and stakeholders in the co-production of knowledge can help to close this gap (Gluckman et al., 2021).

To this end, INE is running a pilot series of ‘Defining the Challenge’ workshops attended by both academics from Newcastle and Northumbria Universities and policymakers from local councils and healthcare authorities. This paper tests the preliminary findings from these workshops against our hypothesis that they will improve relationship-building; clarify the questions under scrutiny by the policymaker; and lead to more defined and impactful outputs from projects.

Evidence-based Human Resource Management: our one-way ticket to reduce the gap between academics and practitioners?

Lisa Maertens (KU Leuven)

Despite evidence-based Human Resource Management (HRM) theories gaining more importance in governmental institutions, empirical evidence remains scarce. To address this knowledge gap, this study examines the application of evidence-based HRM in the regional government of Flanders, Belgium. It investigates the experiences of HR practitioners (n=32) and HR academics (n=12) with evidence-based HRM and the academic-practice gap. Building upon prior research (Criado-Perez et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2016), the study examines the perceived influence of various institutional and individual factors in the development of HRM. Through abductive qualitative analysis of 44 semi-structured interviews, the study finds that respondents demonstrate high awareness of evidence-based HRM and its principles. This holds for those working within the central administration and the executive agencies. Diverse information sources are considered during policy formulation, although internal organisational data (e.g., surveys on well-being, turnover data, etc.) is particularly favoured; however, the rigorous assessment of the validity and reliability of data remains somewhat absent. The study also shows that HR practitioners demonstrate enthusiasm to engage with academia and have a keen interest in accessing academic publications. On the other hand, patterns of using scientific knowledge to only legitimate their policymaking are clearly demonstrated in our interview data. Furthermore, to improve the effectiveness of practitioners, there is a need for an enhancement in data literacy.

Additionally, this research sheds light on the impact of the organisational size on integrating scientific knowledge in the policymaking process. Larger organisations tend to sustain their policy with a more significant amount of scientific evidence compared to smaller organisations. Furthermore, leadership’s endorsement plays a pivotal role in the instrumental utilisation of scientific evidence to support policymaking efforts. However, political factors often determine the policymaking process. The study illuminates the complexities of the relationship between politics and HR practice and highlights the need to consider political dynamics in making sense of evidence-based HRM.

This study aligns with the workshop since the utilisation of scientific evidence is investigated concerning public policy in terms of HRM policy choices made by HR-practitioners. Institutional factors such as governmental settings, legal frameworks, political influence, organisational size, etc., but also individual factors such as data literacy among the practitioners or their willingness to cooperate with academics to support their policymaking by scientific knowledge, are central in this research, which are the focus of this workshop as well. If everything works out well, I would be more than honoured and excited to present my work on-site.

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Session 3

Thursday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 9)

During and after fieldwork: utilization of scientific public policy knowledge as a process

Vanille LABORDE (Mesopolhis (AMU, Sciences Po Aix, CNRS))

Charles Reveillere (Aix-Marseille Université)

The making of scientific public policy knowledge is a process that involves several stages. While most studies have focused on the utilization of final research results by practitioners involved in policy-making (reports, articles, theses…), few have delved into how they utilize scientific research within the course of field investigation. However, it is during this stage that the researcher is in direct contact with practitioners potentially interested in the data being produced. This communication raises an original question : how does the utilization of scientific knowledge evolve all along the various stages of the knowledge production process ?

The paper is based on a comparative study of the implementation of two French public policies in the same city (Marseille): “laïcité” (secularism) policies in schools ; urban renewal projects in working-class neighbourhoods. It is based on a variety of qualitative methods: two years of ethnographic fieldworks in public administrations in both cases ; 304 multi-level interviews ; analyses of written sources.

The paper identifies three factors that determine the utilization of scientific knowledge by practitioners during the specific moment of field investigation. Firstly, a high level of politization which leads to the existence of conflicting coalitions of actors (Hassenteufel 2023), between whom knowledge is a strategic resource. Secondly, impermeable boundaries between different professional groups, involving strong difficulties of communication. Thirdly, accumulation of social capital by the researcher himself, that puts him in an intermediary position between those groups. He becomes then a knowledge broker (Merry 2006 ; Meyer & Brun 2023), caught up in power relationships among the actors that are the object of his study. He detains resources to reduce uncertainty among organizations (Fligstein 1987 ; Crozier & Friedberg 1977). He gets knowledge that information professionals (Abbott 1988) struggle both to obtain and utilize in their organizational environments.

In the case study of school policies of laïcité, two coalitions are in conflict : one aligned with the frames of the government policy ; the other trying to resist to it. The latter expect from the researcher to be a resource both capable of producing data that supports their stance and expressing a criticism that their professional status of civil servants prevents them from expressing. In other words, the researcher becomes a way to “voice” indirectly while remaining “loyal” (Hirschman 1970). In the case of urban planning, a coalition of municipal actors utilizes resources from a state-funded policy to serve their own agenda. Another coalition of actors seeks to denounce these practices to a national regulatory agency. But due to local power configuration, they do not want to go into overt political conflict. They utilize the researcher as a whistleblower. In both cases, scientific research represents a triple resource for the policymakers in conflict: data on social groups to which information professionals do not have access; knowledge benefiting from the authority of science; a person not involved in the conflicting coalitions (the researcher himself), enjoying a higher level of freedom of speech than theirs.

Eventually, the paper raises the question of the reception, by the practitioners, of “hot” and “cold” scientific advice (Craft and Howlett 2012). It shows a turning point (Abbott 2001) in their behaviour after the end of the fieldwork period, from instrumentalization to deliberate discard. Indeed, once completed, the research results do not necessarily fit with the expectations of most of the professionals within public administrations. However, they are seized upon by other actors, such as stakeholders trying to influence the policy process (think tank, lobbies, NGOs). The paper concludes on the conflicting utilization of research by internal and external actors of the state, depending on the stages of scientific knowledge making.

The Evidence Basis of Lobbying: Perspectives and Experiences

Arco Timmermans (Leiden University)

Actors trying to influence the policy process are stakeholders engaging in lobbying, advocacy, and public affairs. These actors work in the sphere of what Abbott (1088) calls the ‘information professions’ (Abbott, 1988). The goal of lobbyists and players alike is to pursue public or more private interests, and this may make them selective in using knowledge and evidence, or even discard or disqualify such knowledge in the competition for attention to their matters of interest. How do professionals in this field of lobbying and public affairs recognize and utilize scientific knowledge and advice on public policy, and what are the conditions for it? This paper provides a theoretical perspective and experiences from the field of public affairs.

Advocate against free public transport with public policy knowledge

Félicien Boiron (ENTPE - Ecole de l'aménagement durable des territoires)

Advocate against free public transport with public policy knowledge

Research Question

Recent studies have highlighted the considerable influence of specific actors within the information profession (Abbott, 1988) in shaping public policy, particularly among practitioners in organizations and stakeholders engaged in lobbying efforts (Aron & Michel-Aguirre, 2022; Mazzucato & Collington, 2023). Notably, there has been a growing number of studies focusing on the impact of advice (Chouin, 2023; DeLeon, 1989) and scientific public policy knowledge on policymaking (Craft & Howlett, 2012; Edler et al., 2022). Some works have delved into a specific type of public policy knowledge : that produced by scientists (Almeida & Báscolo, 2006) particularly public policy scientists (Brans & Timmermans, 2022).

However, often little analysis of how scientific public policy knowledge is generated and utilized by a wider of actors involved in the policy-making process including companies that operate under delegated public service contracts (Ansaloni & Smith, 2017) which are playing an increasingly role (Hood, 1991; Lascoumes & Le Gales, 2007). Despite frequent studies of their efficiency (Baumstark et al., 2005; Infantino, 2017) and implementation work (Abou, 2020; 2022; Overman, 2016), these companies go beyond simply applying specifications outlined by public contractors. They also assume a significant role in policy advice, sometimes even establishing a local monopoly of expertise.

Methodology

We focus on a specific instrument (free public transport) to understand the policy making of public transport in France. This involves examining the involvement of practitioners organizational and lobbying activities, as well as the responsibility of public transport operators in implementing transport policies through the management of buses and subways. They all[1] reject the idea of free public transport using citing a specific policy domain known as the socio-economics of transport policy. To ensure that a proposal for free transport is perceived as unfeasible, they construct an argument and use a dramatic statement, based on this policy knowledge, that causally links it to tragic consequences for public transport policies. This may involve producing local reports[2] or utilizing interest groups (FNAUT, 2018; GART, 2019; UTP, 2020; UTP & FNAUT, 2014).

To understand the sector, we start with a sociographic analysis[3] (Hassenteufel et al., 1999), combined with interviews of stakeholders and observations in transport congresses and events. Additionally, we surveyed and analyzed the french reports on free public transport to understand the argumentation involved.

The trajectory (Bergeron & Hassenteufel, 2018; Chailleux & Zittoun, 2022; Sabatier & Weible, 2014) of free public transport in Montpellier is being studied based on an extensive review of the press[4] and of gray literature. A precise chronology is constructed for conducting qualitative ethnographic interviews[5] (Zittoun, 2021).

Workshop Research

In our presentation, we will illustrate the major role played by socio-economic analysis of transport. Mastery of this discipline is crucial for accessing the policy community (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Baumgartner & Jones, 2010; Cairney, 2012; Haas, 1992; Howlett & Ramesh, 1998; Johnson, 2015), which includes all transport stakeholders (whether there are managers of operators, lobbyists or territorial officials). It is also forms the foundation of a paradigm (Hall, 1993; Kuhn, 1970) that dominates public policy for transport is approached. The players' high degree of specialization, combined with their frequent interaction, explains why public policy knowledge dominates the politician and the political arena.

In Montpellier, politicians are challenging this domination by committing to introduce free public transport. They are navigating the fears and apprehensions of civil servants and operator employees, as well as the doubts of experts and interest groups.

I would prefer to participate on-site.

[1] Although a specific think-tank has attempted to promote the measure using political science in recent years, the transport sector is still dominated by policy advisors discrediting the measure by using socio-economic of transport policy.
[2](Crozet et al., 2019; MBC MBO, 2019; PMP Beyond Consulting, 2019; Rapoport et al., 2018)
[3] We collected data on the internet (mostly on LinkedIn) from nearly 100 persons and analyzing it mostly qualitatively by using a data-visualization software that we made.
[4] More than 1,000 articles.
[5] We conducted 20 interviews with policymaking actors such as politicians, directors of the operators.

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W01 / The utilization of public policy knowledge and advice

Chair : Arco Timmermans (Leiden University)

Second Chair : José Real-Dato (Universidad de Almería)

Third Chair : Marleen Brans (KU Leuven)

Session 4

Thursday, June 27th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 9)

Knowledge and evidence utilization in Mexico: a study of the public policy sphere

Pedro Canales-Hernández (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana - Xochimilco)

Maria Vega (UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA)

How does the information reach the decision-making process? In this article, we explore how academics can be entrepreneurs in charge of bringing scientific information to the designers, implementers, and evaluators of public policies. In addition to producing and spreading academic products, they are sometimes responsible for advising public servants. In this sense, they become facilitators for officials to access scientific knowledge and evidence. In Mexico, there are specialized public policy programs with expert scholars. To approach the exploration of this phenomenon, we conducted interviews with academics from these programs established in universities and research centers in Mexico City currently. We will show why an academic decides to get involved with the practitioners, the challenges and facilities they face, the sectors in which get they involved, the levels of government with which they work, the type of information and evidence they spread, and their experience about whether the information use and its advice followed. This work provides empirical evidence mainly for the literature on information and evaluation utilization. Furthermore, we use a theoretical framework of policy entrepreneurs that allows us to understand academics as actors who can influence public policies.

(Virtual) Policy Knowledge and Policy Change in Higher Education Accreditation in Europe and in the United States

Cecilia Bibbo (State University of New York at Albany, NY)

The term ‘quality assurance’ in higher education refers to the policies, procedures, systems, and practices designed to enhance the quality of education and certify to the public the existence of minimum educational standards (Harvey, 2004; Vla?sceanu et al., 2007). Accreditation is the most commonly used mechanism by which the quality of institutions and programs is reviewed and certified based on pre-defined standards and procedures.

Accreditation policies for higher education have been developed all over the world for the last fifty years, with some convergence among systems fostered by international collaboration and regional networks (Uvalic?-Trumbic? & Martin, 2021). The rapid development of accreditation policies was spurred by several factors, mainly the growing awareness of the importance and benefits of quality higher education in the establishment of civil society and for economic prosperity (Braun, 2013; Lane, 2012). The American accreditation model—the one with the longest history (Phillips & Kinser, 2018)—inspired the design and development of models implemented in many countries, including that in Europe in 1999.

Despite the promised theoretical benefits of accreditation mechanisms for colleges and universities, their practical efficacy and utility have been contested in the last few decades. Governments have developed a series of policy changes to address critiques and improve the quality of higher education. The United States and Europe are cases where a significant volume of policy changes in quality assurance have been rapidly and continuously implemented in recent decades.

This qualitative research investigates how accreditation policy changes in the United States and Europe have been designed over the last three decades. The research specifically examines policy changes that promoted cooperation-competition practices in the accreditation context. The focus is on the arguments and evidence used by practitioners, stakeholders, and policymakers to support, modify, delay, or resist a policy change. The scientific knowledge produced by scholars and public policy professionals and incorporated

into the policy-making process is analyzed to identify the conditions and behavior of actors who commission, select, utilize, or reject this knowledge and the advice received. What types of scientific public policy knowledge did diverse categories of actors use in the policymaking process? With what purpose and function were they utilized? What are the factors that determined their utilization? In contrast to prior studies that have generally examined the outcomes of accreditation policies or were undertaken in the name of advocacy, this research sheds light on the policy formulation process itself and the specific ways in which public policy knowledge has been integrated into the policy-making process. This study draws from the literature on ‘policy advisory systems’ (PAS) and knowledge utilization. The proposed framework maps out the declared issues and expected outcomes, the forces involved, and the type of public policy knowledge utilized, and offers insight useful for the advancement of public policy and educational policy research.

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W01 / The utilization of public policy knowledge and advice

Chair : Arco Timmermans (Leiden University)

Second Chair : José Real-Dato (Universidad de Almería)

Third Chair : Marleen Brans (KU Leuven)

Session 5

Friday, June 28th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 9)

The influence of organizational and contextual factors on the use of policy evaluation in policymaking: Evidence from Spain's central and regional governments

José Real-Dato (Universidad de Almería)

Spain is considered a latecomer country in the process of institutionalization of policy evaluation and its use in policymaking. This paper uses evidence from two recent survey to top-level policymakers at national and regional administration in order to analyse how organizational (policy analytic capacities, types of organizational activities) and contextual factors (characteristics of policy subsystems) affect policymakers' use of knowledge produced in policy evaluation. In this respect, this paper aims to contribute to the growing literature on the use of policy evaluation (Pattyn et al., 2019; Pattyn & Bouterse, 2020; Stockmann et al., 2020), and particularly, to the understanding of the role of the demand side of the system.

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Sources and uses of policy knowledge in contexts with limited institutionalization of policy advice

Natalia Koga (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

Miguel Loureiro (University of Sussex)

Pedro Palotti (National School of Public Administration - ENAP)

Virginia Rocha (European University Institute)

Although the discussion about the challenges in finding a good term in the complex relationship between rationality and legitimacy or between expertise and power in policymaking is not new in the policy studies (Simon, 1956; Weiss, 1979; De Leon, 2008; Fischer e Gottweis, 2012; Lejano, 2006; Parkhurst, 2017; Cairney, 2017;), there is still little production on the diversity of sources of advice that governments rely on. This gap is particularly pronounced in contexts with lower institutionalization of policy advice, such as the Brazilian one.

Recent research showed that the direct and instrumental use of scientific evidence is limited in comparison with the use of other sources of knowledge (Cherney et al., 2015; Vesely et al., 2018). But, as Weiss (1979) suggests, other forms of use of academic research can be found, such as the interactive one, in which scientific knowledge is just one type of source of knowledge in a complex and interactional process that involves other types of sources. In this framework, scientific knowledge serves as just one facet within a multifaceted process that incorporates other sources, including tacit knowledge from professional expertise and phronetic knowledge derived from lay perspectives through public engagement (Saguin, 2022).

This paper seeks to investigate the dynamics of use of that conjunction of sources of information within

government to discuss possible conditional factors and forms of interaction between them. It analyzes and synthetizes empirical data collected through quanti-quali methods over the last five years on the Brazilian federal bureaucracy. It aims to reduce the gap on studies on cases beyond Westminster systems and OECD countries and on the “demand side” of advice, where fewer attention has been given by the specialized literature, as pointed out by Howlett (2019).

In contrast to countries with well-established advisory systems like in the OECD-countries (Howlett, 2019), in Brazil, we find fewer formal institutional arrangements of policy knowledge generation and expertise formation (Palotti et al., 2020). However, as Vaitsman et al.’s (2013) assert, this does not mean that policy analysis and advice do not exist in the country, but that additional effort must be made to identify and understand its practice.

Three main findings were raised through the study. Firstly, bureaucrats have been using different sources of knowledge and playing important roles in the advisory system due to their tenure status and their intermediary position amongst external sources of knowledge and the decision makers. Secondly, data indicate that, overall, knowledge stemming from experience and internal sources holds more influence and visibility amongst the Brazilian bureaucracy. Yet, nuanced variations and blending of sources of information emerge when considering contextual factors such as bureaucrats’ individual characteristics, type of policy work and policy area in which bureaucrats perform, and the broader political scenario (Koga et al., 2022; Saguin et al., in prelo). Finally, we have identified a recent growing involvement of control entities (such as audit offices and the judiciary) in generating evaluations and recommendations for policymakers, posing a potential challenge to the more traditional policy advisors in influencing policymaking.