National Forum on Knowledge Transfer and Exchange  
Toronto Canada, 23-24 October, 2006  

Scoping the Challenge:  
A Systems Approach  

Philip Davies PhD  
Executive Director, Campbell Collaboration  
Senior Research Fellow  
American Institutes for Research  

A C20th View  

“There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult”  

John Maynard Keynes
A C21st View

For the last two hundred years, neo-classical economics has recognised only two factors of production: labour and capital. This is now changing. Information and knowledge are replacing capital and energy as the primary wealth-creating assets, just as the latter two replaced land and labour 200 years ago.

Thomas B Riley, Executive Director and Chair, Commonwealth Centre for Electronic Governance

Outline

What is required are *systems* changes:

- Receptive systems
- Knowledge management systems
- Acknowledgement of different knowledge systems
- Incentive and rewards systems
- Communications systems
Receptive Systems
(Hosts, Agents, Environments)

“Social science should be at the heart of policy making. We need a revolution in the relationship between government and the social research community - we need social scientists to help determine what works and why, and what type of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective …”

(UK Secretary of State for Education, 2000)

Government must be:
• Information aged
• Able to access information
• Evidence-based
• Properly evaluated
• Based on best practice
• Cross Cutting and Joined Up
• A learning organisation
Receptive Systems
(Hosts, Agents, Environments)

• Policy making must be soundly based on evidence of what works
• Improve departments’ capacity to make best use of evidence
• Improve the accessibility of the available evidence to policy makers
Receptive Systems
(Hosts, Agents, Environments)

- It’s not the way we train researchers
- Academic disciplines often work in silos
- Different methodological approaches work in silos
- Academic life is tribal
- Government Departments often work in silos
- Government analysts often work in silos
- Government is tribal

Knowledge Management Systems

- Must be strategic and long term...
- As well as timely and operational
- Must ask answerable questions (PICO)
- Must establish and utilise the balance of evidence
- Avoiding selection, publication and political bias
- Must be accessible, retrievable and useable
- And must be kept up-to-date (monthly, weekly, daily)
- Must be user friendly
- ‘Experts’ must have up-to-date and demonstrable expertise
Knowledge Management Systems

- Systems to search, find and capture knowledge/evidence
- Critical appraisal systems
- Systems to separate the wheat from the chaff
- Data extraction systems (‘what are the data?’)
- Knowledge extraction systems (‘what do the data tell us?’)
- Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
- Rapid/Interim Evidence Assessments
- Evidence-Based Briefings
- Evidence-Based Guidelines

Incentive and Rewards Systems

Professional Skills for Government
Policy Makers’ Core Skills (from October 2005)

- Leadership
- Financial Management
- People Management
- Programme Management
- Communications and Marketing
- Strategic Thinking
- Professional expertise
- Broader Experience
- Analysis and Use of Evidence

Must Be Built Into Appraisal and Rewards Systems
Incentive and Rewards Systems
Professional Skills for Government

Policy Makers’ Core Skills (from October 2005)
Analysis and Use of Evidence

• Anticipate and secure appropriate evidence
• Test for deliverability of policy/program and evaluate
• Use evidence to challenge decision making
• Identify ways to improve policy/practice
• Choose and apply a variety of tools for collecting/using evidence
• Ensure use of evidence is consistent with wider government requirements
• Work in partnership with a wide range of experts/analysts

Incentive and Rewards Systems
Professional Skills for Government

Researchers’ Core Skills (from October 2005) - Analysis and Use of Evidence

• Meet customers’ needs
• Work in partnership with other Government policy makers
• Critically evaluate data and information
• Synthesise and make sense from a variety of sources
• Make evidence-based decisions
• Understand the bigger picture - think imaginatively
• Use interpersonal and other communication skills
• Communicate written and oral information clearly/concisely
Different Knowledge Systems

Policy Makers’ Evidence
- Colloquial
- Anything that seems reasonable
- Policy relevant
- Timely
- Clear Message

Researchers’ Evidence
- ‘Scientific’ (Context free)
- Proven empirically
- Theoretically driven
- As long as it takes
- Caveats and qualifications

Communications Systems

For Policymakers Research Evidence Is Too:
- Long
- Verbose
- Detailed
- Dense
- Impenetrable
- Jargonesque
- Methodological
- Untimely
- Non-relevant/irrelevant
Communications Systems

Getting Research Into The Evidence Chain

- Policy or Practice
- Special Advisers
- ‘Experts’
- Professional Associations
- Think Tanks/Opinion Formers
- Lobbyists and Pressure Groups
- Media
- Constituents, Consumers and Users
- Academic Research

Communications Systems

- Clear and concise messages
- Appropriate formats (1:3:25)
- Explicit policy and practice implications
- Active dissemination systems (passive websites/journals/newsletters not enough)
- Accessible databases and technology
- Use of handheld and mobile equipment (e.g. Blackberries, Palm pilots, PDAs etc.)
- Continuing professional development is necessary
Philip Davies PhD

Executive Director, Campbell Collaboration
Senior Research Fellow
American Institutes for Research
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Washington DC 2007

Tel: (US) 001 202 403 6804 (UK) 01869 347284
Mobile: (US) 001 202 445 3640 (UK) 07927 186074

Email: PDavies@air.org