NZ SSC, VUW & ANZSOG present:

TEACHING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY TO FLY: TRANSFERRING SOUND POLICIES ACROSS THE WORLD

SPEAKER

Professor Paul Cairney
Professor of Politics and Public Policy
Division of History and Politics
University of Stirling

LOCAL SPEAKER & MC

Lesley Baddon
Director, Urban and Infrastructure Policy
Ministry for the Environment

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‘Teaching evidence based policy to fly’:

How to deal with the politics of policy learning and transfer

Paul Cairney, Professor of Politics and Public Policy

p.a.cairney@stir.ac.uk

@Cairneypaul

https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/

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Wouldn’t it be nice?

But there are three problems

1. ‘Evidence based’ policy transfer is misleading

2. ‘Blueprint’ approach ignores local context

3. ‘How to’ guides exist, but most studies do not identify their use.

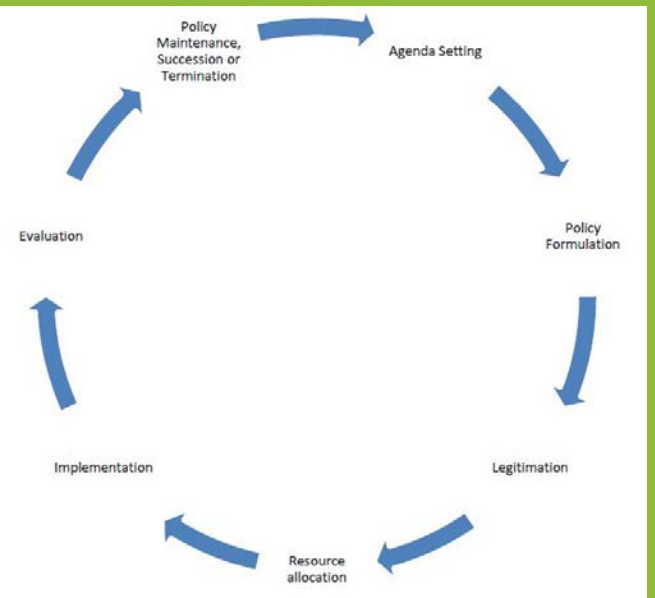
Why? Policy learning and transfer require political choices, not mechanistic steps.

Political choice and 3 problems with ‘evidence based’ policymaking

1. The ‘good evidence’ problem

2. The ‘information processing’ problem

3. The complexity problem



’Evidence based’ is one of many types of policy learning

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Epistemic. Experts transmitting knowledge to policymakers.

Reflection. Dialogue to incorporate diverse forms of knowledge.

Bargaining. Learning how to cooperate/compete effectively.

Hierarchy. Actors with authority learn how to impose their aims; others learn the limits to their discretion.

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Policy Transfer studies suggest:

1. Some transfer is voluntary

- Shortcuts to learning: propinquity, entrepreneurs, limited searches for evidence.

2. Some transfer is driven by pressure

- Encouragement by governments, international norms/ agreements, ‘spillovers’, foreign investment.

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Some studies warn about failure to:

1. Generate or use enough evidence on what made the initial policy successful
2. Adapt policy to local circumstances
3. Back policy change with sufficient resources

But the assumption is that transfer is of a *product*

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Other studies provide caveats:

1. ‘Transfer’ is really ‘translation’ or ‘transformation’
2. Transfer success not the same as implementation success …
3. … or policy success

The assumption is that ‘failed transfer’ makes less sense

Political choices combine: evidence and governance

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	Implementation science	Story telling	Improvement method
How should you gather evidence?	Hierarchy of evidence, RCTs	Practitioner knowledge Service user feedback	Mix of evidence Trained practitioners experimenting and evaluating
How should you 'scale up' from best practice?	Uniform model Fidelity to dosage	Tell stories, invite people to learn	If you think your practice is working, keep doing it.
What aim should you prioritise?	Administer the active ingredient	Governance principles: localism, respect	Training, experimenting, feedback

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11 questions to encourage successful evidence based policy transfer

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11 questions to encourage successful evidence based policy transfer

1. What problem did policymakers say they were trying to solve, and why?
2. What solution did they produce?
3. Why?

1-3 help establish comparability in agenda setting

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11 questions to encourage successful evidence based policy transfer

4. Was the project introduced in a comparable region?

5. Was it introduced nationwide, or in a region which is sufficiently representative of the national experience?

6. How do we account for the role of scale and cultural expectations?

4-6 help establish meaningful comparison

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11 questions to encourage successful evidence based policy transfer

7. Evaluated independently, and well?

8. Enough time for long term evaluation?

9. Evaluated more favourably than other solutions?

10. Are we identifying promise or evidence of success?

7-10 help establish evidence base

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11 questions to encourage successful evidence based policy transfer

11. How shall we transfer policy at scale?

- Fidelity and uniformity?
- Storytelling and discretion?
- Training and pragmatic approaches to evidence?

11 links good transfer to good policymaking

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Take home messages

1. Communication technology helps increase access to information from international experience
2. It also increases the chance to import policy unwisely
3. More evidence is not a substitute for analysis and choice

Key choices include:

- How to define the problem to solve
- How to identify good evidence on policy transfer
- How to connect good evidence to good government

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THANK YOU

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Questions?

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