

Improving communication with policy-makers

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Improving Communication with Policy-Makers

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Objective: This presentation should help to structure our thinking.

Introduction: Organisation of Presentation and Discussion

1. Define the communication problem.
2. Juxtapose policy-makers and research analysts in terms of:
 - environment;
 - psychology;
 - priorities.
3. Show that demand for analytical work is a derived demand resulting from demand for action. These demand relationships are not developing automatically!
4. Hypothesis that economists need to concern themselves more with the ways policy-makers (PM):
 - define their questions;
 - expect answers;
 - act.

Therefore researchers need to cultivate demand for their services and help in developing structures that would enable the evolution of the “product” they produce.

5. Speculate on some needed reorientation in content and organisation and presentation of research in order to close the gap between the PMs need and the researchers' offer.
6. “Brainstorming” to structure ideas on:
 - How to better close this bothersome gap?
 - How research networks could contribute to the solution of this problem?
 - And when other institutional structures are needed to get a “market” for research needs and research findings organised?

I – The Communication Problem

Researchers:	<i>“Policy makers</i>	<i>do not listen</i> <i>do not need advise”</i>
Policy-makers:	<i>“Researchers</i>	<i>do not supply what is needed</i> <i>when it's needed</i> <i>the way it's needed”</i>

II – The Two Worlds of Policy-Makers and Researchers

	PM	R
Personality:	risk taker pragmatic satisfizer	risk averter complex-complicated optimizer
Policy-makers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is “decision-maker under pressure”: pressure groups (rationale of power) time lacking resources • is closer to policies than to economics 	

Some suppositions on the PM's interaction with economic analysis:

1. PMs do not read.
2. PMs cannot handle more than 3 issues or relationships at one time.
3. PMs ask the analyst's advice after they have made their decision
(basic decision) / (instinct)
 - get them to improve their instinct, and
 - help them in utilising their political “space” (from “here to there”).

Some suppositions on economics and economists:

1. There are probably not more than a handful of basic ideas of economics that really make a difference to the outcome of decisions of PMs.
2. Economists underestimate the power of simple messages backed up by empirical findings.
3. Demand orientation of analysis and research: “derived demand”

Demand for action (expressed by leadership <----- population)

Demand for action-oriented information research

Demand for understanding oriented information research

III – Basic Hypotheses

A. To be effective, need to work at all three levels:

- a. Demand for action: information on basic economic relationships (political level).
- b. Action-oriented research (administrative level).
- c. Understanding oriented research (university; research centre).

B. Need specialised organisations for each step (see section VI, “Policy-maker/Researcher network”).

C. Underestimate returns from work at the “action level”.

D. Underestimate significance of research on “going from here to there” (sequencing/political market).

E. Underestimate the importance of “cross linkage” to issues of other sectors, new themes, e.g. environment (political markets).

- F. Underestimate the potential and danger of analysis of distributional issues in emerging democracies (political markets).
- G. It pays to cultivate the demand for one's services.

IV – Speculate on possible avenues of re-orientation

1. Content of product (research agenda):
 - Focus on more than agricultural food.
 - Focus on people who gain, who loose poverty, distribution.
 - Focus on new themes and relationships, environment, resources, sustainability and link them with old messages.
 - “Industrial organisation” (structure, conduct, performance).
Ordnungspolitik who should do what, when, how (institutional economics); public goods questions.
 - Sequencing (“from here to there”).
2. Producing the product:
 - Multi-disciplinary excellence.
 - Intra-sectorial interaction.
 - Work out “rotations”.
 - Network (national/international) – to increase critical messages.
3. “Preparing” the buyer:
 - Training through information. Increase economic literacy (clientele)
 - Focus on simple messages (every message is training).
 - Focus on systems perspective.
4. Packaging the product:
 - KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) with sophisticated back up.
 - Stress who gains, who looses.
 - Stress sequencing (immediate action and consequences).
5. Selling the product:
 - Dialogue structures within sector/intra sector (see below).
 - Newsletters.
 - Hearings.
 - Press conferences.
 - Journalists.
6. The role of networks: “the prophet does not count in his own country”.
 - International.
 - National.

V – In summary

- Stress:
- Demand for the researchers' output.
 - Responsibility/chance for influencing kind and magnitude of demand; content; organisational structure; linkages.
 - Some needed changes at national level to get KISS-messages to policy-makers:
the market for research findings or
the policy-maker/Researcher network at national level.

System Components	Policy Maker	Policy Adviser	Analyst	Researcher
Responsibility	Decision Action	Political implications and consequences	Day to day Short run	Deep, broad Long run

VI – Questions for discussion

1. Is this a useful approach? Way of thinking.
2. What additional issues?
3. Can the network play a role in improving situation by:
 - thinking through relevant issues?
 - thinking through relevant organisational framework?
 - thinking through ways of presenting the “product”?

