



Evidence-based Policy Making

*Getting the Evidence,
Using the Evidence
and Evaluating the
Outcomes*

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Getting the Evidence, Using the Evidence
and Evaluating the Outcomes

Conference Proceedings

UCD
150



A blue-tinted photograph of four people in professional attire standing in front of a banner. The banner features the NESF logo and the text 'National Economic Social Forum NESF'. From left to right: a man in a suit holding a folder, a man in a suit with a name tag, a woman in a dark blazer, and a man in a suit with glasses.

National Economic
Social Forum NESF

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Foreword

by Mr. Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General to the Government
and Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach

I would like to welcome this Report of the Conference on Evidence-based Policy Making¹ which provides a valuable input into the ongoing discussion on policy analysis. I would also like to take the opportunity to compliment and thank both the NESF and the Geary Institute for hosting the event, in particular the Chair of the NESF, Dr. Maureen Gaffney and the Director of the Geary Institute, Professor Colm Harmon.

The Conference afforded participants the opportunity to discuss and debate the complex and challenging issues around the design and implementation of public policy. This debate had a dual purpose of addressing the needs both of policymakers who provide public services and of those who provide research findings for their evaluation and development.

The success of the Conference was due primarily to the quality of contributions from the speakers. Each speaker reflected a different background, perspective and insight so each managed to complement the others and stimulate a keen debate on these issues.

The Conference was well attended by people from a wide spectrum of interests, from policymakers to academics and this led to a productive exchange of views. It is my hope that the views and the issues discussed can be carried forward for the benefit of all.

The Conference helped to deepen our understanding of the challenges involved in enhancing our collective capability to undertake effective and

1. The Programme for the Conference is contained in Annex 1 and a list of those who attended is given in Annex 2.

timely policy analysis. The insights from the speakers and subsequent discussions provide a platform and framework for responding to demand for policy options based on rigorous analysis of available evidence.

This requirement is intensified by virtue of the increasing complexities of the society we live in and greater demands for transparency and accountability in relation to how we deliver and implement policy. Our understanding of the dynamics, interactions and relationships between policy inputs, processes and outcomes is growing and the tools of policy analysis will enhance that understanding.

One particular tool of policy analysis referenced by the Taoiseach during his contribution to the Conference is Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). RIA is an ex-ante analysis of the likely impacts of a proposed regulation which also involves structured consultation with stakeholders. I am pleased to report that there has been significant progress with the introduction of RIA since the Conference. At that time, the Taoiseach referred to the fact that RIA was being piloted in a number of Government Departments and Offices. This piloting phase highlighted many benefits of RIA and, on foot of this, the Government agreed to the introduction of RIA in June 2005.

It is now a requirement for all proposals for primary legislation involving changes to the regulatory framework, significant Statutory Instruments, draft EU Directives and significant EU regulations. RIA training is being provided for officials and published RIA Guidelines are also available. The use of RIA will increase the use of evidence and data in the regulatory process and help to ensure that regulations are well targeted, proportionate and effective.

Of course a key requirement for progress is the availability of better statistics for policymakers. The National Statistics Board is pursuing a process of continuous improvement in the availability of useful sources for statistics including the CSO publication *Measuring Ireland's Progress – a second set of National Progress Indicators*. In addition the CSO is developing a set of national economic, social and environmental statistical frameworks to help Departments with their Data Strategies to map the data gaps which exist and to outline how these gaps will be addressed. The successful completion of this work will greatly enhance the availability of crucial data for policy formulation.

Finally I hope that the publication of this report of the proceedings at the Conference will act as a catalyst to further debate and progress on evidence-based policy making.

Dermot McCarthy

*Secretary General to the Government &
Secretary General at the Department of the Taoiseach*



Overview and Policy Conclusions

Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chairperson of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and Professor Colm Harmon, Director of the UCD Geary Institute

“Social science should be at the heart of policy making. We need a revolution in relations between government and the social research community – we need social scientists to help determine what works and why, and what types of policy initiatives are likely to be the most effective. We need better ways of ensuring that those who want this information can get it easily and quickly. Too often ideas are not openly discussed because of the fear of unhelpful press speculation but if researchers are to become more street wise in handling partial findings and politicians and civil servants are more relaxed about welcoming radical thinking we can get it right.”

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), February 2002.

Scientific and technological research, coupled with commercial exploitation of this research, is seen as a key driver of Ireland’s development as a leader in the global knowledge economy. The significant public investment in these areas, through Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), Enterprise Ireland and the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTL), underscores the importance of basic scientific research to our economic development. The work of these programmes creates the appropriate environment for infrastructural developments – human, physical and financial – required to realise the vision of research enhancing and sustaining economic and

social development. Crucially the development of the scientific base is underscored by the belief in 'technology transfer', the idea that basic R&D activity can have real impact on the economy and on society, delivering for the policymaker the sense of an economy going places, of movement along a value chain.

With this Conference the essential message that the NESF and UCD Geary Institute joined forces to deliver is that the same concept of 'transfer' that lies at the heart of research/industry relationship should be developed with government and the wider policy community. Sustaining a prosperous, competitive and cost-effective economy depends upon the formulation and implementation of appropriate public policy. However, despite the fact that the best policy advice a government can receive has, by definition, to be sourced in the best research output that we can produce, the interaction between policy and academia is not as well developed in Ireland. Neither the *supply* nor *demand* for research into policy design processes is adequate. This removes a key input from the policy debate but more importantly means that the taxpayer may not be getting the value added from their investments made in ventures such as PRTL.

This is an increasingly isolated position. The US is cited as a world leader in the embedded relationship between policy outcomes and the research community. There is a strong willingness on the part of the US government to invest in gathering the necessary data and there is imaginative and widespread use of administrative data. Relations between the government and academic sector are much closer in the US than is typical in Europe with key appointments (Treasury, Labor, Labor Statistics, Council of Economic Advisors – and more recently the new Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke) coming from academia on fixed-term secondments. Moreover, such government appointments are perceived as very prestigious by the academic community and are not seen as a negative issue in career terms. The economics community has provided at least four Nobel Laureates, and a number of prospective recipients of that honour, to positions of significance within the policy sector in the United States.

Over the past decade there has also been a move within Europe and the UK in particular towards more proactive involvement of policymakers with the research sector. In the health sector, for example, systems have developed to ensure health professionals and policymakers have constantly updated access to findings of top quality research (such as the Cochrane Collaboration). Similar developments are now also taking place in relation to social policy, education, social welfare and criminal justice. In the UK

there is public commitment by government to make policy decisions better reflect the available evidence through the HM Treasury's Evidence-based Policy Fund and the ESRC Evidence Network. There is also an increased interest in piloting policies and in evaluating existing policies in the light of experience in order to improve the working of policies – examples there include the New Deal, the Education Maintenance Allowance, Sure Start and the Working Families Tax Credit.

We would like to underline here a key point, which was echoed by the Taoiseach in his speech and by Dr. Don Thornhill and others during the course of the Conference. Policy is set by policymakers and it is not the role of the research community to design policy. With that stated, the role of the research community becomes clearer – evidence to assist in the design of policy, evaluation of effectiveness, and, perhaps, challenging the policymaker on the value of policy based on the available evidence. The primary concern must be to ensure policy research and policy advice are 'joined up' in a clear away across boundaries that typically exist on the side of the policymaker (for example between government departments) and on the side of the academic (between disciplines).

This is summarised by Professor Alison Wolf of King's College London in her address to the Conference. She identified pressure points in realising this transfer process. Policy needs are often inconsistent with academic working processes (feasibility, short time lines etc; pressure on researchers from funders to obtain the 'desired' result from a political standpoint and an inability of many academic researchers to communicate findings in a way that is meaningful to policymakers. Professor Wolf suggested that these problems can be largely explained by the different incentives driving researchers and civil servants. Academic incentives include peer-reviewed publications that advance the researcher's career, aligned with projects that enhance the prestige and/or financial standing of the institution. These tend to have a medium to long-time frame.

Policy community incentives, on the other hand, revolve around maintaining and increasing departmental budgets, and explaining policy options clearly, simply and rapidly to ministers, journalists and the public. Model examples exist of how to get this right – the Institute for Fiscal Studies is one 'gold standard' illustration of public policy outreach with an academic engine room of rigour and extraordinarily high standard lying at its heart. Similarly, the Centre for the Economics of Education at the London

School of Economics was developed to explicitly align the policy needs of the funder (the UK Department for Education and Skills) and needs of the academic team (in terms of leading-edge, publication-focused work).

We were impressed by the very keen and widespread interest this Conference inspired and the very diverse audience attending. Many of the participants expressed the view that this is a topic that would benefit from further exploration. We could continue with an overview of the contributions from all of our Speakers, but we think they really do speak for themselves – provocative, stimulating and uniformly excellent. What is now required is to identify the next steps. Based on the Conference, the exchanges on the day and so on, a number of points emerge.

We need to consider the institutional initiatives required to support the development of the knowledge transfer system, that would bring maximum economic benefit to Ireland through leading edge policy design and implementation and would facilitate the development of a responsive capacity for analysing new and existing initiatives – in effect a shared understanding between the academic and policy community about what is required, and an understanding of the uses (and limitations!) of academic research in the policy formation process.

We also question whether there is now a case for the establishment of an “Evidence-Based Policy Unit” as a ‘sectoral’ response by the research and policy community. A number of issues emerge on this concept. For example, how best could such a Unit stimulate and support excellent research on significant public policy issues based on rigorous analysis and detailed empirical evidence together with in-depth institutional knowledge? How best could such a Unit produce research that is timely and relevant and at the same time remain closely aligned to the engine room of peer-reviewed research? In effect, such a Unit would need to be the prism through which policymakers and the wider community sees policy relevant research, with an appropriate network of relationships and governance arrangements in place to achieve that aim.

The dissemination of policy-relevant research has become more, not less, of a challenge. We need to structure how research is disseminated widely and effectively to policymakers, to politicians across the party spectrum and to the media and the public at large. Outlets such as the ESRI’s Quarterly Economic Commentary provide an invaluable service in disseminating academic research in very readable format. The establishment of a themed

series in public policy research (such as that produced by colleagues in the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, as outlined by Professor Lomas in his contribution to the Conference, following on the success of their Mythbusters series) is necessary.

The research community needs to be more tightly involved in key policy issues including live policy debates, informed by the evidence. It is a challenge for the policy making community to promote partnerships to drive ideas forward rapidly, and seek out and enable effective collaborations with agencies, institutions and groupings in the policy environment in Ireland. The NESF has led the way in working with the research community in a project team model for major reports, projects and in placing academic expertise in the frontline of steering a report through to publication. We would encourage more of this across the policy making spectrum.

It is important to consider the funding mechanisms most effective for development of the research base. Should we consider the creation of a matching fund in line with the Evidence-based Policy Initiative of the UK Treasury, where a peer-reviewed grant for a research programme would secure additional funding if the researchers find support from one or more Government Departments? For example, a research project on ageing might be of essential value to the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Department of Health and Children, and would be enriched by both additional funding and involvement from the civil servants with responsibility for the ageing agenda.

We would encourage the consideration of dedicated PhD bursaries in the area of policy research with the bursary tied specifically to project areas identified by the policymakers. We would also encourage the expansion of training in social sciences to include capability in the area of presentation of work to non-technical audiences, to the media and to government, and note with interest how these 'transferable skills' are forming a key part of the development of the so-called 'fourth level' in Ireland. We would also encourage that some consideration be given to a scheme to fund academic summer placements in government departments and agencies.

Finally, for a Conference concerned with evidence-based policy, we must focus on the raw material of data. At the Conference we heard a number of contributions discussing the quality of data available for such research (particularly micro-level data which records the responses of individuals, households and firms to their economic and social environment and records salient features of that environment). The last ten years has seen a rapid growth in the questions posed of microdata, in the availability of microdata and in the tools available to analyse this data. Even more will now happen with the development of major longitudinal datasets on children and on the ageing population. We must ensure that data generated by public monies be made available for reanalysis and replication. The growth in interest in microdata and recognition of its potential usefulness has brought with it concerns that the quantitative social science research base is not strong enough to take full advantage of the prospects that the development of microdata offers. So we would also encourage an increased focus on training in data research methods.

The NESF and UCD Geary Institute hope to facilitate discussions in a follow-up Conference. It only remains for us to thank all of the contributors to the Conference and Workshop who gave their time generously. The greatest tribute we can pay to them is that they have provoked a debate that will, without any overstatement, have lasting impact on Irish life in the future. We, as partners in this Conference, will work to develop these concepts further.



Opening Address

An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.
(with the President of UCD, Dr. Hugh Brady)

There was a time, when those who had an interest in policy making, would be given the same warning, as people who like sausages – “don't look too closely at how they are made”. Today's conference, however, is clearly for hardier folk, who are not afraid to examine all the ingredients of policy making, and in particular – the evidence-based approach.

We hear more and more these days about “evidence-based policy making”. Like a lot of “hot topics”, however, it is not always clear that we have a shared understanding of what it means. And even if we achieve an understanding, I have a sense that like so many other things, “getting the evidence into policy making”, is slightly easier said than done. Looking around at this distinguished assembly, however, I believe that we have a real opportunity of getting a better fix on the topic arising from today's proceedings.

Complexity of public policy

Public policy is complex because it is diverse. It ranges from areas such as agriculture, health, and the arts to housing. Public policy is also complex because it is interconnected. Take the issue of child care – a policy proposal in this area is likely to impact on labour market policies, gender equality, child welfare and so on. I often think that public policy is particularly complex because, using the iceberg metaphor, there is a lot that lies below the surface. There is more tacit policy at play than is ever espoused in White Papers, glossy policy statements or consultation documents, beloved of politicians, officials and interest groups alike. Source documents are important, but where do we find policy-in-action? We find public policy expressed in our expenditure programmes. It is found in what we tax and what we do not tax. Public policy is expressed in the information campaigns that are

organised promoting awareness of issues and entitlements. It is expressed in the behaviours that we fine and those that we incentivise. Policy is expressed, perhaps in its most durable form, through the laws and regulations that we enact. Policies are often inherited and seldom reviewed. In some cases, the cultural, gender or social values and beliefs that underpin public policies in the social and economic area, obscure the choices which lie buried within those policies. Public policy is regarded as a product of government or the administrative system. It is often not seen by the average person, as the expression of democratic will as expressed through the political system and our democratic institutions and processes. There is an apparent disconnection. Policy is often seen as something delivered to the public rather than emanating from the public. We see something similar in the way that EU Directives are regarded as arriving from Brussels – as if we are not a part of the EU and as if the Directives were not the outcome of political and administrative debate at national and European level.

Evidence-based approach

I am not happy with that level of perceived disconnection. I have always believed that politics is about ideas, values and beliefs. I am happy as a politician, as a public servant and, more fundamentally, as a democrat, that we live in a society that increasingly questions government and public institutions. I welcome a society that is more testing of our assumptions and understandings. I believe that evidence-based approaches can not only improve the effectiveness of our social and economic policies, but they also help to legitimise public policies, by means of the data, models and consultation employed in their development. Naturally, what we believe is influenced by the information we have – the factual data, the evidence. However, at a more fundamental level the models we have of how social and economic systems operate, influence us towards the collection of certain facts and figures, and towards the discounting of others. Of course, data and models each help to refine the other. The better quality information we have, the better founded our beliefs and working models will be, and the better targeted will be our search for evidence.

Reducing Uncertainty and Risk

I do not know whether it will be possible to take guesswork completely out of public policy making, simply by basing our decision and policy making on the best information available. A good example of the complexity I have spoken about is the health system, where we have had a large number of

major reports produced in recent years. All of these reports dealt with important and distinct aspects of the service. But I can assure those of you who have not read them all, that it is very difficult to synthesise the very many, and sometimes conflicting, recommendations they contain.

I think this highlights two key aspects of the problems that confront policymakers. Firstly, the huge complexity of the social and market systems that we seek to influence, can defy our complete understanding at any point in time. Secondly, the interrelationships between the various factors change over time and will change as a result of our intervention.

This has a number of profound implications that, by the way, I normally try to keep secret, but which I will share with you today:

- Government does not know everything. We need the input of others. Take for example the Forum on Europe, which helped us to get to the heart of people's concerns following the first referendum on the Nice Treaty.
- Government sometimes has to proceed slowly in the absence of a full understanding of the dynamic operating within particular systems. We cannot risk people's lives and well being. We only have to call to mind the complexity of regulating issues like genetically-modified foodstuffs or stem cell research to realise the value of hastening slowly.
- Government does experiment and take risks. Even though we try to minimise those risks, we nonetheless take on the biggest social expenditure programmes, the largest infrastructure projects and we regulate the most dynamic sophisticated markets. When the Government embarks on a particular course, we often do so knowing that, although our present course is the right one for now, we may have to change tack later, in ways we cannot precisely anticipate.
- The Government is aware that, despite our best efforts, the stated intent of policy and the actual outcomes can often be very different and that remedial action may be required. For instance, we know to our cost that some tax breaks can lead to unintended results (due to the endless creativity of professional advisors).

In the light of these considerations, you might wonder how Government can act at all! Yet it must and it does. I have mentioned the incremental way in which much governmental policy is formulated and implemented. As academics, you might describe it as an iterative process, “learning by doing”, through feedback loops. We try something - we monitor and evaluate and proceed or adjust our policies as necessary. It strikes me that evidence-based approaches have a key part to play at two points in this process.

Firstly, there is a growing public demand for analysis before policy is implemented. Whether it is in the Dáil or in the media, people want to see the facts, figures and records of who was consulted in respect of new policy initiatives or legislative proposals. Evidence-based approaches support transparency and comprehensiveness.

Secondly, whatever form our initiatives take - for example, grant schemes or regulations – we need to ensure they are systematically reviewed after the fact to check that they are achieving their desired outcomes. In this case, evidence-based approaches help to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. The value of this approach is that it allows for rigorous analysis, where possible, before action is taken. It ensures that the lessons learnt through implementation are fed back into the system so that we can learn from them.

Challenges

Of course, there are challenges in adopting this approach. Challenges for politicians, for their officials, for academics and for interest groups. Perhaps it is worth taking a look at the issues from these different perspectives.

At the political/administrative level there is a question of “which evidence should be relied upon”? We need to be careful that we do not give undue weight to the viewpoint of the best-resourced and most vocal interest groups on particular issues. That is why I am a fan of consultation. At the moment, a group of senior officials, chaired by my Department, is working on new guidelines for public consultation for the public service. This was a commitment that we made under the Government’s White Paper on Better Regulation, which was published last year. I know that some people are critical of public consultation because it might add a further time lag into the decision making process. However, I think if the choice is having “better or quicker” decisions, then the answer is clear.

Another commitment which the Government made in the White Paper was to pilot a form of impact analysis to apply to regulations. Regulatory Impact Analysis has a number of aspects, all aimed at improving the quality of regulations. This is achieved by ensuring regulations are based on some form of evidence that the regulations are necessary. It involves policymakers asking themselves such questions as:

- What is the aim of these regulations?
- Can this aim be achieved using another method, perhaps a tax; the plastic bag tax is a successful example here.

- What do those affected think about the matter; and crucially
- What will these regulations cost, “What are the likely benefits”, and, where possible, benefits should be measured.

We are currently piloting RIA in a number of Government Departments. It will then be introduced across all Departments and Offices. I believe that RIA will help maintain our economic success by identifying proposed regulations which could have unnecessarily high costs for businesses. It will avoid the introduction of faulty regulations, which have occasionally slipped through the net in the past. And because I hope in time that many RIAs will be published, it will open up the law-making process to more evidence-based debates and dialogue.

Sometimes these debates will involve arguments about facts and figures, raising the issue of data and statistics. This is a third key element of evidence-based policy. Impacts are not just economic. They are social. However, it can sometimes be difficult to predict social impacts of policy because of a lack of data. The Central Statistics Office and the National Statistics Board have done useful work in developing the kinds of data, which are available to policymakers. Particularly important here are social data – especially information which relates to vulnerable groups such as those at risk of poverty, the disabled, children and the elderly. The interests of these groups must be considered as part of the range of evidence which influences policy decisions.

Challenges for Academics

We are dependent on the academic community to provide the food for thought when we are considering the choices available. It is vital that channels develop whereby the results of academic research can be communicated to policymakers. That is why I was delighted to learn about today's conference and to lend it my support.

I would encourage any researchers present here today to work with us in enhancing the range and quality of evidence we have at our disposal. I would also welcome your views as to whether there is sufficient recognition – within the academic community – for researchers and academics who contribute to new thinking in the public policy arena. Are the lines of funding for pre- and post-doctoral research sufficient? Equally, are the systems within the Civil Service configured correctly to take full advantage of academic research? Perhaps we need more points of contact, more opportunities for collaboration between practitioners and researchers. We have no

shortage of committees and working groups throughout the Civil Service, but perhaps we could have an improved representation of academics and policy researchers on them.

It is important, I think, to acknowledge that the Irish Civil Service and wider public service is no stranger to solid analysis. From as far back as the time of Lemass and Whitaker, I believe the work of the Irish Civil Service, in key social and economic programmes, stands up to scrutiny from an analytical viewpoint. What we are really talking about is building on these traditions and strengths, and developing newer skills and added capacity. The Civil Service, through the Department of Finance, has long recognised the importance of training and education in improving the quality and capacity of its staff. A number of courses in policy analysis have recently been introduced at Masters and Diploma level, which have proved very popular with civil servants. We need to maintain momentum by focusing on key competencies in the area of cost-benefit analysis, consultation methods and statistical techniques. But we also need to have structures in place, including strategies for improving the quality and range of data, portals for sharing information and the right rewards within the system for those who undertake and use research.

Social Partnership

I believe that Social Partnership has shown us the way with regard to collaborative working. It has reinforced our strong culture of consensus-building. It allows participants a channel for expressing their views on government policies and proposals. It also gives valuable insights as to how concrete policies affect real people. It constitutes an enormous and invaluable reservoir of experience, expertise and feedback for the policy making process.

The formal social partnership bodies comprised within the National Economic and Social Development Office – the National Economic and Social Council, the National Economic and Social Forum and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance – play a key role in this regard. The NESO has, over the years since its establishment in 1973, played a leading role in the development of evidence-based policy making in Ireland and in providing an analytical focus for our social partnership agreements. The NESF, for its part, has been making a major contribution to public policy evaluation, especially in the area of equality and social inclusion. And the NCPP is working hard to develop models and metrics to promote much needed organisational change and improved performance at the level of the workplace. Each of these organisations are represented here today. I would

like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to them for the real contribution they have been making to our economic and social development. I would also like to take the opportunity to commend the NESF Chairperson, Dr Maureen Gaffney, for her initiative in organising this Conference in conjunction with UCD.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, I would also like to thank the National Economic and Social Forum and the Geary Institute here at UCD for hosting this Conference. I wish participants well with your deliberations. I have no doubt that they will make a real contribution to strengthening the policy making process.

Thank you.

Getting the Evidence: using the research in policy making

Dr. Jonathan Grant, RAND Europe

Introduction:

Driving the Demand for Evidence-based Policy Making

It would appear to be the case that Evidence-based Policy (EBP) making has been generally accepted on to the political agenda, both in Ireland, the UK and a number of other countries around Europe and North America. This seems to be driven by a number of factors, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the first instance, public services seem to be becoming increasingly more complex, constantly evolving and reforming. Secondly, citizens, as taxpayers want to be certain that Government, politicians and policymakers are making wise judgments. As the accountability agenda is being taken forward, we are becoming more frustrated by the turf wars and blame games taking place between Government Departments. We want Departments, for example of Education, Health, or the Environment, to work together in an effective way.

The third factor is the increasing demand for 'joined up government', a concept which may be quite difficult to achieve in practice. The challenge here is to get different groups and different cultures working together, to which a solution may be found in EBP-making. The question is how can we go about getting the evidence?

The final factor underpinning the increasing demand for EBP-making is effectiveness. This, as we know, is driven by accountability, by complexity and by the need for joined-up administration. In the UK, the concept of the Third Way has been progressed by Tony Blair. This is a pragmatic 'what

works' approach, which may have developed to compensate for a lack of ideology. There is no strong left or strong right, leaving middle ground, which is most likely to be driven by EBP making. One could argue that it is an ideology, or in this case a lack of ideology, that appears to be driving the field.

Bridging the Gap

There is a perception, however accurate, that a gap exists between policy-makers and researchers. Evidence can help to bridge this gap. There is a need for partnership and to develop structures which get people working together. This of course is easy to say, but more difficult to achieve. Inherent in this is a belief that partnership is about individuals and about relationships between individual researchers and individual policymakers. It is easy for Governments and Departments to adjust to evidence-based policy making by setting up new structures and new instruments. Those structures and instruments make the gap, or ignore the individual, hence the importance of identifying and supporting individuals. This may simply be achieved by providing fellowships between policy making institutions and research institutions, or getting researchers to work in Government Departments for six months and vice-versa.

There is also a need to understand what could be termed, albeit cautiously, a 'research market'. There is a need to ensure that research is delivered in a credible, timely and relevant way, which requires an understanding of what the research questions are and what the demand is for the research. It is necessary to anticipate those questions to make them timely. It is also necessary to ensure a supply-side, that there is a capacity and capability within the system to answer those questions in a timely, credible and relevant manner. There may also be a need for clarity within evidence-based policy making about what does and does not work – researching research, if you like – in order to ensure clarity in what has been termed the 'chaos of purposes'. Policy making is difficult, as is EBP making. It is a messy and complex process, which will not be resolved simply by developing guidance. Rather, it is about addressing issues around culture and understanding the two very different communities that are research and policy making.

Defining Evidence

A number of commentators have tried to define evidence from a number of perspectives. There is on the one hand, what you might call *Organisational Evidence*, organisations that develop their own procedures and knowledge and rely on their corporate memory. They define the boundaries within which they operate. That corporate memory is a form of evidence. The basis for *Practitioner Evidence* is the teacher who, by taking a class day-in day-out, will gain experience about what works and what does not. This will inform their practice on an individual level. That practitioner has evidence and is being informed by that evidence as well as being informed by evidence collected through discussion with peers. It is quite tacit and difficult to extract this type of evidence, but it is there nonetheless. There is a *Policy Community* who will debate and discuss ideas. Some ideas may be radical, and the issue of 'choice' in the UK provides us with a good example of this. Both political parties are now talking about 'choice' in public services, which was one of the central themes in the run up to the election of 2005. However, this debate started two or three years ago and has developed, with evidence as the master. In other words, the policy community has a perspective on evidence and has developed that evidence.

Then we have *User Evidence*, which is information gained from the experience of using public services. Lastly we have *Empirical Research*, which is information, systematically gathered by pre-prescribed methods. This represents one form of evidence, one form of advice, one form of information.

Evidence is used in policy making with the objective of making policy in a more effective way. However, it is necessary to understand how that policy making process occurs, and not to assume that it is simply informed by empirical research. There are a number of pressures facing the policymaker (see Diagram 1 below). Often, policymakers are faced with having to make a judgment, a decision. They will seek to make an informed decision, but there may be times when a decision needs to be made without the evidence supporting or providing the basis for that judgment. They may have their own personal expertise, experience, habits and traditions from which they can draw. This is how it has worked for almost thirty years, which begs the question, why change?

Diagram 1 Why Use Evidence?



And then with changing political parties comes new power driven by differing sets of values. This set of values will influence the policy being made. In times of economic growth, economic boom and more resources, governments are more likely to be willing to be experimental and to take risks with policy making. However, in times of economic depression, there is likely to be less risk-taking and greater adhesion to traditional methods, which have been proven to work.

How do you use Research in Policy Making?

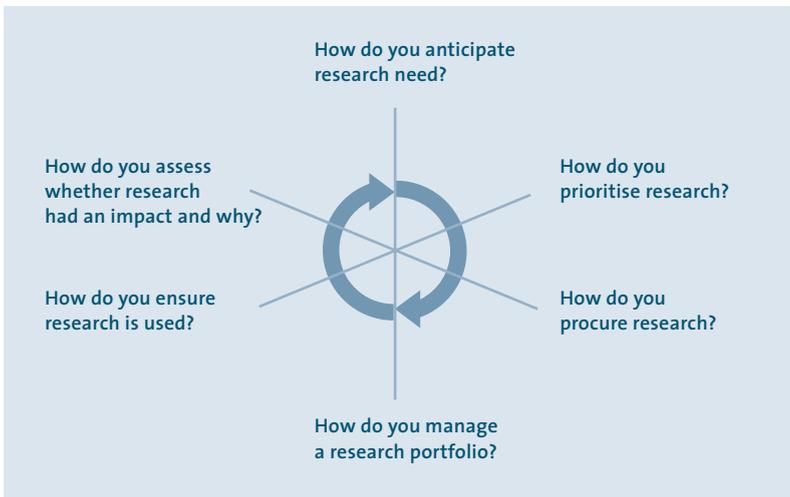
In order to arrive at the answer to this question, it is necessary to engage in a policy research cycle involving a series of critical questions (see Diagram 2 below). The first question, which needs to be answered, is 'How do you anticipate research need?' For research to be effective, it needs to be timely; however, research can often take five or ten years to conduct. Sometimes it can take one year. In any case, research needs to be in a position to anticipate what the policymaker is going to want at some point in the future, if it is to have an impact. This is very difficult to achieve.

Secondly, it is necessary to ask 'How do you prioritise the research?' A complex issue, as there are lots of research ideas from which to choose. Thirdly, a somewhat mundane question, but nonetheless important is 'How do you procure research?' How do you ensure that you get the best people to do what you want, who are to inform policy making? The fourth question,

and perhaps the area about which the least is known is ‘How do you manage a research portfolio?’ What happens in the time between granting research funding and receiving the research results?

The final question then, and the issue which, perhaps the most is known about, is ‘How do you ensure that research is used?’ However, although firm evidence exists about how to utilise research, there are issues around the implementation of this evidence. In this regard, it is necessary to understand what forms of research-commissioning and what forms of research-prioritisation work, so that in the future we can improve the cycle.

Diagram 2 The Policy Research Cycle



Anticipating Research Need

In order to anticipate research need and to ensure that research is timely, it is necessary to have a view of the future, for which there exists a wide variety of scenario setting and analysis tools. What the literature can tell us is that there is not one certain future. Rather, there are a lot of potential futures, which involve a degree of prediction and risk management. One cannot expect to be able to predict the future. However, if an understanding of what are likely futures exists, it may be possible to accurately predict one or two outcomes. If that is the case, it may be possible to commission research correctly for when that outcome occurs. This means, by definition, that research will only be informing a part of policy effectively, as it would be impossible to predict every possible future scenario correctly.

However, it is not necessarily about prediction. To illustrate this point, let us use an example from R&D, science and technology management. Within this area there are two tools, which organisations have relied upon over the last thirty years: foresight and horizon scanning. While the difference between the two may be difficult to discern, foresight may be very much about technology, a vertical activity. For example, genetic testing is likely to have an impact on what the primary care sector may look like in ten or fifteen year's time. A foresight type of activity might look at what the technological pinch points within that technological pathway might be and then commission research around those pinch-points. Horizon scanning, on the other hand, seems to be more focused on policy as opposed to technology and may ask questions such as: if genetic testing becomes an element of primary care, what are the policy implications likely to be? Is it necessary to train General Practitioners so they understand genetic testing? Is it necessary to have an informed public so they can understand the resource of genetic testing? The answers may provide us with a higher-level, broader policy perspective.

Foresight – An Example

RAND was involved in a study of the issues which exist in cyber-crime and cyber-trust. Although quite a technology-focused area of research, a number of different exercises were undertaken, including scenario development. Three or four future scenarios were developed and used to run what was called a 'gaming session'. The workshops were conducted over two days where different stakeholder groups were asked to assess, validate, rip apart these scenarios, and understand what the implications of this might be. The result of the workshops and the other streams of evidence brought into this foresight exercise was that three priorities were identified around which future research should be commissioned by the Office for Science and Technology (OST). It was felt that a lack of understanding existed around what they termed the 'soft' side of information security, which was less about technology and more about the education of individuals around identity and security of PIN numbers.

Related to this issue of identity management, are the different perspectives to identity management and an understanding of how those perspectives inform policy making. Underpinning all of this was a technical issue: the need to be very clear about dependence on critical information infrastructures. If the internet goes down, what are the implications for Government policy?

Another interesting outcome of foresight programmes came to light in an evaluation of foresight programmes undertaken by Green University a number of years ago. In bringing together different communities such as policymakers, industrialists and academics, a relationship was established, which was sustained over a number of years. The activity may not have delivered the future research portfolio desired, but it did create a network, which was equally as important.

Horizon Scanning – An Example

The UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have pioneered the development of the horizon scanning approach. The impetus came from the BSE crisis and the Philips' Report² in the UK. The horizon scanning approach they subsequently developed involved a broad stakeholder approach. A series of workshops were run including an open internet type consultation where three to four hundred research questions were amassed, which different stakeholders thought needed to be addressed. After a series of workshops, these questions were refined to six areas where they believed that some kind of research agenda needed to be developed.

Whether these methods of predicting the future work, is difficult to say, partly because it is very difficult to attribute any foresight or future thinking activity to something which occurs five, ten, fifteen years in the future. However, in research, the issue of attribution is crucial.

There appears to be a tension underlying all of this, the sort of tension the science policy literature refers to as mission-oriented versus curiosity-driven research. It has existed in the science policy literature since at least the Second World War, and there is a need to acknowledge it in thinking about how to develop R&D policy strategies. Mission-oriented research has come to us from the military establishment. It is very much based in the need to develop a new military technology, for which a budget and timescale will be set. Curiosity-driven research has been very much advocated by scientists in a particular field who possess an understanding of a particular area, which allows them to understand the future and ask research questions. The Government in the UK appears to like the idea of mission-oriented research. There has been a shift since 1997 in the amount of directive research emanating from the OST, increasing from 2% to 23% in

2. The Philips' Report in the UK was highly critical of DEFRA for not anticipating the sort of emergent-type disease that was BSE.

a seven- to eight-year period. A part of this is attributable to the allocation of new funding, however, a trend appears to be emerging where Government is determining the research agenda, rather than academics.

Prioritising Research

Interestingly, the agricultural sector is the lead in this area. In a document published by GREENSA, a variety of methodologies for prioritising research are discussed and five different approaches are advocated. The first is called the 'rule of thumb' approach. A project which receives a large amount of research funding in a given year, is more likely to receive the funding in subsequent years. This is not an uncommon approach to prioritising research. 'Scoring models' are perhaps more common than we realise, in the sense that most research funding organisations will evaluate proposals on a number of different criteria, such as quality or relevance. The criteria are then scored, ranked and a line drawn under those to be funded. In a 'cost/benefit analysis', research will be prioritised on the basis of not just the return in financial terms on the investment, but also on the social benefit calculated. The issue with this approach may be that, while research output is produced, it may not translate to a research outcome, perhaps then missing an integral element of the process.

Mathematical programme simulation models adopt an optimisation approach where a trade-off may be made on one criteria, such as quality, in order to maximise another, such as relevance. A mathematical programme allows you to develop a funding portfolio, which optimises your budget on a number of different criteria.

Strategic Prioritisation

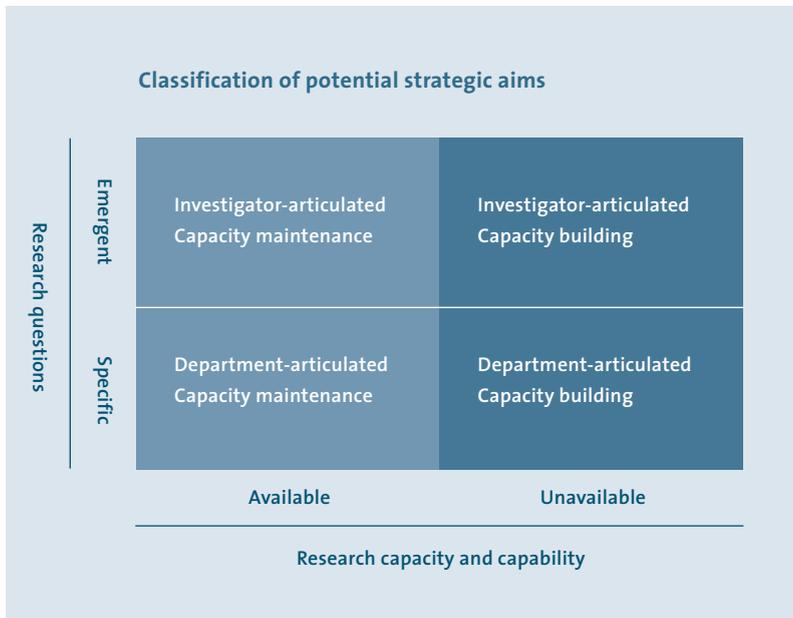
It may be necessary to ask what level of prioritisation we are concerned with. In this regard, there are probably three levels of interest. At the strategic level it might be necessary to determine whether the research agenda is driven by the researcher, so curiosity-driven; or driven by the policymaker, in which case it is more likely to be mission-oriented. There are strategic issues around developing and maintaining a critical capacity, by positioning research where there is a need to have a view of the future (see Diagram 3).

At a strategic level, the research market is relevant. On the one hand there are demand issues where research questions need to be answered that can be classed in different ways. From the perspective of a Government department, these can be specific. For example, a programme needs to be evalu-

ated, or do we think there is a problem in understanding genetic testing in primary care settings emerging? We believe researchers have a deeper understanding of this, so within a broad area, we might ask them to come up with some specific research questions. And alongside of this is a layer of general or non-specific research, the type of research that research councils are more likely to fund.

On the supply side, the key challenge is to have enough people, enough infrastructure, laboratories, data, archives or capacity to carry out the research. Where enough people may be available, issues of quality may arise. Poorly maintained laboratories may exist. Depending on the situation, there may be a need to support specific research or develop supply capacity. There may be differing strategic approaches to the way research is prioritised. The cultural context in which research is prioritised will also be brought to bear on the manner that research is prioritised within an organisation, which may not have the same effect in a different setting.

Diagram 3 Strategic Prioritisation



Source: RAND Europe

Programme Prioritisation

The Ministry of Defense in the UK have an interesting approach to their research prioritisation process. Once research questions have been identified, a process of negotiation between a Director of Equipment Capacity and the Research Budget Manager takes place. The output of this process is a research programme that has been constructed through a process of review, guidance and budget rebalancing over a period of, on average, eight to ten months. Everyone in the Ministry understands and accepts the process and, whilst it may not work in a different environment, a complex process such as this may be appropriate in a process-driven organisation such as the Ministry of Defence.

Procuring Research

In the first instance, a research need must be articulated. It is virtually impossible to respond to an invitation to tender where the research question is not clear. So taking time to invest and develop and articulate a need is crucial. There can be a tendency, particularly in the UK, to consistently adopt the same procurement strategy. Different types of research and different research questions need different methods of research procurement. This in turn will lead to a series of proposals, which can be evaluated according to a set of criteria, which, in most organisations, tends to centre around relevance, quality and durability.

Commissioning Choices

There are a number of decisions, which have to be faced in the procurement process.

- *Direct versus Indirect Competition* – In the case where a specific research question has been articulated, it will be easier to compare different proposals.
- *Open versus Closed* – In the case where the research question is unspecified or emergent, the proposals will, by definition, be substantially different, which will necessitate a different approach to commissioning. One approach may be to open the process by advertising a call for proposals. A closed approach may involve a preferred provider list of for example half a dozen organisations from which to choose. It may also be possible to combine both approaches by collecting expressions of interest from which the preferred list is selected.
- *Formal versus Informal Competition* – Within Government processes, many rules govern the procurement process, which may be more or less

relevant to research procurement. There are certainly many rules laid down by agencies and institutions such as, for example, the European Commission. In some cases it is necessary to follow very fixed procurement procedures whether one is purchasing an IT system, a tunnel or a piece of research. In those cases, it is probably necessary to answer specific questions for direct competition.

Selection Criteria

Traditionally, research funders will look at the quality and the relevance of a proposal. There is a tendency to fund high-quality relevant proposals. We may be moving into an era where deliverability is becoming an integral part of policy making. The research agenda, therefore, also needs to consider deliverability. There are two integral elements. The first is a project management issue, concerned with whether or not the research can be delivered on time, and to budget. There is also a more intellectual aspect of deliverability, which is concerned with whether or not the research question is tractable. Can it be answered within the timeframe? It is here that open dialogue between researchers and policymakers is necessary. Ideally, researchers should be able to feedback to policymakers whether or not they believe the research question can in fact be answered in the time given.

An interesting issue raised by UK Social Research Association was the cost involved in putting together a proposal. They estimate it costs in the region of €15,000 to put a proposal together. An organisation may have to consider whether certain proposals are worth bidding for, but from the perspective of the research funder, the key issue is that that cost is built in to the cost of the research overheads. It is necessary to consider the cost of the proposal, the application process and perhaps be creative about how research is commissioned.

Managing Research

There are standards and quality assurance processes which different organisations may require be applied to a research project, but more often than not they seem to involve a 'tick-box' approach. Within recent health research, there are issues emerging around for example, governance and ethics committees. Very little may be known about the research process. What is needed is to get the policymaker and researcher to work in partnership, not just at the beginning and at the end of the process, but also in the middle of this process when the research is ongoing. By doing this we may develop some sustainability and capacity.

Using Research

There are a number of models outlined in the research utilisation literature³.

- *Push Model* – In this case, researchers publish research findings in academic papers, which policymakers come across and implement in practice. This may seem naïve and simplistic and unlikely to occur.
- *Policy Model* – In this model the policymaker articulates the need for a solution to a problem for which he commissions research. Again, perhaps a naïve view of how researchers work.
- *Social Interaction Model* – Picking up on the theme of partnership, an interactive interaction between the researcher and the policymaker occurs, building relationships and emphasising the individualism in those relationships.
- *Enlightenment Model* – This approach relies on an incremental buildup of ideas, which eventually comes to the attention of and influences the policy choices of decision-makers.
- *Adversarial Model* – Research is seen as a political tool where it becomes part of an adversarial system, or used by politicians to make the case for a particular decision. Research can also be used by politicians as a defensive tool, for example, in cases where a particular public interest issue comes to the fore and a research project investigating the area is announced. This may be used as a tactic to placate interest or lobby groups and may perhaps reinforce the need for Government Departments to have robust prioritisation methods as they can protect themselves from being politicised in that sense. Governments do, of course, need to be accountable and reactive, but it is also necessary to consider whether they will receive value for money from this type of research approach. It must be possible to challenge off-the-cuff research spending decisions.

A recent study of health research involved a systematic review of the facilitators and barriers to research being adopted in practice. The top three facilitation issues, which emerged in that study, were personal contact, relationships and partnerships between individuals, and the need for timely, relevant and quality research. It follows that the barriers which emerged include an absence of personal contact, a lack of timeliness, distrust and the naivety of both the research and policy making communities.

3. Hanney *et al.* (2002).

Measuring Research

A substantial amount of money is spent on research in addition to a considerable amount of time and effort going into the procurement process. There may be no apparent need if the research need has been successfully anticipated. However, there is a need to understand the process, to have better evidence, if you like, about EBP making. There are a number of reasons for this. Research funders themselves are accountable, which should oblige them to demonstrate that they are using research money effectively. An understanding of the scientific process of research with its inherent complexities can provide the basis for dialogue. This in turn leads to the development of evidence for evidence-based policy making research and research. This example reinforces the need to look beyond simply counting the number of research findings that are published when measuring the effectiveness of research.

RAND undertook a study for the Arthritis Research Campaign in the UK, which evaluated the manner in which they have funded research over a twenty- to thirty-year period. A multi-method approach was adopted which included a triangulation of their quantitative bibliometric indicators and case-study logic modeling, again using a number of indicators. The ability to build capacity and inform policy and the extent to which the economy and the health sector were impacted upon, were assessed.

Conclusion

There are four key messages to be borne in mind when considering evidence for evidence-based policy making.

- Partnerships work and there is a need to break down the perceived barriers between researchers and policymakers.
- The focus is on individuals and relationships. There are complicated issues concerning how the Civil Service is managed and how one can maintain relationships.
- There is a need to have a cultured view of the research market by trying in some way to predict the future.
- There is a need to ensure that research is timely, while maintaining relevance and quality. We also need to acknowledge that we are not always going to be successful.

Research as a Tool for Developing Social Policy: Thoughts on the U.S. experience

Dr. Mark Dynarski, Mathematica Policy Research

Introduction: The policy dilemma

“It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.”

“There are as many opinions as there are experts.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Evidence can play an integral, supportive role in policy making, as inevitably policy will be based on more than evidence alone. Policymakers face policy challenges, they have to decide what to do in order to implement policy solutions to emerging issues or problems. It is important to do something; however, it is as important to know what to do, as it is to know what to do next, especially if the first action fails. In this context, knowing what it is to fail is an integral element of the process. Accountability becomes a powerful mechanism, as do experiments, because experiments provide excellent evidence of whether something succeeds or fails. And it is here that the role for evidence becomes critical – evidence can support these decisions by providing an undisputed basis for knowing or trying to decide what might or might not work.

There are essentially more ideas out there than one knows what to do with and lots of people willing to share their ideas about what policymakers should do. There is a role for research in trying to help refine the enormous cacophony of voices that are telling policymakers what they think policy should do. When asking ‘Did it work?’, research can play a very powerful role in determining whether an intervention had impact, or not, which then leads to the question of ‘How can it be improved?’.

In the US, all programmes at the Federal level are assessed annually to determine whether they have in fact met their mission. This process is now institutionalised and it is this that keeps the evaluative momentum going.

Social Mapping – how big is the problem?

There is a value in ‘social mapping’, the documentation of the nature and extent of a social problem. The importance of a reliable data collection infrastructure cannot be overemphasised. In the US, there is a decennial census, as well as monthly counts of the population. It is here that unemployment rates are measured. Additionally, there are various surveys conducted by other organisations mapping, among other things, household and income dynamics and family formation. What this constitutes is a data collection infrastructure, which is a very reliable research tool. While it requires a significant investment of resources, it produces reliable data. By way of example, 40% of young people in the US do not read at a level considered proficient. This fact hasn’t changed in 25 years. Subsequently, it becomes evident that, not only does a problem exist, but that a large problem exists.

How Can the Problem be Addressed?

When it comes to deciding how to address a problem there are many sources of input, such as advocacy groups, stakeholders and individuals affected by the problems, into developing an effective solution. The issue is how to narrow the range of options. Research centres can be excellent sources of information about ideas and about what has worked in the past, what is promising. But, inevitably, to the extent that a problem is quite new or relatively untested, there may not be much information about whether an intervention works well on a broad scale. An intervention, which might have been tested as a promising idea, will be subject, in the test phase, to a constellation of factors, which helped the initiative to work well, subsequently labeling the intervention as promising. However, these factors may be hard to reproduce in other places, and may not necessarily be as effective when replicated on a larger scale.

Theories are Weak for Generalising Findings

An intervention may, on the basis of evaluative research, be deemed to be worth trying on a broader scale and on this basis, especially in the US, the experimental approach is preferred, but not common. There is still a tendency to examine an intervention from a comparative perspective, for example, a pre- and post-intervention assessment. Increasingly, experimen-

tal methods are becoming the preferred method as they are considered an irrefutable impact assessment. Experiments will withstand scrutiny in a way that other kinds of approaches for measuring whether something works will not. An example, which illustrates this point well, is that of an after-school programme monitored and evaluated by Mathematica. Over the course of two years, two groups of children's academic and other developmental competencies were randomly selected and monitored. There was no difference whatsoever in the two groups, one of which was attending the after-school programme and the other not. The evaluation revealed that no aspect of a child's development and growth were furthered by the programme, which was costing \$1 billion a year to operate.

Difficulties can be encountered when a quasi-experiment is conducted. In the example of the after-school programme, children were not randomly selected to attend. Where other factors influence a child's attendance, or lack of attendance, there are difficulties faced in trying to interpret the differences in outcomes. Where a large amount of resources is involved in the policy decision, in this instance, little contribution would be made to the policy debate, as a definitive answer cannot be given about the success of the intervention. Random assignment experiments have a transparency and a simple logic, which is highly valued by policymakers, as outcomes can be directly attributable to a programme, as is independence and objectivity. Independent evaluators can simply try to say whether the evidence suggests that a programme has been effective. Science is most powerful when it's not advocating and in this lies the true value of an objective exercise – policymakers already receive many policy suggestions from advocates involved in an issue.

To make an experiment feasible, it is necessary to have more individuals that can participate in a service or activity than will, or can. Additionally, it is important to be able to control the scale of the experiment at an early stage. Demonstration programmes provide a good example of this, testing an idea on a small scale initially. Once a programme increases in size, scope, resources and stakes, it is more difficult to retract it.

Accountability: are the outcomes worth the cost?

What happens once you know whether an intervention has or has not had a desired effect? A policy decision will then need to be made, which may involve some difficult trade-offs, as, despite the fact that there may be some positive effect, it may still be difficult to justify the resources necessary. It is not always easy to calculate cost and benefit.

How Can We Improve It?

Findings, modifications, more findings, more modifications . . .

Most studies will yield findings that will be mixed and in some cases, it will be statistically impossible to address all outcomes. This in turn will lead to a modification and refinement of the programme, which will lead to another study of the refined and modified programme, and as such becomes part of a cycle. The central question is: Does cycling of policy intervention followed by research, followed by modification, followed by more research, lead to sounder policy?

This is a difficult empirical question. It is necessary to imagine a world both with the intervention and without, and subsequently ask what the difference in social welfare terms is? One can compare the experience of healthcare in the US, which compared to education, has had a vast amount of research money invested. In healthcare research, there have been striking innovations in the last 30 – 40 years, for example the eradication of diseases such as measles, advances in cardiovascular care, reductions of stroke and heart attack. In some of these cases, the numbers are astounding. Compare this experience to that of education where, as mentioned earlier, 25 years ago we learnt that 40% of 4th graders don't read very well. 25 years later, 40% of 4th graders still don't read very well. The apparent lack of progress is distressing considering that spending on education has gone up by 100% over this period. It would appear that very little has happened on some very vital outcomes. There is very little research being undertaken of the sort that's currently under way in medicine, which perhaps is the source of this striking difference.

On-going Programme Assessment – setting the standard

In the US in 1993, Congress passed The Government Performance and Results Act. Contained within the Act was a striking piece of logic, which has taken a long time to work its way through the Government. Essentially, the Government is no longer interested in the outputs of programmes, only in outcomes. An output of a programme, for example would be job training. An outcome is not how many workers were trained, and it's not how many workshops were conducted to help the worker get back to work. It's how many workers got back to work. What is striking is how often outputs had been the basis of decisions up to that point. Outputs are simply the spending of the money and the carrying out of the activity, and not about whether the programme achieved its fundamental purpose. Congress essentially stipulated that the Administration, the President's executive agencies, must

report on the outcomes. The resulting experience was very uneven as many programmes struggled trying to determine their outcome. There may be a difficulty in determining the outcome of sending someone up in a space shuttle, but for social programmes, it is a clear distinction. The desired outcome is to have individuals employed, not just taking part in a workshop.

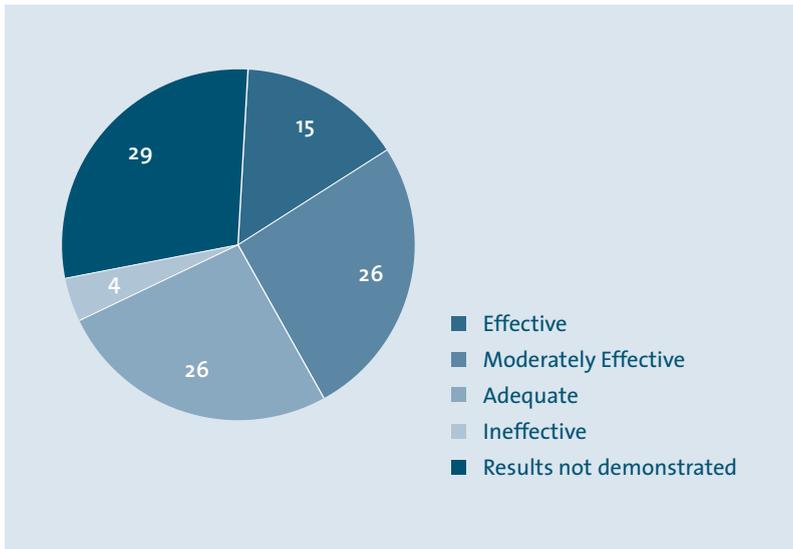
In 2003, the President's Office of Management and Budget decided that it needed a tool that would be uniform across a large number of programmes, which resulted in the Programme Assessment Rating Tool or PART. This is a 24 part questionnaire, a remarkable exercise considering that there are 1,000 programmes spending \$2 trillion dollars a year, and what they proposed was that every single one of these programmes would be assessed by way of this questionnaire. Their utility would be examined on an ongoing basis, and ultimately funding recommendations would be made based on whether the programme was achieving its purpose. It is now common to refer to the process as 'being PARTed', much in the same way as you might 'google' to search for something online.

There are four domains included in PART, each of which accounts for a percentage of the points awarded:

- Programme purpose – 20 points
- Performance monitoring – 10 points
- Administration, audit mechanisms – 20 points
- Programme results – 50 points

Programmes are now assessed on a five year cycle and to date, as illustrated by Diagram 4 below, 15% of the programmes are rated as effective, 26% as moderately effective, 26% as inadequate, 4% as ineffective and 29% as "results not demonstrated".

Diagram 4 PART Ratings 2004 (%)



Interestingly it is the 'results not demonstrated' that worries the OMB the most, as in this case the programme may not even have a stated purpose. It is difficult to know whether it is in fact a lack of objectives or defined programme outcomes, which has resulted in the lack of results. It is these programmes that they have concentrated on, and over time, the number of programmes not demonstrating results has decreased. It is the recommendations that emerge from the process resulting in this decrease that begets confidence in the process.

Mathematica studied a programme for over ten years, which was designed to help young people prepare better for college at a cost of about \$300 million a year. It had been rated as ineffective, however, the OMB, in their recommendations, pointed to the fact that high-risk students seemed to benefit more from the programme than others. The programme was not altered in any way to take account of these recommendations, which resulted in funding decreasing from 300 million to zero dollars. The programme can appeal to Congress for appropriations action and may still emerge with funding. However, increasingly the arguments to keep programmes like this operational will grow more strained and, over time, they may also lose Congressional support. By contrast, the 21st Century Programme, the after-school programme, also had weak results, but reacted

by focusing more of the programme's efforts on developing academic activities for the children that were thought to be more effective. The OMB rated it as adequate as they felt the responsiveness of the programme was an important component of itself, although the evaluation was relatively negative.

The OMB has now decided to apply the PART rating to funding proposals as well as programme evaluation, as it has been so successful in forcing programmes to identify their mission and define outcomes that can be tracked over time.

Conclusion

It is extremely important to have a proactive research agenda. In order to make best use of scarce research resources, it is important to look to the future and ask what kind of research may be needed in two, three, four or five years time.

Experiments have a way of defusing debates. The evidence is very clear. The debate can then focus on a known effect and what should be done. The use of these experiments has created advancements and it is very difficult to refute the effects, so powerful is the logic of experiments. It is one thing to argue that experiments don't capture the full picture, but it is another thing to say the results are wrong or flawed. They are quite straightforward to interpret and to understand.

Ongoing assessment is a significant undertaking, however, the return comes in the form of programme reactions and responsiveness. This contributes to sounder programmes as they learn what success looks like, rethink objectives and focus on a few outcomes. If nothing else comes of research than helping programmes know what success looks like and helping them get there, then it is a very valuable exercise.

Taking the other side seriously: Can academics and policymakers communicate successfully?

Professor Alison Wolf, King's College, London

Introduction:

The UK as a Success Story?

“The quantity and quality of attention being paid to educational R & D by the government and its potential contribution to the quality of policy and practice are remarkable.....”

(OECD 2002)

The United Kingdom was recently visited by a delegation from the OECD, who evaluated the quantity and quality of research in a number of areas, and came up with a remarkably glowing picture. What this emphasises is that there has been a genuine shift in the way that politicians have come to view research in the last ten to fifteen years, which is becoming increasingly evident across all parties. This is attributable to a number of factors, which will be discussed in this paper. They include an increase in the level of Government-commissioned evaluation and research contracts, a greater emphasis on education and skills in research and an increasing pressure on the UK Treasury to achieve value for money in expenditure. There are however, certain issues, which pose a challenge in the emerging environment, for the most part influenced by the career incentive structure, which exists in academia and the civil service.

Government Evaluation and Research Contracts

There have been significant increases in Government evaluation and research contracts, in the way that Government has thought about research and the pressure that it has put on its departments to evaluate programmes. Additionally, an enormous increase in department R&D spending⁴ is evident because of pressure, not only from the civil service, but from people at the top levels of policy making, from policy advisers and indeed from politicians.

There has also been a significant amount of pressure from the Treasury to have programmes evaluated to ensure they are getting value for money. Departments are becoming better at demonstrating benefits to the Treasury. This may also mean that programme managers define programme objectives in such a way as to demonstrate success. However, on the whole, this represents an improvement.

By way of example, the Institute of Fiscal Studies is an independent research institute in the UK which evaluates Government's spending plans on a yearly basis and assesses whether or not what the Treasury says is bearing any relationship to reality. In the past few years, the number of Government-commissioned evaluations the Institute has undertaken has been increasing, simply because of an increase in the amount of good, particularly quantitative economically-oriented research being undertaken. This does not seem to be simply a trend, but may be becoming adopted practice.

Education and Skills

In the Education Skills arena, there have been, again, some really important changes taking place. Four dedicated research centres have been established by the Department of Education and Skills. This idea of dedicated research centres, which have long-term funding, is not only new to the UK, but also extremely important.

Additionally, centres of evidence-based practice have been established, which are intended to undertake evaluations of research. However, as the centre does not involve the same degree of interaction on a day-to-day basis between researchers and policymakers as other centres might, its impact on policy might not be as great as originally intended.

4. Up from 25% to 40%.

A National Research Forum, which is intended to set priorities for the whole research agenda, has also been established. However, this has perhaps been the least effective of all initiatives as it has become a talking shop for interests and is not intimately connected with individual programme unit's objectives. It does produce some splendid ideas, derived from a variety of inputs. However, it implies a degree of rational planning for a whole programme over many years, which may be difficult to achieve.

There has also been an increasing involvement of the Research Councils with Government policy priorities, with the objective of ensuring a policy implication output to all research.

Treasury (Finance)

Extremely important in all of this is the role of the Treasury. If research is to be taken seriously, it will depend on how seriously it is taken by those who have control over resources and funding. Increasingly, and this places extra pressure on academics and policymakers, the Treasury has been demanding more and more in the way of research evidence to justify a Department's spending programmes. If this were not the case, then anything researchers had to say would take second place to what the Treasury was demanding.

It is worth also noting that the Treasury has become more research sensitive. If there is a perception that funds are not being spent efficiently, the Treasury will assume control. Whether or not this practice outlives the current Chancellor remains to be seen, but nonetheless, it is a very strong component of the current scene. Alongside of this, there also seems to have been a shift in culture among a significant number of senior civil servants, and some, although by no means all, politicians, more so those who are ambitious for office and who are involved in select committees, or on the opposition benches. This cultural shift is linked to the underlying pressure to produce research results. This has made more people more willing to make time for academic seminars, run both by think tanks and by universities. This, again, has been linked partly to the research infrastructure that has emerged and partly to the shift within Government towards an emphasis on producing research findings.

Worms in the Apple

There are certain issues which emerge that may present difficulties in trying to establish an evidence-based policy framework:

1. Ill-designed projects (time lines, funding, overall feasibility)
2. Government 'users' largely unable to understand or critique proposals or results
3. Pressure from funding organisations on researchers to obtain desired results
4. Dissatisfaction with 'uselessness' of results
5. Inability of many academics to communicate results clearly to either government, funding organisations or other interested parties

There are many instances where research projects are ill-designed. This may be due to unrealistic time lines, or it may be that the overall feasibility is questionable, but researchers will bid for the project anyway. A genuine issue is that very often the results cannot be used. It may be because they are not there, or that people are being asked to use results without having been given the technical equipment to understand what they're being told. A third problem is the pressure to get the result you want from research, whether you are in Government, in policy, or a politician. There are also tensions evident between academics and policymakers, and vice-versa. A large study may have been undertaken which produced no results. This in turn may be due to the study being hedged by provisos and caveats, so that nothing can be done with any results that may emerge.

Academic Incentives

A genuine problem, which may emerge, is that academics often have difficulties in communicating research results, other than to specialists in their own field. This is borne out of the incentive for academics to advance their careers by impressing other academics. An academic career is made, by getting your publications into prestigious peer-review journals and that is, in a sense, the number one priority. However, it does not make for good communications skills. There is also an incentive to undertake other projects, which will increase the prestige and financial well-being of your own institution. A column in a newspaper such as the Times, while it may make sense to a lot of people, may do little for a departments' research rating.

Institutions regularly find themselves short of funds and so may tender for research funds. As a teaching academic, there is an incentive to be

bought out of teaching, administrators are all in favour of academics doing all teaching, all the academic publishing and undercutting established research organisations such as RAND, Mathematica etc., by committing to undertake impossible research projects in an even less possible length of time! However, academics are seriously interested in research, seriously interested in policy and would like to do things, which are good for society. They want to undertake good research, which has a positive impact and it is this, which may be the real incentive, rather than the funding issues, for academics to engage with Government research.

Civil Servants' Incentives

Within the UK civil service, there are also career incentives to ensure continued funding for the programmes which civil servants are involved in. As a civil servant, you make your career by doing well by your department, by going up the ladder and by convincing the Treasury that not only are the programmes you are running worthwhile, but the programmes should be expanded and the funding increased. That is the day-to-day reality. Civil servants also have to keep Ministers happy. They have to explain clearly to politicians, to Junior Ministers, to senior Ministers, what the options are and what they could do that is politically possible and that can be done quickly. Ambitious Junior Ministers might want to impress their seniors. They also have to be able to explain above all, what the alternatives are and what the positives and potential serious negatives of a policy might be.

These all represent real pressures. Additionally, the time lines that are faced in Government tend to be quite short and so there is a pressure to get something done which can be done within the time available to the people you are dealing with. However, civil servants are also motivated to make a positive difference to society. Ministers are also there, not only to further their own careers, they are also there because they have ideals, because they want to help people, because they also want to make the world better.

De-worming the Apple

Let us refer back to the 'five worms' outlined above:

1. Ill-designed projects (time lines, funding, overall feasibility)
2. Government 'users' largely unable to understand or critique proposals or results
3. Pressure from funding organisations on researchers to obtain desired results
4. Dissatisfaction with 'uselessness' of results

5. Inability of many academics to communicate results clearly, to either government, funding organisations or other interested parties

It is clear that there are two sets of incentives, which appear to be unaligned. Not necessarily non-aligned, but un-aligned. In other words, all of the incentives can be aligned except for the third (pressure from funding organisations on researchers to obtain desired results), which is a reality we may have to accept.

“Experts’ in government can help solve problems that arise in relation to ill-designed projects and the inability of government users to utilise or understand the research findings.

Options include:

- Department-based experts (e.g. government economic service);
- Department-based careers (continuity, knowing what failed in the past);
- Short-term secondments from academia (has very little influence on departments);
- Secondments for non-programme government departments (e.g. ONS, INSEE); and
- Commitment to high quality data collection.

Funding policies for universities have a major impact on the severity of problems which arise as a result of dissatisfaction with research results or the inability of many academics to communicate results clearly to either government, funding organisations or other interested parties.

In some cases research parameters are set, either by Government or institutions, within unrealistic time frames and budgets, mostly because of the need for an answer, perhaps coming from the Treasury. In these circumstances, it can help to have people in Government who are truly expert. They will be highly qualified researchers or statisticians, economists or scientists. But there are more and less effective ways and no perfect ways. Traditionally, the Government has had, for example the Government Economic Service, the Government Statistical Service, or individuals charged with spending functions within Departments who are professional economists, or professional statisticians in the Departments. Even within Departments such as the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, you should find professional scientists who are supposed to give the same advice.

The problem would appear to be that it is then these individuals who are solely charged with this work or they themselves come to be seen as part of the problem. They get caught in the trap of talking to experts in their field

outside Government and fail to communicate within Government. It is not uncommon to find oneself in Departmental meetings discussing economics of education research, where Government economists are present as well as people from policy departments who are not economists. At some point one of the Government economists will start talking about indogeneity, at which point the policy people shut off.

A potential solution to these issues may be to change, to some extent, the structure of the way people advance their careers. It may be possible to allow individuals to become more expert in an area by choice, rather than creating a structure in which the way to succeed is to change jobs, and change fields as often as possible. By providing an incentive to stay within a field, to become expert in a field, in the way that, for example, the best journalists do, and still have a good career that way, then there may be potential to overcome some of the problem. What is crucial is not just having the technical apparatus, it is also about having had experience and knowing that this policy was tried six years ago, or twelve years ago, and what the outcome was on those occasions.

Another potential solution, which has been tried without much success, is to offer short-term secondment from academia. While it may be highly informative for the academic, it may not make much difference to a Government Department. It may also be possible to bring in specialists in certain areas, for example economics or statistics, to work specifically on a project or programme. There is no career pressure, as they do not reside within the Department, to placate those heading up the Department. The French do this very successfully. They will make their careers by returning to, for example, the statistical service where they will be judged by whether or not they did a good professional job, not by whether or not they kept the people in the Department happy.

A final solution, which brings us back to a fundamental issue, is that no solution will work if the basic data collection is not right. Again, this is related to the statistical service, long-term data collection and taking that out of a Department's budget. It is necessary to ring fence the funding because whatever you ask of academics, if they do not have the data, they cannot do it and it is not possible to collect data instantly. Ultimately, in terms of what you can do to improve the current situation, this would appear to be critical.

It is worth understanding that funding policies for universities have a major impact on the severity of what we have called worms four and five above: the fact that academics don't communicate properly, don't produce

the sort of research that policymakers can understand, and also, have every incentive for the potentially best and most successful academics to go and do almost anything except do policy research for Government. The quality of communication between academics and civil servants will depend upon the extent to which these issues are addressed. On the Government side, it may be possible to look at whether funding cycles, and research project management fits in, at least, with university cycles, timing and work practices.

Again, there is, certainly in the UK, an extraordinary lack of understanding within Government departments of the fact that if you want to involve an academic in a research project, you need to give them some warning. It is not possible for academics to suddenly abandon teaching commitments, walk out of committees, abandon the research they were doing, forget about the paper they were writing with two research officers who need it for their own careers, and go and do a piece of policy research in a week's time. You can't. So, if it is desirable to bring academics on board, there are realities that have to be faced.

There is also the issue of creating a balance between long-term relationships and entrapment. An emphasis needs to be placed on the long-term relationship, which needs to be developed while, at the same time not creating a cosy cartel in which academics don't tell the truth anymore because they have become dependent on the funding. If it is desirable to have academics involved in high-quality policy research, the possibility of longer-term funding relationships has to exist. The Centre's Programme is a good example to use to highlight this point, as not all the funding is provided or guaranteed, it is renewed on a competitive basis, but has made a great difference to the capacity of the Departments that do this, to bring really good academics into this sort of research and to give them an understanding of the realities of the policy making process.

It is also important to understand that how base funding for universities is organised, matters. For example, how much money is available at King's College is partly a function of how many students are in attendance, how many students have come from overseas and partly a function of the individual research grant attracted from research councils and Government. However, it is also a function of how research is rated by the funding councils. It is this that affects the research allocation of funds. And that matters to universities, not just in terms of their reputation, but it matters critically in terms of their ability to have an acceptable environment, and to bring in

good people. Research funding is not attracted on the basis of easily understood documents written for Governments.

Conclusion

There are certain issues that need to be borne in mind:

- Long-term funding is critical as once there is a commitment from either the Government or another funding organisation, those involved in the research project can follow their better instincts rather than the pressures of the moment.
- It is absolutely critical to have high-quality, independent statistical agencies that have a budget and a time line which enables them to collect data over long periods of time, so that the raw material necessary for research is readily available.
- Perhaps the single most important development undertaken by a research council are the longitudinal studies which track a cohort of children from birth onwards. The most important change in governments' understanding of research would appear to be the growing understanding that without longitudinal data, there are a large number of questions that it may never be possible to answer.
- In the longer term, the quality of research depends on the quality of universities. There is an important place for independent research institutes; however, establishments can relay the truth to Government if they are already well regarded. If the career possibilities are secure and intact then it is possible for them to tell Government that the research project proposed may not be feasible. The most successful research centres are most likely those that are well established and where the individuals are in a position to relay unpleasant truths.
- Finally, the importance of the media should not be underestimated. It may be possible to have an impact appearing on a popular show with relevant or topical research findings. Long-term policy considerations and policy findings are mediated in this way. It is a mechanism through which the policy agenda, not just for a week but, for five years from now, may be set in people's minds. In order to achieve good quality communication between academics and policymakers, in order to have good quality policy, it is imperative that we have a well informed, responsible media and that researchers and policymakers communicate with them, not defensively, but include them as an integral element of the policy circle.

Professor Brendan Whelan

ESRI

Responding to:

Getting the Evidence – Jonathan Grant

The US Experience – Mark Dynarski

Taking the Other Side Seriously – Alison Wolf

While we may, albeit without naming it as such, have been basing policy decisions on evidence for quite some time, a new emphasis and a new expansion in the demands for evidence-based policy now exists, some stemming from the emphasis on strategic planning in the public sector and an increasing emphasis on value for money.

Power, the interests of the funder and the position of the individual or organisation matter enormously.

In the Irish context, the EU has played a vital role by forcing us to place a greater emphasis on evidence-based policy particularly in relation to the methods for evaluating the Structural Funds. This will continue to arise as a result of the development of the Open Method of Coordination where EU Member States will try to produce hard evidence-based comparisons of policies in order to define best practice and to improve the performance of the EU as a whole.

There is an increasing supply of evidence-based policy in addition to an improved range and quality of statistics, for example the new Quarterly Household Survey and the recent report from the Steering Group on Social and Equality Statistics.

There is a greater emphasis on analysis and the constructions of models and interpretive frameworks – it is no longer a question of providing data, but of how we make use of that data, how we compare it, how we understand the processes the data is emerging from.

There is an increased emphasis in universities on evidence-based policy, on policy research in general and an increase in the number of consultants who can provide research in its various forms.

In order to improve the quality of evidence, there is a need to ensure the variables and concepts used are relevant, that the information obtained is reliable and dependable and that the analysis is relevant to the needs of the policymaker.

It is crucial that this emerging understanding of new research and evidence be cumulative, always seeking to improve the social and economic processes evolving, moving away from the existing tendency to demand quick answers, which leads to a mere recycling of existing information.

The process of evaluating the European Structural Funds has been one of the most important contributions that the Funds have made to policy making in Ireland. The large injection of Structural Funds began to arrive in the late 1980s, increasing in volume during the 1990s. Investment decisions were made on a political basis, and often not based on very good evidence. However, the EU insisted upon an evaluation procedure – an ex-ante evaluation to establish objectives, ongoing monitoring, and ex-post evaluation at the end of the project. These evaluations needed to be underpinned by an understanding of what the effect of Government investment was. This led to the creation of a set of techniques based on the ESRI's macro-economic model (see Diagram 5, below), for understanding the relationship between investment and further improvements in the Irish economy, which can be applied to a wide variety of contexts. It has been the ongoing construction and amendment of the model since the 1980s which allows us to measure investment effects, to make rational decisions. It is recognised in Europe as being one of the better-conducted Structural Fund enterprises.

The use of evidence in research is a long-term process. It is necessary to build long-term relationships between researchers and policymakers, which have to be based on experience and trust. It is as important that the policymaker understand the researcher, as the researcher understand the policymaker.

There are inherent difficulties in attempting to institutionalise relationships as these can depend on relationships between particular individuals within a promotion structure, certainly within the Irish civil service, where individuals are promoted away from departments. A similar situation exists within the EU context.

There is a need to build a skill-base within policy agencies such that they can understand and absorb the evidence of research. There is also a need to build understandings in the research community of how to communicate with policymakers. For example, it is very often our experience that what people read of our research findings is what the media says our findings were, and not what we actually wrote.

Diagram 5 – The ESRI Hermes Macro-economic Model

- Originated in the 1980s, with emphasis on energy problems
- 600+ equations
- Exposed sector driven by world demand and Ireland's cost competitiveness
- Sheltered sector driven by domestic demand
- Public sector policy driven
- Wages determined in a bargaining model of the open labour market with the UK
- Nine sub-sectors distinguished and output and employment in them determined by different mixes of variables

Professor Patrick Wall

UCD

Responding to:

Getting the Evidence – Jonathan Grant

The US Experience – Mark Dynarski

Taking the Other Side Seriously – Alison Wolf

- Within the context of public health, there are factors outside of the Health Service that have a greater impact on public health than Government policies. This includes areas such as employment, education, road safety, town planning for recreational facilities, agriculture and food policies, and tobacco control.
- Policies are often inherited, but seldom reviewed.
- Many of the issues require an inter-disciplinary and inter-agency approach: within the health sector there are issues around disabilities, the care of the elderly and children. If we are going to have an impact on the population's health, there has to be a joined-up approach.
- Often, decisions have to be taken with limited information available.
- Questions that policymakers have to get answered include: Which option is best? Which is the most cost-effective decision? Which decision will deliver the most favourable outcomes? What does the research mean? What time-scale do we have to work in?
- Writing for media may have more impact than writing in academic journals. We need to raise the level of debate. Media influence the priorities and priorities are set when the public gets agitated and they vote.
- Do we get policies proportionate to the media interest, or proportionate to the need of the citizens?
- An example of how legislation should not be made is how the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries in the UK handled the BSE crisis. There, the

Ministry was torn between trying to protect citizens and protect the industry. The scientists did not add any value and forecasts were emerging that painted a drastic scenario. The resultant legislation was highly reactionary – presently in the UK, every animal over 30 months of age cannot go into the food chain and has to be destroyed. The scheme is costing half a billion Euro per annum, which represents twice the budget of Beaumont Hospital.

- Behavioural change is a huge challenge. We have the scientific research which tells us which behavioural patterns are bad for us. However, there is another social science dimension to this for which we need behavioural psychologists and sociologists and economists to inform.
- The desired outcome of research is some sort of change in practice or to add value for society.
- The priorities of policymakers can be quite different from the priorities of researchers, which makes it difficult to always focus on outcome rather than output. The priorities of policymakers need to be made quite clear. Relevant research is needed. Research can be driven with funds for which we have Science Foundation Ireland, Health Research Board and Industry Research. At UCD, President Brady has introduced modular courses, which will have a business dimension to some of the undergraduate courses. The objective is to better understand what industry and policymakers need, in order to produce a more balanced student, or balanced output.
- It is very hard to influence policy with very small specialist researchers. It is also hard to influence policy with blue-sky research, unlike implementation-oriented research.
- The relationship between academics and policymakers can be collaborative, confrontational or indifferent. It is important that academics have a clear view of what emerges from policymakers. As a policymaker, you may reverse the positions and believe academics to have no accountability.
- There is no question but that dialogue is needed for a two-way knowledge transfer, mutual understanding and the release of potential synergy.
- If policy based on existing evidence were implemented, and what we know could deliver health gain, we could deliver a much better health service. The gap could be closed without too much effort.
- There is a need to draw out the evidence that exists, because it is not possible to argue against evidence. A behavioural change in the system is needed.

Peter McDonagh

former Government Advisor

Responding to:

Getting the Evidence – Jonathan Grant

The US Experience – Mark Dynarski

Taking the Other Side Seriously – Alison Wolf

- There tends to be a lack of understanding within the political domain of the need for external expertise.
- There are serious problems in the use of research in formulating policy, which need to be addressed before it can become more dynamic. One of the limitations is the very small number of senior civil servants (who have very little time and very poor backing) in the policy community in areas such as Education, Social Welfare and Justice. They are charged not only with managing departments, but in addition, become involved in serious policy discussions with Government.
- The Brown Treasury in the UK submits all funding decisions to a tremendous amount of rigour, which could be done in Ireland if the staff were available.
- There are an extremely small number of people in academia who are involved in social science research, which limits the debate and effective peer review in many areas. Interaction between researchers and decision-makers is limited. In my five years in Government in two policy-intensive environments, there were perhaps five occasions on which high-quality interactions took place between those making the decisions and those producing the research.

- The Children’s Strategy is an example of an intelligent and innovative document, which does build in international and domestic best practice. In this case, the senior civil servant and academic involvement worked very well together. However, it was notable for being the exception, rather than the rule.
- There are perhaps limitations in the partnership approach to research inherent in the Irish system, as it can give rise to negotiated, rather than evaluated focuses. The negotiations are embedded from the start as terms of reference and choice of research provider are negotiated. There are many actors involved, all with different interests.
- There is little or no public space for debate in Ireland, which places emphasis on the role of the media. Taking the education sector as an example, six or seven years ago serious consideration in the media of educational research was evident in Ireland. It would be standard practice to have two pages on research in the education supplement. Now little to none is presented, as it is covered on the news pages. Hence, there is a striking absence of a forum for constructive debate on what research says.
- By contrast, many business and economic correspondents exist, who know how to consider serious research. In most social policy areas, that is non-existent. Take for example, the area of income distribution, where issues of cause and effect are rarely discussed. Any debate is couched in terms of Government policy while there is little discussion of the nature of employment, which professions are growing, where employment is in the different areas of the economy etc.
- There may be an over-emphasis on the public aspect of policy, believing that everything must have a public policy implication. If we are to understand anything of this emerging idea of social capital, we have to understand that things beyond Government matter. In the case of volunteerism, five years into the process of producing a White Paper were sporting organisations only then considered, although the GAA⁵ is the largest voluntary organisation in the country. The GAA is essential to community life and to other areas such as health gain, education outcomes, etc. but it simply had not been brought up sooner as there was no obvious public policy implication in relation to it.

5. The Gaelic Athletic Association.

- It is necessary to invest in diversity. Capacity-building investment has not yet reached its natural conclusion. It may be necessary to go much further in terms of investing in capacity – the seeds of many great initiatives exist within the university sector at present; however, there is a need to go further. The issue of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral research remains substantive and while it has reached revolutionary proportions compared to seven years ago when there was exactly zero Government funding available to the humanities and social sciences, there is still a long way to go.
- All publicly-funded data sets should as a matter of course become widely available, with of course certain necessary limited exceptions. It should be a requirement that they be available in a speedy and reasonably user-friendly manner so that a timely debate can ensue.
- A significant portion of academic research work on policy areas is non-directed by Government, and this may have implications for the dissemination of publicly-funded research. In the absence of a dedicated professional media, which is capable of this dissemination, there should be an obligation on the receivers of funding to be responsible for ensuring that.
- There is a need for greater international perspective. As a small nation, the skills and expertises available are relatively limited. In the evaluation of proposals and in the involvement of the researcher, there should be the presumption of international involvement, rather than it being exceptional. All major Government-funded research should, as a matter of course, include international evaluators. Interestingly, in the PRTLI, no money was awarded on the basis of domestic evaluation. This difference in evaluation approach did result in some surprises in the funding decisions!
- It may be necessary within the civil service to give people the ‘time-in-house’ to use their expertise, to properly evaluate and advance the work being done and if necessary, to bring outside people in on contract. This has the potential to create a more active and useful engagement between the civil service, who are the primary policy formulators, and the academic community.
- We also need to allow for a distance between understanding results, the discussion and the development of recommendations. In Ireland there is a tendency to, perhaps too speedily, go straight to the negotiation phase. Within the procedures, it may be necessary to ban recommendations from research reports until after a certain amount of time has passed, or when a discussion or a seminar to develop the recommendations has taken place. In the words of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan: everybody is entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to

- their own facts. If agreement on what the facts were could be reached, this may lead to much better discussion.
- There appears to be tremendous appetite by those at the top of the system to have evidence available to them, which allows them to apply the public resources, which are available to them and to apply their role as legislators in a constructive and effective way.
 - Within the Cabinet Committees, the best policy discussions may be centred round evidence, presented by the officials serving the committees.
 - Ireland finds itself at the centre of a research revolution, which does extend to the social sciences. While the Science Foundation is at the heart of this, and is the largest receiver of ongoing programme funding, the decision that Humanities and Social Sciences would be included within the major funding initiatives was a very specific decision taken at the top of Government. No politician is involved in any of the funding decisions. Researchers in the new system are receiving funding on the basis of their abilities and their potential, and not on the basis of whom their supervisor is.
 - There was substantive interchange on issues other than Northern Ireland between the Taoiseach, President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair. Additionally, connections were made with Richard Reilly of the US Department of Education and David Blunkett's Department of Education in London was visited frequently. From these interchanges it would appear that the manner in which social capital was brought onto the agenda in Dublin may very well have been a direct initiative of An Taoiseach.
 - There is a need to have zero-tolerance for vacuous research, of which there is an abundance. Andrew Maher, the political correspondent of the BBC, has written a remarkably insightful book on his profession in which he suggests: suspect all research, unless you have a reason to believe it. He believes there to be certain standards which researchers should be obliged to exceed before their work can be taken seriously. We should expect of our public service broadcaster that they, at least, adopt standards in relation to how something is presented. Good research needs to be dealt with in terms of media and public debate, but not in a trivial way by only looking at problems. Rather, we need to put forward solutions and to try and understand the dynamics behind the problem.

Panel Discussion

Participants, among others from the audience, included:

Professor Miriam Wiley, Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Professor Patrick Wall, Mr. Piaras MacEinri, Professor Alison Wolf, Professor Brendan Whelan and Ms. Eithne Fitzgerald.

The following is a summary of the issues raised in these discussions:

- The health sector is undergoing the largest structural reform of the system, in over thirty years. However, this reform may be taking place in the absence of evidence. It may be the case that the media has portrayed the extent of public dissatisfaction with the health service and it is that which drives the pressure for reform. The impact of the media, as it reflects what people perceive to be the groundswell of public opinion, how that influences politicians and civil servants is a critical chain of events that those in research may overlook.
- There is a consistent set of data to show a divergence between the experience of those who have availed of the health service and those who are canvassed in opinion surveys for their views on the service.
- Although a gap may exist between the service we have and the ideal, change is necessary as the status quo is not adequate and on that there would appear to be agreement.
- There is a dearth of think-tanks, foundations and independent bodies funding research. Besides, one could not really speak of the existence of a policy community in this country. Additionally, there may be areas of public policy where there is virtually no dialogue between the policymakers and the external stakeholders and the voluntary sector does not have the capacity and the academics do not have the critical mass.
- By putting consensus at the heart of policy making for the past two decades we have shown the capacity to make a substantial contribution to economic and social progress. However, we have missed the benefits of good healthy debate to explore policy areas more fully, for example the annual budget, which receives attention from only the ESRI.

- It would, therefore, be worthwhile investing in the development of policy-based institutes within our universities.
- For a small country the issue of critical mass is vital and problematic. Ways of encouraging the development of small foundations and sources of independent funding is essential through, for example, the tax system.
- The National Disability Authority, as a standard element of its research contracts, makes it a condition that any data generated should be deposited in the Data Archive. This, however, has been problematic within the context of how universities and research institutions deal with copyright issues. There is also the question of more staffing and training for the Social Science Archive.
- Finally, better use needs to be made of the interface between existing data archives, policy analysis and policy development.

Three Weddings and a Divorce – Case studies and lessons for the use of evidence in policy making

Professor Jonathan Lomas, Director,
Canadian Health Services Research Foundation

Introduction:

Evidence-based Policy – where the worlds of average and anecdote meet

'The National Health service has never been in more of a crisis today than it was in yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that, and maybe every day since 1947'.

From The Five Giants by Nicholas Timmons

The health sector issues that arise in relation to policy making are no different, in a real sense, than those that arise in other economic and social domains, with the exception of one important variable. Involved in the health sector are probably the single most powerful interest group that the Government has to face in the sector, namely doctors. The presence of this group brings an additional element to the dynamic of creating health policy in a sector that seems to specialise in being in crisis for a considerable amount of time.

There is an inherent, albeit unavoidable tension created in attempting to bring together health sector actors and researchers. It could be described as a place where the worlds of the average and the anecdote meet. The anecdote is a powerful entity which, when coupled with the output of research findings, can provide a powerful foundation for evidence-based policy making. This paper will use the fact that the anecdote is such a powerful entity and will use case studies to demonstrate this. They are described as weddings, of which there are three and which represent examples of a

happy meeting between these two worlds. The funeral is an example of where the union was not so successful.

The Use of the 'Average' in Decision Making

In the Berkshire District Health Authority (UK), a 'decision' was defined as a statement of intent to introduce a change or withdraw a service. This represented a significant improvement, as many studies in the area do not define what they mean by a decision. Each decision was then in turn assessed for availability of research, which was defined as randomised control trials. It was found that a third of the decisions were supported by randomised control trial evidence. When it was broadened out to the social sciences and other forms of methodology, it was found that half of the decisions had research of some kind support of them. This is quite an encouraging scenario. There is already a significant amount of evidence being used in policy making, although it tends to get forgotten as there is a danger, within the research community, of emphasising the research that does not get included in the policy making process. There are many routes by which research finds its way into the decision making process, however, curiously there is not a large enough body of research available to assist in determining how research finds its way into practice.

The Use of the 'Anecdote' in Decision Making

But what of the cases in which there is no evidence to support decisions? This moves us into the arena of the anecdote, rather than the average, which is what the research community is more interested in. In Ireland, there may be a trend towards anecdote-based policy. This is exemplified by cases such as that of Roisin Ruddle and the Children's Hospital in Crumlin in 2003. Roisin Ruddle died while on a waiting list, due to a shortage of nurses at the hospital. Nursing policies, nursing retention or recruitment policies may be developed as a consequence of this powerful event. Every health system is influenced by events such as this and every politician and policymaker is, to some extent, also influenced by them.

The Different Worlds of Anecdote and Average

The reality is that for all the careful approaches that one will take with research, there will almost always be a single and powerful anecdote which constitutes an important element in the decision making process. One of the challenges would appear to be the meeting of the worlds of average and anecdote. The average practitioner or politician will tend to focus on the

individual, the anecdote, and not the average. That is what their currency of exchange is, whether they be a physician dealing with individuals day-in, day-out, as their patients, or whether it be a politician dealing with their constituents on a day-to-day basis. It is these anecdotes that are the powerful currency of exchange. However, the average researcher and the average civil servant, the bureaucrat, focus on the average. They focus on the group, not the individual. The difficulty is that, essentially, the definition of policy is to create something that will satisfy a maximum number of people, or be the average approach. And it is the extent to which frontline individuals then have to implement that when faced with individual clients or individual cases that often present that tension, between, on the one hand the researcher and the civil servant, and on the other hand, the politician and the actual frontline worker or practitioner.

Individual versus Average Decision Making

To demonstrate how powerful this effect can be, Amos Tversky took clinical case scenarios and presented them in two different formats, with one very small difference. In one format, the individual case, he used a set of initials to individualise a case at the beginning. The case stated, for example, HV is a young woman well known to her family physician. The other case was presented as an average or group scenario, stating: Consider young women who are well known to their family physicians. They would continue to describe a particular event, which was exactly the same in both scenarios. The only difference was the use of the set of initials in each scenario, versus the general case.

In each case they asked policymakers whether they would go ahead and decide a particular action, as a consequence of this. The action in this case was the provision of an extra and expensive laboratory test. What did they find? There was a significant difference in the response to the individual scenarios. 30% of the respondents claimed they would recommend the additional test, whereas, only 17% claimed they would recommend the test in the average or group scenario. Significant greater propensity to take action and intervene would then be based on two initials, as opposed to a generic general statement. It was also found to be the case where there was a follow-up by an office-visit, instead of telephone, which led them to conclude that the discrepancy between the collective and individual perspectives may create tension between health policymakers and medical practitioners.

Individual versus Average Reporting

According to Eleanor Chelmsky, the General Accounting Office in the US⁶ uses a style of reporting which is more natural to legislative policymakers and their staffs, that is the anecdote. This may seem somewhat ironic, given that by conducting an evaluation in the first place, one has moved deliberately away from the anecdote. However, to disseminate the findings to policymakers, it seems that one of the most effective ways to present this is to rediscover the anecdote, but this time an anecdote that represents the broader, evaluative evidence. It is important to understand the implications for both the way we think about, as well as the way we specifically communicate research findings in the evidence-based policy realm.

The First Wedding: The Policy Realm

The Manitoba Centre for Health and Policy Evaluation was established in 1991, and was a marriage between the University Of Manitoba Department Of Community Health and the Manitoba Provincial Government. The Health Sector in Canada is broken down into fourteen health care systems, over ten provinces and three territories, each with their own health system, under very broadly defined sets of national principles. In addition, the Federal Government runs an aboriginal health service. Within this context, the Manitoba Provincial Government runs the health system in that province, a province of about 1.2 million people. A relationship with the Department of Community Health was established and the Manitoba Provincial Government funds them by approximately €2 million per annum. They raise another approximately €1 million per annum through other sources, which means that they are sole-sourced funded at the Manitoba Centre. There are ten faculty level researchers, five research co-ordinators, fifteen programmers (the essence of the centre is linked to an administrative database) and ten support staff providing communications work and secretarial support.

The focus for this particular marriage each year comes from a negotiation of five major deliverables between Centre senior staff and the Provincial Government. Each deliverable is based on what is feasible for the Centre to do as well as what is going to be important for the coming one to two years for the health system in Manitoba.

The types of topics covered would include issues such as:

6. Responsible for conducting research on behalf of the US Congress, reporting findings to the US Senate and House of Representatives.

- Immunisation cover among aboriginal population versus among the general population;
- Impact assessment of closure of 20% of hospital beds in Winnipeg; and
- Study of care seeking behaviour patterns in anticipation of a transfer of services to rural areas.

The Manitoba Centre took on the task of evaluating and monitoring the impact of the bed closures and found that in fact, the beds/services should not be transferred out of the city to the rural areas.

Another area of particular interest to the Manitoba Centre is on multi-channel communication. This involves ensuring that research findings are communicated. There is much time spent talking with the media, who after many years, automatically approach the Manitoba Centre for commentary on many of the extant health policy areas to get the ‘facts’ on an issue. They now have an extremely good reputation as being a source of objective advice and information on what is happening in the health system. In addition to speaking with the media, the Manitoba Centre identify other public speaking opportunities, which ensure that the messages from their research are distributed in many different channels. In their own words, the Manitoba Centre serves as a bridge between the analysts who produce the research and politicians and policymakers who use it.

The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation has developed a research infrastructure that can transform routinely collected administrative data into policy relevant information. This began in the late 1980s with the anecdotal element we have been referring to. Nora Lou Ruth and her husband Les Ruth set about creating a set of administratively linked databases that would enable a window onto the operation of the system. Imagine a health system in which you could link together pharmaceutical use, GP visits, special visits, hospital care, census data, births and deaths registry, with all of the information linked together in an anonymised but nevertheless individualised database. The database represents a very rich resource, which, outside of the Government sector, complete with its inherent credibility as a source of objective advice, can provide a valuable resource for Government and researchers alike. This objectivity would be lost if it were brought into the Government sector. This puts the Manitoba Centre in the very strong position of being able to secure long-term funding. They are now funded on the basis of five-year contracts, which are negoti-

ated for renewal in their third year. They have now been funded for over fifteen years under this arrangement. This long-term security of funding is crucial.

What lessons can be learnt from the Manitoba experience?

A sustained relationship where trust is built up between individuals is vital. It is essential to clearly define roles and expectations, not a Just-in-Time inventory approach to accessing research, rather the pre-negotiation of what the research will deliver and the inherent roles involved in that. Multiple channels of communication emphasise the fact that the Manitoba Research Centre is not an adjunct to the Government who then become the owners of the information produced by them. The information is publicly available. There is also a respect for the fact that academics need to publish. The arrangements in place may result in a sixty or ninety-day delay between providing information to Government and setting about getting it more widely published, as the research findings may have repercussions for Government. However, there is no attempt to delay publication or to demand ownership of the research results. There is, essentially, a balance between the needs of Government on the one hand and the needs of academics, who are working in their own incentive environment, on the other.

The Second Wedding: The Management Realm

The Centre of Health Management Research (CHMR) in the United States was established in 1992 comprising a consortium of twelve healthcare organisations, mostly what would be called integrated health systems, and fifteen universities. The Centre was charged with the objective of providing management research that would be relevant to the member organisations. The budget and personnel are determined by the National Science Foundation collaborative grant, in addition to the contributions of each of the member organisations. They describe themselves as an evidence-based management cooperative. Given the nature of these management organisations, the focus is essentially integrated health systems – the strategies, structures, processes and performance of integrating health systems. The type of projects they would be involved in would be more management than policy oriented, addressing issues such as the appropriate mix between community and institutional provision and appropriate approaches to local level marketing.

The CHMR stemmed originally from a group of researchers who needed access to data. There was, additionally, a desire on the part of the management organisations to get access to strategic research, so they formed an alliance originally under an agreement to conduct a series of research projects. As the alliance evolved, however, two very important differences emerged.

In the first instance, it became clear that the time line for conducting the research was in fact quite incompatible with the time line for decisions. What emerged was that instead of generating a flow of new knowledge, it became much more of a task to exploit, harvest, extract and nurture the existing stock of knowledge to doing synthesis work. The lesson was that it may not necessarily be the case that evidence does not exist, rather that it has not been used as it has not been pulled together and synthesised in the appropriate form.

The second aspect to emerge came as something of a surprise to all members. The alliance provided an exchange mechanism in which the twelve healthcare organisations shared information about the innovations they were involved in. It became a horizontal as well as a vertical exchange.

These two factors emerged with the experience the organisations had of what was originally thought to be quite a different approach and a different idea. That synthesis of the stock of knowledge that already exists, coupled with the approach to information exchange around innovations, became the motivating forces for this particular marriage.

What lessons can be learnt from the CHMR experience?

The Centre found that involvement across the full spectrum of the research process, the definition of questions around information synthesis, research projects, dissemination and application of findings to the members, the organisation of information around innovations and finally the mesh of the time lines were all important. In the words of the Centre 'there should be a match between when the researcher's results will be available and when management must make a decision'. Otherwise, the use of research by policymakers is akin to the use of a lamp-post by a drunk – more for support than for illumination. This is a post-hoc application that happens when time lines don't coincide.

The Third Wedding: Researchers and Clinical Providers

The North American Asymptomatic Carotid Endarterectomy Trial (NASCET) was conducted in the US in the 1990s and involved a multi-centre randomised control trial to evaluate the use of endarterectomy for cleaning out blockages in the carotid arteries. There were some academic centres involved in the study. The Canadian Health Sciences Research Fund (CHSRF) was charged with evaluating the response of those academic institutions who were involved vis-à-vis those who were not. It followed that those who were involved in the trial had established a relationship, or marriage in this context, between the researchers and the decision making community or the practitioners. What had been undertaken was an experimental study of the impact of marriage between research and the decision making community. In 1990, results of the trial were released that were relevant to severe, major and medium blockages. In 1998, results were released for minimal blockages. Prior to any of these results being released there was general scepticism about the value of this type of surgical intervention.

The NASCET found that carotid endarterectomy was effective in cases where there are medium or severe blockages. In the hospitals that were involved in the trial, the take-up of the method was significantly more rapid than in those hospitals that were not involved. For minimal blockages, the NASCET found the method to be ineffective. There was a marked difference in the response rate to reducing use of the method in these cases between the participating and non-participating hospitals. Again, the participating hospitals responded quicker.

What lessons can be learnt from the NASCET experience?

In the first instance generating ownership of results by those that can implement them, speeds up the application of research findings. Secondly, marriages work better, on average, when both sides come from similar cultures. In the case of NASCET, the individuals who participated as the practitioners, the decision-makers, nearly all came from academic health centres. In this environment, practitioners are rewarded for getting involved in research, one way or another. They were not from community hospitals, where there is little reward for being involved in research. This was facilitated by the fact that academic health centres have an incentive structure in place, which encourages involvement in research for the practitioners or decision-makers who are making the clinical decisions.

The Divorce: The Policy World with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Policy

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Policy is a US Government funded agency established in 1980, complementing the National Institutes of Health. It has over 300 employees and a significant budget appropriated annually by the US Congress. Its focus is applied health services research, deemed important by the US Congress. Between 1990 and 1995 its main focus was on Patient Outcome Research Teams (PORTs), encouraged by Jack Linberg, an influential health services researcher in the US. Using administrative data sets, they attempted to assign problems to different kinds of diseases such as diabetes, hip and knee replacements, in order to identify what could be done to improve care. Individual PORTs received \$5 million each per annum in funding for five years from Congress. They were expected to create and implement practice guidelines in certain disease areas. However, although it had been sold to Congress as an opportunity to improve care in these areas over the five-year period, it transpired that it was unrealistic to use the research process to have a major impact on the care and delivery in each of these disease areas in five years.

Further problems were to emerge by the end of the first five-year period. While PORTs were developing guidelines for certain aspects of practice, they had not involved certain practitioners nor had kept them abreast of their research and findings. In one case, a PORT had issued a guideline, which clearly stated that surgery for low back pain was not an effective process. They had failed to take account of the fact that these surgeons represented a significant lobby who effectively pointed out to Congress that the PORTs had put forward very unrealistic ideas about what could be achieved as they were not achieving all of the objectives laid down in 1990, when they received the original funding.

The result was that the funding ceased and the Agency of Healthcare Research and Policy learnt a hard lesson. In addition to the need for setting realistic time lines, it was also a lesson in keeping stakeholders informed and involved, linking in with them and exchanging information. Additionally, what emerges from this example is the need to set the research agenda in the policy, and not the political environment. This is an important distinction that is often not made. The policy environment is one which may be less subject to the kind of influences that are involved in politics and lobbying, such as in the example outlined above.

The Agency for Healthcare and Research now operates under a different name and has recovered its budget, which, by 2004, had exceeded \$300 million. Their approach now focuses on patient safety agendas and they have changed their name to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, dropping the link to policy, which enables them to work more in the management realm. They no longer issue practice guidelines.

What lessons can be learnt from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Policy experience?

An important question which emerges from this example, is where the boundaries lie between research, on the one hand, and implementation on the other. Nick Black⁷ states ‘despite our limited knowledge of implementation methods, it seems reasonable to assume that the skills required for implementation may not be the same as those needed to carry out good research. Implementation is largely concerned with bringing about change in healthcare. But this surely is the essence of operational management, the basic task of most health service managers’.

Black introduces for us the idea of a boundary. While it is fruitful to establish linkages and exchanges between the research, management and policy world, somewhere the expertise of research ends and the expertise of the decision-maker starts. It is not desirable to have researchers making policy or to have policymakers conducting research. But there is a grey area between these scenarios, which is culturally sensitive to the particular skills of each group. There will be, of course, individuals who have experience of both roles. However, in general it is necessary to clearly define roles and expectations while creating linkages and exchange.

Conclusion

Seeing Eye-to-eye is Believing: some don'ts for policymakers

There are some essential issues which arise in evidence-based policy making, both for policymakers and for researchers. Let us say there are some ‘do’s’ and some ‘don’ts’.

For policymakers it is important to bear in mind that research needs time. Don't ask a question that needs an answer now. It is necessary to plan a research agenda for six months, one year, two years from now. Secondly,

7. Black, N. (1996), *J. Hlth. Serv. Res. Pol.* 1996; 1:184.

don't ask a question when there isn't uncertainty. If your political masters know the answer, what is the point of asking a research question that may actually show the opposite. If they are certain it is the answer, there may not be any point in asking the question. Ogden Nash, the American poet, has a lovely way of capturing this: when people reject a truth or an untruth, it is not because it is a truth or an untruth that they reject it. No, if it isn't in accord with their beliefs in the first place, they simply say Nothing Doing and refuse to inspect it. Likewise, when they embrace a truth or an untruth, it's not for either its truth or mendacity. But simply because they have believed it all along and therefore regard the embrace as a tribute to their own fair mindedness and sagacity. We should do well to remember Ogden Nash.

It is equally important to not ask a politically sensitive question. It is unfair to the researchers to involve them in the issues you are involved with on a day-to-day basis as a policymaker.

Boundaries Between Research and Implementation: some do's for policymakers

It is essential to clearly define the role for research in the decision process. Tailor the question and the expectations to the time available. Spend time refining the question with those who know what is possible, which is usually the researchers. Ensure that the research question reflects your needs. Researchers are absolute specialists in persuading you that the question you have is actually the question they have. Ensure that the research brief reflects the question that you want to have answered

Some Generic Questions

There are, in fact, a limited number of generic questions which are equally as important to ask, and which extend beyond simply asking, what works? There is a tendency to believe that it is this which is being asked of research, but it does not constitute the full population of questions that research should be working on. We should be asking what we know of a particular problem. For example, what do we know about unemployment? Is it a problem? If so, what is the cause? How extensive is it? Who is it affecting? What might we do about it? These are all general questions that need to be asked before you come to What Works? For example, do youth training schemes work? What will be, or is now, the impact of Y? I know what I want to do,

now what research is there that will tell me what the impact of doing that will be? If, for example, I believe a shorter working week will address unemployment, who is supporting that contention? Who is against it? What else will be affected? And so on.

Tools for Applied Researchers

What are the lessons for researchers? Watch for windows of opportunity. The policy process moves with just some very small windows of opportunity and possibilities. Researchers should be there ready to use that window of opportunity at the right time. It is important to know who the influential individuals are. In every system there are individuals who are particularly influential and it is necessary on the one hand to know who they are and also to keep them informed throughout the research process.

Value face-to-face exchanges with those who can use the research. Use peer-review publications for the credibility to enable you to communicate the anecdote. Finally, once a consultation to discuss your research findings has taken place, leave behind a copy of the findings for the future use of the decision-maker. However, ensure that the meeting takes place first as, if the survey is left in the in-tray of the decision-maker, it is unlikely that it will be read at a later stage.

The Philosophy of On-going Linkage and Exchange

An example of a method for communicating effectively is what are called Myth Busters. These are useful in cases where there is a belief that has been challenged successfully by research. Evidence boosts are useful in cases where research is not be used that clearly supports a particular course of action. Michael Huberman, the education researcher, suggests that 'interpersonal links spread through the life of a given study, are the key to research use. They allow non-researchers to find their niche and their voice, while a study is still young. There are reciprocal effects, such that we are no longer in a conventional research-to-practice paradigm, but in more of a conversation among professionals, each bringing different expertise to bear on the same topic'.

This respect for different expertise is crucial. To be effective, it is necessary to think ahead of time on a research project, to be culturally sensitive to each side of the debate, to create and reinforce the interpersonal trust, to have commitment, to define roles and expectations at the outset, to partner with the organisation, not just the individual, and to ensure there is organisational support for the project.

There are many challenges – incompatible time lines, turnover among managers and policymakers, the corporate need for specific answers versus the researchers need for publishable general answers, unfriendly incentive structures, both in the universities through promotion and tenure incentives and in the employers' environment, for evidence-based decision making not being well supported.

Why should we employ evidence-based policy making practices? It is one of the fundamental underpinnings of a democratic society. In the words of S. N. Tesh, "Science is both a collection of ideological beliefs and an agency for liberation⁸. As an agency for liberation it substitutes democracy for political and religious authority. Demanding evidence for statements of fact and providing criteria to test the evidence, it gives us a way to distinguish between what is true and what powerful people might wish to convince us is true".

8. Tesh, S. N. *Hidden Arguments: Political Ideology and Disease Prevention Policy*. London, Rutgers University Press, 1989, p. 167.

Dr Ruth Barrington

CEO, Health Research Board

Responding to:

Three Weddings and a Divorce – Professor Jonathan Lomas

- Political and religious authority may have played a major role in shaping health policy in Ireland. The capacity in health policy for powerful people to influence the ‘truth’ should not be underestimated.
- Where does the evidence in evidence-based policy come from? It begins with research and good information systems, but the findings need to be translated into evidence that policymakers appreciate and can use.
- The process may be much more effective if the policymakers are involved in setting the research agenda in the first place, if the long-term nature of research and information building task is understood and good personal contacts are maintained throughout the process.
- The smoking ban represents a good example in the Irish context of research translated from evidence into action. A long-standing commitment by Government policymakers to reduce tobacco consumption was in place from as far back as the 1970s. An active, vocal and articulate public health community campaigned for further regulation, which led to the Department of Health and Children and the Health and Safety Authority commissioning a systematic review of research findings on the environmental impact of tobacco smoke. The review highlighted the damage secondary smoking was doing to the health of workers, leading to a Government commitment to prohibit smoking in work places to protect the health of workers.
- Another interesting example is the Intellectual Disability Database. Minister Cowen’s first budget speech committed €900 million over five years on the strength of the evidence produced on the virtues of this data-

- base as a source of evidence for policy decisions in providing services for people with disabilities. An interesting aspect of this example is that this database was developed while Minister Cowen was Minister for Health and Children. This is an example of the personal linkages it may be possible to create between actors and policy environments.
- There are many other examples, such as the practice of the National Children’s Office of building research into their policy, the decision to establish the Health Information and Quality Agency, the Health Research Board undertaking capacity building, and the Cochrane Library, which translates research by taking it through systemic reviews into evidence that policymakers and clinicians use.
 - Areas where there is room for improvement include a dearth of action around the evidence which shows the effects of folic acid on the neuro-development of babies. 70 babies a year are born in Ireland with neuro-tube defects. To date, there is no government action on this. On the basis of the evidence that researchers have produced internationally, the US and Canada have taken the decision to fortify flour with folic acid. In Ireland, the reasoning behind the decision not to is that this type of action would represent over-interference in the lives of individuals. We might ask the difference between this level of interference and the smoking ban? Perhaps the campaign is not yet strong enough around folic acid. A recently established working group, chaired by Maureen Lynott, may assist in translating evidence into policy around this issue.
 - Changes that are currently taking place in Irish health services seem to be taking a direction opposite to that of health policy in other countries. This would appear to be based on anecdote rather than evidence. For example, one of the major reasons given is that it has been thirty years since the last change, so change is needed now. Another reason is that too many health bodies exist. However, no comparison has been made to determine what is the number of health bodies that a sovereign independent country needs to run a health service and to deliver healthcare to the most dispersed population in Western Europe.
 - The functions of these bodies have been brought together in one centralised health service executive. The reason for this change? It is not likely that it could be called evidence-based. There would appear to be a reaction to dissatisfaction with the performance of subordinate or local bodies and to abolish and centralise.
 - There appears to be similar concerns about the introduction of for-profit healthcare in Ireland. Maev-Ann Wren in *Unhealthy State* highlights the

contradictions at the heart of Irish health policy, between the tax incentives being provided by the Department of Finance and the move to the market driven approach to healthcare, which is not based on evidence. If evidence as to the benefits to health and the health sector were the criteria, this option would certainly not be on the table. This is an area where perhaps the use of Myth Busters might prove useful.

- It is necessary to have a long-term commitment to support the production of research relevant to health policy. This commitment is crucial. The support has to be public or from philanthropic sources. The market is not going to produce health policy researchers or health policy evidence. Since research begins and ends with people, young people must be attracted to research; they have to receive high-quality supervision and have to find that they can make a rewarding career in research. The existence of fellowships, career opportunities, opportunities to publish and to have an impact on policy is the reward in its widest sense.
- Health policymakers must engage with the process of identifying research priorities, and stay with the process of producing the evidence from the research. There is a Government policy around this in *Making Knowledge Work for Health*, a commitment to establish a research and development function for the health service as a whole, to appoint a Director of Research and Development in the Department of Health and Children, to establish a Health Research Forum, to agree to priorities for research in the health service and to greatly enhance the funding to the Health Research Board to support research linked to the R&D agenda, and to fund fellowships and career rewards for young researchers, and finally, to support those activities which will produce evidence on the research and disseminate it through the system. As yet, this commitment has not been followed through.

Panel Discussion

Participants, among others from the audience, included:

Professor Des Fitzgerald, Ms. Judy O'Neill, Dr. Don Thornhill, Mr. Martin Macken, Professor Gerry Boyle, Mr. Greg Sparks, Professor Colm Harmon, Dr. Fergus O'Ferrall, Mr. Dónal Garvey, Professor Sheila Greene, Ms. Paula Carey, Professor Philip O'Connell and Mr. Lawrence Bond.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in these discussions:

- A difficulty in involving users in research is their attempts to try and influence findings at the early draft stage, particularly in politically sensitive areas.
- The integrity of the research is paramount. Ensuring well-framed terms of reference for the research should help. The onus is on the policymakers to be clear what are the questions they wish to have answered.
- Security of funding will also influence the degree to which research 'truths' can speak to power. In this regard, it may also be important to detach research results from policy recommendations.
- To what extent are we equipping ourselves to learn from policy experiences in Ireland? Who has control of the agenda? Where the evidence is questionable, how do we verify it? Was the process that underpinned the current health sector reforms democratic and participative? Are other policy alternatives being developed independently?
- By not involving local communities in the development of the Hanley report, evidence and research were developed without the public's knowledge or involvement. The media may have a role to play, such as the role played in the experience of the Manitoba Centre, of providing an information link and an ambience between the researchers, policymakers and the public.

- There is a difficult balance to be achieved between the influence of local communities on elected representatives, consultation and awareness, and ensuring that evidence remains untainted and uncontaminated.
- In addition to State and academic entities conducting research, it is now the case that political parties are becoming more involved in conducting their own media research. The question is whether the results of this research are being used to divine what is right or what is popular.
- There is a dilemma between identifying what is the right thing to do, by getting the evidence, and doing what is objectively possible within a democratic mandate, and then bringing key stakeholders along with you. To complete the circle, it is necessary to evaluate the outcomes of the decisions made.
- Research is increasingly being conducted by private consultants in relation, for example, to the evaluation of the EU Structural Funds.
- Programme research and evaluation are very important but we are very poor at this in this country. It's very important to break down the barriers in communication between policymakers and academic researchers.
- Departments need to improve the manner in which they produce rigorous information which political representatives can use to communicate more effectively with the public. However, there is a tension between immediate messages and the time required to produce research.
- Well-operationalised public relations can create the climate necessary for pushing through a particular piece of policy.
- The incentive of the academic community to secure peer-review papers need not be inconsistent with its value to the policymaker. Providing incentives for both communities in addition to including policy experts at all levels in the civil service can help to provide the continuum necessary to achieve this. There is no reason why the model that works in the UK is not achievable here.
- There are elements of *Sustaining Progress*, major social issues, which have been with us in Ireland for a considerable time, for which we still do not have evidence or answers. In this regard, it is essential to tap into the knowledge base which exists on the ground, through the structures of Social Partnership, as was done for long-term unemployment in the early 1990s by the NESF.
- A key barrier facing empirical programme evaluation, which may have prevented evaluations of national policy, is the Data Protection Act. If we are serious about collecting adequate data, we need to look at creating exemptions that would allow bona fide research to look at the impact of

- policies. We do not have the right balance in our legislation between the privacy of the individual and the promotion of the common good (in Canada, the public interest overrides that of the individual).
- How can we build a requirement for accountability of Government Departments into a system that is facing a move away from EU Structural Funding, which may be the present catalyst? The new reporting arrangements being developed under the Strategic Management Initiative should provide this framework.
 - We must be careful to make a clear distinction between the independence of researchers and when it is necessary, the independence of policymakers and when that is necessary, and the times when researchers and policymakers should collaborate. In order for researchers to make valuable policy recommendations, they should have experience of engaging in a collaborative exercise with policymakers. Arriving at policy implications is the result of a process of synthesis and dialogue.
 - The development of policy institutes at universities can help to change the incentives for academics involved in policy-focused research.

Closing Remarks

Dr Rory O'Donnell,
Chief Executive Officer, NESDO, and Director, NESC

Introduction

It seems to be the case that the discussion and papers presented today have been attempting to answer the question that was raised by the President of UCD this morning in his opening remarks: What does it mean to apply the same rigour to policy and social and economic research as to natural science research? Many themes have been addressed in the course of the day. The value of empirical research, which is of a particular type and catered to the needs of policymakers, is not to be underestimated. Within this framework, an increase in the availability and quality of data coming from the CSO and others is evident.

Additionally, there is the role of consultants and experts, either within Government or academia, and to provide incentives that encourage university research on policy matters. And knowledge of how things work in a community and in an institution is of increasing value to policymakers.

In response, I would like to make the following points.

The Value of Organisational Knowledge

There is a body of policy-oriented research on certain issues, such as inflation, high blood pressure, the problem of unemployment in a certain town, which may give us a body of knowledge, which in turn can be used by policymakers. This body of indispensable research emanates from sociology, social policy, psychology, natural science, medicine etc. In this context, it may be inadequate to suggest that policymakers do not use research. We also have available to us what I might term interaction-oriented policy research, that is knowledge around the processes and interactions between

policy players. Policy is not made by a single actor who happens to be the recipient of a piece of policy research. Rather, policy is made by a complex set of actors who interact with each other and strategically play off each other. Immediately, the distinction between the positive and the normative is blurred. In order to understand these processes and the payoff between the various actor interests, we need to understand how these actors see their position. This will take us from an objective to a subjective level of analysis. The implication of this is that in addition to policy-oriented research, we need research on politics, administration and forms of governance in Ireland, an area where currently, research may be lacking. There would appear to be three players in this circle. Firstly, there are the researchers. Secondly there are policymakers at the level of Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries and Ministers. Thirdly, there is administration and practice. All three sets of actors are involved in the policy process. However, the difficulty may lie, not in the making of policy *per se*, but in ensuring that the policy made is implemented. In this regard, more knowledge of the processes of administration, of governance of the organisation, of the users and the community is necessary.

Experimentation

In Ireland, there is a willingness to create pilot programmes by a responsive, inventive public service and a set of policy actors. But there are concerns around mainstreaming from these pilot programmes, and what to select. However, within the context of the experimental approach, it may not always be the case that there are clear outcomes. It may be that to create a programme, it is necessary to create a new institution, a new entity, to persuade certain actors, perhaps the subject of the programme, to behave in new ways in order to create the experiment, perhaps in an area of high unemployment or of drug-abuse. In this context, each of the actors that participated in creating the experiment may offer a plausibly different account of whether or not the experiment worked.

The goals of the programme may themselves also change quite dramatically. There are examples in Ireland where this has been the case, such as the community employment programme. Here, the desire was to implement something, as it was evident that some response was necessary. However, as the programme develops and new goals become evident, the goals and the policy-means need to interact. In this case, the goals may not be clearly defined and the means are not simply a question of social engineering where one gets answers and turns off the machines that don't work and

plugs in the ones that do, so to speak. In the area of healthcare, which lends itself very clearly to biomedical research, it is clear that goals can turn out to be very different. Within community health, where people can take responsibility for their own disease reduction, we can find ourselves in a very complex process of changing goals and changing means. This may require a very different kind of evidence-based input and may give rise to a situation, already evident in international environmental research, where stakeholders jointly define what each side would consider to be relevant fact and subsequently pursue joint research initiatives.

And this process of team-based exploration of policy implementation is now being undertaken on a regular basis since 1998 by the NESF.

Again, there are interesting international examples of experimental and conflict mediation processes of knowledge creation and knowledge mediation in which partners jointly seek facts, which are jointly defined. Our experience at the National Economic and Social Council, within the context of what I would describe as macro-level policy debate, is that the processes of fact-finding and problem-solving now face major challenges as the social partners are tempted to approach these in a strategic and bargaining way. If this fit occurs, it would undermine the effectiveness and the ability of the process to service public policy.

To conclude, there is enormous value in joint fact-finding and joint problem reframing through partnership. In many ways we have to explore this idea along with greater knowledge of governance and administration, because that line of experimentation, problem-solving, monitoring and feeding back information is possibly one of the keys to the wider public reform challenges that Ireland and many other countries face. In the words of John Dewey, there is a moral tragedy inherent in efforts to further the common-good, which prevents the result from being either good or common. Not good, because it is at the expense of the active growth of those to be helped; and not common, because they have no share in bringing about the result.

Farmleigh Workshop

To avail of the opportunity arising from the presence in Dublin of a number of distinguished academic researchers, a Workshop was convened by the Department of the Taoiseach in Farmleigh for the morning (11th February) following the Conference for the purposes of:

- exchanging views and following up in greater detail some of the issues that had been raised at the previous day's discussions;
- learning more fully of developments elsewhere in linking the worlds of research, evaluation and policy making;
- identifying and understanding better the different barriers and facilitators to developing evidence-based policy making in this country;
- comparing the different providers of research and their comparative advantages;
- reviewing potential models for co-operation between the research community and policymakers; and
- exploring ways forward to build the capacity for evidence-based policy making in this country.

In addition to the visiting researchers, those who attended the Workshop included Secretary-Generals and Senior Officials in Government Departments, State Offices and key members of the academic and research community in this country.

The main policy issues involved were discussed in the Workshop from a number of perspectives and dimensions such as:

- the perspective of Government Departments /State agencies (NESF, NESC, NCPP, CSO, HEA, Competitiveness Council, HSE, Science Foundation, Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences etc);
- the perspective of the research community, both in the universities and in institutes such as the ESRI;
- the perspective of the citizen and user of State services;
- what needs to be done to address the barriers and tensions and create the ambience, models and structures for effective co-operation between policymakers and the research community;

- build up a skills base in Departments and Agencies; and
- how to build up the infrastructure and the incentives to encourage and support such co-operation in the future.

It was agreed at the outset that these discussions at the Workshop in Farmleigh would be kept confidential and held in accordance with ‘Chatham House’ rules so as to encourage as full and open exchange of views as possible. Accordingly, while no detailed report has been prepared, however, and in the interests of providing information to those working in the area, the main themes discussed can be grouped under the following main headings:

- External Environment;
- Systems and Governance;
- Research Capacity;
- Resources and Data; and
- Dialogue.

The following Schedule summarises the views of participants under each of the above themes in relation to:

- The Facilitators ;
- The Barriers; and
- Action Points.

In conclusion, it was the general view shared by all those who attended the Workshop that it served a useful purpose in facilitating wide-ranging discussions on policy issues between researchers and policymakers in developing our thinking about how to link better the differing perspectives and contributions of all those who are involved in the design and implementation of more effective policy making processes and policies for the future.

Moving forward – Action points

Facilitators

- A confluence of interest
- Existing window of opportunity
- Growing doubt about traditional way of thinking or deciding
- Comptroller and Auditor General driving change
- Increased emphasis on value for money and accountability
- Greater emphasis on performance

Barriers

- Environment may be hostile to findings
- May be a short-lived window of opportunity
- Pressure of the moment
- How seriously is the C & AG taken?

External Environment

- Research Council composed of academics, funded by Government

Moving forward – Action points

Facilitators

- Incentivising researchers
- Research driven by domestic and EU requirements

Barriers

- Desire to protect the patch
- Capacity of system to conduct research
- Creating knowledge from information
- Ethics and governance
- Existing organisations do not always meet research needs
- Weak dynamic political decision making
- Protecting blue-sky and long-term research
- No leader to coordinate system
- Small size requires bespoke arrangements

Systems & Governance

- Modernising government agenda
- Joined-up actions across Government Departments
- Influence SMI Strategy Statements
- Appoint evaluation officer at senior level
- Improve policy analysis skills
- Staff secondments
- Long-term funding of research
- Use competition to purchase research

Moving forward – Action points

Barriers

- Training needs at the centre
- Lack of career structure for researchers
- Capacity of the centre to support research

Facilitators

- New training in universities
- New policy analysts in civil service
- New policy institutes

Research Capacity

- Combine peer review with matching funding
- Learn from existing models – create a 'Funders' Forum'
- Improve access and dissemination of knowledge

Moving forward –

Action points

Barriers

Facilitators

Resources and Data

- Investment in IT
- Funding to support evidence-based policy making project
- Data protection issues
- Public procurement of long-term public research
- Mechanisms supporting research are overly bureaucratic
- Limited data sources
- Duration and security of funding
- Vision for 2020 in a research perspective
- Supporting the social partnership
- Vibrant citizenry
- Open source funding
- Accessing raw data /sharing data
- Exploit data-mining tools/ high data collection
- Exploit EU research funding & not duplicate

Moving forward – Action points

Facilitators

Barriers

Dialogue

- Researchers should discuss how to engage Departments/Agencies
 - Agencies
 - EU drivers
 - Encouraging independent research
 - Evidence-based research and policy making is also value-based
 - An appreciation that policy matters
 - Engage differently with public around evidence-based policy making
 - Education of public to accept evidence-based policy making
- Knowing who to interact with
 - Distrust between research community and Government
 - Perceived bias of researchers
 - History of tension between research and Government
 - Lack of appreciation for researchers
 - Staying in the 'comfort zone'
 - Danger of leaving out wider groups in society
- Dissemination of research findings
 - Journalism by researchers
 - Engage journalists
 - Early events to explore links between researchers and policy-makers AND within the research community
 - A guide for researchers
 - Shared data sources to support research
 - A coordinating centre to support evidence-based policy making
 - International peer review

Annex 1: Programme for the Conference, 10th February 2005

8.00 – 9.00	Registration – Coffee/Tea Student Centre, Astra Hall, University College Dublin
9.00 – 9.10	Welcome Dr. Hugh Brady (President of University College Dublin)
9.10 – 9.30	Opening Address The Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.
9.30 – 9.45	Keynote Address ‘Setting the Context’ Mr. Dermot McCarthy (Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach and Secretary General to the Government)
	MORNING SESSION (CHAIR – Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chair, NESF)
9.45 – 10.30	‘Getting the Evidence’ Dr. Jonathan Grant (RAND Europe)
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee/Tea
10.45 – 11.15	‘Research as a Tool for Developing Social Policy: Thoughts on the US Experience’ Dr. Mark Dynarski (Mathematica Policy Research, Princeton)
11.15 – 11.45	‘Taking the Other Side Seriously – Can Academics and Policymakers Communicate Successfully?’ Prof. Alison Wolf (King’s College London)
11.45 – 12.30	Respondants: Prof. Brendan Whelan, (Director, Economic and Social Research Institute) Prof. Patrick Wall (UCD and Health Service Executive) Mr. Peter MacDonagh (Policy Evaluation Programme, Geary Institute)
12.30-13.00	Questions & Answers
13.00-14.30	Lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION	
	(CHAIR – Prof. Des Fitzgerald, Vice President for Research, UCD)
14.30–15.10	‘Three Weddings and a Divorce: Case Studies and Lessons for the Use of Evidence in Policy’ Prof. Jonathan Lomas (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation)
15.10–15.20	Respondant: Dr. Ruth Barrington (Chief Executive Officer, Health Research Board)
15.20–16.20	Panel and Q&A Session Ms. Julie O’Neill (Secretary-General, Department of Transport) Dr. Don Thornhill (Former Chair, Higher Education Authority) Mr. Martin Mackin (Partner and Director, Q4 Public Relations) Prof. Gerry Boyle (National University of Ireland, Maynooth) Mr. Greg Sparks (Managing Partner, FGS (Farrell, Grant, Sparks))
16.20–16.30	Closing Remarks Dr. Rory O’Donnell (Chief Executive Officer, NESDO, Director, NESC)

The Speakers



Jonathan Grant is a director of Policy Audit & Governance at RAND Europe, and head of RAND Europe's Cambridge office. He holds a Ph.D. from King's College London. Jonathan joined RAND Europe from the Wellcome Trust where he was head of policy. His research interests cover health and research policy, with a focus on research translation and research evaluation methodologies. He has published widely in a number of areas including health R&D policy and research evaluation methodologies.



Mark Dynarski (Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University) is a senior fellow and leads the education research area at Mathematica Policy Research. His focus is on research and evaluation of programmes for children and youth, with an emphasis on using experimental methods. His research has explored a range of policy issues about at-risk youth, child development programmes and college enrolment, and education technology. Dr. Dynarski currently is directing the national evaluations of educational technology and of the 21st Century Community Learning Centres after-school programme. He has written and published extensively on designing rigorous social and educational programme evaluations, serves as an associate editor of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* and *Economics of Education Review*, and serves on the advisory panel for the Government Accountability Office on K-12 education issues and for the U.S. Department of Education on its Behavioral Research Centres.



Alison Wolf is Professor of Management and Professional Development, King's College London and Professor of Education, Head of Mathematical Sciences Group and Executive Director of the International Centre for Research in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. Her research interests include demand for skills and qualifications in the labour market, the contribution of skills and training to productivity and growth, public sector management and assessment of professional and vocational skills. Her most recent works include *Does Education Matter? Myths about Education and Economic Growth* (Penguin 2002) and *Economic Performance: Simplistic Theories and the Policy Consequences*, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*.



Jonathan Lomas is the executive director of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, a national organisation dedicated to improving the relevance and use of health services research for decision-makers in the health sector. His background includes work or training in psychology, health economics, epidemiology, political science, and management. From 1982 to 1997 he was Professor of Health Policy Analysis at McMaster University where he co-founded the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis. He has published two books and numerous articles and chapters in the area of health policy and health services research. His main interest, and the area in which he has an international reputation, is the role and impact of research evidence in health system's decision making.

He has been a consultant to national and provincial governments, as well as providing research and advice to various non-governmental organisations, task forces and inquiries. He is currently on a number of boards including, in the US: Academy Health and Health Affairs; in the UK: Journal of Health Services Research and Policy and the Journal of Evidence-based Policy and Management; in Australia: the Institute of Health Research; and in Canada: Healthcare Quarterly.

Annex 2: List of Registered Delegates

Title	First	Surname	Org
Ms	Josephine	Ahern	The Homeless Agency
Dr	Ruth	Barrington	Health Research Board
Mr	David	Begg	ICTU
Ms	Catherine	Blake	Physiotherapy School, UCD
Mr	John	Bohan	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Prof.	Maurice	Boland	Faculty of Agri-Food & The Environment, UCD
Mr	Seamus	Boland	Irish Rural Link
Mr	Laurence	Bond	Equality Authority
Mr	Richard	Boyle	Institute of Public Administration
Prof.	Gerry	Boyle	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Ms	Siobhan	Bradley	Centre for Social & Educational Research, DIT
Dr	Hugh	Brady	University College Dublin
Ms	Mary	Burke	National Crime Council
Ms	Susan	Butler	Geary Institute
Ms	Helen	Byrne	Council for Childrens Hospitals Care
Ms	Catherine	Byrne	INTO
Dr	Marc	Caball	Irish Research Council for Humanities & Social Sciences
Mr	Eamonn	Cahill	Expert Skills Group, Forfás
Mr	Noel	Cahill	National Economic & Social Council

Mr	Ian	Cahill	NITM, UCD
Prof.	Tim	Callan	Economic & Social Research Institute
Dr	Sara	Cantillon	Library Building, UCD
Ms	Paula	Carey	ICTU
Ms	Michéle	Clarke	Social Services Inspectorate
Ms	Mary	Clarke-Boyd	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Dr	Mary	Clayton	University College Dublin
Prof.	Peter	Clinch	Department of Planning & Environmental Policy, UCD
Ms	Anne	Cody	Health Research Board
Mr	Patricia	Conboy	National Council for Ageing & Older People
Dr	Alpha	Connelly	Human Rights Commission
Ms	Tracy	Conroy	Cancer Services Unit, DHC
Dr	Padraic	Conway	Development Office, UCD
Prof.	John	Coolahan	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Ms	Sarah	Craig	National Economic & Social Forum
Mr	Martin	Cronin	Forfás
Ms	Maria	Cronin	IBEC
Prof.	Mary	Daly	Faculty of Arts
Dr	Kevin	Denny	University College Dublin
Mr	Adrian	Devitt	Forfás
Prof.	Donal	Dineen	Kemmy Business School, UL
Mr	John	Dolan	Disability Federation of Ireland
Dr	Stephen	Donnelly	Office of the First & Deputy First Minister
Ms	Pauline	Dooley	Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
Ms	Antoinette	Dooley	Health Service Executive
Dr	Patrick	Doorley	Health Service Executive Corporate
Mr	Des	Dowling	Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government

Ms	Mary	Doyle	Department of the Taoiseach
Mr	Eamon	Drea	Hay Group (Ireland) Limited
Mr	David W.	Duffy	Prospectus
Mr	Joseph	Durkan	Geary Institute
Prof.	Mark	Dynarski	Mathematica Policy Research, Princeton
Ms	Jacqueline	Fallon	CEDCE
Mr	Conor	Falvey	Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government
Dr	Lisa	Farrell	Department of Economics UCD & Geary Institute
Ms	Claire	Finn	Geary Institute
Prof.	Muiris	Fitzgerald	Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, UCD
Prof.	Des	Fitzgerald	University College Dublin
Ms	Geraldine	Fitzpatrick	Change Management Team, DHC
Ms	Mo	Flynn	Eastern Regional Health Authorit
Dr	Maureen	Gaffney	National Economic & Social Forum
Ms	Helen	Gallagher	University College Dublin
Ms	Caren	Gallagher	Vision 21
Mr	Donal	Garvey	CSO
Prof.	John	Geary	UCD Business School
Prof.	Patrick	Geary	Economics, NUIM
Mr	Dónall	Geoghegan	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ms	Maria	Ginnity	Forfás
Prof.	Catherine	Godson	Conway Institute, UCD
Mr	Fergal	Goodman	Primary Care Task Force, DHC
Mr	Frank	Goodwin	The Carers Association
Mr	Sean	Gorman	Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
Dr	Jonathan	Grant	RAND Europe
Dr	Sheila	Greene	Department of Psychology, TCD
Prof.	Colm	Harmon	Geary Institute

Mr	Brian	Harvey	Brian Harvey Social Research
Ms	Mairead	Hayes	Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Prof.	Frank	Hegarty	Department of Chemistry, UCD
Ms	Maria	Hegarty	Independent Researcher
Ms	Paula	Heino Schonfeld	CECCE
Ms	Paula	Hennelly	National Economic & Social Forum
Mr	Victor	Hewitt	Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland
Dr	Tony	Holohan	Department of Health & Children
Prof.	Robert	Holton	Trinity College Dublin
Dr	Peter	Humphreys	Institute of Public Administration
Mr	John	Hynes	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mr	Gerry	Kearney	Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
Mr	Brian	Kearney-Grieve	The Atlantic Philanthropies
Ms	Eileen	Kehoe	Department of The Taoiseach
Mr	Philip	Kelly	Department of the Taoiseach
Dr	Mary	Kelly	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr	Patricia	Kennedy	Department of Social Policy & Social Work, UCD
Ms	Marie	Kennedy	National Children's Office
Dr	Fiona	Keogh	Mental Health Commission
Mr	Jim	Kiely	Department of Health & Children
Ms	Shelagh	Lackhy	Health Promotion Department
Prof.	Brigid	Laffan	Dublin European Institute UCD
Ms	Carol	Laffan	Geary Institute
Ms	Sylda	Langford	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
Mr	Joe	Larragy	Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUIM
Dr	Ann	Lavan	Department of Social Policy & Social Work, UCD

Ms	Breda	Lawless	Health Service Executive – Eastern Region
Ms	Anna	Lee	Tallaght Partnership
Prof.	J. Owen	Lewis	Faculty of Engineering & Architecture, UCD
Mr	Tom	Ling	RAND
Mr	Frank	Litton	Institute of Public Administration
Prof.	Jonathan	Lomas	Canadian Health Services Research Foundation
Ms	Heidi	Lougheed	IBEC
Ms	Geraldine	Luddy	Womens Health Council
Mr	Peter	MacDonagh	Policy Evaluation Programme, Geary Institute
Mr	Piaras	MacEinri	Department of Geography, UCC
Mr	Martin	Mackin	Q4 Public Relations
Dr	Michael	Maguire	PA Consulting Group
Dr	Evelyn	Mahon	Department of Sociology, TCD
Prof.	Alan	Matthews	Department of Economics, TCD
Ms	Marie-Claire	McAleer	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ms	Claire	McCann	Human Rights Commission
Mr	Dermot	McCarthy	Department of the Taoiseach
Ms	Deirdre	McDonnell	Department of Education & Science
Mr	Moore	McDowell	Department of Economics, UCD
Dr	Michael	McGrath	Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
Mr	John	McGrath	FÁS
Mr	Peter	McLoone	IMPACT
Mr	Pat	McLoughlin	Health Service Executive
Dr	Dorren	McMahon	Geary Institute
Ms	Bernie	McNally	Department of Health & Children
Mr	Donal	McNally	Department of Finance
Mr	Tony	McQuinn	Comhairle

Ms	Tina	McVeigh	DEI/Geary Institute
Ms	Mary	Meaney	Policy & Public Affairs, NDA
Ms	Shira	Mehlman	Social Inclusion, FÁS
Mr	Marc	Mellotte	Hewlett Packard
Mr	Frank	Mills	Health Services Executive
Mr	Tom	Mooney	Department of Health & Children
Mr	Derek	Moran	Department of Finance
Dr	Ros	Moran	HRB
Ms	Pauline	Moreau	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
Mr	Tom	Mulherin	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Prof.	John	Mullahy	University Of Wisconsin/Geary Inst.
Mr	Sean	Murphy	Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
Ms	Mary	Murphy	Dublin City University
Ms	Mary	Murphy	Independent Researcher
Prof.	Brian	Nolan	Economic & Social Research Institute
Dr	Philip	Nolan	Registrar's Office, UCD
Mr	Séan	Ó hÉigearthaigh	National Economic & Social Forum
Dr	Larry	O'Connell	National Centre for Partnership & Performance
Mr	Kevin	O'Kelly	Combat Poverty Agency
Dr	Cathal	O'Regan	National Centre for Partnership & Performance
Dr	Conor	O'Carroll	Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
Prof.	Seámus	O'Cinneide	Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUIM
Dr	Philip	O'Connell	Economic & Social Research Institute
Ms	Ann-Marie	O'Connor	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms	Marie Claire	O'Connor	National Disability Authority
Dr	Rory	O'Donnell	NESDO/NESC

Dr	Ian	O'Donnell	Faculty of Law, UCD
Ms	Bernadette	O'Donoghue	Dublin City Development Board
Dr	Mairéad	O'Driscoll	HRB
Dr	Fergus	O'Ferrall	The Adelaide Hospital Society
Dr	Particia	O'Hara	Western Development Commission
Ms	Moira	O'Mara	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
Ms	Julie	O'Neill	Department of Transport
Ms	Marian	O'Riordan	Council for Childrens Hospitals Care
Mr	Robert	O'Shea	Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
Mr	Eamonn	O'Toole	Hewlett Packard
Ms	Sara	Parsons	National Crime Council
Dr	Diane	Payne	Assistant Director, UCD
Ms	Melanie	Pine	The Equality Tribunal
Ms	Grainne	Pyne	A&L Goodbody Consulting
Mr	John	Quinlan	Department of Education & Science
Ms	Orlaigh	Quinn	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Prof.	Ciaran	Regan	Conway Institute, UCD
Dr	Vera	Regan	Department of French, UCD
Sr.	Brigid	Reynolds	CORI
Ms	Sinead	Riordan	Centre for Social & Educational Research, DIT
Ms	Catriona	Ryan	Higher Education Authority
Mr	Michael	Scanlan	Department of Finance
Ms	Amanda	Scoggins	RAND
Prof.	Anna	Scott	Head of School of Nursing, DCU
Mr	Fergal	Scully	Students Union, UCD
Mr	David	Silke	National Economic & Social Forum
Mr	Dermot	Smith	Department of Health & Children
Ms	Sinead	Smith	Pavee Point Travellers Centre
Dr	Marin	Sokol	Urban Institute Ireland, UCD

Mr	Greg	Sparks	FGS (Farrell, Grant, Sparks)
Dr	Peter	Stafford	Urban Institute, UCD
Mr	Eddie	Sullivan	Department of Finance
Ms	Carole	Sullivan	Equality Authority
Dr	John	Sweeney	National Economic & Social Council
Mr	Damien	Thomas	National Centre for Partnership & Performance
Dr	Don	Thornhill	Higher Education Authority
Mr	Michael	Turley	Hewlett Packard
Ms	Mary	Van Lieshout	Research & Standards Development, NDA
Ms	Anne	Vaughan	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Ms	Anne	Vaughan	Institute of Public Administration
Mr	Gerard	Walker	National Economic & Social Forum
Prof.	Patrick	Wall	UCD and Health Service Executive
Mr	Jim	Walsh	Combat Poverty Agency
Dr	Edward M	Walsh	Irish Council for Science, Technology & Innovation
Ms	Aisling	Walsh	The Disability Federation of Ireland
Mr	Robin	Webster	Age Action Ireland
Mr	Jeff	Weinberger	President's Office, UCD
Prof.	Brendan	Whelan	Economic & Social Research Institute
Dr	Jane	Wilde	Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Prof.	Miriam	Wiley	Economic & Social Research Institute
Mr	Mark	Winkelmann	Department of Agriculture and Food
Dr	Nessa	Winston	Department of Social Policy & Social Work, UCD
Prof.	Alison	Wolf	King's College, London

Terms of Reference and Constitution of the NESF

1. The role of the NESF will be:
 - to monitor and analyse the implementation of specific measures and programmes identified in the context of social partnership arrangements, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social inclusion; and
 - to facilitate public consultation on policy matters referred to it by the Government from time to time.
2. In carrying out this role the NESF will:
 - consider policy issues on its own initiative or at the request of the Government; the work programme to be agreed with the Department of the Taoiseach, taking into account the overall context of the NESDO;
 - consider reports prepared by Teams involving the social partners, with appropriate expertise and representatives of relevant Departments and agencies and its own Secretariat;
 - ensure that the Teams compiling such reports take account of the experience of implementing bodies and customers/clients including regional variations;
 - publish reports with such comments as may be considered appropriate;
 - convene meetings and other forms of relevant consultation appropriate to the nature of issues referred to it by the Government from time to time.

3. The term of office of members of the NESF will be three years. During the term alternates may be nominated. Casual vacancies will be filled by the nominating body or the Government as appropriate and members so appointed will hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. Retiring members will be eligible for re-appointment.
4. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the NESF will be appointed by the Government.
5. Membership of the NESF will comprise 15 representatives from each of the following four strands:
 - the Oireachtas;
 - employer, trade unions and farm organisations;
 - the voluntary and community sector; and
 - central government, local government and independents.
6. The NESF will decide on its own internal structures and working arrangements.

Membership of the NESF

Independent Chairperson
Deputy Chairperson

Dr Maureen Gaffney
Mary Doyle, Dept of the Taoiseach

Strand (i) Oireachtas

Fianna Fáil

Dr Michael Woods T.D.
Pat Carey T.D.
John Curran T.D.
Senator Mary O'Rourke
Senator Paschal Mooney
Senator Brendan Daly
Senator Geraldine Feeney

Fine Gael

Senator Paul Coghlan
Damien English T.D.
Paul Kehoe T.D.

Labour

Joan Burton T.D.
Willie Penrose T.D.

Progressive Democrats

Senator Kate Walsh

Independents

Senator Feargal Quinn

Technical Group

Dr Jerry Cowley T.D.

Strand (ii) Employer/Trade Unions/Farming Organisations

Employer/Business Organisations

IBEC	Tony Donohoe Heidi Loughheed
Small Firms' Association	Patricia Callan
Construction Industry Federation	Dr Peter Stafford
Chambers of Commerce/ Tourist Industry/Exporters Association	Seán Murphy

Trade Unions

ICTU	Eamon Devoy
ICTU	Blair Horan
ICTU	Jerry Shanahan
ICTU	Manus O'Riordan
ICTU	Esther Lynch

Agricultural/Farming Organisations

Irish Farmers Association	Mary McGreal
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	Michael Doody
Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society	Mary Johnson
Macra na Feirme	Carmel Brennan
Irish Country Womens Association	Carmel Dawson

Strand (iii) Community and Voluntary Sector

Womens Organisations

National Womens Council of Ireland	Orla O'Connor Dr Joanna McMinn
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Unemployed

INOUE	John Farrell
ICTU Centres for the Unemployed	Patricia Short

Disadvantaged

CORI	Sr Brigid Reynolds
Society of St Vincent de Paul	Audry Deane
Pavee Point	Brid O'Brien
Anti-Poverty Networks	Joe Gallagher

Youth/Children

NYCI	Marie Claire McAleer
Children's Rights Alliance	Jillian Van Turnhout

Older People

Senior Citizens' Parliament/Age Action	Robin Webster
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Disability

Disability Federation of Ireland	Joanne Mc Carthy
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Others

The Carers Association	Frank Goodwin
Irish Rural Link	Seamus Boland
The Wheel	Dr Fergus O'Ferrall

Strand (iv) Central Government, Local Government and Independents

Central Government

Secretary-General, Department of Finance

Secretary-General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Secretary-General, Department of Social and Family Affairs

Secretary-General, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Secretary-General, Dept. of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Local Government

Association of County and City Councils	Councillor Ger Barron Councillor Jack Crowe Councillor Constance Hanniffy
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Association of Municipal Authorities	Councillor Patricia McCarthy
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County and City Managers Association	John Tierney
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Independents

Institute for the Study of Social Change, UCD	Prof. Colm Harmon
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Department of Sociology, NUI Maynooth	Dr Mary P. Corcoran
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ESRI	Prof. Brian Nolan
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Tansey, Webster, Stewart & Company Ltd	Paul Tansey Cáit Keane
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Secretariat

Director	Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh
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Policy Analysts	Gerard Walker Dr Ann-Marie Mc Gauran Dr Jeanne Moore
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Executive Secretary	Paula Hennelly
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NESF Publications

(i) NESF Reports

Report No	Title	Date
1.	Negotiations on a Successor Agreement to the PESF	Nov 1993
2.	National Development Plan 1994 – 1999	Nov 1993
3.	Commission on Social Welfare – Outstanding recommendations	Jan 1994
4.	Ending Long-term Unemployment	June 1994
5.	Income Maintenance Strategies	July 1994
6.	Quality Delivery of Social Services	Feb 1995
7.	Jobs Potential of the Services Sector	April 1995
8.	First Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	May 1995
9.	Jobs Potential of Work Sharing	Jan 1996
10.	Equality Proofing Issues	Feb 1996
11.	Early School Leavers and Youth Employment	Jan 1997
12.	Rural Renewal – Combating Social Exclusion	Mar 1997
13.	Unemployment Statistics	May 1997
14.	Self-Employment, Enterprise and Social Inclusion	Oct 1997
15.	Second Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 1997
16.	A Framework for Partnership – Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation	Dec 1997
17.	Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Local Employment Service	Mar 2000
18.	Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation: Building the Future	Sept 2000
19.	Alleviating Labour Shortages	Nov 2000

20.	Lone Parents	July 2001
21.	Third Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 2001
22.	Re-integration of Prisoners	Jan 2002
23.	A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues	Mar 2002
24.	Early School Leavers	Mar 2002
25.	Equity of Access to Hospital Care	July 2002
26.	Labour Market Issues for Older Workers	Feb 2003
27.	Equality Policies for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People: Implementation Issues	April 2003
28.	The Policy Implications of Social Capital	June 2003
29.	Equality Policies for Older People: Implementation Issues	July 2003
30.	Fourth Periodic Report on the Work of the NESF	Nov 2004
31.	Early Childhood Care & Education	June 2005
32.	Care for Older People	Nov 2005
33.	Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market	Jan 2006
34.	Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services	Dec 2006

(ii) NESF Opinions

Opinion No.	Title	Date
1.	Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment	Mar 1995
2.	National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Jan 1996
3.	Long-term Unemployment Initiatives	Apr 1996
4.	Post PCW Negotiations – A New Deal?	Aug 1996
5.	Employment Equality Bill	Dec 1996
6.	Pensions Policy Issues	Oct 1997
7.	Local Development Issues	Oct 1999
8.	The National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Aug 2000

(iii) NESF Opinions under the Monitoring Procedures of Partnership 2000

Opinion No.	Title	Date
1.	Development of the Equality Provisions	Nov 1997
2.	Targeted Employment and Training Measures	Nov 1997

(iv) NAPS Social Inclusion Forum: Conference Reports

1.	Inaugural Meeting on 30th January 2003	
2.	Second Meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum	Jan 2005
3.	Third Meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum	April 2006

(v) NESF Research Series

1.	A Study of Labour Market Vulnerability & Responses to it in Donegal/Sligo and North Dublin	Jun 2005
2.	The Economics of Early Childhood Care & Education	Sept 2005
3.	Delivery of Quality Public Services	Sept 2006

Overleaf: *A cross-section of Delegates at the Conference.*





