

New Approaches for the Study of Program Evaluation Results Utilisation: New evidences, Proposed Hypotheses, Methodologies and Challenges

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Presentation Plan

- ◆ **Overview of the Use of Evaluation within the Departments of the Government of Quebec**
 - ◆ Conceptual Framework, Research Questions, Hypothesis, Data, Results
- ◆ **Enhancing the Conceptual Framework for Further Research**
 - ◆ Advocacy Coalition Framework; Policy Cycle; Disjointed Incrementalism; Mixed Scanning Approach; Garbage Can Theory
- ◆ **Methodological Considerations**
 - ◆ Conceptual Clarity; Generalization of Findings; Units of Analysis
- ◆ **Conceptual Issues and Directions for a Research Design**

An Overview of the Use of Evaluation within the Departments of the Government of Quebec

Conceptual Framework

- ◆ **The « Utilisation Paradox »**
 - ◆ Despite the importance of information available, only a small part of this information is used (James and Jorgensen (2009))
- ◆ **Shortcomings of the Concept of Utilisation of Evaluation**
 - ◆ Magnitude and vagueness of many approaches of evaluation utilisation (Kirkhart, 2000)
 - ◆ An overdeveloped concept (Mark and Henry, 2004)
 - ◆ Lack of moral beacon (Mark and Henry, 2004)
 - ◆ Limited interest for the change process explaining how evaluation influences people attitudes and actions (Mark and Henry, 2004)

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◆ Concept of Evaluation Influence

- ◆ Reconceptualization of the utilisation of evaluation towards the concept of evaluation influence
- ◆ Interest for the benefits linked to evaluation

◆ Appreciation of the Concept of Influence

- ◆ Kirkhart's and Mark and Henry's models have the advantage of making the concept of utilisation of evaluation more concrete, but...
- ◆ We are still missing a theoretical foundation that would capture the influence of context on utilisation and from which we could derive hypotheses that would advance the state of knowledge regarding the use of evaluation.

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◆ Litterature on Research Utilization

◆ Research Utilization (Weiss, 1979)

- Knowledge-driven model; Problem-solving model; Interactive model; Political model; Tactical model; Enlightenment model; Research as part of the intellectual enterprise of society

◆ A 6-Step Process (Landry et al., 2003)

- Reception, cognition, discussion, reference, efforts (adaptation), influence in the organization

◆ **However, we still can't explain how a political system can better mobilize its resources dedicated to research in order to inform public policy.**

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◆ Litterature on Research Utilization

- ◆ Some determinants may influence utilization level and transfer achieved (Landry et al., 2001; 2003).
 - **Engineering explanations (science push model)**
 - The progress of knowledge would be different from one discipline to another and from one individual to another.
 - **Socio-organizational explanations**
 - Organizational-interest explanations: Organizational structures, the size of an organization, its focus area, the hierarchical level occupied, the organization's needs
 - Institutional model: Differences between users and knowledge providers leading to a miscommunication between the two groups
 - Interaction explanations: Shortcomings on the interactions between the producers of knowledge and potential users

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Research Questions

- ◆ Why do some policy analysts consult evaluation reports and other not?
- ◆ What determine behaviours aimed at adopting or changing public policies?
- ◆ What is the impact of program evaluation reports on policy changes?

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Hypothesis

- ◆ **H1:** Behaviours of consultation and valorisation of knowledge produced by evaluation reports are induced by the **intrinsic characteristics** of the policy analyst.
- ◆ **H2:** Policy analysts that are **competent** and operating in an environment conducive to **professional learning** are more likely to use evaluation reports.
- ◆ **H3:** **Health, education and social development** departments are more involved in the valorization of knowledge produced by program evaluation evaluation than **technical** and **financial** oriented departments.
- ◆ **H4:** **Stages of the public-policy process** are unequally concerned by the search and exploitation of new knowledge produced program evaluation.
- ◆ **H5:** In a public-policy changing process, knowledge produced by **departments** are more influential than knowledge produced by **academic research**.

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Data

- ◆ **Targeted population:** Policy analysts working within Quebec government (Canada)
- ◆ **Net response rate** of 62,48% (n = 1614)
- ◆ Targeted population spread in **18 of the 22** Quebec departments
- ◆ **Survey instrument:** Close-ended questions
- ◆ Data collected by a **survey firm** in 2008
- ◆ **See:**
 - ◆ Ouimet M, Bédard P-O, Turgeon J, Lavis JN, Gélinau F, Gagnon F, Dallaire C (2010) Correlates of consulting research evidence among policy analysts in ministries: a cross sectional study. Evidence & Policy 6(4), forthcoming

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- ◆ Two dependent variables (DV)
 - ◆ First DV related to the **behaviour of consulting program evaluation work** conducted in different departments.
 - “In the last 12 months, did you consult an evaluation report from a public policy or program?”
 - ◆ Second DV relates to the **behavior of suggesting changes on public policy** (program, policy and strategies) within the jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec.
 - “In the last 12 months, did you write one or several documents which contained recommendations on the modification or the adoption of policies, programs, strategies or action plans?”

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- ◆ Four categories of **independent variables** (IV)
 - ◆ **Personal attributes** of the policy analyst (age, gender, academic background)
 - ◆ **Competences** of the policy analyst (years of experience, knowledge of randomised-controlled trials, systematic reviews, quantitative studies, qualitative studies and conceptual studies, participation to professional development activities, intensity of interactions with university researchers, socio-economist status)
 - ◆ **Policy domain (sector)**: public department for which the policy analyst is working
 - ◆ **Public policy cycle**: steps of the policy process in which the policy analyst is involved: policy formulation, implementation, etc.

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- ◆ **A fifth category of IV** is added to the model, explaining the influence on public policy change.
 - ◆ **Sources of information and new knowledge** that can influence change in public policy:
 - **Program evaluation**
 - University research
 - Benchmarking and scorecard

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◆ Models

- ◆ Multivariate Logit Regression
- ◆ Both models explain a targeted behaviour's odds ratio of probability by the respondent.
 - Consultation of reports evaluating policies and programs
 - Likelihood to influence behaviour change and the adoption of new policies

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- ◆ **Policy analysts who...**
 - ◆ are male;
 - ◆ have studied in **social science**;
 - ◆ Having socio-economist status ;
 - ◆ Knowing of **randomised-controlled trials**;
 - ◆ Knowing of **systematic reviews**;
 - ◆ Interacting with the **academic researcher**;
 - ◆ Having **professional development training**;
 - ◆ Working for **one of the following departments**: Health and Social Services; Culture, Communications and Women's Condition; Economic Development, Innovation and Exportation; Education, Recreation and Sports, Labour and Social Solidarity, Family and Senior Citizens);
 - ◆ Involved in **every steps** of the policy-cycle
- ◆ **... are more likely to consult program evaluation work.**

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- ◆ **Policy analysts who...**
 - ◆ having **socio-economist status**;
 - ◆ interact with the **academic world**;
 - ◆ work for the **Treasury Board** or the **Executive Council**;
 - ◆ are involved in **every steps** of the policy-cycle;
 - ◆ are **only involved in the conception** of public policies or programs;
 - ◆ have **consulted program evaluation reports**;
 - ◆ have **consulted academic research**;
 - ◆ have **consulted benchmarking and scorecard**
- ◆ **... are more likely to have written one or several documents which contain recommendations on the modification or the adoption of policies, programs, strategies or action plans.**
- ◆ « **Evaluation report** » is the source with the biggest B (0,647, compared to 0,307 for academic research and 0,283 for benchmarking/ scorecard).

Enhancing the Conceptual Framework

- ◆ **Advocacy Coalition Framework:**
(Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993)
 - ◆ The evaluation-generated knowledge is not used because it goes against coalition's members' beliefs system.
- ◆ **Policy Cycle:** (Bridgman and Davis, 1998)
 - ◆ The consultation of evaluation reports by Government of Quebec policy analysts is more important in key moments of the political process.
- ◆ **Disjointed Incrementalism:**
(Dahl and Lindblom, 1953, Simon, 1957)
 - ◆ Government of Quebec's policy analysts consult evaluation reports at any stage of the political process.

Enhancing the Conceptual Framework

◆ **Mixed Scanning Approach:**

(Dror, 1964 ; Etzioni, 1967)

- ◆ Should policy analysts further consult evaluation reports for activities aimed at making a fundamental decision (planning/ development of new policies, programming/ development of policy implementation plans, policy evaluation), evaluation utilisation would respond to a rational model rather than to an incremental one.

◆ **Garbage can theory:**

(Cohen et al, 1972; March and Olsen, 1976)

- ◆ Policy analysts consult evaluation reports anytime in the political process.

Methodological Considerations

Conceptual Clarity

- ◆ Lack of **parsimony** (Sabatier, 1978)
 - ◆ Many of the factors proved inaccurate
- ◆ Relationships mostly **bivariate** (Sabatier, 1978)
 - ◆ Rare information on the different variables' relative importance
- ◆ Specification of the **dependent variable** "utilisation."
 - ◆ Scales focus too much on instrumental use and particular utilisation of research (Landry et al., 2003).
 - ◆ The concept of utilisation can have a special meaning depending on the research. It complicates results' interpretation (Invaer et al., 2002).
 - ◆ Lack of parsimony of the independent variables (Landry et al., 2003).

Methodological Considerations

Generalization of Findings

- ◆ **Samples** formed from a single policy domain, a single organization or a single hierarchical level are less likely to be generalizable (Landry et al., 2003). These levels present significant variations in the types of research needs and the extent of research utilization.
 - ◆ Studies **mostly descriptive** (case studies of one or a handful of decisions within a single agency or a limited number of agencies), testing hypothesis about a single decision or a limited number of decisions
 - ◆ **Rare information** on utilization processes' occurrence and on different variables' interaction in various situations
 - ◆ Rarity of **multivariate analysis**

Methodological Considerations

Measure Accuracy

- ◆ **Ignorance of** the questions asked to respondents, the origin of respondents and the researcher's efforts to minimize bias, both from the respondents and the researcher.
- ◆ Significant risk of **social desirability bias** (Oxman, 2007)
- ◆ To what extent can we trust the **memory of a respondent** on the influence of a specific element of a report on a decision taken a few years earlier ? (Landry et al., 2003)

Conceptual Issues and Possible Directions for a Research Design

- ◆ A **quantitative methodology, with a large sample**, seems essential in order to contribute to the literature in the field.
- ◆ A particular **attention to the public policy domain** is necessary.
- ◆ The use of methods such as **path analysis** seems to be a good strategy to consider (Johnson et al., 2009; James et Jorgensen, 2009).
 - ◆ **Quantitative component** measuring the level of utilization
 - ◆ **Qualitative component** describing the path
 - ◆ **Deconstruction of an intervention** to reconstruct the series of decisions that led to the actual form of the intervention
 - ◆ Identification of models showing **positive relationships** between procedural activities and the utilization/ influence observed

Discussion



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