



Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:

<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/>

“This is a post-peer-review, pre-copy edited version of an article published in *Evidence and Policy*. The definitive publisher-authenticated version is available online by subscription at:

http://www.policypress.co.uk/journals_eap.asp?”

Please cite this article as:

Newman, L., Biedrzycki, K., Patterson, J. and Baum, F., 2011. Partnership in knowledge creation: lessons learned from a researcher-policy actor partnership to co-produce a rapid appraisal case study of South Australia’s Social Inclusion Initiative. *Evidence and Policy*, 7(1), 79-98.

Copyright (2011) The Policy Press.

Please note that any alterations made during the publishing process may not appear in this version.

AUTHOR PRE-PRINT VERSION of:

Newman L, Biedrzycki K, Patterson J, Baum F (2011), 'Partnership in knowledge creation: lessons learned from researchers and policymakers co-producing a case study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative', *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate & Practice*, 7(1):79-98.

Partnership in knowledge creation: lessons learned from a researcher-policy actor partnership to co-produce a rapid appraisal case study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative

Authors

Lareen Newman, Dip Eur Langs (Hons), BA (Hons), PhD (corresponding author)

Senior Research Fellow, Southgate Institute for Health Society & Equity, Flinders University. Level 2, Health Sciences Building, Bedford Park, SA 5042, Australia. Email: lareen.newman@flinders.edu.au; Phone: +61 8 7221 8488.

Kate Biedrzycki BSc, Grad Dip Int Health, MPH

South Australian Community Health Research Unit, Flinders University. Level 2, Health Sciences Building, Bedford Park, SA 5042, Australia.

Jan Patterson BA SocWk, Grad Dip GpWk, Grad Dip Public Health, PhD

Principal Policy Advisor, Social Inclusion Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, GPO Box 2343, Adelaide, SA 5001, Australia.

Fran Baum BA (Hons), PhD

Professor and Director, Southgate Institute for Health Society & Equity, Flinders University. Level 2, Health Sciences Building, Bedford Park, SA 5042, Australia.

Partnership in knowledge creation: lessons learned from researchers and policy actors co-producing a rapid appraisal case study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative

Key words (4): Partnership, researcher, policy actor, interactive knowledge creation

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a partnership between researchers and policy actors which was developed within a short timeframe to produce a rapid appraisal case study of a government policy initiative - South Australia's *Social Inclusion Initiative* - for the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network of the international Commission on Social Determinants of Health. The paper does not focus on the case study findings or content, but rather on the researcher-policy actor partnership which developed in the process of producing the case study and its report. The paper is set against the broader literature on researcher-policy collaboration and is written to share lessons that may help others quickly establish or improve researcher-policy partnerships. It sets out six key elements for success in a framework for partnership which can meet policy rather than academic time frames and which can effectively co-produce knowledge that meets both research and policy objectives.

INTRODUCTION

There is a large literature maintaining that researchers and policy actors live on opposite sides of a divide, even in separate "universes", and that their aims and working contexts are "worlds apart", resulting in major challenges in the two sectors working together (e.g. Brownson et al 2006; Feldman, Nadash & Gursen 2001; Locock & Boaz 2004). Caplan (1977) goes so far as to see researchers and policy actors inhabiting two cultures or communities which differ fundamentally in terms of values, languages, reward systems, and social and professional affiliations, obligations and interests. Despite these challenges to collaborative research, Mitton et al (2007), drawing on work by Lomas and Lavis, note that growing demands on health care

resources and a greater culture of accountability have led to a renewed interest in generating joint research knowledge that can have a practical impact on health systems and health policy.

In 2005 the World Health Organisation established the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH). In order to gather global knowledge in various areas on the relationship between social determinants of health and health inequities, the CSDH set up nine Knowledge Networks. The Social Exclusion Knowledge Network (SEKN) commissioned descriptive case studies from around the world in order to draw generalisable lessons about successful policy approaches to reducing social exclusion. Together these formed the basis of SEKN's final report to the CSDH.¹ South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative was identified by one of us (FB) as one possible case study of policy/action which held the potential to reduce health inequities by addressing social exclusion.

The Social Inclusion Initiative (SII) is the South Australian response to addressing social exclusion by (a) facilitating joined-up implementation of programs across government departments, sectors and communities; (b) sponsoring or using innovative approaches; (c) developing partnerships and relationships with stakeholders; and (d) focusing on outcomes rather than outputs. With the mandate from the Premier (Head of the state government, who is also the Minister for Social Inclusion), an independent Social Inclusion Board and a Commissioner for Social Inclusion provide the direction for the Initiative, supported by the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) which is located within government in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The case study report provides a detailed analysis of the development of the SII, its aims and mode of operation, the impact for the population, and generalisable lessons learned that may be of potential use in other settings around the world (see Newman et al 2007; Baum, Newman, Biedrzycki & Patterson 2010).

The case study process required that researchers and policy actors work together to access and appraise pertinent information and write the final case study report. It is the researcher-policy actor partnership which was developed to co-produce this knowledge, and our reflections upon it, which are the focus of this paper. Indeed, we see this paper as an unintended but positive outcome of working in partnership to produce the case study, as it was only after the report was

completed that we realised that we had gained important insights into the elements of a successful partnership that could be of value to other researchers and policy actors, who often find this a difficult terrain to negotiate, particularly in a short timeframe in a political sensitive policy area.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Research on how academic evidence can better be incorporated into policymaking, and how researchers and policy actors can better work together to produce knowledge, has led to a number of different models. In the 1970s ideas emerged about *knowledge translation*, *linkage* between researchers and policy actors, and *interactive research utilisation* (Bacchi 2008; Hanney 2004). More recently, *knowledge transfer* has been seen as a process by which research findings can be translated from research producers to research users (Lavis et al 2003), or how policy actors can convey their needs to researchers more effectively (e.g. Dobbins et al 2007). This latter conceptualisation implies, however, that one side dominates the origin and focus of the research and that a linear transfer process moves the knowledge from researcher (producer) to policy actor (user), rather than the two working in an interactive way.

The lack of widespread successful uptake of research in policy through these models led to arguments for a more interactive process based on *knowledge exchange* (Lavis et al 2003). However, further research still identifies an apparent gap in understanding between researchers and policy actors, where researchers often despair at the lack of policy uptake of academic evidence, while policy actors often consider that academic research asks the wrong questions, takes too long, is too qualified, and ignores their complex policy world (Lomas 2000; Petticrew et al 2004; Popay 2006; Whitehead et al 2004). The field has therefore further explored the potential to increase effectiveness through models of *ongoing linkage and exchange* which places a greater emphasis on genuine interaction among researchers, policy actors and other stakeholders, including lay persons (Ginsberg et al 2007; Mitton et al 2007). Denis and Lomas (2003) argue that such a “blurring of frontiers” between researchers and policy actors to allow a collaborative process of producing knowledge reflects changes in science and research which have led to an increased interest in, and ability to accommodate, this type of arrangement on

both sides: i.e. the inclusion of non-researchers in research design and conduct, and increased interest in “evidence-based policymaking” within the policy environment. Such models, grounded in interaction and partnership, are seen as beneficial to improving policymaking as they are likely to be more applicable to the “real world” (Armstrong et al 2006). For example, the *knowledge exchange model* and *knowledge-sharing-and creation model* are seen to lead to a broader range of choices in defining problems and assembling methodologies (including the generation of research questions which are both scientifically and practically relevant), better understanding of the meaning of results, greater use of research findings to address issues, improved relevance through co-produced outputs, and facilitation of change in the way researchers and policy actors think and use knowledge (Bartunek et al 2003; Denis & Lomas 2003). Bartunek et al (2003) believe the process is aided by considering the different forms of communal and individual knowledge each party brings to the table and the shared goals of discovery and application, while Boxelaar, Paine and Beilin (2006) argue that *knowledge sharing* implies the need to accept a constructivist theory of knowledge, where knowledge is seen not as objective, absolute and value-free but as socially constructed through an ongoing exchange among all who have a stake in that knowledge, who may nevertheless have divergent ways of “knowing and doing”. Nevertheless, Ginsberg et al (2007) caution that the efficacy of interaction approaches to research translation may be more limited than current theory proposes and may account for the slow pace of improvement.

Some of the research so far discussed has similarities with the evaluation literature, which has for a long time discussed the relative benefits of *internal and external evaluations* (e.g. Feuerstein 1986). Internal evaluations and internal evaluators (who can be considered equivalent to policy actors) bring intimate program knowledge and nuanced understandings of program staff, dynamics and context, but they may not be skilled at evaluation and may not be objective. External evaluators (who can be considered equivalent to academic researchers) are more likely to bring stronger evaluation skills and “unbiased” independent, “fresh” eyes to the evaluation. However, external evaluations may cause anxiety within the program to be evaluated about what the findings might show and external evaluators will usually have less detailed knowledge of the program itself (Feuerstein 1986). The dichotomy between internal and external evaluations diminishes with collaborative approaches, whereby internal and

external evaluators may share evaluation planning, tasks, information, and outcomes, with each process ideally bolstering the other. Christie, Ross and Klein (2004), for example, describe a collaborative evaluation team which changed the culture of a program's evaluation towards fostering a learning evaluation community, which as a result is more skilled and now embraces evaluation instead of seeing it as a laborious imposition. The rationale for partnership evaluation and the evidence for the characteristics of successful partnerships are reviewed in the literature (see Jolley, Lawless & Hurley 2008).

Despite moves to more collaborative and knowledge exchange models, several writers note that researchers and policy actors are often driven by demands that may not be conducive to working together, and that they can bring competing skills and competing sources of influence to the table. Effective collaboration can therefore require considerable compromise or change from both sides, such as in terms of defining "evidence", answering to institutional responsibilities, and being used to different timelines and communication formats (Garrett-Jones et al 2005; Hunter 2003; Mitton et al 2007). Some researchers remind us that researchers and policy actors have different underlying beliefs and values and differing levels of institutional accountability and power and hence they caution researchers about potentially compromising the independence of research directions, design, questions, analysis and outputs by conducting research in partnership with policy actors and governments (Bacchi 2008; Coburr 1998; Huberman 1999; Yazahmeidi & Holman 2007). Thus, the literature on interaction between researchers and policy actors suggests that both could benefit from greater interaction but also cautions that this could mean undue compromise in practice. This paper analyses a case study of an interactive partnership approach to conducting a rapid assessment of a policy initiative that was designed to feed into the deliberations of an international Commission and deduces generalisable lessons from the specific case.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on the observations of three researchers and one policy actor about the partnership which developed during the planning, conduct and dissemination of a 3-month case study of a policy initiative and their reflections over the ensuing months on the success of the

partnership, including during face-to-face project meetings and a post-project debriefing meeting. The knowledge that was required to be produced was a case study describing and assessing the SII, which was commissioned by the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network (SEKN) of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (established in 2005 by the World Health Organisation, and on which FB was a Commissioner). In order to meet CSDH's timelines, the case study was to be a rapid assessment conducted within 3 months. A general research framework and case study template was provided by SEKN, but allowing room for adaptation to local context.

The SEKN template was amended for the South Australian context following negotiation between the researchers and senior policy actors at the SIU. SEKN requirements were to use both documentary and narrative sources as evidence, including public and non-public documents held by the SIU (e.g. internal reports, internal evaluations, Social Inclusion Board minutes), expert insider knowledge from senior SIU staff, and interviews with key informants both inside and outside of the SIU and internal and external to government. The SIU, in consultation with the Social Inclusion Board and Social Inclusion Commissioner, believed that as well as contributing to the SEKN information base, conducting a descriptive case study that included analysis of the establishment, processes used and ongoing functioning since the Initiative's establishment 5 years previously would also be of benefit in considering the Initiative's further development. The case study was not, however, intended to evaluate the outcomes for the priority groups from the actions resulting from the Initiative, since evaluations were already being undertaken as part of the SII's ongoing workplan.

Using these data we reflect on the pros and cons of working together and how the partnership appeared to shape the co-production of knowledge as evidenced by the end product. Our reflections are synthesised in a framework derived from other empirical work about what makes for successful researcher-policy actor collaborations. These are: the "four tiers" of linkage and exchange identified by Goering et al (2003), the social processes of knowledge creation and the "communicative perspective" identified by Golden-Biddle et al (2003), the facilitators reported in a systematic review by Innvaer et al (2002) of 24 studies, a qualitative study of facilitators and hindrances by Jewell & Bero (2008), a short theoretical review by

Locock & Boase (2004), and the principles of partnership evaluation as outlined above including Jolley, Lawless & Hurley (2008). From these we have synthesised six key elements which we found to be crucial to the success of our researcher-policy actor partnership and its output:

1. Developing the relationship
2. Acknowledging and appreciating cultural differences
3. Clarifying the goal
4. Defining the roles
5. Creating the process and the knowledge together
6. Deriving implications from the knowledge

These elements are further developed in the Discussion section in our proposed framework for *partnership in knowledge creation*.

RESULTS

This section uses the key elements for success described in the methodology section to examine the partnership between the researchers and policy actors according to the quality of the relationship, the appreciation of different cultures, the goal of the exercise, the role each party played, and the processes of jointly creating knowledge and deriving recommendations from the research.

1. Developing the Relationship

Working together right from the start enabled us to clarify goals and roles, and allowed respect and mutual understanding to develop, which greatly aided the successful co-production of knowledge (i.e. the completion of the case study). The short timeframe of three months, critical from the policy actors' perspective for the findings to be timely for their purposes, meant that the relationship needed to be developed quickly. To aid this, two of the researchers (LN, KB) visited the government offices once a week to read and take notes of non-public documents

onto their laptops. This also allowed for a formal weekly discussion with the key policy actors; to ask whether further documentary evidence existed for issues that had arisen from reading other documents; to discuss the origin, context, and content of documents; and to clarify the researchers' emerging understanding of the Social Inclusion Initiative with the first-hand experience of the main policy actor involved in the research (JP). Personal visits allowed discussion of what additional information was still required to meet the SEKN template. They also allowed the researchers to observe the day-to-day activity, pressures and culture within this particular policy environment - a specialised unit within a central agency of government working across government and to an independent Board. Most communication was face-to-face, and much of the work was done side-by-side, supplemented by regular email and phone discussion.

At the debriefing session at the end of the project, the policy actor's feedback was that the final report had gained credibility among the broader policy staff precisely because it had been visibly co-written with a senior member of their team and because some SIU staff had also seen the researchers in the office and/or met them personally in the office or tea room, rather than a report having been written in judgement of their work by outsiders who were perceived to have remained in their academic "ivory tower".

2. Acknowledging and Appreciating Cultural Differences

When we first came together on this project, the researchers did sense that policy actors see academic research as too specific, with too many caveats to make it useful for policy purposes and applicable to real world scenarios. On the other hand, the researchers felt that governments tend to develop policy with too little incorporation of "real" evidence (i.e. academic research) and with too much focus on political directions and community opinion. Thus we needed to find ways to bring these two views together. This was addressed to a great extent, although not specifically intentionally, by the way we went about our work (and possibly following our own personal preferences for "sociable working"), in that understanding of each other's perspectives and needs developed as we discussed the case study face-to-face, and sat side-by-

side to work through the project and develop the format of communication and language so that it was right for all of us to produce the final report.

Another issue was to explicitly address our differing perceptions about what would constitute evidence for the case study. For example, researchers are used to drawing on peer-reviewed academic literature which they see as having a high level of credibility, whereas policy documents are often seen as 'grey' literature with less credibility, despite the fact that policy documents also often undergo extensive scrutiny by policy peers. The researchers experienced some discomfort at including evidence from certain non-public documentary sources that could not be referenced in the final report but which nevertheless had informed the report, whereas policy actors are more used to drawing on evidence types that cannot always be referenced, such as public sentiment. The researchers would have liked to be able to report whether the SII had led to improved outcomes, yet such outcome evaluations are methodologically difficult especially where outcomes are expected over the longer term and the SII was only in its early years. The researchers therefore had to assess outcomes on a balance-of-evidence approach i.e. what seemed plausible, and using indicators that the initiatives were on-track to achieve outcomes in the longer term. For example, in relation to action on the Homelessness Reference which had a target of reducing rough sleeping by 50% by 2010, the report found evidence that over 12,000 people had been helped through the various programs, including 40 of the most chronic rough sleepers being assisted into long-term sustainable housing and over 2,000 people among at-risk populations receiving support to prevent homelessness (see Baum et al 2010 for further detail).

One major benefit for this project was that on both sides we felt somewhat like bilingual people with parents from two cultural backgrounds who therefore have some understanding of both cultures. The policy actor in this case (JP) has research experience in different sectors and has conducted her PhD research within a university; conversely, the principal researcher (LN) and research assistant (KB) had both worked previously in government (state or federal), and FB has a long history of conducting research with or for policy actors in South Australia. The ability to work together and accommodate the need for more than just "academic" evidence was also supported by the SIU having an explicit emphasis on evidence-based work and

processes that include spending time collecting quantitative and qualitative data and other evidence as a basis for addressing each issue on which they are asked to work. In addition, the SIU had an expressed commitment to research and was a partner in a number of university-led research projects. In other words, both sides already had some “cultural understanding” and respect for the other’s world, which we felt supported our ability to create the case study together.

An additional cultural difference was working to different timeframes. The policy world often works to much shorter timeframes than the world of academic research, so that the researchers had to adapt from their usual 2 to 4 year timeframe for planning and conducting research projects in order to plan and produce the case study report within just 3 months. This was aided to some degree by the involvement of KB whose usual work is predominantly rapid evaluations, and LN’s prior administrative experience in managing projects.

3. Clarifying the Goal

The researchers commenced the project with the clear goal of producing the case study report requested by SEKN. However, when the researchers approached the SIU to explore the possibility of working with them to conduct the case study, it became clear that the case study report would occur at a time when it could be useful to the Social Inclusion Initiative as a review of the first five years. This meant that the case study now had both a primary purpose (as data for SEKN) and a secondary purpose (as a summary and review document for local benefit). Furthermore, an additional mutual benefit was that it gave both parties the opportunity to provide input to the globally important CSDH. The case study was summarised in the final report of the CSDH (CSDH 2008: 161) as a positive example of policy to address social inclusion and this gave kudos to the South Australian Initiative. In hindsight, the case study was even more timely, in that, shortly after its completion, a national social inclusion initiative was developed by the incoming Labor federal government and the South Australian case study report contributed to informing its development.

Davies, Nutley and Walter (2005) distinguish different purposes of research-policy collaboration which can influence the approach and process. Of their six models, we felt that we started with a “Problem-solving Policy-Driven” linear model, where we began with the end-users of the research and the questions they wanted answered – the SEKN template – and we then tracked back in search of useful findings i.e. to help understand how the Initiative was working and why. We were, however, also involved in an “Interactive Model” during the case study development and reporting, where the process was non-linear and with less predictable interactions between researchers and users, with the research impact happening through complex social processes of “sustained interactivity”.

4. Defining the Roles

Defining clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries was relatively easy in this project because of the small number of people involved and the majority of work being carried out face-to-face. It was clear that the researchers would lead the research process, with the policy actor working alongside to provide appropriate input about what data existed and where it might be found, and to give directions on how various documentary material and informants might provide relevant evidence. LN was the key liaison person for the project and was responsible for keeping the project on schedule for its 3-month completion date. She consulted and negotiated with the SEKN leader in the UK, with JP as the policy actor, with KB as the research assistant, with FB as the advisor on academic and research-policy issues, and acted as the pivot for all communication and the primary link with the SEKN; FB also had an intimate understanding of the needs of these bodies as a member of the CSDH. The coordinating and managing role, over and above the actual researcher role, was instrumental in ensuring that key timelines were met and that the final product was fit for the dual purpose of the case study, as outlined in the previous point.

Katz & Martin (1995) distinguish between different depths of collaboration and, using their definitions, in our case study it was *people* who were predominantly doing the collaborating (rather than their institutions), the four main people all making frequent and substantial

contributions, and being jointly responsible for key steps in the research, analysis and report writing.

5. Creating the Process and the Knowledge Together

The methodology to produce the knowledge for the case study report evolved in an organic manner and responded to the amount of, and types of, evidence that were uncovered and the way in which the policy actor-researcher working relationship developed. Based on the SEKN template, two researchers (LN & KB) initially visited the government offices to discuss the initial approach with the senior policy actor (JP). It was decided that to meet the dual goals of the project (as already discussed in section 3), some compromise would be required to amend the SEKN template to the SII context. For example, the SIU reframed the template focus from *social exclusion* to reflect the South Australian focus on increasing *social inclusion* through a whole of government approach, and the suggested analysis of the institutions and processes which address social exclusion were replaced by examination of the work of the first three SII References. Similarly, the SEKN requirement to explain whether local context had previously had any political focus on social exclusion was amended for South Australia to explain the previous state focus on social justice and equal opportunity. Furthermore, we added to the SEKN question “how did the target group react to the policy/initiative” an additional question of “how did consumers and service providers react” because this was a key concern of the SII and a focus in their evaluation reports.

It was considered too difficult for the policy actor to provide a comprehensive list of documents at the project’s outset because there were potentially so many. A list was therefore built as the project progressed, commencing with the more prominent documents and with an iterative approach then used to locate other relevant documents mentioned within them or that came to light through discussion. The policy actor therefore first provided the researchers with a range of documents held by the SIU, augmented by a considerable amount of discussion using her accumulated insider knowledge and expertise. The researchers felt that this enabled them to familiarise themselves with the origin, role and workings of the Social Inclusion Initiative to a depth which they would not have been able to reach had they been conducting the research independent of the policy actor, particularly in the short timeframe available. This

process enabled the researchers to ask the policy actor about the existence of additional sources of information that might better help respond to the SEKN template, and prompted the discovery of other documents that could otherwise have been overlooked. The researchers also undertook a small independent literature scan to locate other external documents and views about the Social Inclusion Initiative's work, including in State Parliament Hansard records and newspapers.

We worked together at the same location and face-to-face on finding evidence and producing a narrative synthesis of the documentary and interview material.² This allowed us to create knowledge which the researchers thought was useful both to the research community (who were interested in examples of local ways of addressing health inequities through action on social determinants) as well as knowledge which the policy actor thought was useful to the policymaking community (as a summary of the Initiative's development and achievements). However, the success of working this way may have depended to a considerable extent on the fact that the researchers and policy actors had a common interest in social inclusion, health inequities, and broader determinants of health. This meant that at least we had a basic understanding of the same issues, even if our approaches, ways of working and/ or particular interests differed.

6. Deriving the Implications

Since the data collection process had developed organically and was mediated by considerable amounts of face-to-face discussion and joint work, this successful way of working was used for writing the report. One difficulty was that the SEKN had not set out a rigid report structure and so we decided together that the layout should derive from a combination of the SEKN questions and the thematic content identified during analysis, with particular sections included according to what each considered would be most useful from their perspective. The researchers, for example, added a section on the SII governance structure as they felt this contained an important generalisable lesson about what influences effectiveness in across-government work; the policy actor added a section on the types of evidence and processes used in developing and delivering SII References. After the researchers had developed a draft of

each main section of the report based on the documentary and interview material, the principal researcher (LN) worked through the draft with the policy actor (JP). This assisted greatly in terms of writing the report in language that made sense to both the researchers and policy actors, and in terms of writing the report to meet the joint aims for the SEKN and the Social Inclusion Initiative. The other two researchers (KB, FB) then provided input both in track changes via email and in face-to-face discussions. Keeping the dual purpose of the report in mind also assisted in deciding whether any compromise was important.

Despite face-to-face work taking more time than individuals each contributing alone electronically, it was felt that a better quality product resulted through the face-to-face co-production because this allowed for discussion, improved understanding on both sides, and negotiations about structure, layout, style, language and content that would either not have occurred, or would have taken much longer or been more difficult to achieve through only combining written inputs. This process meant that both the researchers and policy actor could be more confident that the final product would be acceptable and of interest to their respective communities. Had the researchers worked alone on this study we believe the written content would not have been as informative or accurate for SEKN's purposes in terms of understanding the issues around the Initiative's development, political context, and processes used, such as the independent Board and whole-of-government approaches. For example, the structural, operational, accountabilities and reporting arrangements of the SII were complex and required the researchers and policy actor to work together to accurately identify and explain these in a way that could be easily understood by multiple audiences. This also included negotiating wording to express particular aspects of the context, for example while the researchers first used the phrase "the SII was a strongly political initiative of a government in its first term of office", after discussion with the policy actor this was reworded more simply to "the SII was a key political initiative" as the link to the incoming government had already been made. In another instance, reference to the changes of SIU Director was stated as "The SIU has had relative continuity of Executive Directors in its five years, with the two most recent Executive Directors covering the last 4½ years" to accommodate the differing opinions amongst the team about the potential impact that these changes may have had on the SII.

The researchers could also have simply interviewed SIU staff and have not worked together with them to develop the final report, but then SIU staff may not have been as forthcoming with information and perhaps could have been more restrictive in what information they offered, had they thought they would have no input into producing the final report. On the other hand, the researchers alone may never have uncovered important insights, such as SIU experience of the practical and added-value benefits of “walk alongside” evaluation as opposed to end-point evaluation, while SIU staff working alone may not have been inclined to include the report section on public debate, may not have considered the initiative from a social determinants of health policy perspective or may not have viewed the SII in the light of the global context that the SEKN connection offered. The final report contained “lessons learned” and comment on the generalisability of findings, which were written together and in a way that made the lessons relevant both to other policy actors wishing to consider adopting the processes to their local context, and to other researchers in understanding how such an initiative could help address social determinants and health inequities. The fact that the report had been produced in partnership gave it credibility with all three organisations involved and meant it was able to have the logos of the Commission, the SEKN, the SA Government, and Flinders University on the front page. It was also able to be circulated both via the researchers’ and policy actor’s networks.

DISCUSSION

This paper adds to the literature a real-life example of a researcher-policy actor partnership which had to be established within a short timeframe, and derives generalisable lessons for interactive knowledge creation in research-policy partnerships. Reflecting on how our experience fitted with the six key elements for successful collaboration which we distilled from the literature, we have developed our framework for *partnership in knowledge creation* which is presented in Figure 1 below. We have already applied this framework to assessing our involvement in a subsequent project under the South Australian Government’s *Health in All Policies* program (see Golder, Newman, Biedrzycki & Baum 2010).

Figure 1 about here

Referring back to the literature cited earlier in this paper, our case study confirms the views of several previous writers (e.g. Golden-Biddle et al 2003; Trostle 1999 etc), that **the most fundamental and crucial element for the successful partnership creation of knowledge are the social relationships between the researchers and policy actors**, developed through regular face-to-face interaction to achieve a shared goal. Interpersonal contact is also an oft-cited fundamental ingredient in successful partnerships between researchers and policy actors: Mitton et al (2007), for example, cite many research papers on this, and Innvaer et al 2002 found this to be the “number one” facilitator. From our experience we agree with Bowen et al (2005) that the *quality* of relationships and the *trust* developed between partners are additional critical components. The literature says little about whether there is any benefit to *where* relationships are built, and Greenberg & Poole (2007) note that an “unusual feature” of their project was the location of the core team at the government offices. In our project we found that building of the social relationships and personal contact were enhanced through the researchers being able and willing to visit and work within the government offices among those whose work they were researching. We consider that this improved the ability to build social relationships between the key individuals, which in turn improved the quality of the work through enhanced mutual understanding, as well as allowing for incidental personal contact with other staff who were more indirectly involved in the work. While JP and FB had prior experience of research-policy partnership work, LN and KB did not have this. In addition, prior to the case study each of the organizations had been aware of, and interested in, each other’s area of work, and so the case study presented a concrete opportunity to start forming a working collaboration. The ability to build relationships in this partnership was also supported by stability of personnel during the 12 week period as no annual leave, sick leave or other leave arrangements were required that would have caused disruptions or delays.

The importance of the social relationship links to what we conclude was the **second most important component, which was the ability of all individuals involved to engage in a bi-cultural process**. More through serendipity than planning, we came to realise that those on each side previously had some “cultural experience” of being in other’s worlds of working, so that the researchers already had some cultural respect for those working in government, and vice versa. This meant that neither side came with what could be seen perhaps as a more colonialist view that theirs was the more “valid” or “better” way to do things. This supports the view of Lavis et al (2003) that collaboration is aided by a “decision-relevant culture” being created (or existing) among researchers, and a “research-attuned culture” being created (or existing) among policy actors. If this does not exist in circumstances where researcher-policy actor collaboration is expected, then we would recommend that it be overtly developed. It is not clear in the literature whether it is possible to create such cultures among people who are not already somewhat predisposed to, or experienced in, working across organisational cultures. The literature does suggest that two ways around this are to develop hybrid researcher-practitioner roles (Ferlie, Fitzgerald & Wood 2000) or to use intermediaries such as knowledge brokers (Choi et al 2005; Lomas 2007), or intermediaries who might take various roles including those of “cross-pollinators”, “matchmakers”, “translators and processors”, or “articulators of user perspectives” (Sin 2008). However, our experience is that our project’s success was supported and strengthened by the coming together without intermediaries of researchers and policy actors who had good social and communication skills, a respect for what each other could contribute to the project, and a willingness to see benefits in “cultural diversity”. The other four processes in the partnership which we have written about (having a common goal; clarifying roles, developing joint understanding of the issues, and outputting key messages) were all underpinned by these first two fundamental elements, as shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

From a policy actor perspective, the timing of the work is an important element. Timeframes about the likely availability of the research findings and timelines for carrying out the research process are key considerations for policy actors because policy agendas can shift rapidly, particularly in more volatile political environments. Practical ways to work with the issue of timing, particular limited timeframes, is rarely explored in the researcher-policy actor

literature, although Ginsburg et al 2007 do note that policymakers often want “just-in-time” data and do not want to wait more than a matter of months before findings are released. Our experience suggests that both the development of positive social relationships and engagement in a bi-cultural process can be accelerated by where and how these are built, thereby reducing the time required for the overall research process. Researchers need to be prepared to adapt their modes of working to deal more effectively with the constraints of limited timelines that are often an imperative for their policy actor partners. However, at the same time, researchers can be severely limited by academic requirements to seek research funding through major competitive grant processes which often work on considerably longer timeframes than those which are useful to policy actors. Our analysis suggests that it is possible for academics to contribute to and work with policy actors to develop a useful partnership in a short timeframe which fits the policy world.

Another element which could be of major significance to conducting a case study, in particular one which is of longer-term duration, is **economic considerations**. However, on our project this was managed through incorporating a good proportion of the case study work into the regular workplan of each staff member, with additional time jointly funded by the SEKN, SIU and AHIP. Key informants also contributed their time without financial reimbursement. Furthermore, the project members all contributed over and beyond the minimum required to carry out the work and were not limited in being able to do this, so that the real economic cost was undoubtedly more than the financial funding. This was possible through our commitment to the project and the partnership and our willingness to be flexible to achieve the common goal, whereas in different circumstances projects may struggle when funding runs out.

One issue which is not widely discussed in the literature is **how a researcher’s or policy actor’s integrity within their own community may be affected by working collaboratively**, including through working with what others in their community may see as “the other side” (even “the dark side”). From an academic’s point of view, collaborative research for the real world of policy may imply a compromise to academic independence, whilst to policy actors collaborative research needs to take into account the political sensitivities of agencies and governments. In other words, collaborative research can result in compromises and challenges

to organisational and personal/professional norms and practices on both sides. For example, a potential disadvantage of the policy actor's involvement in the case study project was that, as with documentary sources, the choice of key informants was recommended by the SIU. This meant the researchers could not be sure on what grounds informants were selected, even though specific criteria for selection were identified and agreed. On the other hand, the SIU was in a good position to know which individuals had been most involved in the development of particular projects and stages of the Initiative's development (yet they were in a good position to know who had been most critical). The key informants did, however, include four academics who had been involved with the Initiative as Social Inclusion Board members or researchers, and who the researchers expected to provide more independent comment than might be provided by the four ex-SIU staff in their continuing role as public servants in other parts of government. The Chair of the Board was also one of the interviewees and is known as someone who champions the cause of social inclusion without reservation and who has been outspoken in the press about the governmental barriers to addressing social inclusion.

We acknowledge that some research-policy partnerships also include community partners who may play a significant part in contributing their views and whose involvement may be crucial in the work having validity within the community or with the general public. However, since ours was a rapid case study specifically for policy processes we did not talk directly to community members. Community views were represented indirectly in some key informant interviews via the experiences of Board members who would have been on the SI Board with community members from diverse backgrounds, such as a radio personality and private sector business members. Furthermore, the documentary evidence used for the case study already contained community and user views because the SII makes extensive use of these at all stages within its philosophy of 'active listening for solutions' as it shapes each Reference, develops the action plans, monitors and reviews, and community input was also already included in the external evaluation reports which are part of the SII workplan. Documents analysed in relation to the Homelessness Reference, for example, identified consultation with thousands of members from the general public via round-tables, community phone ins and in-depth interviews, while for the School Retention Reference views were included from parents, business people, and school non-attendees. The SII evidence also encompassed practitioner

views of those working in relevant agencies, for example teachers for the School Retention Reference, shelter workers and providers of services for the Homelessness Reference, and health workers, corrections, justice and police workers for the Drugs Reference.

The literature also largely overlooks details related to **jointly produced research outputs** and how they may need to be worded in a way which is readable by and meaningful to both researchers and policy actors if the one product is to be appropriate for dissemination to both audiences. We recognised from the outset that it was important to work together in the process (indeed even sitting together at the computer) to discuss and negotiate the wording of our final report so that the one product could be useful and acceptable both to policy actors interested in the development of the Initiative, as well as to researchers interested in how such an initiative might be used to increase social inclusion. Even negotiating the layout and structure of a jointly produced report can be important, since a concise style of writing and inclusion of executive summaries are not common in most academic outputs. Garrett-Jones et al (2005) discuss the difficulties of researchers undertaking collaborative research who may possibly have a “common purpose but divided loyalties” in terms of academic reward systems and performance measures. For our project the researchers have felt the need for double outputs, in terms of needing to produce both articles for peer-reviewed academic journals (whose impact factors and rankings “count” with national competitive grants bodies) as well as the original policy relevant case study report (which tends to “not count” or “count less” in academia, despite its potentially more direct impact on achieving policy change on the ground).

Our experience revealed that **joint ownership of the research findings** through the collaborative partnership increased the credibility and acceptance of the findings by both research and policy audiences, which in turn meant that the findings were more likely to be included in the evidence mix used by policy actors (Pope et al 2006). Joint ownership of co-produced research findings would seem to go some way in overcoming the difficulties in translating research evidence into policy and action that both the research and policy literatures highlight. We also found that both researchers and policy actors need to be mindful that research evidence alone certainly does not provide all the appropriate or acceptable policy solutions (Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia 2006; Graycar 2006).

We acknowledge that different types of research may have more room for negotiation than others. For example, reviews of processes and policy developments such as ours may have more room for working together to develop a suitable process than other types of research. However, we agree with Ross et al (2003) that having researchers and policy actors working together introduced a new kind of knowledge creation process that resulted in an end product that was different than one produced by either the researchers or policy actors alone. The researchers benefited from the contextual insight and personal experience in the policy setting that the policy actor brought, and policy actor benefited from the different lens through which the researchers viewed the Initiative and their application of research methods suitable to the project, including being able to sift through and manage copious amounts of documentation in a short time frame. Without this, the report would have been more of an outsider ethnography of a culture without having contact with the people to represent their insider cultural understandings.

CONCLUSION

The lessons learned from the partnership which developed to conduct our case study support the literature which sees interactive knowledge creation between researchers and policy actors as a fundamentally social process which requires attention to relationship-building and cultural understanding, as well as the ability to develop joint understanding of issues and to work alongside one another. This is as much a crucial part of the success of a joint project as the content knowledge that each side brings, or agreement on funding sources. Our real-life partnership reinforces some elements already highlighted in the literature, in particular the social and cultural elements. These are that the partnership was built on a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship with “cultural” respect, along with aspects which supported the partners to work together well: i.e. a shared timely goal, clarity of roles and responsibilities, interactive opportunities to create knowledge, and a shared output. However, our project also highlights some new issues that require consideration for successful partnerships to develop, particularly in short timeframes, including how to sustain integrity in one’s own community whilst working with those who are traditionally outside this community, how to produce a joint output which is meaningful to and owned by both partners and their communities, and the fact that

partnership work may result in an end product which is noticeably different to that which might have been produced by either partner working alone. Overall we have identified benefits from the synergy of the two partners which led to the final product being more than the sum of the two individual contributions. The success of our partnership in knowledge creation is demonstrated in the fact that the final report was distributed through government channels, including to the Premier and the Cabinet of South Australia, and was used to convey the South Australian model in SA government discussions with the Australian Federal Government in relation to the development of a national social inclusion initiative, as well as with other Australian states and territories interested in developing a similar initiative. For the researchers' part, they have been able to incorporate their experience of partnership work in this project into their practice for working in further partnerships to conduct research. In addition, because of our experience in knowledge creation that resulted in a successful process and a successful product, the researchers' and policy actor's organisations have committed to further collaborative endeavours with each other, with both research and policy outcomes. We believe our partnership is a tangible example of how, with strong commitment from both sides, it is possible for academics and policy actors to develop a useful partnership which fits into policy timeframes rather than longer academic timeframes and which effectively co-produces knowledge that meets both policy and research goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The case study was co-funded by the Social Inclusion Unit (Department of the Premier and Cabinet of the Government of South Australia), the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, and the Australian Health Inequities Program (funded by the Australian NH&MRC Capacity Building Grant, no. 324724). It should be noted that the views expressed in this paper are those of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Social Inclusion Board, nor is the paper a statement of South Australia government policy.

FOOTNOTES

1. For more information about the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, its final report, and the reports of the Knowledge Networks, see http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/

2. It is important to note that to ensure the confidentiality of interviewees, the researchers conducted all the interviews and kept the interview transcripts separately. The policy actor only had access to de-identified summaries of the interviews.

REFERENCES

Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (2006) *Proceedings of the Policy Roundtable on Wellbeing*. 4 August 2006, No. 3/2006,

<http://www.assa.edu.au/programs/policy/roundtables/roundtable.php?id=2>

Armstrong R., Waters E., Roberts H., Oliver S., Popay J. (2006) 'The role and theoretical evolution of knowledge translation and exchange in public health', *Journal of Public Health*, 28(4): 384–389.

Bacchi, C., (2008) 'The politics of research management: Reflections on the gap between what we 'know' (about SDH) and what we do', *Health Sociology Review*, 17: 165-176.

Bartunek J., Trullen, J., Bonet, E., Sauquet, A. (2003) 'Sharing and expanding academic and practitioner knowledge in health care', *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 8 (S2): 62-68.

Baum, F., Newman, L., Biedrzycki, K., Patterson, J. (2010) 'Can a regional government's social inclusion initiative contribute to the quest for health equity?', *Health Promotion International*, doi:10.1093/heapro/daq033.

Bowen, S., Martens, P., and the Manitoba Need to Know Team (2005) 'Demystifying Knowledge Translation: Learning from the Community', *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 10 (4): 203–11.

Boxelaar, L., Paine, M., Beilin, R. (2006) 'Community engagement and public administration: Of silos, overlays and technologies of government', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 65 (1): 113-126.

- Brownson, R.C., Royer, C., Ewing, R., McBride, T.D. (2006) 'Researchers and Policymakers - Travelers in Parallel Universes', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 30 (2): 164-172.
- Caplan, N. (1977) 'The use of social research knowledge at the national level', in C. Weiss (ed) *Social research in public policymaking*, London: Lexington Books.
- Choi, B.C.K., Pang, T., Lin, V., Puska, P., et al (2004) 'Can scientists and policy makers work together?', *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 59: 632-637.
- Coburr, A.F. (1998) 'The role of health services research in developing state health policy', *Health Affairs*, 17: 139-151.
- Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008) *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Final report of the commission on social determinants of health*, Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- Davies, H., Nutley, S., Walter, I. (2005) *Assessing the impact of social science research: Conceptual, methodological and practical issues: A background discussion paper*, St Andrews (UK): Research Unit for Research Utilization, School of Management, University of St Andrews.
- Denis, J-L., Lehoux, P., Hivon, M., Champagne, F. (2003) 'Creating a new articulation between research and practice through policy? The views and experiences of researchers and practitioners', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 8 (S2): 44-50.
- Denis, J-L., Lomas, J. (2003) 'Convergent evolution: the academic and policy roots of collaborative research', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 8 (S2): 1-6.
- Dobbins, M., Rosenbaum, P., Plews, N., Law, M., Fysh, A. (2007) 'Information transfer: what do decision makers want and need from researchers?', *Implementation Science*, 2: 20.
- Feldman, P.H., Nadash, P., Gursen, M., (2001) 'Improving communication between researchers and policymakers in long-term care: Or, researchers are from Mars, policy makers are from Venus', *The Gerontologist*, 41 (3): 312-321.
- Ferlie, E., Fitzgerald, L., Wood, M. (2000) 'Getting evidence into clinical practice: An organisation behaviour perspective. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 5 (2): 96-102.
- Feuerstein, M.T. (1986) *Partners in evaluation: Evaluation development and community programmes with participants*, Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers.

- Garrett-Jones, S., Turpin, T., Burns, P., Diment, K. (2005) 'Common purpose and divided loyalties: the risks and rewards of cross-sector collaboration for academic and government researchers', *R&D Management*, 35 (5): 535-544.
- Ginsberg, L.R., Lewis, S., Zackheim, L., Casebeer A (2007) 'Revisiting interaction in knowledge translation', *Interaction Science*, 2: 34.
- Goering, P., Butterill, D., Jacobson, N., Sturtevant, D. (2003) 'Linkage and exchange at the organizational level: a model of collaboration between research and policy', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*; 8 (S2): 14-19.
- Golden-Biddle, K., Reay, T., Petz, S., Witt, C., et al (2003) 'Toward a communicative perspective of collaborating in research: the case of the researcher-decisionmaker partnership', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 8 (S2): 20-25.
- Golder, W., Newman, L., Biedrzycki, K., Baum, F. (2010). Digital technology access and use as 21st century determinants of health: Impact of social and economic disadvantage, in I Kickbusch & K Buckett (eds) *Implementing Health in All Policies: Adelaide 2010*, Adelaide (AUST): Department of Health South Australia, p133, <http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/HiAP/implementinghiapadel-sahealth-100622.pdf>
- Graycar, A. (2006) 'Public policy: core business and by-products. a question we need continually to ask is 'who owns the problem?'' *Public Administration Today*, July-September: 6-10.
- Greenberg D., Poole, L. (2007) 'Designing a social experiment for the UK: how it was done and some lessons learned', *Evidence & Policy*, 3 (1): 5-29.
- Hanney, S.(2004) 'Personal interaction with researchers or detached synthesis of the evidence', *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 18 (1-2): 72-82.
- Huberman, M. (1999) 'The mind is its own place: the influence of sustained interactivity with practitioners on educational researchers', *Harvard Educational Review*, 69 (3): 289-319.
- Hunter, D.J. (2003) ' Evidence-based policy and practice: riding for a fall?' *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 96: 194-196.
- Jolley, G., Lawless, A., Hurley, C. (2008) 'Framework and tools for planning and evaluating community participation, collaborative partnerships and equity in health promotion', *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 19: 152-7.

- Innvaer, S., Vist, G.E., Trommald, M., Oxman, A.D. (2002) 'Health policy-makers' perceptions of their use of evidence: a systematic review', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 7: 239-244.
- Jewell, C.J., Bero, L.A. (2008) 'Developing Good Taste in Evidence': Facilitators of and Hindrances to Evidence-Informed Health Policymaking in State Government', *Milbank Quarterly*, 86: 177-208.
- Katz, J.S., Martin, B.R. (1995) 'What is research collaboration', *Research Policy* 26: 1-18.
- Lavis, J., Robertson, J., Woodside, C., McLeod, C. Abelson, J. (2003) 'How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers?' *The Milbank Quarterly*, 81 (2): 221-48.
- Locock, L., Boaz, A. (2004) 'Research, Policy and Practice—Worlds Apart?', *Social Policy and Society*, 3(4): 375-384.
- Lomas, J. (1997) *Improving research dissemination and uptake in the health sector: Beyond the sound of one hand clapping*. Policy Commentary C97-1, Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis.
- Lomas, J. (2000) 'Using 'Linkage and Exchange' to move research into policy. *Health Affairs*, 19 (3): 236-240.
- Lomas, J. (2007) 'The in-between world of knowledge brokering', *British Medical Journal*, 334: 129-132.
- Mitton, C., Adair, C.E., McKenzie, E., Patten, S.B., et al (2007) 'Knowledge transfer and exchange: Review and synthesis of the literature', *Milbank Quarterly*, 85 (4): 729-768.
- Newman, L., Biedrzycki, K., Patterson, J., Baum, F. (2007) *A rapid appraisal case study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative*, Adelaide (AUST): Australian Health Inequities Program (Flinders University of South Australia) and the Social Inclusion Unit (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Government of South Australia), http://www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au/files/SEKN_SA_Case_Study_Final_Report.pdf
- Petticrew, M. et al (2004) 'Evidence for public health policy on inequalities 1: The reality according to policymakers', *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*; 58: 811-816.
- Popay, J. (ed.) (2006) *Moving beyond effectiveness in evidence synthesis*, London: UK National Institute for Health & Excellence.

- Pope, C., Mays, N., Popay, J. (2006) 'Informing Policy making and Management in Healthcare: The Place for Synthesis', *Healthcare Policy* 1 (2): 43-48.
- Ross, S., Lavis, J., Rodriguez, C., Woodside, J., Denis, J.L. (2003) 'Partnership experiences: involving decision-makers in the research process', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 8: S26.
- Sin, C.H. (2008) 'The role of intermediaries in getting evidence into policy and practice: some useful lessons from examining consultancy-client relationship, *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate & Practice* 4 (1):85-103.
- Trostle, J., Bronfman, M., Langer, A. (1999) 'How do researchers influence decisionmakers? Case studies of Mexican policies', *Health Policy & Planning*, 14: 103-114.
- Whitehead, M. et al (2004) 'Evidence for public health policy on inequalities: assembling the evidence jigsaw', *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 58 (10): 817-821.
- Yazahmeidi, B., Holman, C.D.J. (2007) 'A survey of suppression of public health information by Australian governments', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 31 (6): 551-557.