



Determinants of successful knowledge brokering: A transnational comparison of knowledge- intermediary organizations

David J. Phipps* – *York University, Toronto*

Derek Brien – *Pacific Institute of Public Policy, Port Vila, Vanuatu*

Leandro Echt – *Politics & Ideas, Buenos Aires*

Glowen Kyei-Mensah – *Participatory Development Associates Ltd, Accra*

Vanessa Weyrauch – *Politics & Ideas, Buenos Aires*

Abstract

In this practice-based paper, knowledge brokers working in Argentina, Canada, Ghana and Vanuatu reflect on knowledge-intermediary activities. Although our use of media varies, we share five knowledge-brokering practices: build trust; develop capacity; co-construct knowledge; understand the political, social and economic context; and build culture. While these characteristics of knowledge brokering are well described in individual research studies, our reflections on their commonality across diverse settings suggest that they are determinants of successful knowledge brokering. The commonality of these five practices challenges the perception that knowledge brokering is context specific. We propose that it is not the practice but its implementation that is context specific.

Keywords: knowledge brokering; knowledge intermediary; civil society; K*; Kstar

Key messages

- In contrast to the commonly held view that knowledge brokering is context specific, some practices of knowledge brokering transcend contexts and can be considered to be determinants of success.
- While these determinants of success transcend contexts, their implementation is context specific.
- Knowledge brokers and knowledge-brokering organizations should practise these determinants of success, but in ways that are adapted to their own contexts.

Introduction: Background to successful knowledge brokering

Knowledge brokering is emerging as one mechanism to close the loop between what we know and what we do: the 'know-do' gap (Booth, 2011). Knowledge brokering and related activities have been described in fields as diverse as health (Estabrooks *et al.*, 2008; Estabrooks *et al.*, 2006), the environment (Bielak *et al.*, 2008; Michaels, 2009), education (Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2003; Cooper and Levin, 2010), agriculture

(Klerkx and Leeuwis, 2009), management (Bansal *et al.*, 2012) and international development (Cash *et al.*, 2003). Knowledge brokering has been described in a variety of contexts, including in research projects (Ward *et al.*, 2009) and research institutions (Phipps and Shapson, 2009), and community–university partnership programmes have developed to support community-based research (Hart and Wolff, 2006). There have been descriptions of the skills (Bielak *et al.*, 2009; Ward *et al.*, 2009; CHSRF, 2003) and qualities (Stetler *et al.*, 2011; Phipps and Morton, 2013) that knowledge brokers need. Knowledge brokering and related activities have also been described in low- and middle-income countries (Yamey, 2012; Kilelu *et al.*, 2011; Samoff and Stromquist, 2001). However, all of these studies describe single instances or single settings of knowledge brokering. While the characteristics of successful knowledge brokering are described in these single settings, it is difficult to compare these very different studies and draw conclusions about key success factors across settings.

There have also been many studies that have attempted to explain the factors that contribute to successful knowledge brokering. The Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARiHS) framework (Stetler *et al.*, 2011) describes the importance of evidence, context and facilitation as drivers of success in situations where health evidence is being implemented into practice. PARiHS has more recently been updated to the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research, which describes 36 elements in five themes, all of which are critical to successful implementation of evidence into practice (Damschroder *et al.*, 2009). Bennet and Bennet (2008) describe the following basic concepts of successful relationship-network management: interdependency, trust, common framework, openness (the same as transparency: Siemens, 2012), flow (of information and knowledge) and equitability. Relationships have been shown to be a key driver of successful knowledge brokering (Robeson *et al.*, 2008). Co-production/collaboration, where researchers and decision-makers collaborate on generating knowledge that has academic as well as practice-based relevance, is another characteristic described in successful knowledge brokering (Gagnon, 2011; Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006; Ross *et al.*, 2003). Boaz and her colleagues (Boaz *et al.*, 2011) concluded that a multifaceted approach to bridging the research-to-practice gap is likely to produce a greater effect than a single intervention. Building capacity by engaging in ongoing training/mentorship opportunities (Ochocka *et al.*, 2002) is another characteristic for successful collaborations between researchers and end-users. Sandra Nutley and her co-authors discuss the role of institutional culture and values in creating the right conditions for research use (Nutley *et al.*, 2007).

Many of these characteristics of successful knowledge brokering have been described in individual studies, interventions or contexts. We describe below many of these same characteristics of successful knowledge brokering, but we demonstrate that they are common across vastly different organizational settings. We describe them as common to knowledge-brokering practice in general, not in individual studies. When these examples in the literature are brought together with the examples from knowledge-brokering practices in Ghana, Argentina, Vanuatu and Canada, these begin to suggest some key determinants for successful knowledge brokering. These cases were chosen as a result of the authors' participation on a panel at a conference on knowledge brokering (see below).

Our objective is to draw conclusions about successful knowledge brokering by comparing our own practices in very different organizational contexts. We describe our knowledge-brokering practices and how we came to collaborate on this transnational comparison. We describe the five knowledge-brokering practices we share in common, and illustrate each with a short, descriptive case study from one of our practices.

Who we are

We are knowledge brokers working in knowledge-intermediary organizations in a variety of sectors including civil society. While we each perform a variety of roles, our common goal is to act as brokers between research evidence (from universities, governments or think tanks) and its eventual use by individuals and organizations from civil society.

David Phipps is the Executive Director, Research and Innovation Services at York University in Toronto, Canada. In this capacity he leads the University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit, which was founded in 2006. He also leads ResearchImpact–RéseauImpactRecherche, Canada's knowledge-mobilization network. The Knowledge Mobilization Unit works closely with a primary community (civil society) partner, United Way York Region (Phipps and Zanotti, 2011) to broker collaborations between the university and mainly (but not exclusively) community partners.

Derek Brien is Executive Director of the Pacific Institute of Public Policy (PiPP). PiPP was established in 2008 to stimulate and support informed and inclusive debate in and about Pacific island countries, with an emphasis on government responsibility and effectiveness. Based in Vanuatu, and working across the 14 independent Pacific island countries, PiPP acts as a knowledge intermediary between researchers and those in government, civil society and development agencies to connect the evidence base to the live policy debate. It has done this by hosting debates and forums on various channels (television, radio, social media), synthesizing and publicizing research on key issues and hot topics, and encouraging face-to-face engagement between policymakers and their constituents. PiPP does not advocate for any policy position; it simply provides the space within which indigenous positions can emerge.

Leandro Echt and Vanesa Weyrauch were Coordinator and Principal Researcher respectively for the Influence, Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth, CIPPEC) in Argentina. CIPPEC is an independent and non-profit organization that works to create a just, democratic and efficient state that improves the quality of life for all Argentine citizens. Thus, it concentrates its efforts on analysing and promoting public policies that foster equity and growth in Argentina. Its challenge is to turn the best ideas that emerge from the areas of social development, economic development, institutions and public management into concrete actions. Much of CIPPEC's knowledge-broker work has been performed under the programme 'Spaces for Engagement: Using knowledge to improve public decisions', with the Global Development Network (GDNet), a strategic partner in this field.

Glown Kyei-Mensah is the Country Coordinator of Mwananchi Ghana, a project of Participatory Development Associates (PDA) Ltd. PDA is a human development organization in Ghana with an aim to support processes of empowerment and self-determination in communities, organizations and individuals. Mwananchi Ghana is part of the Mwananchi Project, funded by the UK Department for International Development, which works to strengthen citizen engagement with governments across six African countries. Mwananchi takes an action-research approach, encouraging learning from tracking a range of innovative ways in which ordinary citizens can hold their elected representatives accountable. The project aims to increase transparency, and hold governments to account, by focusing on key actors in the citizen–state relationship, particularly the media, civil society organizations and elected representatives at both the local and national levels.

The contexts in which we work are vastly different – from a centrally funded knowledge-brokering practice in an almost billion-dollar organization in Canada to a \$550,000 externally funded project of nine NGOs and two radio stations in Ghana. These differences in context stand in contrast to the similarities of determinants of successful knowledge-brokering practices that we describe below.

What we did: K* conference

In April 2012, over 60 representatives of knowledge-intermediary organizations from five continents gathered in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada for the K* ('Kstar') conference (Shaxson with Bielak *et al.*, 2012). This conference brought together knowledge brokers to compare examples of knowledge-brokering practices working with communities, government agencies and the private sector. K* was an attempt to unify a common practice described by different terms, such as knowledge mobilization (KMb), knowledge translation (KT), knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE), knowledge management (KM) and the knowledge brokers (KB) who undertake many of these functions:

K* is the collective term for the set of functions and processes at the various interfaces between knowledge, practice, and policy. K* improves the ways in which knowledge is shared and applied; improving processes already in place to bring about more effective and sustainable change.
(Shaxson, with Bielak *et al.*, 2012: 2)

One stream of the conference examined K* practices within different sectors: private sector, practitioners, government and civil society.

In preparing for the K* conference, the authors collaborated on a panel dealing with K* and civil society. We developed 'lessons learned' from our practice via email and held one Skype call in advance of the panel. After the panel presentation, one of the authors hosted a breakout session attended by participants from Canada, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, the USA and Kenya. During the breakout session, the lessons learned were discussed and checked against the experience of knowledge brokers in these other countries. The other knowledge brokers validated these lessons, which became five common practices shaping knowledge-brokering activities in ten countries from four continents spanning developing and industrialized nations. This suggests that these are, in fact, key determinants for successful knowledge brokering across very different organizational contexts.

The K* conference provided the impetus to explore our commonalities, but these were reinforced by sharing the specifics of our operations (see 'Who we are', above) and our practices (see 'What we found', below). This has resulted in a sustained exchange during the drafting of this article. Indeed, even though two authors (Leandro Echt and Vanesa Weyrauch) have now left CIPPEC, they have remained in touch and have recently held a Skype teleconference with another author (David Phipps) to continue to share practices and experiences.

What we found: Common practices that are key determinants for successful knowledge brokering

Table 1 shows five practices that we share despite the very different contexts of those practices. Each practice is a key determinant of success that was practised in all four knowledge-intermediary organizations. Each is illustrated with a brief case study from

one of our practices, selected to illustrate one determinant but that also demonstrates how other determinants contribute to successful knowledge brokering.

Table 1: Five practices of successful knowledge brokering

Practice	Case study example
1. Understand the political, social and economic context of the partners	PiPP (Vanuatu)
2. Build trust among partners	PDA Ltd Mwananchi Ghana project
3. Develop capacity for K*	York University Knowledge Mobilization Unit (Canada)
4. Enable knowledge to be co-constructed	CIPPEC (Argentina)
5. Build a culture of K* for all participants	PiPP (Vanuatu)

Determinant 1: Understand the political, social and economic context of the partners

'Knowledge is dependent on context' (Bennet and Bennet, 2008: 39). It therefore follows that knowledge brokering is also dependent on context although, as we describe below, it is the implementation that is context specific. Bennet and Bennet (2008) describe eight 'avenues' of context that drive implementation of knowledge-brokering practices. Understanding the political, social and economic contexts is therefore key to effective implementation of knowledge brokering, as illustrated by PiPP's involvement with Drivers of Change.

Drivers of Change is an analytical tool pioneered by the UK government's Department for International Development as a means of understanding the political economy of change and poverty reduction in developing countries. It assesses the structural and institutional factors likely to drive change in the medium term, and the underlying interests and incentives that affect the environment for reform. In 2007, a Drivers of Change study (Cox *et al.*, 2007) provided evidence about the linkages between the social, economic and political frameworks and the factors that support or block development in Vanuatu. PiPP itself arose from this effort. Many of the authors of the Drivers of Change study subsequently became founding members of the PiPP network, armed with the knowledge that despite the enormous international investment in aid, research and development programmes, debate on pressing policy issues throughout the Pacific was limited. Key messages from the vast but underutilized research base were not reaching national decision-makers. Existing communication channels failed to engage local communities, and considerable gaps existed between academic observations and the realities on the ground. The Drivers of Change study revealed that the hurdles of language, access and cultural discord required a fresh approach to the use and sharing of knowledge. Since 2008, PiPP has capitalized on its growing understanding of the local political context to connect knowledge to the policymaking processes. Contextualizing knowledge-brokering approaches and acknowledging the political reality has positioned PiPP as the key interlocutor between researchers and policymakers. The result has been a broader acceptance and uptake of the research base to stimulate and inform policy debates that have initiated essential reform initiatives. These have included land tenure, government jurisdiction and political representation.

In addition to illustrating the importance of understanding the context of partners, Drivers of Change also demonstrates the critical role of building trust (Determinant 2) among stakeholders. PiPP invested in understanding and addressing the barriers of language and culture, as mentioned above. These efforts to create understanding (Determinant 1) helped to subsequently build trust (Determinant 2), which contributed to the acceptance and uptake of the research evidence.

Determinant 2: Build trust among partners

Trust is a frequently cited determinant of successful collaboration (for example, Robeson *et al.*, 2008), and trust among peers can drive effective knowledge mobilization and can be described as 'nothing about us without us' (Fitzpatrick, 2013). Creating trusted relationships among peers will enable co-creation and use of knowledge, as illustrated by the Mwananchi Ghana example.

Mental illness in Ghana is surrounded by stigma and ignorance, and this has resulted in severe marginalization of mentally ill people. Excluded from their communities, they are frequently denied access to basic human rights such as health, and social and economic well-being, as well as participation in both political and social life. Ghana: A Picture of Mental Health is an initiative under the Mwananchi Ghana project (in partnership with BasicNeeds Ghana, an NGO that focuses on issues of mental health) that began in July 2010 and is ongoing. The initiative uses photographic documentary evidence of the everyday life of people with mental illness or epilepsy as evidence to influence mental health policy and practice that addresses the needs and rights of people with mental illness. The Mwananchi Ghana project would never have been able to produce this evidence without building trust. This link of trust building was championed by BasicNeeds Ghana, an organization that has worked tirelessly over the years on issues of mental health in Ghana.

One way of building trust and reinforcing the use of evidence is to use peer support. In the Mwananchi Ghana project, peer support was delivered by self-help groups of people with mental illness. They were supported to use a photograph book to engage those supporting people with mental illness on the issues affecting them. Capacity building, another determinant of successful knowledge brokering, (Determinant 3) was essential, as members of the self-help groups were actively involved from the inception of the project, again, building on a position of trust. As a result, they learned and appreciated the importance of evidence when dealing with issues of governance and human rights. The self-help groups are more dynamic as a result of this project. The vivid and dramatic photographs of the state of mental health in Ghana also caught the attention of policymakers. Ghana's first mental health bill was informed by engaging with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health. In May 2012, The Mental Health Act received Presidential assent and became law. The Ghana Mental Health Authority was set up and the board inaugurated in 2013. The Mental Health Authority has since initiated a legislative instrument to facilitate the effective implementation of the Mental Health Act of 2012 (Act 846).

Determinant 3: Develop capacity for K*

Although the skills (Bielak *et al.*, 2009; Ward *et al.*, 2009; CHSRF, 2003) and qualities (Stetler *et al.*, 2011; Phipps and Morton, 2013) of successful knowledge brokers are known, a 2013 study of knowledge brokers at the University of Edinburgh identified a lack of training for these skills as one of a number of limitations for effective practice (Lightowler and Knight, 2013). Building capacity for knowledge mobilization can result

in a broad uptake of knowledge-brokering practices, as illustrated by the case of York University.

York University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit employs three knowledge brokers, who connect the university's research to community and government organizations. Since 2006, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit has been brokering relationships on behalf of researchers and their non-academic research partners. As funding agencies began to require knowledge-mobilization strategies in research grant applications, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit began to provide training to assist the increasing numbers of knowledge-mobilization partnerships. Training was offered in diverse aspects of knowledge mobilization to enable faculty and their partners to collaborate to maximize the impacts of research beyond the academy. This training made the partners less dependent on the Knowledge Mobilization Unit. Today the Knowledge Mobilization Unit offers a suite of training modules including knowledge-mobilization planning and strategy, evaluation of research impacts, clear language writing, social media (beginner and intermediate) and community engagement. For example, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit has trained over one hundred individuals in clear language writing and design principles. These workshops are offered on campus to faculty and students and off campus to community and government agencies, and they have become in demand at other universities.

Building capacity enables uptake and implementation of knowledge mobilization across campus and contributes to a culture of K* (Determinant 5). Knowledge mobilization is featured as an enabling mechanism in York University's Strategic Research Plan (<http://srp.info.yorku.ca/>), which governs the growth of research across the university. Including knowledge mobilization in the Strategic Research Plan is testament to how it has contributed to the university's research culture. Creating a culture of K* and building capacity for others to engage in knowledge mobilization is more efficient than attempting to support all the knowledge mobilization of others and builds sustainable capacity for knowledge mobilization.

Determinant 4: Enable knowledge to be co-constructed

Co-construction of knowledge comes about through participatory research methods, where academic and non-academic partners collaborate in the knowledge-production context. Participatory research methods can help to mediate potential conflicts between partners, can contribute to sustainability of the application of research and can generate systemic change (Jagosh *et al.*, 2012). Extending the concept of participatory research further, Bowen and Graham (2013) argue that the failure of effective knowledge brokering is not a failure of knowledge transfer but of the process of knowledge production, in which diverse collaborators work together to co-construct and synthesize knowledge that addresses the perspectives of more than one audience. Engaged co-construction involving diverse actors to inform a policy debate is illustrated in the following example from CIPPEC.

Agenda for the President 2011–2015 was an initiative of CIPPEC and other organizations to promote public debate on government priorities for the Argentinian president between 2011 and 2015. The purpose of this initiative was to increase the quality and intensity of public debate on strategic issues for the country, taking the presidential election as a catalyst for this effort.

CIPPEC recognized the need to collaborate with other organizations in Argentina (Poder Ciudadano, Fundación Vida Silvestre) in order to cover a broad range of policy issues, taking advantage of the best expertise in the respective policy fields (education, social protection, energy, sustainability of development and so on). In that way, Agenda

for the President was not only an initiative from a particular organization, but from a network of organizations. This collaboration resulted in a compendium of documents that incorporated the view of a broad group of stakeholders with different experiences and approaches to the respective policy fields. The broad spectrum of relevance of the co-constructed knowledge in these documents has enabled discussions with a diverse range of actors, including decision-makers, journalists, the private sector, academia and other peer organizations, in an effort to involve the policy community in a substantive policy debate.

Moreover, CIPPEC decided to re-edit the effort in a new initiative called 'Argentina Debate'. For this new edition, CIPPEC took advantage of lessons learned regarding co-construction of knowledge and strengthened its alliances with organizations with sectorial relevance, public legitimacy and influencing capacity, in order to raise the initiative's capacity to generate dialogue. While in 2011 CIPPEC had invited peer organizations with expertise in certain policy issues to produce some of the documents, in 2015 a Strategic Committee was set up (with former foreign ministers, ambassadors, journalists, union representative and other figures with social relevance) with the objective of building legitimacy for the project and incorporating new perspectives on the policy documents and proposals. CIPPEC also associated with a group of young private entrepreneurs, who expressed their intention to contribute to improve the culture of public debate in the country.

Agenda for the President also demonstrates how CIPPEC needed to build trust with diverse stakeholder organizations (Determinant 2) to enable the co-construction of knowledge. The partnership with Poder Ciudadano and Fundación Vida Silvestre was predicated on a shared understanding of the context of each partner (Determinant 1) that underpinned the trust required for an effective partnership. This resulted in a collaboration that produced documents that resonated with diverse audiences, including journalists, the private sector and academics.

Determinant 5: Build a culture of K* for all participants

Nutley *et al.* (2007: 167) discuss the impacts of culture on organizational learning. An organization can use evidence more effectively if the culture includes openness, trust and celebration of success, among other cultural values. These cultural values become key to successful knowledge brokering, as described in the following PiPP example.

In the Pacific, people have generally voted according to clan and community loyalties, not because of any policy platforms linked to political parties. In an attempt to shift the political relationship from personality to a consideration of the pressing development issues, PiPP pioneered the Face-to-Face programme in Vanuatu. Essentially a series of 'town hall'-type meetings, the events were designed to foster a culture of civic engagement and dialogue between the people and their elected representatives. Facilitated discussions canvassed opinions on an array of national and foreign policy topics, demonstrating a broad awareness of the issues that had been hindering development. What had been missing was the space for an inclusive and frank exchange of ideas. Face-to-Face developed a culture of engagement, and it has shown that a national dialogue that connects knowledge to the debate is possible. It has become a regular feature on the political landscape, and the format has been adopted across many different sectors. Face-to-Face has generated growing demand for political parties to articulate policy positions ahead of national and local elections. Media and civil society groups are now better equipped with information and a sense of public perception to rally for improvements in service delivery and infrastructure development. Building this culture of K* also aided understanding of the political,

social and economic contexts of citizens (Determinant 1). Face-to-Face is a form of stakeholder engagement that has been shown to be essential to supporting evidence use (see chapters 14 and 15 in Reed, 2016). While PiPP was building a culture of K* in Vanuatu, they were also using the stakeholder engagement opportunities to learn about the different contexts of the end beneficiaries of policies responding to different development issues.

Table 2 shows these five practices as a main practice aligned with each knowledge-brokering example. However, as illustrated above, each knowledge-brokering example also illustrates other practices in addition to the main practice. Since mixed methods are more effective than a single method (Boaz *et al.*, 2011), knowledge brokers are encouraged to consider all five practices and choose multiple practices to maximize the impact of knowledge-broker activities.

Table 2: Case studies illustrating practices of successful knowledge brokering

	PIPP (Vanuatu)	PDA Ltd Mwananchi Ghana project	York University Knowledge Mobilization Unit (Canada)	CIPPEC (Argentina)
1. Understand the political, social and economic context of the partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Build trust among partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Develop capacity for K*		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4. Enable knowledge to be co-constructed				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Build a culture of K* for all participants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

main practice illustrated by case study other practice illustrated by case study

Additional considerations: Use of media

There is one consideration that is common to our different settings but is implemented differently: the use of media. CIPPEC uses a mix of print, web-based and social media. PiPP also works with a mix of media platforms, including radio, television, print, web and advertising agencies. York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit uses exclusively social media channels (Phipps *et al.*, 2012) to engage a broad audience. Mwananchi Ghana partners with radio stations to reach many communities; however, traditional media are used by some projects to reach citizens in remote communities that do not have access to radio. In these communities, news and discussions are provided to citizens through community public address systems, which provide information over a loudspeaker at a central location in the community.

The use of media should also be considered a determinant for successful knowledge brokering, although its implementation does not transcend different contexts. Traditional means of knowledge dissemination, such as academic publishing and posting a report online, are not sufficient to reach broad audiences, such as those

engaged by knowledge brokers working with civil society. It is important to use a variety of media appropriate to the context. Although we all use media in our different contexts, the implementation of the use of media is context specific. This demonstrates that while key determinants are not context specific, their implementation is.

Additional considerations: Use of mixed methods

Mixed methods and multifaceted interventions are more likely to be successful in supporting the use of research in decision-making (Boaz *et al.*, 2011). Using mixed methods may not be a determinant of successful knowledge brokering, but it is a practice that has been shown to maximize the use of evidence. This is illustrated by the following CIPPEC example.

The CIPPEC and GDNNet programme, Spaces for Engagement: Using knowledge to improve public decisions, sought to strengthen what is usually termed the supply (researchers, policy research institutes or think tanks, and community organizations) and demand (policymakers) of research. It aimed to enhance capacities to better use evidence to inform and design public policies, mainly in Latin America, but also in Africa and Asia. Producing and disseminating research is not sufficient.

Therefore, for six years (2007–13), CIPPEC deployed a variety of complementary methodologies to engage key players (from policymakers, to civil society organizations, policy research institutes, think tanks and universities). An effective combination of generating research, building a network and promoting debates, conducting online (including web 2.0 technologies) and offline capacity-building activities and producing training materials allowed CIPPEC to tackle some of the main challenges in the field and add value to how evidence is used in policymaking processes.

Conclusions and implications for practice

In April 2012, the K* panel presented lessons learned from knowledge brokering with civil society organizations from four countries operating in vastly different contexts. Validating these with knowledge brokers from an additional six countries, and finding them used in the literature to describe successful knowledge brokering in individual examples, elevates these lessons to key determinants for successful knowledge brokering.

In their recent book *Knowledge, Policy and Power*, Jones and colleagues wrote: 'No two knowledge intermediaries are the same; their work is entirely context specific, which means that, while it is possible to draw general conclusions as to how they could choose to act, it is impossible to develop a standard set of rules as to how they should act' (Jones *et al.*, 2012: 123). This is true for the implementation of knowledge-brokering practices, but we propose that there are determinants of knowledge brokering that transcend contexts. Comparison across four very different contexts has identified five practices that will help drive successful knowledge brokering, but they need to be adapted to be implemented in different contexts. Such comparative analysis is not possible for individual studies describing characteristics of knowledge brokering in a single context. Comparing across contexts builds on the descriptions of characteristics in individual studies and enables conclusions that are more than characteristics of knowledge brokering. They become determinants of success across diverse contexts.

Sandra Nutley and Huw Davies recently identified 'five emerging principles to underpin the development of knowledge mobilisation strategies and practices' (Nutley and Davies, 2016: 194, Box 13.5). While their five principles are different from the five determinants presented here, they align as common elements across diverse

settings. According to Nutley and Davies, their five principles 'need to be discussed, interpreted and operationalised in specific contexts and adapted and reworked in the light of experience in those contexts' (195). This supports the conclusion that some elements transcend contexts, but that it is the implementation of those elements (principles, determinants) that is context specific.

We propose that the five determinants that transcend contexts offer an effective suite of knowledge-brokering practices when considering how to approach any knowledge-brokering role. These practices do not need to be employed in every instance of knowledge brokering, but we recommend that knowledge-brokering organizations consider adapting these five practices to their unique contexts. We are not prescriptive on how to implement these five practices since implementation is context dependent, as shown by the common practice but differential implementation of the use of media; however, they become more than lessons learned and more than the general conclusions referenced by Jones and colleagues (Jones *et al.*, 2012). While it is not necessary to implement them in any sequential order, considering the five determinants should contribute to success as a knowledge broker.

Notes on the contributors

David Phipps manages all research funding, including knowledge and technology transfer, for York University, Toronto. In addition to other awards, he has been named the most influential knowledge mobilizer in Canada. He received the 2015 Research Management Excellence Award and 2015 President's Award for Innovation in Knowledge Mobilization. In 2015 he was named the Gordon and Jean Southam Fellow from the Association of Commonwealth Universities. He is KT Lead for NeuroDevNet and Network Director for ResearchImpact–RéseauImpactRecherche.

Derek Brien is a co-founder and executive director of the Pacific Institute of Public Policy. In this role he has led a range of research and communications initiatives to stimulate informed policy debate in Pacific island countries on issues relating to sustainable development, trade, social and economic integration, citizen engagement, political reform, the aid relationship and climate change. Born in Ireland, he grew up in Australia and has called Vanuatu home for the last decade.

Leandro Echt is an independent consultant working on research and policy. He supports public agencies in developing their capacities to use knowledge, and in the design and evaluation of public policies. He works with think tanks and NGOs on developing their capacities on influence planning, research communications, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising, doing policy relevant research and governance. He is a Member of Politics & Ideas and On Think Tanks and has an MA in Public Policy and Development Management (Georgetown University and Universidad de San Martín).

Glown Kyei-Mensah is the Country Coordinator of Mwananchi Ghana, a project of Participatory Development Associates (PDA) Ltd. PDA is a human development organization in Ghana with an aim to support processes of empowerment and self-determination in communities, organizations and individuals. Mwananchi Ghana is part of the UK Department for International Development-funded Mwananchi Project that works to strengthen citizen engagement with governments across six African countries.

Vanessa Weyrauch is co-founder of Politics & Ideas, a think net focused on the interaction between research and policy, and Director of the On Think Tanks School. She has

worked in the policy and research field for the past 12 years, especially in capacity building and evaluation of policy influence. She has created and led several online courses addressed to think tanks and policymakers in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

References

- Bansal, P., Bertels, S., Ewart, T., MacConnachie, P. and O'Brien, J. (2012) 'Bridging the research-practice gap'. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 26 (1), 73–92.
- Bennet, A. and Bennet, D. (2008) *Knowledge Mobilization in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Moving from research to action*. Frost, WV: MQI Press.
- Bielak, A.T., Campbell, A., Pope, S., Schaefer, K. and Shaxson, L. (2008) 'From science communications to knowledge brokering: The shift from science push to policy pull'. In Cheng, D., Claessens, M., Gascoigne, T., Metcalfe, J., Schiele, B. and Shi, S. (eds) *Communicating Science in Social Contexts: New models, new practices*. New York: Springer, 201–26.
- Bielak, A.T., Holmes, J., Savgård, J. and Schaefer, K. (2009) 'A comparison of European and North American approaches to the management and communication of environmental research' (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency Report 5,958). Online. www.naturvardsverket.se/Documents/publikationer/978-91-620-5958-3.pdf (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Boaz, A., Baeza, J., Fraser, A. and the European Implementation Score Collaborative Group (2011) 'Effective implementation of research into practice: An overview of systematic reviews of the health literature'. *BMC Research Notes*, 4 (212). Online. www.biomedcentral.com/1756-0500/4/212 (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Booth, A. (2011) 'Bridging the "know-do gap": A role for health information professionals?' *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 28 (4), 331–4.
- Bowen, S.J. and Graham, I.D. (2013) 'From knowledge translation to engaged scholarship: Promoting research relevance and utilization'. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 94 (1, Supplement), S3–S8.
- Cash, D.W., Clark, W.C., Alcock, F., Dickson, N.M., Eckley, N., Guston, D.H., Jäger, J. and Mitchell, R.B. (2003) 'Knowledge systems for sustainable development'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 100 (14), 8,086–91.
- CHSRF (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation) (2003) *The Theory and Practice of Knowledge Brokering in Canada's Health System*. Online. www.cfhi-fcass.ca/migrated/pdf/Theory_and_Practice_e.pdf (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Cooper, A. and Levin, B. (2010) 'Some Canadian contributions to understanding knowledge mobilisation'. *Evidence and Policy*, 6 (3), 351–69.
- Cox, M., Alatoa, H., Kenni, L. et al. (2007) 'Unfinished state: Drivers of change in Vanuatu'. Online. www.researchgate.net/publication/265191322_THE_UNFINISHED_STATE_DRIVERS_OF_CHANGE_IN_VANUATU (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Damschroder, L.J., Aron, D.C., Keith, R.E., Kirsh, S.R., Alexander J.A. and Lowery, J.C. (2009) 'Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: A consolidated framework for advancing implementation science'. *Implementation Science*, 4 (50). Online. www.implementationscience.com/content/4/1/50/ (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Estabrooks, C., Derksen, L., Winther, C., Lavis, J.N., Scott, S.D., Wallin, L. and Profetto-McGrath, J. (2008) 'The intellectual structure and substance of the knowledge utilization field: A longitudinal author co-citation analysis, 1945 to 2004'. *Implementation Science*, 3 (49). Online. www.implementationscience.com/content/3/1/49/ (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Estabrooks, C., Thompson, D.S., Lovely, J.E. and Hofmeyer, A. (2006) 'A guide to knowledge translation theory'. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 26 (1), 25–36.
- Fitzpatrick, J. (2013) 'Nothing about us, without us'. *University Affairs*, 31 May. Online. www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/nothing-about-us-without-us/ (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Gagnon, M.L. (2011) 'Moving knowledge to action through dissemination and exchange'. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 64 (1), 25–31.
- Hart, A. and Wolff, D. (2006) 'Developing local "communities of practice" through local community-university partnerships'. *Planning, Practice and Research*, 21 (1), 121–38.
- Hemsley-Brown, J. and Sharp C. (2003) 'The use of research to improve professional practice: A systematic review of the literature'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29 (4), 449–70.
- Jagosh, J., Macaulay, A.C., Pluye, P. et al. (2012) 'Uncovering the benefits of participatory research: Implications of a realist review for health research and practice'. *Milbank Quarterly*, 90 (2), 311–46. Online. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3460206/ (accessed 1 October 2016).

- Jones, H, Jones, N.A., Shaxson, L. and Walker, D. (2012) *Knowledge, Policy and Power in International Development: A practical guide*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Kilelu, C.W., Klerkx, L., Leeuwis, C. and Hall, A. (2011) *Beyond Knowledge Brokerage: An exploratory study of innovation intermediaries in an evolving smallholder agricultural system in Kenya*. Online. www.innovationstudies.org/images/stories/riuknowledgebrokerscatherine.pdf (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Klerkx, I. and Leeuwis, C. (2009) 'Establishment and embedding of innovation brokers at different innovation system levels: Insights from the Dutch agricultural sector'. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 76 (6), 849–60.
- Lightowler, C. and Knight, C. (2013) 'Sustaining knowledge exchange and research impact in the social sciences and humanities: Investing in knowledge broker roles in UK universities'. *Evidence & Policy*, 9 (3), 317–34.
- Michaels, S. (2009) 'Matching knowledge brokering strategies to environmental policy problems and settings'. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 12 (7), 994–1,011.
- Nutley, S. and Davies, H. (2016) 'Knowledge mobilisation: Creating, sharing and using knowledge'. In Orr, K., Nutley, S., Russell, S., Bain, R., Hacking, B. and Moran, C. (eds) *Knowledge and Practice in Business and Organisations*. New York: Routledge. New York, 181–200.
- Nutley, S.M., Walter, I. and Davies, H.T.O. (2007) *Using Evidence: How research can inform public services*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Ochocka, J., Janzen, R. and Nelson, G. (2002) 'Sharing power and knowledge: Professional and mental health consumer/survivor researchers working together in a participatory action research project'. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 25 (4), 379–87.
- Phipps, D.J., Jensen, K.E. and Myers, J.G. (2012) 'Applying social sciences research for public benefit using knowledge mobilization and social media'. In López-Varela, A. (ed.) *Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Social Sciences and Knowledge Management*. InTech. Online. www.intechopen.com/books/theoretical-and-methodological-approaches-to-social-sciences-and-knowledge-management/applying-social-sciences-research-for-public-benefit-using-knowledge-mobilization-and-social-media (accessed 1 October 2016).
- Phipps, D.J. and Morton S. (2013) 'Qualities of knowledge brokers: Reflections from practice'. *Evidence & Policy*, 9 (2), 255–65.
- Phipps D.J. and Shapson S. (2009) 'Knowledge mobilisation builds local research collaborations for social innovation'. *Evidence & Policy*, 5 (3), 211–27.
- Phipps, D.J. and Zanotti, D. (2011) 'It's the basement stories, not the belt: Lessons from a community–university knowledge mobilisation collaboration'. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 4, 203–17.
- Reed, M. (2016) *The Research Impact Handbook*. Huntly: Fast Track Impact.
- Robeson, P., Dobbins, M. and DeCorby, K. (2008) 'Life as a knowledge broker in public health'. *Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association*, 29 (3), 79–82. Online. <https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/jchla/article/view/22850/17033> (accessed 24 October 2016).
- Ross, S., Lavis, J., Rodriguez, C., Woodside, J. and Denis, J.-L. (2003) 'Partnership experiences: Involving decision-makers in the research process'. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 8 (Supplement 2), 26–34.
- Samoff, J. and Stromquist, N.P. (2001) 'Managing knowledge and storing wisdom? New forms of foreign aid?' *Development and Change*, 32 (4), 631–56.
- Shaxson, L. with Bielak, A., Ahmed, I. et al. (2012). *Expanding our Understanding of K* (KT, KE, KTT, KMb, KB, KM, etc.): A concept paper emerging from the K* conference held in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, April 2012*. Online. http://inweh.unu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/KStar_ConceptPaper_FINAL_Oct29_WEB.pdf (accessed 7 August 2016).
- Siemens, L. (2012) 'The impact of a community–university collaboration: Opening the "black box"'. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*, 3 (1), 5–25.
- Stetler, C.B., Damschroder, L.J., Helfrich, C.D. and Hagedorn, H.J. (2011) 'A Guide for applying a revised version of the PARIHS framework for implementation'. *Implementation Science*, 6 (99), 1–10. Online. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-99> (accessed 17 October 2016).
- Van de Ven, A.H. and Johnson, P.E. (2006) 'Knowledge for theory and practice'. *Academy of Management Review*, 31 (4), 802–21.
- Ward, V., House, A. and Hamer, S. (2009) 'Knowledge brokering: The missing link in the evidence to action chain'. *Evidence & Policy*, 5 (3), 267–79.
- Yamey, G. (2012) 'What are the barriers to scaling up health interventions in low and middle income countries? A qualitative study of academic leaders in implementation science'. *Globalization and Health*, 8 (11). Online. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1744-8603-8-11> (accessed 17 October 2016).