

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### FAI Learning Series 7 & KIX EMAP Webinar 25: How Policymakers Think: Sharing Research for Policy Use

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#### Sources of evidence for policymaking

##### **Is it more likely that policymakers use research results from local or international institutions?**

**Lira Samykbaeva:** Politicians are more likely to use research results that are directly linked to current national priorities and strategic documents. If the study is aligned with government programs or long-term strategies, it has a higher chance of being taken seriously. Local research often has the advantage of context and practicality, while international research is valued for methodology and credibility. The most effective is when both are combined – local relevance supported by international standards.

**Elaine Munthe:** In my experience, the research that is used most is the research that is requested. That is quite natural – as a policymaker, you need to know more about a specific topic. But research use also requires some research literacy – being able to understand, interpret, assess, and translate. Researchers who are more proficient in translating research can have a greater effect than others.

##### **What sort of criteria or considerations do policymakers take into account when identifying what is or is not high-quality/credible?**

**Elaine Munthe:** Research carried out within the national context can be valued higher than research carried out in contexts that appear to be quite different culturally or otherwise. Often, policies depend on knowledge about “what works” or “what should we advise”? Some research designs can be better at answering those questions than others, but policy makers also need research that can explain why – or “for whom”? One recent review that we carried out for Ireland in cooperation with the OECD sheds light on a complex issue with few clear-cut answers – but this review is considered very valuable for the Government’s work on the use of digital tools and resources in schools (see: [The impact of digital technologies on students’ learning \(EN\)](#)).

## **Strategies for increasing the use of research evidence by policymakers**

**In contexts where new political leadership may prioritise other factors over empirical evidence, what practical strategies can public administrators employ to ensure policy decisions remain grounded in data and best practices?**

**Elaine Munthe:** Try to “walk the talk” as much as possible – to use data and refer to research in administrative work, when preparing cases etc. Show the relevance and assist in finding relevant knowledge.

**In resource-limited contexts, what practical strategies can policymakers adopt to still make evidence-informed decisions?**

**Elaine Munthe:** There is so much research that is already published and much of it is open access. Searching for “systematic review + “TOPIC” (whatever topic it is you are searching for knowledge about) can be an easy way to find out if someone has already summarised and analysed published research on the topic. If possible, work with a librarian to carry out searches. Ensuring enough and relevant data about a situation is often problematic because the data doesn’t exist or it is difficult to obtain. Finding out what data is needed on a national and regional level – and then setting out to build the systems that need to be in place to secure such data – would be important to prioritise.

**What recommendations would you offer to donors on how to engage with public officials so that the evidence generated by grantees in the country is more consistently taken up and used in decision-making?**

**Ly Thi Le:** To ensure evidence generated by grantees is consistently used in decision-making, donors should support early engagement of public officials in setting research questions, align outputs with policy cycles, and frame results in policy-ready formats (briefs, infographics). Evidence uptake is strengthened when researchers work with trusted local institutes, foster ongoing dialogue through workshops, and build officials’ capacity for data use. From MDRI’s experience in Viet Nam, co-design with MOET departments, producing clear policy notes, and convening consultations with teachers and community actors have proven most effective in translating evidence into actionable reforms.

**How effective is the bottom-up approach for influencing policies?**

**Ly Thi Le:** Bottom-up evidence in education grounds policies in classroom realities and ensures marginalised voices are included. At MDRI, teacher and parent surveys have directly informed MOET’s teacher professional development and digital transformation strategies. Through the GPE KIX Observatory, we are capturing schools’ and teachers’ lived experiences of disruptions—such as ecological shocks, pandemics, and social inequalities—with particular attention to gender equality and social inclusion. This evidence strengthens national education system resilience strategies while contributing to regional knowledge sharing across South and Southeast Asia.

## **The impact of policy on research agendas**

### **How can we resolve the challenge of research conducted by one minister not being a priority for a new minister?**

**Syed Ahamed:** Framing the same evidence in the new minister's rhetoric can be effective. While approaches vary, political messaging is typically pro-people, and the evidence aligns with it.

**Lira Samykbaeva:** In order for new ministers to adopt and use the results of research, it is important that the research objectives are aligned with the Ministry's major strategic documents. Usually, these are long-term policy frameworks. Ministries are always obliged to work toward these goals in a long-term perspective, and the achievement of such goals does not depend on the individual minister in office

### **What role do policymakers typically play in setting the research agenda, and how can researchers effectively engage with them on this front?**

**Elaine Munthe:** Researchers can engage local politicians and national politicians by inviting them to research seminars, panel discussions, etc. Colleges and universities arrange many seminars and inviting politicians to these can be good way to build relationships and exchange ideas, knowledge, and concerns. Invite politicians to take part in podcasts and webinars. This way, politicians can learn more about which areas researchers see a need to learn more about, and it can also be possible to discuss relevant policy areas that are in need of research. Involvement and engagement are key factors.

### **Does the development of a long-term relationship between researchers and the government fuel research bias in favour of legitimising government efforts?**

**Elaine Munthe:** It has to be clear from the onset that research results are the property of the researchers / university - not the government. Policy-makers can be involved in discussions about relevant research questions, but the researchers must be autonomous in their choice of methods, analyses and discussions of results. There are, however, contexts where this can be difficult - and results can be misused as well. I do not think this is related to a long-term relationship though - a long-term relationship would indicate a relationship that works well.

### **How do we ensure that we receive the much-needed support from the Ministry of Education so that we are motivated to continue doing research that aligns with national priorities?**

**Elaine Munthe:** I would assume that the MoE needs to see the relevance of the research that goes on in order to support it further. But of course, not all education research is directly policy relevant - it has to be relevant for another reason (s) - and communicating that relevance is something researchers have to do. Communication - dissemination for understanding - cannot be underestimated. This is increasingly a very important part of a researcher's job - and not least a university's / research organisation's job.