The Role of Academics in a Tobacco control policy vacuum

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Overview

(1) Background and context
(2) Why, what, and how research was used to inform policy
(3) Describe *process* of involvement
(4) Barriers and facilitators
(5) Conclusions
The Policy Pie

- Systematic Reviews
- Cultural Beliefs
- Policy Briefs
- Experience
- Expertise
- Resources at hand
- Values
- Habits & Tradition
- Other Countries
- Contingencies
- Single Studies
- Research Syntheses
- Electoral Cycle
- Good Ideas
- The Media

“The RM Knowledge Translation Toolkit: A Resource for Researchers”
A schematic view of the contextual influences on the decision making process

The World in which Policies are Made

Information

Producers
- Researchers
- Institutes
- Polisters

Purveyors
- Media
- Advocates
- Networks

Knowledge

Persuasion

Epistemology, paradigms

Lomas, 2000
A schematic view of the contextual influences on the decision making process

Information
- Producers
  - Researchers
  - Institutes
  - Polsters
- Purveyors
  - Media
  - Advocates
  - Networks
- Knowledge

Institutional Structure for Decision Making
- Formal Structure
  - Executive
  - Legislative
  - Bureaucracy
- Informal Structure
  - Policy Brokers
  - Coalitions
  - Stakeholders
  - Citizens

Values
- Ideologies
  - Views about what ought to be
- Beliefs
  - Causal assumptions about what is
- Interests
  - Responses to incentives and rewards

Persuasion

Policies

The World in which Policies are Made

Power Relationships

Epistemology, paradigms

Lomas, 2000
A piece of the pie

**Academia**

AUB-Tobacco Control Research Group

**Faculty of Health Sciences** - Housed at the Center for Research on Population and Health
- Department of Health Promotion and Community Health
- Department of Epidemiology and Population Health

**Faculty of Medicine**
- Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
- Department of Internal Medicine
- School of Nursing

**Faculty of Engineering and Architecture**
- Aerosol Research Laboratory
- Department of Mechanical Engineering

**Faculty of Arts and Sciences**
- Department of Chemistry
- Department of Economics

**Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences**
- Department of Agricultural Sciences

**Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy & International Affairs**

Website:
http://www.aub.edu.lb/units/tcrg/Pages/index.aspx
So where did Lebanon stand in terms of tobacco control laws in 2010?

1983

Law-HW on packs and advertisements
“Ministry of Public Health warns you about smoking dangers”

1995

Law-HW on packs and advertisements amending 1983 Law number 101. HW: “Ministry of Health warns: Smoking leads to dangerous and deadly diseases.” HW should be visible to the naked eye on cigarette packs and 15% of size of advertisements.
Discussions reinitiated by the Parliamentary Committee in early 2010
- Tobacco industry and allies participating in discussions and meetings
- No pro tobacco control dialogue or presence in the public sphere and media.
- Despite having a stronger draft championed by the National Tobacco control program, the law under discussion was weak.
Policy under discussion was poorly informed by research evidence

- Smoking/nonsmoking sections
- Loopholes-Exceptions to places bans are active
- Long and gradual implementation delays
- Partial bans of advertising (sampling under 18, point of sale, relationship marketing and direct. Up to three-5 year implementation delays)
- HW’s textual and 30%-No pictorials proposed
- Unclear penalty and fine system
Do we have enough evidence?

- Health effects of tobacco use?
- Do we have evaluated policy solutions?
Influencing the policy process:

Point A - Weak national tobacco control policy
January 2010

Point B - Adoption of relatively strong policy
August 2011

Point C - Implementation, enforcement, and compliance

Lobby policymakers

Disseminate research findings to policymakers and the public

Network with and mobilize NGO’s and Media

X
What are our objectives?

- Having tobacco control issues discussed
- Having tobacco control discussed *differently*
- Discrediting the tobacco industry and allies
- Bringing extra, credible, and different voices into the debate
- Introducing new facts, perspectives regarding effectiveness of policies.
- Enriching the debate

(adopted from Simon Chapman’s presentation on advocacy)

...Having a law that is evidence-based and not just any law.
Disseminate policy relevant and timely research to support needed policy changes

Smoke free policies
Health Warnings
Tobacco industry influence
Economics of Tobacco

Waterpipe health effects, prevention, intervention, and policy implications
We consider the following three measures the cornerstone of a sensible and effective tobacco control policy:

• Total bans of smoking in indoor public places without exemptions and without permission for smoking and non-smoking areas.
• Total comprehensive advertising bans, both direct and indirect (including promotion, branding, etc.)
• Large pictorial health warnings on tobacco products at least 40% on two larger surfaces of the pack with rotating messages every six months to avoid wear-out.

We outlined an explanation of why these must be adopted and why half-measures should not be allowed.
Network with and mobilize NGO’s and media
- Focusing on niche area of expertise
  - Tobacco Industry
  - Political lobby
  - Raising public urgency
Focused on social justice

- The economic cost that is paid by everyone
- The issue of rights and responsibilities
- Made it very clear that it is not smokers vs non-smokers
• Systematic one on meetings with Parliamentarians, heads of parliamentary blocks (up to approx. 45 out of 128 parliamentarians between Feb – Nov 2010)
• Analysis of pro and anti tobacco control positions of MP’s
• Tobacco industry interference in Parliamentary Health Committee meetings and with allies

- Tobacco farming livelihood
- Advertising sector livelihood
- Hospitality sector losses
- Tourism industry damage
- Other countries started gradual implementation why do we have to be so radical
- Lebanon is different.
Barriers

• Rigid academic obligations.
• Lack of recognition to advocacy effort
• Barriers of student involvement
• Knowledge on how to communicate with policymakers
• Turf issues (with Parliamentarians, NGO’s, and others)
• Keeping the debate alive

Facilitators

• Civil society access, authority, and commitment to the cause and drive to get involved and make a difference
• Support of university top management
• Credibility of scientific evidence
• Evidence accessible
• National Tobacco Control Program participation in Parliamentary meetings
• Shared purpose and common messages and supporting arguments.
THANK YOU
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- Website of the group: http://www.aub.edu.lb/units/tcrp/Pages/index.aspx