



Building the Evidence for a Better Scotland: Challenges and Prospects

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Outline of Presentation

- What progress have we made?
- What challenges do we face?
- What are the prospects?



What Progress Have We Made?

- Growth in rhetoric in Govnt supporting EBPP
- Growth in capacity in Govnt for analysis and use of evidence
- Has policy making become more evidence based?
- What are the limitations?



Evidence-Based Policy Making: The Rhetoric

- David Blunkett (DfEE, 2000):
 - "...clear commitment that we will be guided not by dogma but by an open-minded approach to understanding what works and why..." (p.2)
 - "...having ready access to the lessons from high quality research can and must vastly improve the quality and sensitivity of the complex and often constrained decisions we, as politicians, have to make." (p.4)
 - "... rational thought is impossible without good evidence...social science research is central to the development and evaluation of policy." (p.24)
- Cabinet Office (2001, p.25):
 - "Good quality policy-making depends on high quality information and evidence. Modern policy-making calls for the need to improve Departments' capacity to make best use of evidence, and the need to improve the accessibility of evidence available to policy-makers."



What Challenges Do We Face?

- Meeting the policy challenges of the 'third phase of devolution'
- Providing the right forms of evidence and analysis
- Increasing the impact of evidence and analysis on policy and practice
- Increasing the capacity for EBPP across public sector



What Are the Prospects?

- Increasing the impact of evidence?
- Building capacity across public sector?
- Enhancing KT capacity in F/HE sector?
- Building 'intermediary' capacity?
- Raising the level of public debate on evidence and policy?
- Scotland in international learning networks?
- Scotland as exemplar in policy making?



Towards 'Intelligent Policy Making'?

- Deweyan pragmatism:
 - "...the necessity of a deliberate control of policies by the method of intelligence, an intelligence which is not the faculty of intellect honored in text-books and neglected elsewhere, but which is the sum-total of impulses, habits, emotions, records, and discoveries which forecast what is desirable and undesirable in future possibilities, and which contrive ingeniously in behalf of an imagined good" (Dewey, 1993, p.9).
- Policy making as deliberative process
- Experimentation and learning
 - pilots/trials and evaluation