

The reason why research and evidence fails to have substantial and in some cases almost any influence on policy processes is well captured and conceptualised by the RAPID framework, although I think they will be different in different contexts and the interaction between the players varies among different countries.

My comments are based on my practical experience in Bangladesh.

Research –Policy Interface

- Although there is a shift to making research more multi- and interdisciplinary, its outputs remain limited primarily to publications for academic audiences in Bangladesh. Less emphasis is placed on linking research into non-research networks and contexts.
- An example is Flood Action Plan (FAP) of Bangladesh which was hugely detrimental to the freshwater fisheries of Bangladesh in the 80s and this was undertaken without any systematic attempt to predict the possible environmental and social impact of the massive programme. I feel if adequate research was done before the programme was undertaken and the results fed to the policy makers this could have done differently.
- No attention is given to improving the interaction between researchers and policy-makers in Bangladesh. The policy makers tend to see the researchers as some sort of civil servants and the researchers use the policy maker's political patronage as lever to go up the professional ladder. Policy-makers are dismissive about research and its usefulness. An appreciation of research not as an end in itself but as a tool for problem-solving and policy-making is also, unfortunately, not present with the researchers.
- Researchers do not understand policy requirements, so frequently cannot communicate their results effectively to policy-makers. There is also the ignorance of politicians about existing research available to define policy problems and measures.

Capacity Building

- Young professionals and researchers in Bangladesh are not trained with methodological and theoretical instruments to enable them to carry out quality social science research. The education system rarely fosters original thinking. For example the HIV/AIDS research done by NGOs in Bangladesh. These are rarely done through rigorous peer reviewed methodologies and therefore are questioned by the academics and also policymakers. NGOs as research institutions are also resented by the 'hard core' researchers.
- 99% of the university budget goes towards salary of the staff and other infrastructural costs. Research gets less than 1% of the total budget. There is therefore hardly any long-range strategic research capable of influencing local development and the formulation of public policies.

- International research fellowship programmes funded by the donors contributes to brain drain since many graduates do not return to their own countries. The subjects/topics for training are also frequently not relevant to the ground reality.
- The research institutes in Bangladesh are not able to attract the brightest when employment opportunities in private companies and consultancies elsewhere are much more attractive.

Conclusion: The way ahead

- Success stories like BRRI (Bangladesh Rice Research Institute) and its contribution to food security in Bangladesh should be mentioned in this context.
- The demand oriented nurturing of development-oriented social-science research capacity is an intensive, long-term, and continuous process. Institutions take a long time to build and there is no substitute for the steady evolution of practices and habits of interaction that create a favourable environment for research and its relevance to policy making.