Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring evidence-policy linkages in health research plans: a case study from six countries

Version: 1 Date: 4 October 2007

Reviewer: Atle Fretheim

Reviewer's report:

General

I salute the authors for addressing an important issue in their research-effort. I fully agree with them that we need to learn and understand more about the research-policy interface in order to improve the lives of the citizens we wish to serve, as researchers and/or policymakers.

Having said that, I found the current paper a tough read, and I had difficulties following the lines of arguments and logical framework(s) that are presented. This may be due to my limited insight in anthropological jargon commonly used in “development”-circles, but the authors could consider whether the quality of the paper would profit from simplification and shortening, where possible. I think the section under the heading “Development context” is the hardest part – I had to read it 5 or 6 times before I could move on.

The logic of the paper is based on the four “key-considerations for Evidence-Policy linkages” that are postulated by the authors. I have a problem with the four bullet-points: Where did they come from? I have nothing against it if they were formulated at a lunch-meeting on campus or said to be “based on many years of working in the field” or some other vague phrase, but I want to know! Preferably I would like to learn what others have formulated – there are systematic reviews of research done on the interface between researchers and policymakers and I find it surprising that the findings from them are not included in your reflections. E.g.


Are there not other “Key considerations” that should be mentioned – are you convinced yourself that the four you have selected are the most important? As an example: The mentioned systematic reviews highlight the personal relationship between researchers and decision-makers as a key-issue with regards to the utilisation of research findings, but as far as I can see this is not an issue in the current paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I would like the authors to

• Communicate the basis for the four “Key considerations” and convince me that they make sense
• To describe each Key consideration in a slightly more reader-friendly manner

For me this needs to be done before I can meaningfully review the description of each of the six country-projects as provided in the paper, simply because I need to understand and accept the framework before using it!

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.