



PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

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Talking points

KNOWLEDGE & COMPREHENSION

1. What is institutional memory? How does informal memory differ from formal memory?
2. What are the stages of the policy cycle?
3. What is institutional churn? What benefits and drawbacks can it bring to institutions?
4. In Australia, New Zealand and the UK, which government departments have the highest and lowest rates of churn? Why do you think this might be?

APPLICATION

5. What real or fictitious examples can you think of that demonstrate the unreliability of storytelling for passing on knowledge?
6. What real or fictitious examples can you think of that demonstrate the usefulness of storytelling in decision making?

ANALYSIS

7. Why do you think the team is investigating government department case studies from three different nations, rather than focusing on policymaking in only one country? Why do you think they chose Australia, New Zealand and the UK as the countries to study?

EVALUATION

8. What do you think are the main similarities and differences between a career in public policy research and public policy implementation? Which would you prefer, and why?
9. A common frustration of researchers is that their policy-relevant findings are not always understood or used by policymakers. Why do you think this is? How do you think the team will ensure their results are effectively communicated to those who will benefit from the research?

Activities

1. Imagine you are working in AI, Heather and Rodney's collaboration.

The research has been completed and the next step is to communicate your findings to policymakers.

Create a one-page 'policy brief' to give to policymakers in government departments. It should explain your main conclusions about how institutional churn influences institutional memory and suggest recommendations for how departments can manage churn to improve their policymaking process.

Consider the following when writing your brief:

- What are the outcomes of your research? What have you discovered about institutional churn, institutional memory and policymaking?
- Policymakers are very busy and receive many documents every day. How will you ensure your brief stands out and succinctly summarises what you want them to know?
- If you had to choose one key message for policymakers to take on board, what would it be? How will you present this message?
- Policymakers benefit from research that clearly demonstrates applicability to their work. How will you highlight that the recommendations you are giving are backed up by the evidence from your research findings?



2. Imagine a new person arrives at your school or moves into your neighbourhood.

Write a list of the formal information that you think they will be given by the school or neighbourhood authorities. Then, write a list of the things that you would tell them as you show them around your school or neighbourhood.

Compare your two lists and consider the following questions:

- What are the similarities and differences in the information given by you and the authorities?
- Which information do you think will be most useful to the new arrival, and why?
- How do you think the new arrival will use the different types of information to influence their decisions as they settle into the school or neighbourhood?

3. Create a flow chart of the policy cycle to show how policies are developed, implemented and evaluated.

Devise a new educational or environmental policy that you think your country should introduce, and highlight on your flow chart how it might pass through the stages of the policy cycle.

More resources

- This blog post, co-authored by Heather and Rodney, argues that we need a more dynamic understanding of institutional memory:
blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/institutional-memory-dynamic-approach
- *The Mandarin* provides daily newsletters catered to the public sector, which can provide interesting insights into the policy world: www.themandarin.com.au/about
- This video from All Things Political Science provides an overview of what political science is and why you might consider studying it:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQK0Xbfel-M