



Submission from: Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa

Date: 25 September 2017

Subject: The Impact of Science – discussion paper

About us:

Occupational Therapy / Whakaora Ngangahau (OTNZ-WNA) is a holistic health profession who use the concept of occupation to mean all those things we do. Occupation is participation in meaningful activities that occupy our time, whether it is self-care, looking after others, education, leisure or work. OTNZ-WNA use occupation to improve well-being and quality of life for individuals and communities by engaging the concepts of what people can do, be, become and belong to. We take seriously the responsibility of applying research results into practice.

Given that occupational therapy is an applied science, occupational therapists deal with the impact of science on a daily basis and are also contributors to the production of scientific knowledge through research outputs. The comments articulated below are informed by our members, many of whom are well regarded academics in their own right.

Focus of the Submission

In this submission, we focus on your discussion point 4 - What does impact look like and provide some additional commentary on the paper in general.

In summary, point 4 asks if the impact of research should be evaluated against the existing National Statement of Science Investment (NSSI) or adopt the Treasury's Higher Living Standards Framework (THLSF).

We strongly advocate in favour of the Treasury's Higher Living Standards Framework

Rationale

National Statement of Science Investment (NSSI)

The NSSI sets out productivity and wellbeing as the final impacts, with impacts separated into economic growth, environment, society, health and Vision Mātauranga

Response to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi

The practice of documenting a separate section relating to Tangata Whenua is inappropriate. Given the original intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi of a partnership relationship, OTNZ-WNA strongly advocate for Tangata Whenua values, tikanga, practices and processes being woven into the entire document and processes. In addition, Tangata Whenua values must be embedded across all the criteria that evaluate the impact of science. Tangata Whenua scientists, researchers

and academics should be included in the development to ensure indigenous authenticity and to reduce the occurrence of institutional racism.

Overall Vision

In more general terms we feel that the NSSI is static – there is no overall vision on what science should be moving towards (direction of development). It implies any direction for development would do, as long as it serves productivity and wellbeing goals. The NSSI does not, for example, indicate what kind of society we want to become, or what the end goal of enhancing the environment is, or whether we are aiming for overall improvements in health or decreasing disparities and discrimination. As a more specific example, the view of the NSSI in relation to health is limited. In relation to health based science and research we suggest that the view for science could be broadened significantly to incorporate wider determinants of health such as ensuring food quality, sanitation systems, and housing and safety systems (e.g. safe products), education as well as the ongoing issues arising from colonialism.

Extending this argument, we propose that resilience alone is not the defining marker of society and consideration needs to be given to inclusion, equality, fairness and enhancing the capabilities of the most disadvantaged members of society (opportunities to do, be, belong and become) as essential outcomes of science and research outputs.

The Treasury's Higher Living Standards Framework.

The Treasury's Higher Living Standards Framework provides a broader outcome measure in comparison to the NSSI. We advocate to adopt this framework with the absolute proviso that the Tangata Whenua world view is woven into the framework. As well as this we suggest that it would be very difficult to measure impacts of science against the Framework unless there is a clear definition of what is considered success in the five identified areas. For example, whose standards of living are considered high, what is high, how is this measured?

Other discussion Points

3. What are your views on the mechanisms or processes for generating impacts? What intermediate outcomes are especially important?

We feel that open access policies and practices are very important issues for generating intermediate outcomes, particularly open access practices, i.e. making research (science) have explicit expectations to share knowledge in publically accessible, repeated and multi-media formats, i.e. open access publications, public lectures, blogs, newspaper articles, radio interviews, presentations to relevant groups. This also relates to health practitioners, as many working outside District Health Boards cannot easily access research in subscription based journals. Again, processes relative to engagement and participation with Tangata Whenua must be incorporated.

6. What are your views on the balance between ex-ante and ex-post evaluation? What principles should underpin an ex-post evaluation framework? What data should be collected on the use of knowledge and how might it be collected?

Ex-ante expectations for science research should contain named practitioners, services and users that are partners in the project so scientists must have a relationship with who/what the science is for from the outset. This would assist in diffusion, translation of knowledge and measuring outcomes also. Ex-post evaluation would involve these named partners and if social scientists were included in this step a broader outcome of knowledge might be captured. Inclusive research

practices such as these would also support the strategic goal number 2 of the Health Research Strategy;

"The health sector has a role in setting the research agenda and in participating in all types of research. It has a critical role in health services research and in translating research findings into policy and practice. It can encourage practitioners to take up new ideas by involving health professionals in research, evaluation, quality improvement and improved service delivery. Ongoing engagement with the tertiary education sector is essential for developing a skilled clinical and research workforce" <http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/nz-health-research-strategy-jun17.pdf> (p. 16).

Further Comments

From your discussion document the following excerpts are taken from p. 22 and p. 33 respectively. We bold the sentences that we wish to direct a comment on in Italics.

P. 22: "As identified in the Treasury's Higher Living Standards framework and the OECD's intermediate mechanisms, human capital is a critical underpinning factor to achieving many impacts, such as improved economic growth and greater levels of wellbeing. We do not know the importance of each of these mechanisms to the generation of impact. Further investigation is needed to understand how these mechanisms operate and their importance. **A key question is the role of science in triggering and shaping the mechanisms.**"

P. 33 "Particular emphasis needs to be placed on diffusion, engagement with end users, and building of the four types of capital. All assessments and evaluations need to pay particular attention to these dimensions, **while recognising that it is often not research and science organisations that are responsible for them.**"

In relation to the sentences in bold, we advise adding commentary on the way that separating scientists, science and research from other social structures supports siloed nature of knowledge and the barriers between knowledge and practice alive. We contend that science creates social structures (along with other things) and assuming it has no direct responsibility for things such as wellbeing, productivity, and colonialism is missing an important underlying reason why knowledge/practice divides and taken for granted hierarchies of knowledge exist. One way to address this would be insisting that social scientists (such as occupational scientists), practitioner researchers and/or end users of the science are part of any overall project. By broadening the make-up of science based teams the role and impact of science in wider social functions may be better understood, particularly the unforeseen, negative or highly productive outcomes of the science.

For more information about Occupational Therapists / Kaiwhakaora Ngangahau please visit the association's website at www.otnz.co.nz

We would be happy to be further involved and happy to engage in further discussion.

Yours sincerely

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