KNOWLEDGE, USERS and IMPACT in Aging &Technology RESEARCH: An Overview of NCE’s KMb Policy Framework

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Purpose and Rationale

**Purpose:** This poster reviews the NCE’s (Network of Centres of Excellence) understanding of “knowledge mobilization (KMb)” from a regulatory and conceptual perspective. This review is part of a project on knowledge mobilization in large teams that is being carried out by AGE-WELL’s CC-1 team.

**Rationale:** The NCE is a leading standard-setting institution in the field of knowledge production. How it conceptualizes, implements, and governs KMb is therefore important in designing an effective KMb infrastructure for large research networks, that is based on social engagement and geared toward social and economic benefits.

Understanding and Enacting KMb

**Why the emphasis on KMb?**

From a regulatory standpoint, knowledge mobilization is one principle that NCE-funded networks are expected to incorporate in their governance and reporting structures. Other principles include: transdisciplinarity, commercialization, and the training of highly qualified personnel (HQP).

The NCE’s interpretation of KMb is designed to be purposefully broad as a means to invite active and innovative interpretation across projects and teams. However, a broad approach raises a number of questions with regards to interpretation, priorities, common standards, and accountability.

**What is the context for enactment?**

From a conceptual standpoint, the NCE’s approach to KMb resonates with related ideas of innovation diffusion, knowledge transfer/translation/exchange, and innovation impact, which seek to shorten (or document) the gap between innovative solutions and their implementation.

Although NCE researchers often use these concepts interchangeably, the philosophy behind them, and their perspectives to “knowledge” and “community-engagement” may substantially differ, posing socio-political, and ethical challenges.

Guiding Questions: Critical Research on KMb

- Whose knowledge is being mobilized and enacted?
- How is research conducted and mobilized in multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary teams and environments?
- What is network research governance and its challenges?
- What are the policy priorities and conceptual frameworks used by national, institutional, and disciplinary actors?
- What do we learn from rapidly changing science policy terminology, including the transitional language (e.g., from receptors to knowledge users, research subjects to participants, knowledge translation to mobilization?)
- What are the constituents of social and economic impact in given research areas? How is impact measured?
- What is the status of KMb in research governance? What constitutes KMb’s social accountability?

Findings and Implications

**Findings:**

- With regards to social and economic impact, the economic dimension is addressed through commercialization and corresponding indicators. Meanwhile, the social dimension is approached using the concepts of well-being and quality of life, which require deeper contextual understanding and research efforts, and may lose their priority status in actual research settings.
- Rapidly changing policy language, such as adoption of research participants and knowledge users instead of subjects and receptors, respectively, seem to indicate differences across fields and perspectives, and signal the complexities (and difficulty) of implementing a community-engaged socially-meaningful model of scientific knowledge production.
- Although KMb is prioritized in the network governance structure as a separate unit, its effectiveness depends on the KMb culture of all governance and research nodes, their modes of thinking, technologies and available resources with respect to KMb.

**Implications:**

- Academic community and policymakers need to engage in a broad, contextually-meaningful dialogue about the social components of social and economic impact.
- It is necessary to engage in collaborative innovative research on knowledge mobilization to understand its limitations, refine its philosophy, and outline the realistic and possible impacts, as well as how these may vary across contexts.
- KMb should be understood beyond a network governance unit, as a research and governance philosophy, based on a learning network design in which every research node is engaged in KMb.
- Understanding and building upon the plurality of approaches to KMb is integral to socially-engage research infrastructure.

**Key Take Away Message:** Unpacking the understanding of KMb from a regulatory and conceptual perspective can help clarify expectations, situate distinct interpretations and practices, and bridge divergent approaches with regards to KMb. Such efforts represent a crucial step in creating a community-engaged space of learning and exchange within AGE-WELL, other NCE networks, and across Canadian research communities in general.