An audio file of this presentation is available via the following link:

https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/srhe-society-for-research/id594177334?mt=2&ign-mpt=uo%3D4

SRHE Fellows Annual Meeting
HE research: searching for impact, striving for influence

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Plan of talk

1. **What's the problem?**

2. **'THEM': changing policy-making cultures**

3. **'US': shifting patterns of (HE) research**

4. **What's to be done?**

What's the Problem? (1)

Academic respectability

HE research within wider field of educational research, proportion of 'world-leading' (i.e. 4*) research, capacity building

Impact on practice ('us'?)

Informing learning strategies, horizon-scanning…

Influencing policy ('them')

Policy research and evidence-based policy

What's the Problem? (2)

REMEMBERING 'LOST' TIME'

❑ 'Golden Age' myths (19th-century 'Blue Books', 20th-century Royal Commissions – Robbins and Plowden)

'EVIDENCE-BASED' POLICY'S FALSE PROMISE

❑ Have we been conned? Researchers as collaborators / treadmill of short-termism

'THEM': 21st-century policy making

➢ **'Presentism' – and presentationalism**

➢ **Mediatised politics = policy 'permanent revolution'**

➢ **Rise of lobbies / think-tanks**

➢ **Ideological edge ('one of us')**

➢ **Neo-liberal market 'consensus'**

➢ **Objectives and outcomes**

'US': shifting research cultures

- ➢ **'Open' knowledge production systems, e.g. 'Mode 2', 'Triple Helix'**
- ➢ **Intensification of research culture / management in universities**
- ➢ **Education as a discipline – social science or professional field?**

Varieties of HE research

TOPICS

❑ **Philosophy, theory…**

❑ **Policy (+ history)**

❑ **Learning & Teaching >>> student experience**

METHODS

❑ **'Scientific' research (quantitative / qualitative)**

❑ **Institutional / practitioner research**

'Influencing' strategies

❑ **Beyond impact – accessibility**

❑ **Policy 'groupies' ('if you can't beat them, join them')**

❑ **'Open' research & communities of engagement**

❑ **Academic rigour - and critique / opposition ('telling truth to power')**

1. Promoting accessibility

- ✓ **Discourse / language: concepts & modes of expression**
- ✓ **Design: pluralism & collaboration**
- ✓ **Presentation: key points, length…**
- ✓ **Publication: open-source and 'un-REFable'**
- ✓ **Dissemination: media (and community) engagement**

2. Policy 'groupies'

- ✓ **Relevance to policy communities**
- ✓ **Influencing policy agendas ('we hope'!)**
- ✓ **Re-thinking research strategies / priorities ('they hope'!)**
- ✓ **'On tap not on top' ('their' questions not 'our' questions)**
- ✓ **Seduction of (proximity) to power**

3. 'Open' communities

- ✓ **Strengthening research-practice nexus**
- ✓ **Open frontiers – 'We are all (HE) researchers now'**
- ✓ **Beyond 'objectivity': engaged / activist research**
- ✓ **Negotiated agendas, novel methodologies - & corporate goals?**

4. Holding the (academic) line

- ✓ **'They shall not pass': clarity, rigour, complexity**
- ✓ **'Here I stand; I can do no other': discovering / trusting the evidence**
- ✓ **'Thinking the unthinkable'**
  - ➤ Going beyond current agendas
  - ➤ Rescuing suppressed agendas
- ✓ **The Long Revolution (policy futures)**

Promises (and perils) of 'proximity'

- ❑ **Policy / practice relevance = immediate impact**
- ❑ **Following the (increased) funding**
- ❑ **The 'ivory tower' – and the 'real world'**
- ❑ **Faustian bargain: power and truth**
- ❑ **Conceptual imagining – & ideological constraint**
- ❑ **Dilution of scientific rigour**
- ❑ **Imagining (other) futures**