



Evaluation Report for Early-Career Professionals Workshop Series

- [a] Research to Policy (14 October 2020)
- [b] The Art of Storytelling for Influencing Policy (18 November 2020)

Background

As part of UNU-IIGH's initiative to strengthen capacity around local decision-making and translate evidence into policy, in the year 2020, UNU-IIGH collaborated with Lancaster University on a series of workshops for early-career professionals. The first instalment of the virtual workshop series, titled 'Research to Policy', was held on 14 October 2020 to provide insights into the stakeholder engagement process. This workshop aimed to provide an overview of how to collaborate with stakeholders across sectors and identify potential stakeholders and strategies for engagement. A summary report for the workshop was prepared and available [here](#).

The second instalment of the workshop series was held on 18 November 2020, focusing on 'The Art of Storytelling for Influencing Policy'. The main objectives of this workshop were: 1) to understand the definition of stories and the importance of storytelling for decision-making; 2) to understand how to create stories (who is the audience, what are the key narrative components), and 3) to practice scripted, oral, and visual storytelling. Details of the workshop can be found [here](#).

An Introduction of Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

This report provides a summary of the monitoring and evaluation activities conducted on the two early-career professionals workshops. Integrating monitoring and evaluation into the project cycle will enable more effective planning in the future. Specifically, we aim to:

1. Evaluate the impacts of the workshops for researchers' capacity strengthening
2. Determine which groups were most benefited
3. Identify necessary areas for improvement (content, logistic, participation, and workshop delivery)
4. Identify lessons from experience for future workshops and other projects

An online survey was developed using Microsoft Forms ([link](#)). An invitation to complete the online survey was emailed to the participants who attended the workshops. In the survey, participants were asked if they would like to be contacted for a brief interview. One-to-hand online interviews were conducted, and the finding was summarised.

Findings

Profiles of respondents

A total of ten responses were received (six women, four men). Of the ten responses, five respondents have attended both ECP workshops. Seven of the ten respondents fall within the age range of 30-39 years (Figure 1). Seven out of ten respondents came from low- to middle-income countries (four from Malaysia, one each from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Kenya) and three from high-income countries (Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States) (Figure 2). Half of the total respondents did not consider English as their first language. A majority (n=8) of the respondents have a postgraduate level qualification (n=5 Masters level, n=3 Doctoral level) (Figure 3). In terms of professional roles, most of the respondents work in the private sector (three researchers, three public health professionals, one clinician, and five did not specify) (Figure 4). Respondents could be considered as early or mid-career professionals with more than four years of experience in their working field (Figure 5). Most of the respondents considered professional development as their main motivation for participating in the workshops. Other motivating factors include self-learning, the application of knowledge and tools learnt at the workplace, and a combination of personal and work-related interests.

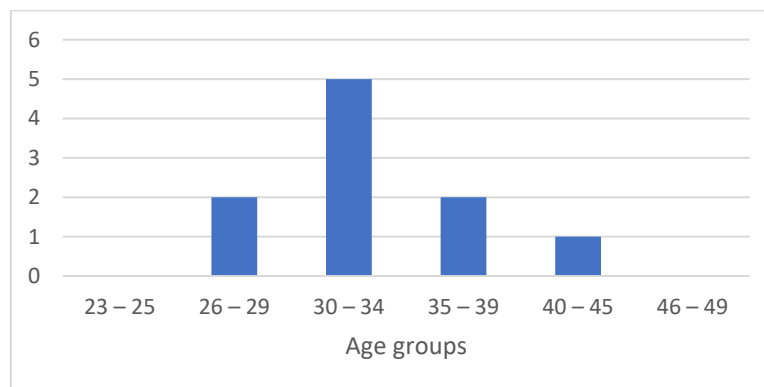


Figure 1: Age groups of workshop respondents

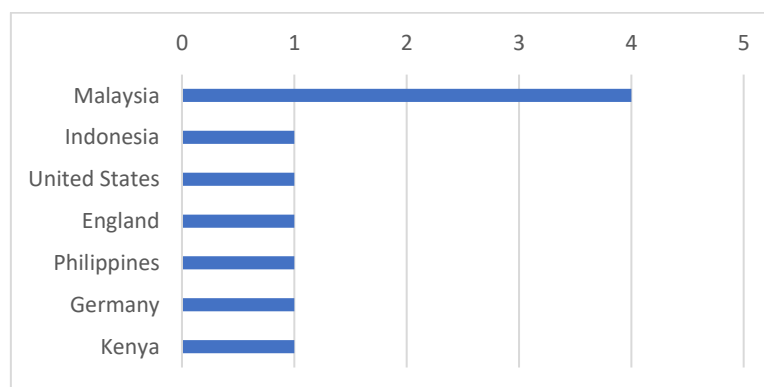


Figure 2: Country of respondents

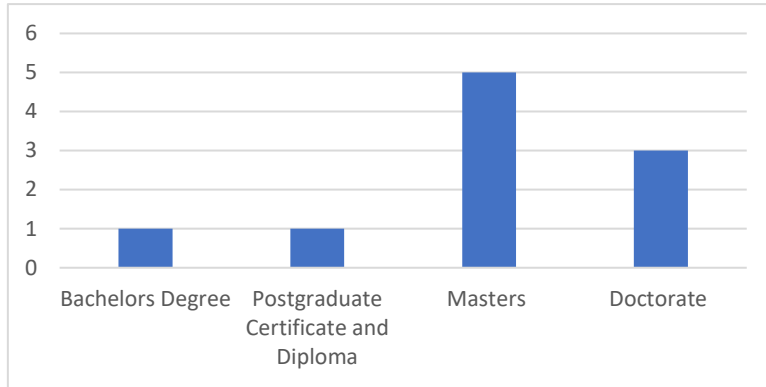


Figure 3: Education level of respondents



Figure 4: Work sectors of respondents

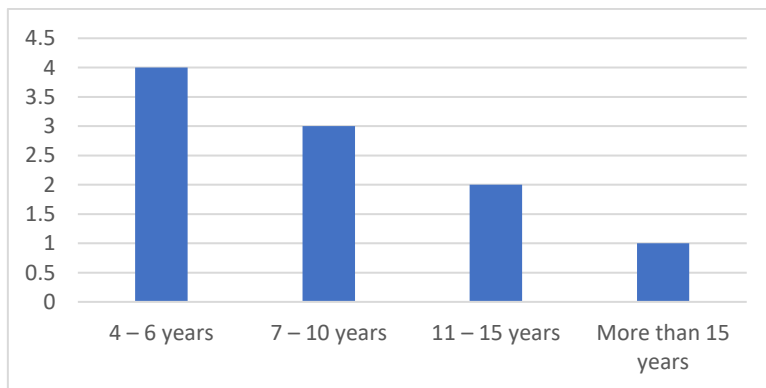


Figure 5: Years of experience in the working field

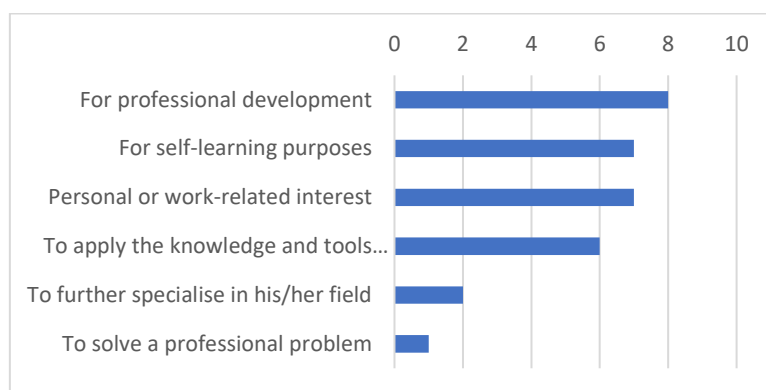


Figure 6: Motivation for participating

Logistical Feedback

Half (five out of ten) of the total respondents noted that they had faced time constraints in studying the materials sent before the workshops. However, eight respondents found the pre-workshop material useful, and nine respondents found the reminders to attend the workshops to be adequate.

Impact of the workshops

(a) Research to Policy workshop

Of the seven respondents, five rated their prior knowledge on stakeholder engagement for policy translation to be fair and two rated their prior knowledge as good. Although respondents indicated that the workshop had contributed to their knowledge to some extent, only one has used the knowledge gained daily and only two has used the knowledge monthly (Figure 7).

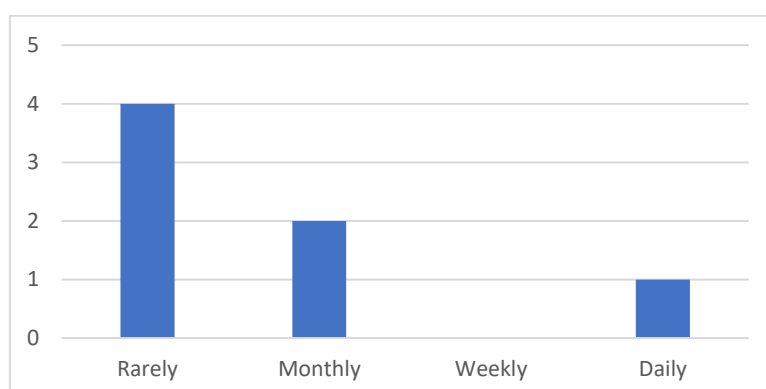


Figure 7: Frequency of knowledge application

Respondents indicated that the key take-aways from the from the Research to Policy workshop include:

- Contextual setting on why a policy is created is a crucial thing that must be understood before analysing why it is needed.
- Talking with other researchers will give you a broader perspective in understanding the system.
- Thinking in a circle - a mechanism for practice policy via research

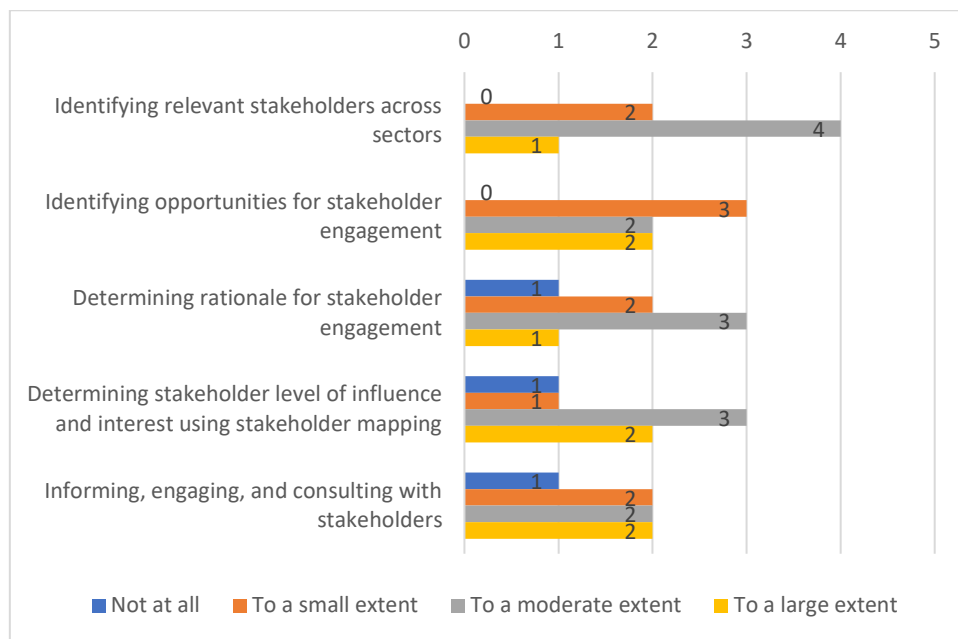


Figure 8: Application of knowledge in professional practice

Six respondents indicated that they were able to identify relevant stakeholders to a moderate or large extent. However, they were less able to do so for informing, engaging, and consulting with stakeholders (Figure 8). Five respondents indicated that they had performed their professional roles and responsibilities differently after the workshop. The changes include having better insight into stakeholder engagement, using the knowledge for teaching, and better dealing with and valuing stakeholders.



Figure 9: Post-workshop activities

In terms of post-workshop activities, three respondents indicated that they had engaged and consulted with other stakeholders in a research project. Two had incorporated knowledge translation activities as part of their research, and two had initiated new professional collaborations.

(b) The Art of Storytelling for Influencing Policy workshop

A total of eight respondents attended "The art of storytelling for influencing policy" workshop. Six rated their prior knowledge on using storytelling for health communication to be fair, and two rated good. Seven out of eight respondents reported that the workshop has contributed to their skills to a large or moderate extent. Four respondents reported that they had applied the knowledge gained from the workshop monthly (Figure 10).

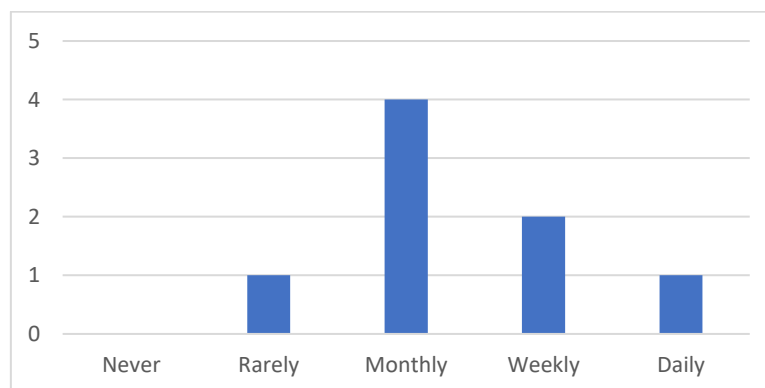


Figure 10: Frequency of knowledge application

The key takeaway insights from the workshop as reported by respondents include:

- Making stories relatable.
- Have a punchline.

- Less is more.
- Stories should support and reinforce the message that you're communicating.
- A story does not need to document every turning point. Pick one and make that your focus.
- Stories should focus on one main character. He or she's the star.

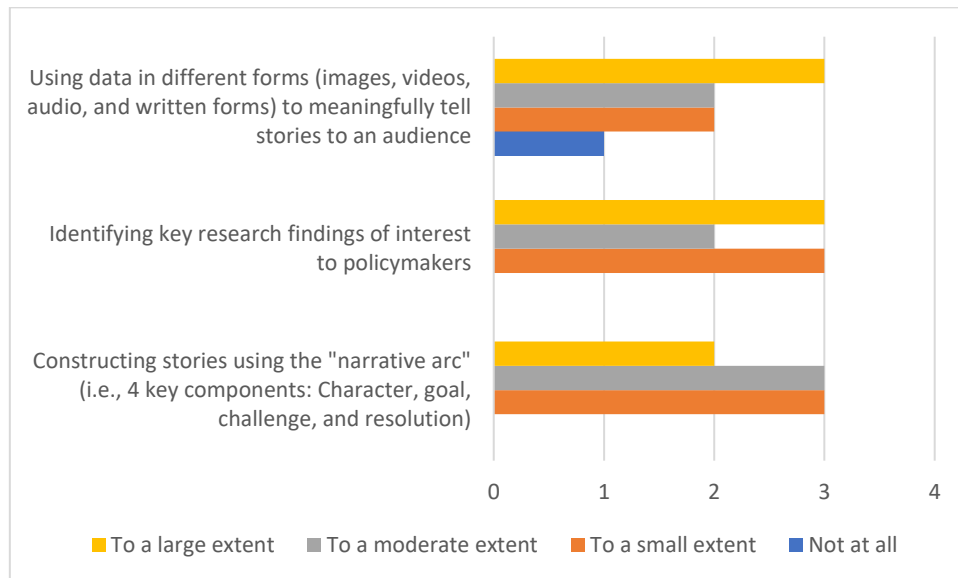


Figure 11: Application of knowledge in professional practice

Most of the respondents were able to use the storytelling skills such as using images, videos, audio, and written forms to tell meaningful stories to the audience, and constructing stories using the "narrative arc"- character, goal, challenge, and resolution (Figure 11). Five respondents indicated that they had performed their professional roles and responsibilities differently post-workshop, including:

- *'I am better at identifying what is essential in my communication to policy makers'*
- *'Initiating research and programs on "Narratives of the Older Person" towards policy and program development.'*
- *'My presentation skills have improved to include more story flow and easier to follow for the general audience.'*

As a result of the workshop, five respondents had used storytelling skills as a research method, four had designed and implemented storytelling strategies, and two had used storytelling in advocacy for policy change (Figure 12). Overall, respondents considered storytelling skills to be an asset in their professional practices.

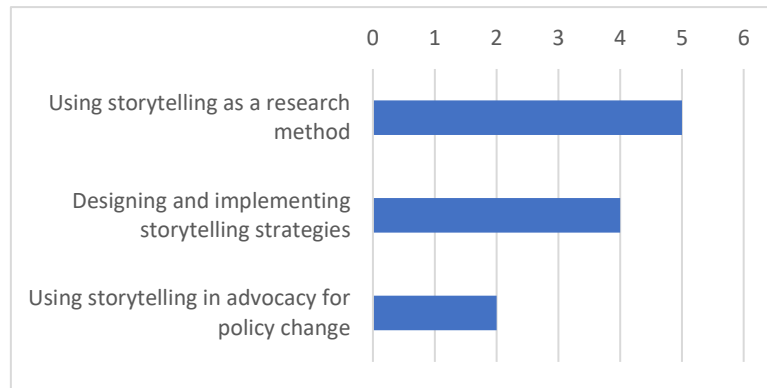


Figure 12: Post-workshop activities

Qualitative Feedback (N=1)

Pasha* is an Indonesian woman in her 20s who teaches Policy Analysis in public health at a local Indonesian university. She participated in the Art of Storytelling workshop in November 2020.

Reflecting on what *"were the best things I can remember from the training"*, Pasha noted on the facilitator-led discussion format stating,

"They always explain first and then asked us to do a discussion in the breakout room. I think that is a very great method".

She also felt the ratio of participants to facilitator was conducive to group discussion noting,

"Even though it's a free training, there aren't many participants, so I feel we can have a great discussion and talk with each other because not so many people in the group".

Reflecting on the topic focused on during the workshop, she felt *"very interesting because the research topic was about gender and how gender works in the health system. Because I don't get enough reference to understand gender issues in the health system, and this was provided by the UNU in their agenda"*.

Pasha reflected on the skills and knowledge acquired from the workshop and how this impacted on current work practices. The method of storytelling introduced in the workshop was novel, and she reflected on this stating, *"Storytelling, the method, it's kind of a new thing for me. So, it's very meaningful for me"*.

Reflecting on transferability of knowledge and skills to others, she noted, *"this is a new kind of method that I think can be easily understood by bachelor's students... it's nice to know there is a new method in policy analysis and to translate policy into practice. So, it's nice to know, and I can*

share this with my students". Illustrating examples of how she used the method in her teaching practice, Pasha stated, "when students ask me to assist or be their mentor in writing a publication, I try to suggest to them that they can use the storytelling method and use it as a framework in writing their article for publication."

Describing elements that could be improved upon in the future, Pasha felt opportunities to network were important and stated, *"I think, one thing I can suggest is the continuity after the workshop itself...I think it's very interesting to see another perspective from other people. So, I am sure that networking with other participants will be great and of course networking with the UNU will be great for us to explore more opportunities"*.

Finally, describing the impact of the workshop, Pasha stated, *"it was very meaningful to upgrade my knowledge but not as a technical thing in policy analysis. Because it is very short course, so I didn't get much upgraded skills. But I really have a better knowledge in the knowledge level and I can talk with other people in my group"*.

*Please note this is a pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participant.

Additional feedback

Respondents indicated that they hope to have more workshops in the future and that it would be beneficial to provide the training with follow-up activities to retain the knowledge and build networking.