EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PUBLIC SECTOR

PRAXIS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Editors:
Paul Kariuki and Gerrit van der Waldt

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M&E Compendium

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Contents

Book Summary

The use of evaluation evidence to inform government policymaking and decisions for programming has gained traction in many countries across the globe. More importantly, there is growing empirical evidence that monitoring and evaluation within the public sector are gaining political recognition. This recognition is important in facilitating the uptake of evaluation results to influence all government policy and decision-making processes. However, the extent to which political recognition is influencing the efficacy of policies, projects, programs, and interventions in the public sector in South Africa remains unclear.

This book focuses on exploring the extent to which government departments, agencies and entities in South Africa use evaluation results to inform their departmental policies and evaluation practices, the challenges experienced, and lessons learned. Moreover, it explores the contribution of various actors such as civil society, parliaments, and academia in evidence generation and their support to the government in the use of evidence towards better policy and decision-making.

In the first introductory chapter, Leonard Chitongo explores the origins and purpose of evidence-informed policy and practice as well as the rationale for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the public sector. He neatly provides an overview of the link between M&E, outcomes-based governance and good governance. He furthermore reveals the link between M&E and overall government performance (i.e., efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and productivity). Moreover, since the value of M&E is to help improve organisational performance, he examines the extent evaluation has contributed to departmental performance across the public sector.

In Chapter 2, Norah Msuya offers her insight into the statutory and regulatory framework as well as international conventions, instruments and benchmarks for evidence use in governance. She shows how these frameworks enable evidence generation and the extent it does or does not support the use of evaluation evidence towards policy and decision-making including the implementation of government plans, inclusive of the use of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System and Performance Management Systems in government departments, agencies and entities.

Ineke Stemmet focuses on the use of evaluation evidence as a catalyst for administrative reforms in Chapter 3 and scrutinises how

reforms promote efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector. The whole point of generating evidence is that it is used to support policymaking and implementation. Ineke thus interrogates the extent to which evaluation results from various government M&E activities influence policymaking and implementation by making use of selected government departments as case studies. These cases provide a contextual understanding of the culture in various monitoring and evaluation praxis.

In Chapter 4, Linda Khumalo and Caitlin Mapitsa probe the politics of the use of evaluations in policymaking in South Africa by highlighting key challenges and potential mitigation strategies. They investigate the role of various political leadership structures in government departments and municipalities including the Executive in influencing the use of evaluation evidence in policy design, financial planning, and implementation of government programmes. Potential political ramifications for rational (scientific, evidence-based) decision-making versus 'popular' (short-termism) decisions are explored. Normative political dimensions associated with policymaking such as openness, transparency, and inclusiveness are also investigated.

Tom Okello explores systems, tools and techniques typically utilised for evidence-based policymaking and analysis in Chapter 5. He provides an overview of knowledge governance and the use of Information and communications technology (ICT) decision support systems, tools and instruments to measure the successes and failures of government policies and programmes.

In Chapter 6, Lizzy Ofusori surveys key actors involved in evidence generation and M&E in the South African public sector. She detects and analyses these actors (i.e., role-players and stakeholders) involved in evidence generation and M&E, inclusive of the Office of the Presidency, Parliament, National Treasury, civil society, and academia.

In the final chapter, Chapter 7, Babette Rabie neatly summarises the content of the publication by delving into the lessons to be learnt and the way forward regarding the use of evidence in policy and practice. She argues that to improve implementation and departmental performance, there needs to be increased use of evaluation results throughout the planning, design, and implementation stages of projects and programs as part of good practices and improved performances. Both senior management and middle-level management teams should use evaluation results. This can also be used for learning purposes and

for providing accountability for actions at governmental level. She also examines the use of evaluation and extrapolates lessons for learning, inclusive of best practices emanating from the international experience in connection with evidence-based governance (i.e., cases from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) and Sweden, etc.). She concludes by recommending interventions required to address current challenges experienced with evidence-based policy and decision-making and reflecting on M&E applications to improve the status quo.

More information about this book series is available at: http://ddp.org.za/blog/publications/

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Abbreviations

AEA	American Evaluation Association
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
AG	Auditor General
ANC	African National Congress
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
ELM	Emfuleni Local Municipality
GWM&E	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IMC	Inter-ministerial Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEIA	Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment
MMC	Member of the Mayoral Committee
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NDHS	National Department of Human Settlements
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000

PFMA	Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999
RCT	Rationale Choice Theory
SAHO	South African History Online
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SEIAS	Socio-economic impact assessment system
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Foreword

With the increased stresses in this world, the pursuit of improving the lives of citizens by those who have a passion for service delivery is a long-trodden path. Actively participating in the transformation of the public sector, I am indeed honoured and blessed to have been given this opportunity by my good friend Dr Paul Kariuki, editor and author of this book, to pen the Foreword for this inaugural book on monitoring and evaluation by the DDP in South Africa.

Dr Paul Kariuki and I, undertook our doctoral studies at approximately the same time, under the supervision and mentorship of Professor P.S. Reddy. This provided an opportunity for us to collaborate and support each other in our academia and through our doctoral studies and has led to a great friendship. Active participation in monitoring and evaluation has the end goal of transforming the lives of the country's citizens, and both Paul and I share these values. With contributions towards both academia and the practical implementation of monitoring and evaluation, we have both been able to impact decision-making in the field. Dr Paul Kariuki has contributed greatly to the monitoring and evaluation profession as a whole and amongst his defining moments in the profession, is the establishment of the KwaZulu-Natal Monitoring and Evaluation Forum, which sought to bring together like-minded thought-leaders in the monitoring and evaluation space.

The attention to monitoring and evaluation by the political arm has increased over the years, thereby, providing an opportunity to utilise evaluation studies to influence decision-making and policymaking within government. Whilst pursuing a career in auditing, I was fortunate enough to have been given the challenge of establishing the Performance Management Unit, which later was changed to the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit within the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa, in the year 2007. As the head of the department with more than 30 years of experience in both auditing and performance management, as well as monitoring and evaluation, I believe that the content of this book on evidence-informed policy and practice lends great value to the profession, especially within the public sector.

Since the introduction of the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework within government, by the National Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, the rollout of

evaluation studies has been mainly focused on national and provincial government departments. It is only in the last few years, that local government has introduced evaluation studies of programs and projects. In particular, the eThekwini Municipality has been one of the key metropolitans in spear-heading this roll-out, to the extent, that it has collaborated with all other metropolitan municipalities in South Africa and founded the Metropolitan Monitoring & Evaluation Learning Network; and the Local Government Monitoring and Evaluation Community of Practice. These forums in particular address the concerns and issues raised in the book regarding the use of evidence in policymaking government, by collaborating with various levels of government and organisations to improve the implementation of evaluation studies at the local government level.

Having identified the huge role and impact that evidence-based decision-making can have on improving service delivery within communities, the eThekwini Municipality is one of the leading municipalities in the implementation of evaluation studies within the local government environment in South Africa. The challenges experienced by the level of government closest to the people are often understated, leading to an in-balance in the allocation of funding and support required by local government and inappropriate policymaking. The responsibility is then on those in local government to deal with communities who lash out their frustration at the level of government closest to the people. Therefore, it is of absolute importance that evidence that has been identified during evaluation studies undertaken within the public sector, be used as the foundation to set the tone and influence policymaking within the Government. The contributions of the authors of this inaugural book lend support to this critical thinking regarding evidence-based policymaking.

Dr Kariuki, with his co-editor of this book, Professor Gerrit van der Waldt, has gathered several esteemed professionals in the monitoring and evaluation field, to author this book on monitoring and evaluation, with emphasis on policymaking in the public sector environment.

This book will benefit the readers, especially those involved in political decision-making, planning, policymaking, monitoring, evaluation, and research work as well as any other reader who is

interested in this subject matter, as it will provide critical information for policymaking at the public sector level.

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About the Volume Editors and Authors

Co-Editors Bios

Dr. Paul Kariuki holds a PhD in administration from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). He is the Executive Director of the Democracy Development Program (DDP), a national not-for-profit organisation and think tank based in Durban, South Africa. Moreover, he is a research fellow at the School of Management, IT, and Governance, UKZN. He is an alumnus of the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science, and Technology (CREST), University Stellenbosch, where he did his training in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Kariuki's research interests are in governance, digital transformation, public participation, elections, electronic governance, local government, migration, cybersecurity as well as M&E in the public sector. He has published research articles in peer-reviewed journals in these areas of interest and co-edited several books on various themes. Furthermore, he is a guest reviewer of several journals in Africa and abroad. Additionally, he is a regular contributor to various social and political issues in the mainstream electronic and print media in South Africa and abroad.

Prof Gerrit van der Waldt is a research professor in public governance, attached to North-West University. He is a National Research Foundation-rated researcher and is the author and co-author of 51 text books, 142 scholarly articles, and 95 internal handbooks for institutions nationally and internationally such as the Swedish Institute of Public Administration (SIPU), the Rwanda Local Government Association (RALGA), the Vrije University (Amsterdam), and the African Cities Network. Van der Waldt's main areas of specialisation are governance-related domains such as project management, performance management, and sustainable development.

Authors' Bios

Prof Leonard Chitongo is a hardworking and self-motivated individual who is always excited to face new challenges in his academic and professional career. He is an associate professor in the Department of Development Sciences at Marondera University

of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Zimbabwe. Chitongo has a strong interest in researching issues that affect human socio-economic development. To date, he has published several articles on rural and urban resilience, housing, livelihoods, and public policy.

Dr Linda Khumalo has over eight years of experience in monitoring, evaluation, research, learning (MERL), and evidence-informed policy decision-making initiatives. She has rich experience in public and private sector evaluations, data management processes, developing MERL systems and performance improvement projects. Khumalo's expertise has focused on strengthening evidence systems to improve organisational management systems and the effective use of data in supporting learning and policymaking. In her work with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR-AA) spanning four years, she worked with African parliaments and other government stakeholders, facilitating evidence use in policy and decision-making and advocating for the use of evaluation results for greater development outcomes.

Prof Caitlin Blaser-Mapitsa is an associate professor in M&E at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Governance. Her research looks at understanding change and decision-making processes in the border areas of socio-ecological systems. She supports transdisciplinary teams in both research and evaluation practice.

Dr Norah Msuya is an academician and practising lawyer. She has published and lectured widely on public international law, human rights, administrative law, and corporate law. Msuya is also a coordinator and founder member of the Tanzania Legal Aid Organization for Women and Children, a non-governmental organisation that provides legal assistance and education to women and children in Tanzania. Her academic publications cover a wide range of subjects on violence against children and gender-based violence, including constitutionalism, rule of law and judiciary in South Africa, practices that facilitate the trafficking of children and child marriage as an obstacle to socio-economic development in Africa.

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Prof Tom Okello is a professor at the Walter Sisulu University (WSU) in the Biological and Environmental Studies Department. He has over 15 years of university teaching in environmental health, geospatial, and geography. His mission is to train the next generation of scholars in Geosciences Utilizing, modern tools such as remote sensing, the Geographic Information System (GIS), and spatial analysis for a fresh perspective on the world, the environment, and the relationship between people and the environment. Prior to joining WSU, Okello was a senior lecturer and program director for geosciences and biological sciences at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He also served as a project director and research specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa. He spent five years as a senior resident lecturer at the School for Field Studies and the Centre for Wildlife Management Studies, in Kenya, Tanzania, Turks & Caicos Island, and the United States where he lectured on environmental policy, socio-economic studies, and public health field practicum. He is a former visiting scholar at the Indian Vision Institute, Hyderabad. Okello is an M&E practitioner and a lead expert in environmental impact assessment. He is a former research and postdoctoral fellow at the Nelson Mandela University, South Africa.

Prof Babette Rabie is an associate professor at the School of Public Leadership, University Stellenbosch. She offers formal and executive training in policy writing and public sector M&E. Her research focuses on increasing the availability and uptake of evidence in policy decision-making and increasing government performance through M&E evidence.

Ms. Ineke Stemmet is a research, development, and operations coordinator at the Southern African Liaison Office. She has a social science bachelor's degree in politics, philosophy, and economics (PPE) and an honours degree in international relations from University Stellenbosch. She is a master's graduate at Leiden University in international relations, specialising in "Global Conflict in the Modern Era". Ineke has contributed a chapter to the Democracy Development Program's book, *Gender, Race, and Politics in South Africa: Towards Diverse, Inclusive, and Transformed Political Leadership*. She has worked with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on conflict analysis and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. She is interested in gender equality, conflict studies, and LGBTQIA+ issues.

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Mbiere Francois Sakata is a professional economist with many years of experience, specialising in economics and finance, particularly in affordable housing. He holds a bachelor's degree in commerce, a BCom in economics from the University of Johannesburg, an MBA from the Tshwane University of Technology, and has recently completed a master's in M&E at the University of the Witwatersrand. With a background as an executive financial planner at prominent South African financial institutions, he joined the National Department of Human Settlements in 2008. Currently serving as Deputy Director, he focuses on the Human Settlements Development Grant. Recently, Sakata has been awarded a scholarship to attend the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training at the University of Bern in Switzerland financed by the World Bank.

Chapter 1
Origins and Purpose of Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice and the Rationale for Monitoring and Evaluation in the Public Sector

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Abstract

Public policy analysis has taken centre stage in the governance discourse. This chapter traces the origins and dynamics of evidence-informed policy and practice in this discourse. To assess available evidence for effective public policies and programmes in the public sector the study adopts a case study qualitative research approach. Various monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms across sectors are reviewed to compare them with the efficacy of those in the South African public sector. It is argued that good governance principles and evidence-informed policy and practice ensure greater efficiency and positive outcomes of environmental, social and economic development policies. It is evident that synergies should exist between M&E on the one hand and outcome-based governance on the other. It is further clear that M&E mechanisms generally lead to improved organisational performance in the public sector. The chapter concluded that public institutions with effective M&E systems have higher resilience capabilities to cope with shocks and stresses characterising the public sector. It is recommended that an integrated and holistic approach to M&E should be pursued, thereby fostering improved policy and practice in the public sector.

Keywords: monitoring, evaluation, policy, evidence-based policy, evidence-informed policy, governance, public sector.

Introduction

Public policy can be regarded as the broad framework of ideas and values within which decisions are taken and actions, or inaction, is pursued by governments in relation to some issue or problem (Brooks, 1989:16). According to Wildavsky (1979), comprehension of public policy depends on the context in which it is applied. The same applies to policy analysis where various approaches are used depending on the particular circumstances and situations. Since scholars have different cultures, norms and beliefs and follow different scientific traditions and conventions, an interpretivist approach is usually more appropriate to frame public policy and the analysis thereof.

According to Broadbent (2012), evidence-based policy has become synonymous with policies considered to be scientifically sound, objective, long-term in focus and implicitly 'better' than policies not based on research-based evidence. In addition, evidence has the potential to improve political decisions by contributing to the degree of objectivity, as opposed to other decision-making factors, such as the decision-making context, personal norms and values, or the interplay of actors involved in a decision (Shaxson, Datta, Tshangela & Matomela, 2016).

The study is informed by rational choice theory (RCT) which is based on the concept of rational action. RCT is characterised as a school of thought or an approach to comprehending the dynamics associated with public policy. It can therefore be regarded as a "family of theories" rather than a single theory (Green & Shapiro, 1994:28). This chapter traces the origins and dynamics of evidence-informed policy and practice. Furthermore, it analyses the efficacy of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as an instrument to build policy resilience in the public sector.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach, which is largely based on a review of secondary sources of data. The document review sources include academic journals and a multiplicity of internet sources. A desk top review as a data collection method was used to collect, organise and synthesise extant information (Shuttleworth, 2008). Furthermore, data was drawn from interviews conducted with policy analysts, government officials and academics. Newspaper articles that carried stories regarding evidence-informed and evidence-based

practices were also used to analyse possible prospects and challenges of policy implementation A thematic approach was used to analyse and present data. This aided in formulating recommendations for future policy interventions. The study contributes to the debate regarding the growing importance of M&E in the policy decision-making process.

Trends in South Africa's Policy Process

The South African context of the policymaking process after democratisation in 1994 presents a unique perspective. The policymaking process and subsequent policies have been influenced by various approaches. After democratisation in 1994, when the African National Congress (ANC) obtained majority rule, the political landscape changed and so did the priority concerns of government. This necessitated a shift in policymaking processes to address socio-economic inequality and imbalances. According to Hanekom and Sharansky (1993), the conditions that prevailed between 1994 and 1999 were very uncertain and the policymaking process was aimed at redirecting policies to match social needs. Maseng (2014) asserts that one characteristic of the new policymaking process was the involvement of non-state actors in decision-making. Civil society has become an integral part of the contemporary socio-political space and has been a central force in influencing policy decisions while reinforcing democratic practice.

The major public policy actors in South Africa are the government and the ruling political party. The government and ANC as the dominant party have separate decision-making structures although some processes may overlap in function, authority and people involved. Public policy formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation therefore follow similar paths, although a distinction can be made between administrative (i.e., government) and party-political decisions.

The primary coordinating body for policymaking in the South African Government is the Cabinet, comprising the President, the Deputy President and ministers. The Cabinet constitutes the executive arm of government. Representing the legislative authority, Parliament is made up of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). The National Assembly is responsible for making laws to govern the country and the NCOP represents all nine provinces in policy decisions (SAHO, 2011). Party politics inevitably influences decision-making since representatives in the Cabinet, Parliament

and the NCOP are seconded by their respective political parties. This implies that party ideology and priority concerns ultimately influence public policy (i.e., national legislation). Finally, the judicial authority is vested in courts (RSA, 2019). Collectively, these authorities retain their independence but based on the principles of checks and balances and *trias politica* (separation of powers), perform vital oversight regarding the functioning of each other.

It should be noted that policy processes can be regarded as a network of actors drawn from the state, the international community and civil society. Actors include political parties; government departments, entities and agencies; non-governmental organisations; the private sector; international aid and donor agencies; the media; interest and pressure groups; community-based organisations; and other civil society organisations. In addition, research institutions, universities and think tanks such as the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), and agencies such as the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) or Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) engage in multidisciplinary research to influence policy. They have an interest in a broad range of socio-economic problems. They employ a variety of expertise that enables them to develop a more comprehensive perspective of policy problems. By making their analyses of policy problems known, they may ultimately influence policy direction.

All the network actors try to influence public policy and exert pressure on political decision-makers regarding their business interests and ideological ideas. The challenge therefore for policy decision-makers is to remain unbiased, and objective and make decisions in the best interest of society. In some instances, prominent actors may sponsor election campaigns of political parties, thus exerting significant influence on the political direction and priorities of those parties. Public decision-makers should thus avoid a situation where pressure and interest groups representing vast financial resources unduly distort decisions in their favour.

As alluded to, academic and research institutions play a significant role in problem analysis, policy formulation and policy adoption. Government-funded research institutions such as the CSIR, the HSRC, and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) receive between 30% and 60% of their budget from the state. State funding comes with a defined degree of accountability towards the government, but at the same time guarantees the basic functioning of the institutions (McGann, 2018). Their main tasks

include conducting and coordinating research, advising the relevant minister regarding research priorities, and offering training. The work of these institutions has to be in line with broad government directives such as the *National Development Plan: Vision 2030* (NPC, 2011) that defines specific developmental outcomes.

Rational Choice Theory

The main building blocks of rationale choice theory (RCT) include rationality, rank-ordered and consistent preferences, methodological individualism and deductive reasoning (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). The assumption of rationality posits that individuals in the policy process are rational actors and that their behaviour is best explained by imputing some level of rationality on to them. The assumption is that rational actors are bound to maximise or optimise benefits given a variety of options. However, achieving complete rationality is challenging, given the limitations of time, resources and personal preferences. This means that rationality is usually bounded. Bounded rationality refers to the way that policy actors make decisions that depart from perfect rationality because their rationality is limited by thinking capacity, available information, resource constraints, time, and ideological differences. Moreover, in an ever-changing environment, the future is unpredictable. Instead of making the most rational choice, policy actors therefore often make choices that will yield maximum benefits and perceived most positive outcomes. As such, mainstream RCT lends itself towards explanations of policy outcomes grounded in the goal-oriented action of individuals where the desires, beliefs, and preferences of individual actors influence decisions (Green & Shapiro, 1994:20).

Scholars such as Udehn (1996) argue that the self-interest of policy actors often leads to failure to recognise the collective motivations of individuals or groups in the policy process. Policy actors are just as likely to be motivated by group interests or altruistic public concerns as their narrow self-interest; and, as such, self-interest cannot be simply imputed on or read into every action of an individual throughout the process of decision-making. The ultimate test for rationality in decision-making in the policy domain is whether they are taken in the public interest and whether positive broad-based societal outcomes are achieved.

Evidence-Based Practice vs Evidence-Informed Policy Decisions

Evidence-based policymaking augments the technocratic (i.e., rational, objective) model, as it implies that scientific results are a determining factor for political decisions. In contrast, evidence-informed policymaking seems to reflect the decisionist (i.e., concerns and preferences of decision-makers) approach, as it suggests that evidence is but one influencing factor alongside other determinants, such as the circumstances in which decisions were made. Both models face the problem of legitimacy and socio-political sustainability. As for the decisionist model, political decisions lack independence and rationality because they are not based on scientific facts and knowledge. The legitimacy of those decisions can therefore be questioned. In contrast, the legitimacy of technocratic decisions can be challenged due to the dependence on scientific input and the lack of participation by the public in the decision-making process (DIE, 2016:4).

Technocratic, science-based approaches to decision-making validate empirical evidence. Yet, public policy is subject to a complex interplay of socio-economic conditions and political realities (Jasanoff, 1990). It should also be noted that scientific facts (evidence-based decisions) are temporary and provisional, representing only current conditions. This reality necessitates a more balanced approach which oscillates between rationality (evidence-based decisions) and subjectivity (evidence-informed decisions) to align and integrate facts and societal values. It is undisputed that the sustainability of public policies is dependent on social legitimacy, requiring the participation of citizens. It is thus counterproductive to only base public policy on evidence (scientific facts), thereby ignoring the values, concerns, aspirations, and needs of communities which have to adhere to these policies.

Mass-elite theory of public policy holds that only a small group of elites participate and influence public policy. The masses are simply apathetic or ill-informed and do not meaningfully participate. This brings the challenge of whose interests will ultimately be served by policies to the fore. Ideally, public policy should be redistributive in nature, implying that broader societal interests should be served. In other words, policy should result in the prosperity, well-being, and improvement of the standard of living of everybody, inclusive of marginalised and vulnerable groups in society.

Up to the 1990's the policy arena was mainly shaped by logic-positivism (science-based empirical methods and evidence) (Fox & Miller, 1995). There was an emphasis on quantitative policy analysis, the objective separation of facts and values, and the search for generalisable findings whose validity would be independent of the particular social context from which they were drawn. However, during the last two decades, a growing number of policy analysts have focused on the role of argumentation or so-called "deliberative" policy analysis (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:6). Argumentative or deliberative policy analysis mainly emerged to address the limitation of logic-positivism or evidence-based, technocratic policy analysis. It is evident that public policy analysis has undergone a paradigm shift from 'things' (evidence-based, scientific facts) to 'people'. This implies a more balanced interpretivist (evidence-informed) approach which also puts emphasis on values, norms and people's perceptions.

Towards a More Balanced Framework for Policy Analysis

Policy analysis emerged to inform the rational model of decision-making, or what Stone (1988:81) has called the "rationality project". In this model, rational decision-makers are seen to follow logical analytical steps that closely parallel the requirements of scientific research. Decision-makers first empirically identify a problem, and then formulate the objectives and goals that would lead to an optimal solution. After determining the relevant probabilities and consequences associated with the alternative means to the solution, analysts assign numerical values to the various costs and benefits related to the predicted outcomes. Combining the information and evidence about probabilities, consequences, and costs and benefits, they select the perceived most efficient and effective alternative.

Policy analysis has been a matter of applying empirically-based technical methodologies, such as cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment to the technical aspects of all policy problems. Despite the devotion of a large amount of time, money, and energy to this form of policy analysis, it has confronted considerable difficulty in supplying policy decision-makers with the kind of problem-oriented knowledge that was expected from policy analysts. Missing have been the often-promised solutions to pressing economic and social problems. The field is seen to have generated far too little "usable knowledge" (Fischer, 1995:2). This concern first emerged as a problem of "knowledge utilisation". Thus, discussions emerged to bridge the gaps between

policy research (evidence) and the application of evidence in socio-political contexts. There is recognition that policy analysts should provide answers or solutions to challenges facing contemporary societies. This recognition has led to the alignment and integration of empirical and normative inquiry together in a more deliberative framework for policy analysis.

Evaluation plays a crucial role in policy analysis by providing a systematic and objective assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of policies. It helps policymakers and analysts understand whether policies are achieving their intended outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and make evidence-based decisions.

Evolution of Policy Evaluation

There are three phases in the development of evaluation over the past forty years: the first wave of evaluation was during the 1960s and 1970s, the second wave began in the mid-1970s, and the third wave set in since the 1990s (Mayer, 1997).

First Wave: The 1960s- and 1970s

During the 1960s and 1970s, the advent of the advanced welfare state was accompanied by the concept of enhancing the ability of the state to provide proactive policymaking through the modernisation of its political and administrative structures in the pursuit of which the institutionalisation and employment of planning, information, and evaluation capacities were seen as instrumental. The concept of a "policy cycle" revolved around policy formation, implementation, and termination, whereby evaluation was deemed crucial as a loop in gathering and feeding back policy-relevant information. The underlying scientific logic and vision of a science-driven policy model were epitomised by Donald Campbell's famous call for an experimenting society ("reforms as experiments", Campbell, 1969). In the United States, the rise of evaluation came with the inauguration of federal social action programs such as the War on Poverty in the mid-1960s under President Johnson with evaluation routinely mandated by reform legislation, turning policy and program evaluation into a growth industry. Large-scale social experimentation with accompanying major evaluation followed suit. In Europe, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom became the frontrunners of this "first wave" of evaluation (Mayer, 1997).

Mayer (1997) noted that reflecting the reformist consensus, the evaluation projects supported the reformist policies and were meant to improve policy results and maximise output effectiveness. The heyday of the interventionist welfare state policies proved to be short-lived, when, following the first oil price rise of 1973, the world economy slid into a deepening recession and the national budgets ran into a worsening financial squeeze that brought most of the cost-intensive reform policies to a grinding halt. This led to the "second wave".

Second Wave: Mid–1970

As policymaking came to be dictated by the calls for budgetary retrenchment and cost-saving, the mandate of policy evaluation was redefined with the aim of reducing the costs of policies and programmes, if not phasing them out (Lynn, 1999). In this second wave of evaluation, it focused on the cost-efficiency of policies and programmes.

The Third Wave: Since the 1990s

The concepts of "new public management" have come to dominate the international modernisation discourse and public sector reform in many countries with internal evaluation forming an integral part of the "public management package" and giving new momentum to evaluative procedures (Reschenthaler & Thompson, 1996:5). In several policy fields, evaluation has gained salience in laying bare the existing policy shortcomings and in identifying the potential for reforms and improvements (Fox & Miller, 1995).

Policy M&E in the South African Public Sector

In a bid to improve service delivery in South Africa, the Government has created the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) system that would help gauge performance across all spheres of government. This has compelled public sector institutions to adopt and implement M&E systems mandatorily, even when they are not necessarily ready for it (Eresia-Eke & Boadu, 2019). In more mature democracies, the value of implementing M&E derives from the idea that public programmes should be assessed since they emanate from political decisions with which the ruling political party anticipates achieving certain outcomes (Ile, Eresia-Eke and Ile, 2019).

In the South African public sector, the need to implement M&E systems stems from a political decision. It therefore enjoys considerable political support and has become strongly imbedded in statutory and regulatory prescripts. White (2005) argues that the adoption of M&E praxis can be regarded as a public sector reform strategy aiming at transforming outdated public sector practices.

One area of public sector reform is the adoption of good governance principles. Building M&E systems helps strengthen governance in countries by improving transparency, strengthening accountability relationships, and building a performance culture. These good governance principles generally support policymaking processes, inclusive of budgeting and management functions. Evaluation in the field of public policy involves investigating policy programmes to obtain all information pertinent to the assessment of its performance and reporting such information back to the policymaking process (Wollmann, 2003). It is a time-bound exercise that systematically and objectively assesses the relevance, performance, challenges and successes of service delivery programmes and projects. Policy analysts utilise evaluation tools and techniques to identify gaps in implementation, extract lessons to be learned and highlight best practices. Evidence gained from evaluation allows policymakers and public officials to better design and implement policies. The general aim is to continuously assess successes and failures thereby improving future government actions. In this regard, Walt and Gilson (1994) maintain that the results of evaluation exercises should always be fed back into the policy debate, generating new and shared ideas to strengthen future policy.

Two types of evaluation can be distinguished, namely ex-ante and ex-post evaluation. Ex-ante evaluation can be regarded as a forward-looking assessment based on past experience to anticipate or pre-assess the effects and consequences of planned policies and actions in order to feed the information into the decision-making process. If undertaken on alternative courses of policies and actions, ex-ante evaluation is an instrument for choosing between policy alternatives. It includes pre-assessments which are meant to analytically anticipate the course of policy implementation.

Ongoing evaluation has the task of identifying the (interim) effects and results of policy programmes and measures during implementation. The essential function of ongoing evaluation is to feed relevant information back into the implementation process at a point and stage when pertinent information can be used to adjust,

correct or redirect the implementation process or even underlying key policy decisions. It therefore runs parallel to the policy implementation process. Within the ongoing evaluation, one can discern between an analytical modality that remains detached or distanced from the implementation process to retain objectivity (May, Shand, Mackay, Rojas & Saavedra, 2006). The term interventionist accompanying evaluation has been applied when the evaluators are expected to actively intervene in the implementation process to rectify shortcomings and flaws in the implementation process jeopardising the attainment of the pre-set policy goals. In this context, policy monitoring can be seen as an ongoing evaluative procedure which aims at assessing and measuring the effects of ongoing activities (May, Shand, Mackay, Rojas & Saavedra, 2006).

Ex-post evaluation assesses the goal attainment and effects of policies once they have been implemented. This type of evaluation is also called programme evaluation or summative evaluation. It is meant to produce an assessment of the degree to which the intended policy goals have been achieved (Shaxson, Datta, Tshangela & Matomela, 2016). Measurable performance indicators are typically used to make such an assessment of goal attainment possible. Besides identifying the intended outcomes, the assessment of the effects of policy programmes should also assess non-intended consequences.

Meta-evaluation is meant to analyse an already completed (primary) evaluation using a kind of secondary analysis. There are two types of meta-evaluation. Methodology-reviewing ma-evaluation is a meta-evaluation that reviews the already completed piece of (primary) evaluation as to whether it is up to methodological criteria and standards. Synthesising meta-evaluation is a meta-evaluation that accumulates the substantive findings of the already completed (primary) evaluation and synthesises the results. While evaluation aims at giving a comprehensive picture of what has happened in the policy field, encompassing successful as well as unsuccessful courses of events, the best practice approach tends to pick up and tell success stories of reform policies, with the analytical intention of identifying the factors that explain the success, and with the applied learning purpose to foster lesson drawing from such experience in the intranational as well as in the inter- and transnational contexts.

As stated, M&E in the South African public sector enjoys sufficient political support since it represents an initiative for broad-based transformation. It is also used as a means to promote good governance, development and democracy and a means of support

to a developmental state and to eradicate the legacy of apartheid (Mackay, 2007). The Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 and the implementation of the Medium Term Strategic and Expenditure Frameworks in South Africa, have made it necessary to define and align activities and spending around clearly defined objectives. These reforms have led to major improvements in planning and implementation and encouraged a focus on service delivery quality and impact. With the decentralisation of accountability, line managers have become more responsible for non-core functions, such as human resource development and equity (Taylor & Balloch, 2005).

Policymaking is supposed to contribute to problem-solving or at least to the reduction of the problem load. During the evaluation stage of the policy cycle, these intended outcomes of policies move into the centre of attention. Policymaking should be appraised against intended objectives and impacts. Evaluation is not only associated with the final stage in the policy cycle that either ends with the termination of the policy or its redesign based on modified problem perception and agenda-setting. Evaluation forms a separate sub-discipline in the policy sciences that focuses on the intended results and unintended consequences of policies. Evaluation is not restricted to a particular stage in the policy cycle; instead, the perspective is applied to the whole policymaking process and from different perspectives in terms of timing.

Evaluation was perceived as a way to systematically apply the idea of experimental testing of new policy options in a controlled setting (Wollmann, 1984). Attempts to establish evaluation exercises as part of politics-free policymaking have been widely regarded as failures. Their results were contested as being largely dependent on the inherent and often implicit values on which the evaluation was based (Fischer, 1990). The role of evaluation in the policy process goes far beyond the scope of scientific evaluation studies. Policy evaluation takes place as a regular and embedded part of the political process and debate. Scientific evaluation has been distinguished from administrative evaluations conducted or initiated by the public administration and political evaluations carried out by diverse actors in the political arena, including the wider public and the media (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003:210).

Discussion

From the foregoing, it is evident that policies are not developed and implemented in context-free environments. Policies are aimed at addressing specific social concerns such as economic prosperity, education, and health. Cloete, Rabie and De Coning (2014) maintain that implementers should pay attention to challenges emanating from contextual influence which impact effective implementation processes; corridors through which implementation must pass and reflect the realities of the systems which shape the policy and its implementations. Sometimes implementers need to bargain, accommodate various perceptions, be threatened, display respect gestures and cajole to build effective working relations that would enable successful implementation processes.

The pragmatic model of policy analysis argues that policy should be based on practical experiences. The pragmatic model goes beyond "traditional, linear thinking" (Lompe, 2006:30) and incorporates evidence-informed and rational perspectives in policy analysis. Pragmatists regard policymakers as humans with their own personal values, morals, norms, preferences and experiences. Moreover, pragmatists maintain that it is impossible to have perfect knowledge of the policy problem. In addition, there are usually significant time gaps between policy problem identification and policy implementation. Additionally, decision-makers often want to implement policies within an election cycle or another relatively short period to ensure their re-election (Godfrey, Funke & Mbizvo, 2010; Strydom, Funke, Nienaber, Nortje & Steyn, 2010:3). A pragmatic approach therefore entails that a more integrated and balanced approach to policymaking and policy analysis should be followed (Haldenwang & Alker, 2009; Strydom, Funke, Nienaber, Nortje & Steyn, 2010:2).

It is furthermore evident that the sustainability of policies can be affected by the non-involvement of key actors as well as limited institutional readiness to implement public policy. Scholars like Messner (2003:179) assert that organisational theory holds that organisational change is a slow process requiring "complex learning" to modify existing values, practices and procedures to cope with new situations (i.e., policy implementation). In this regard, political parallels can be drawn between the readiness of public institutions to adapt to new radical policies such as those proposed by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). The EFF has come up with a political ideology of "radicalism, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism" (Malema,

2013). In the event that they are elected to office as the majority party, public policy and governance systems would need to radically adjust.

Arguably, the maturity or readiness of public institutions to adopt and adapt suitable M&E systems and practices is at its infancy stage. M&E systems need to be closely structured around existing planning and management frameworks and should be clearly integrated with political directives (Shaxson, Datta, Tshangela & Matomela, 2016). This implies that M&E systems should be adequately supported by reporting, control and governance arrangements as well as the allocation of suitable resources and expertise. In addition, M&E should be supported by information technology systems to generate policy-related evidence.

Conclusion

Public policymaking practices in South Africa have made significant adjustments since democratisation. Public institutions are required to adopt M&E practices to support both evidence-based and evidence-informed policy decisions and to foster accountability and transparency in governance. Policy analysts face several challenges as decision-making processes are complex and change over time. Policy decisions emerge in unpredictable and often unobservable ways, while divergent preferences of a multitude of policy actors further complicate the assessment of policies.

Effective and efficient policies require robust policy evidence and analysis. The analysis of public policy should combine rationality and subjectivity by incorporating both facts and values. It is clear that evidence-informed practice is more inclusive than evidence-based practice alone. It is therefore recommended that a pragmatic and integrated approach to policy analysis should be pursued to promote a more balanced perspective on public policy processes and outcomes.

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Chapter 2
Statutory and Regulatory Framework, International Instruments, and Benchmarks for Evidence Use in Governance

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Abstract

This chapter explores the international and national legal frameworks and benchmarks for evidence use in governance. Legal standards and principles provide a set of values to guide the work of governments and other political and social actors. They also offer a set of performance standards against which actors can be held accountable. Moreover, statutory and regulatory principles inform the content of reasonable governance efforts; they may inform the development of legislative frameworks, policies, programmes, budgetary allocations and other measures. By presenting benchmarks, and statutory and regulatory frameworks from around the world to design and carry out governance reform, this chapter examines the African perspective on the nature and scope of evidence gap maps for good governance by means of statutory prescripts and international best practices. The use of evidence is not limited to informing the policymaking processes. However, it is also crucial to identify the positive and negative consequences of public interventions, while quality evidence can contribute to learning how to maximise benefits and minimise damages of public interventions. The findings of this chapter can strengthen the evidence and decision-making interface, bringing greater understanding and support to the role of knowledge brokerage organisations in their efforts to improve public sector effectiveness in Africa.

Keywords: governance, statutory framework, regulatory frameworks, benchmarks, evidence used, national and international instruments.

Introduction

The concept of "governance" is as old as human civilisation. It involves the process of making the decision and the implementation of the decision. There are several contexts of governance, including corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. The process of decision-making and the process of implementing the decisions made in governance involves formal and informal actors and structures. One of the prominent actors in governance is the government. Depending on the level of government that is under discussion, other actors involved in governance differ. Actors in rural areas may include associations of peasant farmers, influential landlords, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, research institutes, cooperatives, religious leaders, the military, financial institutions and political parties. At the national level, in addition to the above, actors such as the media, international donors, lobbyists, and multi-national corporations, may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process.

Formal government structures are among the means by which decisions are made and implemented. Informal decision-making structures or informal advisors also exist, influencing decision-making. According to Sheng (2022), such informal decision-making is often the result of corrupt practices or may lead to corrupt practices. In a nutshell, governance denotes all processes of governing, the institutions, processes and practices through which issues of common societal concern are decided upon and regulated.

This chapter is a product of a qualitative study designed to explore an African perspective on the nature and scope of evidence gap maps for good governance employing statutory prescripts and international best practise. A systematic desk review approach was conducted to attain the exploration intended in this study. Analyses of qualitative data are mainly undertaken in an inductive thematic manner. The chapter seeks to answer three questions; How do international law instruments form the basis of good governance? How do statutory and regulatory frameworks maintain good governance? Furthermore, why is it valuable to use benchmarks for evidence in governance?

Good governance: A conceptual exposition

Notions of "good" governance add a normative or evaluative attribute to the process of governing. It refers to the effective and responsible management of public affairs, characterised by "transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and respect for human rights" (UNDL, 1997:2). The World Bank's definition of good governance states that good governance denotes:

> [The] manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development … [I]t encompasses the processes by which decisions are made and implemented, and the extent to which citizens can voice their interests and hold public officials accountable (Preston, 1992:8).

Good governance also refers to a system of governing that promotes inclusivity, responsiveness, and efficiency, ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and fostering social cohesion. It involves "the active engagement of citizens, protection of civil liberties, and adherence to legal frameworks" (IDEA, 2008:3). In turn, the Asian Development Bank defines good governance as characterised by the ethical conduct of public officials, fostering public trust and confidence. It involves the "effective utilisation of resources, sound decision-making processes, and the promotion of fairness, justice, and equity" (Asian Development Bank, 2001:4).

These definitions provide different perspectives on good governance. They emphasise vital principles such as transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, responsiveness, and ethical conduct. It is universally accepted that good governance generally entails the prevalence of eight principles, namely transparency, accountability, responsibility, participation, responsiveness to the needs of the people, equitable, following the rule of law, and effectiveness and efficiency. Good governance should minimise corruption, consider the views of minorities and consider the voices of the most vulnerable in society in decision-making. It should also take responsibility for society's current and future needs and legitimacy, access to knowledge, information and education, political empowerment of people, equity, sustainability, and attitudes and values that foster responsibility, solidarity and tolerance (Sheng, 2022). In short, good governance refers to the political and institutional processes and results that are crucial to attaining development. The objective evidence of good governance is the extent to which it

delivers on the promise of the rule of law, and civil, cultural, political, economic, and social rights (Mahmod, 2023).

Statutory and Regulatory Framework for Good Governance

The rule of law in good governance means a legal framework that establishes and provides power to the government and that rules and regulations explicitly provide powers and jurisdiction to the authorities (Mahmod, 2023). Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires complete protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force (Addink, 2019).

Governments must have good and fair legal frameworks, including institutions and processes, to ensure stability, accountability, equality and access to justice for all. Further, it involves complete protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. This eventually results in respect for human rights and the environment, leading to decreased levels of corruption and violent conflict. A solid statutory and regulatory framework affects everything about where people work and how they live (Addink, 2019). By having an excellent legal system, governments give businesses and society the stability of knowing that all rights are respected and protected. A comprehensive legal framework includes, among other things, unambiguously written and easily accessible legislation that establishes certainty and enforceability of legal rights: An independent and impartial judiciary that upholds justice and ensures transparent, timely and predictable resolution of disputes; Effective and efficient public institutions that empower communities and individuals to make affirmative input to the economy and society (Addink, 2019).

Statutory and Regulatory Framework for Good Governance in South Africa

South Africa has made significant strides in establishing a statutory and regulatory framework to promote good governance in the country. The framework encompasses various laws, regulations, and oversight mechanisms that aim to ensure transparency, accountability, and integrity in public and private sector organisations. The Constitution of South Africa, adopted in 1996, serves as a cornerstone for promoting good governance in the country. The foundational legal document sets

out the principles of good governance, including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. It provides the basis for other statutory laws and regulations related to governance. The Constitution lays the foundation for a democratic and accountable government, enshrines fundamental rights and freedoms, and establishes principles that guide public administration and governance, as outlined below.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Section 1 of the Constitution establishes South Africa as a constitutional democracy, with a government elected through free and fair elections. It ensures the participation of citizens in decision-making processes, fostering transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. Section 1(c) of the Constitution emphasises the rule of law as one of the founding values of the Republic. The Constitution upholds the principle of the rule of law, which means that everyone, including the government, is subject to and accountable to the law. It promotes the idea that laws should be clear, predictable, and applied consistently, ensuring fair treatment and protecting individuals' rights. Furthermore, the Constitution provides for the separation of powers among the three branches of government: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary under Chapter 4 outlines the separation of powers, particularly sections 42 to 50, which delineate the powers and functions of the legislature, executive, and judiciary. This separation ensures checks and balances, preventing the concentration of power and promoting accountability.

South Africa's Constitution contains a comprehensive Bill of Rights that guarantees and protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals in the country. The Bill of Rights is incorporated from sections 7 to 39 of the Constitution. These rights include equality, dignity, freedom of expression, access to information, and the right to a fair administrative process. Protecting human rights is integral to good governance and ensures that the government acts in the best interest of its citizens.

Section 195 of the Constitution establishes the principles that govern public administration, emphasising accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. The Constitution mandates that accountability, transparency, and openness principles must govern public administration. It requires public officials to act in good faith, fulfil their duties diligently, and be accountable to the public. It also supports the right of access to information, enabling citizens to hold the government accountable.

Judicial independence, as one of the pillars of good governance, is covered under section 165 of the Constitution. The Constitution safeguards the independence of the judiciary, ensuring that the courts can adjudicate impartially and without interference. An independent judiciary plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law, interpreting and applying the Constitution, and safeguarding individual rights. The Constitution includes mechanisms for constitutional review, allowing for the amendment and interpretation of its provisions over time. This flexibility enables the Constitution to evolve with societal needs and ensures it remains relevant in promoting good governance.

South Africa's Constitutional Court, established in terms of sections 74 to 83 of the Constitution, is the highest court in matters relating to constitutional interpretation and protection of fundamental rights. The court's judgements contribute to clarifying and strengthening principles of good governance. In addition, Chapter 9 of the Constitution establishes various institutions to safeguard democracy and good governance, including the Office of the Public Protector, the South African Human Rights Commission, and the Commission for Gender Equality. These institutions act as checks and balances, promoting accountability and protecting citizens' rights.

Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994)

The Public Service Act sets out the principles and values that guide public servants in their conduct. Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996-, reinforces these principles, and the Public Service Act provides further guidance and regulations. Section 7 of the Public Service Act establishes a code of conduct for public servants, emphasising values such as integrity, professionalism, and impartiality. It outlines the expected behaviour and standards of public servants and provides a basis for disciplinary proceedings in case of misconduct.

Public Protector Act 23 of 1994

The Public Protector Act, 1994 promotes good governance in South Africa by establishing the Office of the Public Protector as an independent institution responsible for investigating complaints of maladministration, corruption, and improper conduct in the public sector. The Act enhances transparency by providing a mechanism for citizens to lodge complaints and seek redress against acts of maladministration or corruption in the public sector. It ensures

that government actions and decisions are subject to scrutiny and investigation. The law holds public officials accountable for their actions by empowering the Public Protector to investigate complaints and make findings or recommendations. The Public Protector has the authority to hold individuals or entities accountable for maladministration, improper conduct, or corruption, thereby fostering a culture of accountability in the public sector.

The Public Protector Act serves as a safeguard for the public interest by investigating complaints that affect the welfare of the public. It ensures that government officials act in the best interests of the citizens and the nation as a whole. It also plays a crucial role in combating corruption and misconduct in the public sector. It provides a mechanism for detecting and investigating allegations of corruption and maladministration, leading to the exposure and prevention of corrupt practices. By establishing an independent institution tasked with upholding principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and integrity, the Act sets a standard for ethical behaviour and responsible governance in the public sector.

The Auditor–General Act 12 of 1995

The Auditor-General Act of 1995 established the Office of the Auditor-General, which plays a vital role in auditing government entities and promoting financial accountability. The Auditor-General's reports help identify irregularities, inefficiencies, and mismanagement, contributing to improved governance practices. The Act establishes the Office of the Auditor-General as an independent institution separate from the government. This independence ensures that the auditing process is conducted impartially and without interference, fostering accountability and transparency in financial management. The law imposes a duty on the Auditor-General to audit and report on the financial statements and financial management of government departments, public entities, and municipalities. By conducting these audits, the Act ensures that public funds are used responsibly and efficiently, promoting financial accountability and preventing mismanagement.

Further, the Act empowers the Auditor–General to investigate and report on any irregularities, including fraud and corruption, identified during the auditing process. By detecting and exposing such malpractices, the Act helps prevent corruption and improper conduct, thereby safeguarding public resources. It also enables the Auditor–

General to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations governing financial management and public procurement. This monitoring function helps identify areas of non-compliance and supports the enforcement of good governance practices. Through its reporting mechanisms, the Act promotes transparency by providing information on the financial performance and management of government entities to the public. This transparency builds public trust and confidence in the government's use of public resources.

Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999 is a crucial piece of legislation that regulates financial management and accountability in the public sector. Section 3 of the PFMA sets out the key principles that guide financial management, including transparency, accountability, and the efficient and effective use of resources. It emphasises the need for proper planning, budgeting, and reporting to ensure responsible financial management. Section 38 of the PFMA establishes the duty of accounting officers to promote transparency and accountability in their respective departments. It requires accounting officers to maintain effective systems of internal control, ensure compliance with laws and regulations, and prepare accurate and reliable financial statements. Section 51 of the PFMA addresses procurement processes, highlighting the need for fair, equitable, transparent, and cost-effective procurement practices. It establishes principles of competitive bidding and sets out procedures to prevent fraud and corruption in procurement activities. It sets out principles for prudent financial management, transparency, and accountability in the use of public funds.

Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000

The Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) of 2000 is also an important law that facilitates transparency and accountability by providing individuals with the right to access information held by public and private bodies. It enables citizens to participate actively in decision-making processes and hold institutions accountable. The PAIA aims to enhance transparency and facilitate public access to information held by public and private bodies. Section 32 of PAIA grants individuals the right to access information and outlines the procedure for making information requests. However, certain limitations, such as protecting personal privacy, commercial confidentiality, and national security, are also outlined in the Act. Section 4 of PAIA

places an obligation on public bodies to actively promote a culture of transparency and openness. It requires public bodies to compile and maintain records of their activities and make these records available to the public. The Act also establishes the South African Human Rights Commission as the oversight body responsible for promoting and monitoring compliance with PAIA.

Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

The Municipal Systems Act governs the conduct and functioning of local government, aiming to promote good governance, transparency, and effective service delivery. Section 5 of the Act emphasises the principles of democratic governance, public participation, and accountability in the affairs of municipalities. Section 29 of the Municipal Systems Act focuses on public participation, requiring municipalities to develop mechanisms and processes that allow for meaningful engagement with communities. The law establishes the obligation of municipalities to consult and involve the public in decision-making processes.

Overview of International Instruments on Good Governance

At the most basic level of international law, good governance has been accepted as a principle of law in the state's legal systems and, thereby, in regional and international institutions (Mahmod, 2023). Thus, it operates as a norm for the administration, and the court practices rudiments of the principle in its review. Good governance and international law instruments are mutually reinforcing (Fellmeth & McInerney-Lankford, 2022). Further, it is undutiful that the promotion of good governance is vital to safeguarding value for human rights. Exclusive of the rule of law, independent courts and other institutions of modern society, which are essential components of good governance, the promise of human rights may still need to be fulfilled. The moral of history is that responsible, transparent, accountable and participatory governance is a requirement to maintain respect for human dignity and the defence of human rights (Fellmeth & McInerney-Lankford, 2022).

International instruments, standards, and principles provide a set of values to guide the work of governments and other political and social actors. They offer a set of performance standards against which actors can be kept accountable. Additionally, international law instruments inform the content of reasonable governance efforts. They enlighten the development of statutory frameworks, programmes,

policies, budgetary allocations and other dealings. Many international law instruments require courtiers to take up a wide variety of policy and legal measures to promote and protect the fundamental interests of individuals in their countries (D'Orsi, 2023). Most international human rights instruments are concerned with disputing brutal dictatorships and the outrageous comportment of democratic governments that have momentarily lost sight of universal human dignity. International instruments provide a general guide to good governance almost in all areas of law and public policy (Fellmeth & McInerney-Lankford, 2022). Although the guide does not elaborate in detail on the objectives which countries should pursue in their national statutes and how they should achieve their objectives, the guidance is available, and compliance is compulsory (D'Orsi, 2023).

Several international law instruments require states to implement good governance practices across three significant paths. Firstly, international law instruments institute wide-ranging responsibilities in various public policy fields covering how state governments frame policy priorities. They specify certain restraints on the approaches by which states should accomplish these commitments. Secondly, international law instruments impose positive correlative responsibilities on states that require the adoption of laws, regulations, and enforcement practices designed to promote the effective enjoyment of the protected rights to fulfil them. Thirdly, international law obligates the overall administration of state government to maintain consistency with three rights, namely, the right to private life, the right against arbitrary discrimination, and the right to equal protection of the laws. Here is the exposition on how these three dogmas guide countries in their decision-making process.

Policy Commitments in International Law Instruments

International law is characterised by a fast-growing body of international instruments designed to support countries in addressing their policy challenges. These instruments are the result of international regulatory cooperation within a multilateral setting, following specific decision-making processes agreed upon by members. These instruments help feed into countries' domestic rulemaking with international evidence, expertise and coordinated approaches. However, in the diverse landscape, international instruments' terminologies and legal effects vary from one organisation to another. Navigating the ecosystem of international instruments is a challenging task for

international organisations and their constituencies. The recipients of these international instruments, the assortment of the international normative framework, maintain the image of a preliminary list of distant principles or rules.

Nearly all main international law instruments have comprehensive policy commitments (Wouters & Ryngaert, 2004). The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide under Article 3 of UN 46 obliges states to reprimand genocide and public incitement to commit genocide, conspiracy to execute genocide, attempted genocide, and complicity in genocide. So, the deterrence and punishment of genocide are human rights obligations imposed on the nations by the Convention, with which countries parties to the Convention should comply by adopting and enforcing appropriate statutes. Likewise, Article 20(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) obliges nations to prohibit propaganda for war officially. This Article intends to oblige states to enact a law to prohibit such advocacy. Article 25 of the ICCPR is the cornerstone of democratic governance and genuine elections in international law. This Article ensures the main elements of democratic and good governance, such as the separation of powers, rule of law, accountability, and transparency. It also guards the central values of democratic elections, such as universal suffrage, the right to vote, and be elected, the secrecy of the vote, the right to freely assemble and associate, and, importantly, the right to a "genuine" election. Article 25 explicitly grants the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs and to equal suffrage. The ICCPR and other human rights treaties also guarantee other core elements of a democracy and good governance, such as freedoms of association, assembly, and expression and the independence of the judiciary.

Corruption as a major hindrance to good governance is covered under international law instruments in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption of 2003. The Convention presents a widespread set of standards, measures and rules that all states can employ to reinforce their legal and regulatory regimes to fight corruption. It provides preventive measures and the criminalisation of the most prevalent forms of corruption in public and private sectors. Furthermore, it makes a significant advance by commanding state members to return assets obtained through corruption to the country from which they were stolen (Article 54). Chapter V of the Convention introduces a new essential principle and framework for more vital collaboration between countries to prevent and detect corruption and to return

the proceeds. The notions of good governance and corruption have a reciprocal underlying correlation with each other. They feed off each other in a spiteful circle. Greater opportunity for corruption is always available where sound governance principles and structures are not in place, and in turn, corruption can prevent good governance principles and structures from being put in place or implemented. Corruption is also associated with infringements of the principles of accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. Ultimately, poor governance and corruption are security encounters which damage the rule of law, democracy and economic development.

To take action to prevent genocide is a significant demonstration of good governance while comprehendibly reducing the popularity and social acceptability of aggressive uses of armed force meets the criteria of good governance as well. These discussed Articles demand relatively straightforward state policy measures. Another international instrument which requires states to adopt more complex good governance measures to remove obstacles to and increase the opportunities for the enjoyment of human rights includes several provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This conversion requires the state to take "all appropriate measures" to change forms of social behaviour, such as to "ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations" (CEDAW, Article 8). The provisions of CEDAW, as a result, require countries to adopt specific types of policies which promote good governance that does not essentially confer correlated rights on individuals. There are several international instruments related to this effect, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) guarantees several individual rights which dictate relatedly broad statutory agendas, including those associated with the recognition of a human right to "the widest possible protection and assistance" for families, protection of children from "economic and social exploitation" to social security, and adequate food, clothing and housing (Article 9, 10 & 11). Article 11 of the ICESCR provides a comprehensive structural requirement for all. It declares, among other things, a right "to the continuous improvement of living conditions" and requires nations to act independently and in cooperation with

other nations to "improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food". Although these obligations are not absolute as they are mediated by the "progressive achievement", they set out general programs of government policy, identifying as priorities certain forms of state contribution to human dignity through such benefits as work under fair conditions; social security; education; health care; and the necessities of nutrition, clothing, and shelter. Article 2(1) of the ICESCR clarifies that countries should consume the "maximum" of their available possessions to work toward the full enjoyment of each itemised right. The international human rights instruments do not provide direct information about government corruption, but it is hard to combine government corruption with the requirement of Article 2(1) of ICESCR. Funds diverted to the offshore bank accounts of corrupt government officials cannot be used to subsidise safe housing for needy citizens.

Positive Obligations in International Instruments

The wide-ranging policy commitments are the best definite feature of international human rights instruments that require states to adopt good governance practices. However, they are not the only such obligations. International human rights instruments focus most on the negative aspect of the "obligation to respect" the right in the sense that human rights include entitlements to demand the state to restrain its officials and agents from interfering with the enjoyment of a recognised human right, but human rights encompass positive obligations as well (Fellmeth & McInerney-Lankford, 2022:3). Positive obligations under international human rights instruments are in two key aspects, the requirement of protection and fulfilment. The requirement of protection relates to the responsibility of the countries to take reasonable measures to ensure private actors and other states do not interfere with the rights. On the other hand, the requirement of fulfilment draws a parallel to the country's obligation to take reasonable measures to eliminate all impediments to the enjoyment of the right (Fellmeth, 2016).

To be able to achieve positive obligations, countries must enact statutes, make budget commitments, formulate regulations, create judicial and other enforcement institutions, monitor private behaviour, train government officials, and implement similar actions to ensure the correlative right against interference by private actors who could threaten its enjoyment. The obligation of fulfilment goes

much further because states must create, fund, and implement social programs to fulfil even such basic human rights as the right to life and the right to security and liberty of the person. For those drives, they need to organise the creation of hospital emergency facilities, fire departments, ambulance fleets, sanitary facilities, transportation and energy infrastructure, and similar social services. If pursued in earnest, these policy and institutional commitments result in an elaborate government that promotes good governance. Thus, states can only effectively protect and fulfil positive individual rights if they adopt programs of good governance (Nowak, 2022). Some aspect of good governance is built into the very nature of positive human rights, and because all human rights are positive, all human rights mandate some such forms within the scope of the right (Nowak, 2022).

Specific Rights Guaranteed in International Instruments with Broad Governance Implications

Apart from the above putative international law, two human rights are guaranteed in the international instrument, which has pervasive implications on state governance. The first one is the right to privacy. It obliges countries to adopt extensive suitable governance measures. The second is the right against discrimination and the right to equal protection of the laws. Even though it is superficially like a set of rights concealed in a long list, the non-discrimination and equal protection rights have the potential to reach deeply into state decision-making in a way most other rights do not.

Right to Private and Good Governance

The right to privacy is codified in many international and regional instruments, including under Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 9 of the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, Article 11 of the American Convention on Human Rights, Article 17 of the ICCPR, Article 8 of European Convention on Human Rights. Privacy covers more than a simple right to withhold personal information from the public domain. It is interpreted to safeguard a wide range of autonomy in which the individual and his or her close links can make personal choices free from unnecessary interference by the government. It, therefore, includes the ability to control self-information as well as such interests as preserving psychological and bodily integrity; making choices regarding intimate relationships; managing communication with others; upholding family connections;

defending personal space from intrusions: using birth control or seeking artificial insemination, and protecting one's reputation.

In its negative appearance, the right to privacy requires states to avoid statutes, law enforcement, and other measures that unnecessarily infringe on the individual's personal freedom in matters essential to his or her private life (Fellmeth & Abourahma, 2021). On the other hand, as a positive right, it obliges countries to protect individuals within their jurisdiction from public and private interference (Fellmeth, 2022). Due to its negative and positive obligations, the right to privacy is potentially crucial for how states govern. Thus, the right to privacy has huge implications for good governance. It can call into question state measures intended to enforce public accord with established cultural traditions, religious beliefs, customs or other norms with compelling arguments for the limitations serving a vital public interest based on sound evidence. In this regard, several interferences with private life seen as desirable by the state will fail to satisfy the tests of necessity and proportionality. Obliging states to justify their domestic laws and other measures having such an effect with rational criteria signifies important control on arbitrary governance, attracting good governance.

Rights to Equal Protection of the Laws and Non-Discrimination

Rights to Equal Protection of the Laws and Non-Discrimination are guaranteed in most international human rights instruments, including Article 2 of UDHR, Article 2(1) of ICCPR, and Article 1 of CEDAW. The instruments oblige state parties to respect and to guarantee to all individuals within their jurisdiction the recognised rights "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or another status"(Article 2(1) of ICCPR). Article 26 of ICCPR goes further and prohibits "any state measure that makes arbitrary distinctions between groups based on prohibited grounds". The Article forbids inequity in law or, in fact, in any field regulated and protected by public authorities. Hence Article 26 imposes obligations on state parties regarding their legislation and the application not to have discriminatory content. Although rights to equal protection and non-discrimination appear similar to other substantive obligations in international instruments, in realism, the impact is on defining good governance in a way that no other human right has. This is because most cases of violation of substantive human rights include

an allegation of discrimination or violation of equal protection as well (Fellmeth & McInerney-Lankford, 2022).

Equal protection and non-discrimination rights stand apart from other human rights as prospective supporters of good governance due to a fantastic threesome of features. Firstly, they are relative as they do not describe an absolute standard of minimum handling for all persons, but as an alternative allow a contrast between various societal groups and require equilibrium of that treatment. Secondly, they are adaptable in substance rather than circumscribed by subject matter. Discrimination and failure of equal protection in law infringe on their respective rights. Thirdly, equal protection and non-discrimination rights are worldwide in content. They are relative in application in such a way that they are appealed to only by groups in response to differential treatment. These characteristics provide a methodology for evaluating good governance in state policymaking (Ladegaard, 2021). Firstly, all state legislations and measures make differences between groups of individuals established on some identifiable characteristics. These differences, whether intended or accidental, if they result in disparity dealing between groups based on prohibited grounds, may afford bases for a claim of discrimination or unequal protection. Secondly, the list of reasons on which unequal protection or discrimination is prohibited is unrestricted in most international instruments, even though the ICCPR, ECHR, ACHR, and other human rights treaties list specific grounds on which discrimination is prohibited, such as religion, language, race, or sex, they make clear the list is just exemplary, and discrimination based on other category or group characteristic is equally forbidden. The openness of lists of prohibited grounds allows any definable group to use equal protection or discrimination claims to challenge almost any government measure. Equal protection and non-discrimination are considered "super-rights" because they validate a human rights authority in demanding states to justify any government measure that affects different groups differently (Fellmeth & Abourahma, 2021). Equal protection and non-discrimination rights can significantly challenge the government's poor decision-making.

Evidence Use in Governance

Evidence is among other inputs into decision-making. Government decision-makers are required to exercise significant findings about what evidence to pursue, when and from whom, and how to ensure

it informs judgements efficiently and in a timely way (Puttick, 2018). Governments must manage the proportion of their budgets they can use for evidence as wisely as possible. There is no single approach to evidence-informed decision-making: policies are very varied, and different branches within the government department, each of which addresses many specific policy issues, will use evidence differently at different times (Gray & Khan, 2010). This means an evidence-informed approach must be flexible and pay equal attention to the quality of the processes through which evidence is sourced and used, as well as the quality of the evidence itself. However, governance is a context that cuts across all sectors; therefore, an evidence base for good governance which addresses economic, social and political goals is essential. This part looks at how countries can mobilise evidence for good governance.

Challenges in governance decision-making

Public trust in government and political institutions has been grinding because of the universal financial disaster in many states (OECD, 2019). Currently, states are in a much deeper disaster in public confidence caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has tested governments' abilities to maintain and ensure trust in decision-making processes that have an urgent and deep effect on the lives of their inhabitants. There are many impacts of a lack of confidence in government institutions, including effects on the effective functioning of public institutions, which may result in costly micromanagement between citizens, government, and organisations (Prange-Gstöhl, 2016). The pandemic has also put science under intensified public debates: "Trust in research and its role in political decision-making and policy changes have never been more at the forefront of public discussion and scrutiny than during the current public health crisis" (Parkhurst & Abeysinghe, 2016). The fabric of our democracies where tested due to the inability of the government to present a persuasive model of the role of science and evidence in decision-making during the pandemic. In addition, the addressing of the part of conventional teaching has coincided with the digitalisation of social orders, counting inside the open division, and the appropriation of advanced communications stages. There is developing concern around the potential for disinformation or fake news through conventional and social media, where the roots and inspirations of conventional and modern sources of proof are addressed. Both patterns have, as it were, been exacerbated amid the COVID-19 emergency (Sheng,

2022). This has driven the conventional levelled approach to the dispersal of information being supplanted by peer-to-peer proposals and calculations, indeed on the off chance that the requirement for definitive voices remains (D'Ancona, 2017). While citizens still hold science in great respect and there's an elevated level of belief in researchers (Yarborough, 2014), what can now not be taken for granted is the specialist of science within the confront of other weights and elective sources of 'knowledge'. The numerous "unknown unknowns" and instability made by, for case, the pandemic emergency have also produced considerable challenges while expanding the dependence on science within the choice-making preparation.

Another enabler for reliable and evidence-informed choice-making is the expanding capacity of governments to gather, handle and store digital information and to coordinate them into approach forms (Parkhurst & Abeysinghe, 2016). The utilisation and application of the information in crisis management endeavours have, within the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, pointed at empowering more transformative, open, collaborative, pinpointed and spry activity whereas reemphasising challenges to excellent information administration, counting inside the open segment, such as missing wellbeing information measures and crisis-adjusted information morals (OECD, 2019). The result is that many new and elective data sources are presently accessible to governments, plenty of which might bolster decision-making and implementation. Hence, this makes it very essential to develop some dogmas and standards for mobilising evidence. This, of course, is complementary to all the endeavours that are required upstream to address information certification or information provenance in arrange to dodge information debasement and deceiving outputs.

Keen governments have a crucial role to play in maintaining public confidence and trust, as they can advance good processes and results for citizens. Great open administration is additionally got to move forward the quality, get to and responsiveness of open administrations. This pivots on the good or "appropriate" utilise of proof to nourish into the plan, usage, and assessment of open programs and intercessions (Sheng, 2022). Both are vital highlights of a savvy and spry state. Sound public governance has a critical role to play in maintaining trust, as it can promote fair processes and outcomes for citizens. For good governance, the state should improve the access, quality and receptiveness of public provisions. This pivots for the good or "appropriate" utilise of evidence to nourish into the plan,

enforcement, and assessment of public programs and interventions. Both are critical attributes of a savvy and sprightly state.

The Use of Evidence in Improving Public Governance

Evidence has a significant role to play in advancing the responsiveness, quality, and accessibility of government interventions, programmes or services. When public interventions are created, enforced and evaluated, an interactive process may be involved, allowing civilians and users to communicate their opinions, cooperate with peers or air disappointment as part of a feedback circle to comprehend desires better and embrace innovation (OECD, 2020).

Better decision-making for good governance requires an understanding of where problems have been occurring in the past and what foregoing good practice may be incorporated into the existing reform endeavour. Evidence use helps decision-makers avoid biased strategy and replication and make sure that limited resources are channelled at areas which require more solutions. It also assists in pinpointing ineffective strategies and enforcement, bringing to mind the need to be attentive when exercising them and involving more investment in the absence of extra modification and testing (Torgerson & Torgerson, 2003).

The realisation of public interventions needs substantial preparation and management. Evidence shows how public policies should be adapted to meet local needs while safeguarding against modifications that may impact outcomes (Moore, Bumbarger & Cooper, 2013). Diffusion of effectual interventions at scale and the delivery of outcomes at the population level can be facilitated by collecting evidence on factors that help and hinder implementation (Castro, Barrera & Steiker, 2010). The attention given to implementation aspects has been subject to growing interest from the economics profession over recent years (Duflo, 2017). Through evidence, the government can determine why some complex policies work and others do not. As one source of relevant knowledge, policy evaluation supports policy choices through an evidence-informed decision-making process. Furthermore, legal frameworks create a foundation for embedding the practice of evaluations across the government systematically. This kind of institutionalised method of evidence gathering and usage positions remote and unprepared evidence efforts into more formal and organised practices, with the aptitude to set guidelines and motivations for evidence creation and use (Gaarder & Briceño,

2010). Frameworks also provide calculated track to a particular sector or thematic area of management valuation. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report indicates that building capacity for evidence use needs strengthening resources, organisational tools, legislation, regulation and mandate (OECD, 2020). Although states recognise the significance of using evidence in decision-making, not all evidence is equal. Specific evidence is more substantial and more trustworthy and deserves to be given more weight in decision-making. Figuring out which evidence is robust and communicating this to decision-makers is challenging.

Standards of evidence attempt to strengthen the evidence of policies and programmes transmitted to decision-makers. Although standards of evidence have great potential to improve the quality of evidence-informed policymaking, current approaches face several limitations that impede their use (Jacobzone, 2020). This is because of the proliferation of several approaches to standards of evidence. It is likely to make different judgements on the strength of evidence of the same programme. Stakeholders need to perceive better the distinction between the standards of evidence used by different institutions (Puttick, 2018). Some approaches to evidence standards may also not serve the needs and realities of public policy (Parkhurst & Abeysinghe, 2016).

Evidence is just one of many inputs of decision-making, and decision-makers must balance several considerations, including equity, ethics, values, special interests, security, economics, privacy, and political objectives, in order to maintain trust in good governance. Principles for the good governance of evidence aid in guaranteeing that evidence is used appropriately and with reference to the broader governmental and political system into which it is being introduced. Simultaneously, it is significant to determine the messy nature of the decision-making process where conflicting values, constraints and interests must be addressed. Though evidence can inform decision-making, it cannot "determine" it, as this reflects the political responsibility entrusted to decision-makers and ministers in the government.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, governance is a structured principle. The delivery of fundamental safety and services for the citizens is highly dependent on the aptitude of governments, both at the national and local levels,

to manage public affairs effectively, efficiently, accountable and transparently. Although there is no one definition of good governance, there is a common understanding that it covers government effectiveness, such as getting things done and meeting goals; responsiveness which includes addressing needs and accountability, which involves taking responsibility for decisions. Good governance implores values from those who have the power to govern. As one of the values, the rule of law is pivotal in ensuring fair, just and stable governance. Public and private governance apply the same values and principles, and there is interconnectivity between the two. In fact, they are intertwined, and they are interdependent on each other for efficiency and effectiveness.

Good governance reforms are based on a particular way of understanding economic development that draws on a particular and partial reading of new institutional economics and new political economy. It assumes that political stability and economic development in developing countries can be based on institutions of political representation, accountability and market competition. In making these assumptions, it ignores not only much of the history of economic, political and social transformations through which advanced societies have emerged, it also reads economic and political theory very selectively. The danger is that in confusing desirable outcomes such as low corruption, a good rule of law and accountability with the preconditions that are required to achieve political stability and economic growth in developing countries, the good governance agenda can, in many contexts, result in lost opportunities for meaningful reform or even worse.

The Way Forward

An inclusive action plan will have to be established for the proper implementation of good governance, which goes hand in hand with the aforementioned goals, and this includes the following:

- Incorporating services per citizens' needs: This will cover aspects of efficiency, accountability, and the comprehensiveness of public services. This also includes accessibility, speed, transparency and customer-friendly services. Priority should be for services that provide for the welfare and security of the citizen.
- Improving the transparency in government transactions: Government projects are the most vulnerable of all to corrupt performance and misuse of public power like favouritism and

cronyism. So, transparent procedures and transparency on tendering regulations and processes must be present. Wherever direct negotiation to award a government project is to be made, agreed criteria and clear qualifications for appointment should be in place. So, concentrated scrutiny of public officials who have direct authority over these transactions must be employed, including the prerequisite to declare their own and close family members' assets.

- Causing government to focus on its core functions: There is a trend in the current government to be aggressively engaged in business in a way that has affected its focus on the core functions, such as eliminating poverty and providing good healthcare services to its inhabitants. Establishing a link between public companies can positively contribute to the nation's economy; moreover, the majority of these entities need to be better managed and have caused extensive losses to the government. Governments also spend a substantial amount of their annual budget on defence and procurement of armouries and military hardware at the expense of health, welfare and education.

- Homogenising the quality of public service delivery: Poor services, delays and incompetent officials are the widespread complaints on government delivery of services. All public service departments should have a citizen's charter, which should promise excellent and efficient services to the citizens. Service enhancement should be part of the departmental tactical agendas. A yearly customer satisfaction assessment should determine citizens' perception of the overall service delivery. This must involve "devising a communication management tool and methodology to solicit citizen's feedback" (NEDA, 2011:12).

- Enhancing Government financial management system: This is where the responsibility of the Auditor General Office is substantially important. The annual audit report includes wastage and misuse of Government funds. It would also uncover corrupt does and abuse of power. The main concern is on the result of the report and the level to which the identified officers are held accountable in the respective department through disciplinary action and, in some cases, in criminal court cases. It has been a familiar public cry in many African countries that action has yet to be taken against public servants who have been proven to have misused their power and failed to comply with financial rules, as reported in the annual Auditor General reports.

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Chapter 3

The Use of Evaluation Evidence as a Catalyst for Administrative Reforms: Towards Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Public Sector

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Abstract

Policymaking and implementation should be informed by evidence. South Africa is widely regarded as a pioneer in creating a framework for government-wide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and use of evidence, which was approved by the Cabinet in 2005. However, in practice, the utilisation of evidence is lacklustre and M&E is not consistently applied. This gap between policy and implementation remains understudied. This chapter will answer the following questions:

- Does evaluation results from various government M&E activities influence policymaking and implementation and has it reached administrative reform?
- Has the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) Framework been sufficiently institutionalised in government departments?

This will be done through a qualitative research design, using the methodology of reviewing relative academic literature and books and investigating the case studies of the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Basic Education. The literature reveals that while the GWM&E Framework has led to improved service delivery and policy outcomes, several challenges remain. These include a lack of skills, knowledge and capacity, corruption, institutional weakness and the non-utilisation of information and evidence. This chapter will give a conceptual understanding of the culture of M&E and attitudes towards evidence-based policymaking in the South African government and

the broader public sector. Last, several recommendations will be made to address these issues.

Keywords: monitoring, evaluation, institutionalisation, service delivery, evidence-based policymaking (EBPM), policymakers, administrative reform.

Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are complex and multifaceted undertakings, even more so in a government system that is decentralised. For an M&E system to be successful it must contain incentives for implementation and build sufficient and continuous capacity. The effective implementation of any M&E system should result in behavioural change and can be used as a catalyst for administrative reform, and if it does not, it needs to be revised. In South Africa, the Cabinet approved a framework for government-wide M&E and use of evidence in 2005. The goal of this framework is to mainstream M&E practices in all government departments and support the implementation of evidence-based policymaking. In 2009, a Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation was created, located in the President's Office. While this is regarded as innovative, the institutionalisation of the framework remains largely unachieved.

This chapter will study the gap between policy and implementation and will answer the following questions:

- Does evaluation evidence from various government M&E activities influence policymaking and implementation and has it reached administrative reform?
- Has the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) Framework been sufficiently institutionalised in government departments?

This will be done through a literature review. This chapter will give a conceptual understanding of the culture of M&E and attitudes towards evidence-based policymaking in the South African government and the broader public sector. Both the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Basic Education have experienced improvements in service delivery and efficiency since implementing M&E systems more consistently. Despite this, a culture of M&E as the 'lifeblood' of policymaking and implementation is not palpable within the South African public space, despite the presidency being a champion of this. In many cases, attitudes towards M&E reveal inefficiency and

incompetence, issues with organisational and/or operational culture and non-compliance with several legal instruments. This has inhibited the potential for evaluation evidence to be used as a catalyst for administrative reform. Last, several recommendations will be made to address these issues, including continuous capacity building, training and technical changes in operations.

The chapter concludes that the GWM&E system has improved the public sector's capacity for service delivery but that it has not been institutionalised, with the focus remaining on outputs and not outcomes and information not being utilised as evidence. This results in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies not being based on evidence and administrative reform remaining out of reach.

Methodology

The research will take the form of a qualitative research design, using the methodology of a literature review. A literature review is a "systematic way of collecting and synthesi(s)ing previous research" and provides a solid base for progressing knowledge and making it easier to develop theories (Snyder, 2019:333). Relative academic literature and books will be assessed, and specific case studies will be investigated, including the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Basic Education.

Background

Monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based policymaking are complex phenomena, especially within the public sector. This section gives an overview of the differences between M&E and the benefits of evidence-based policymaking. It emphasises the importance of an effective M&E system to ensure that the government implements its mandate and improves service delivery and how this can act as a catalyst for administrative reform. The section gives an overview of South Africa's public M&E system, including the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and the National Evaluation Policy Framework. While South Africa's M&E system is comprehensive on paper, the literature suggests that effective implementation across all spheres will determine its success. The section further discusses the challenges of implementing an M&E system in South Africa and examines whether a culture of learning and improvement has been institutionalised within the public sector.

Monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based policymaking

Monitoring and evaluation have different meanings and different functions. Monitoring tracks what has been planned, and analyses and collects data on inputs, outputs, activities and impacts (Presidency, 2017:1). A monitoring culture is generally linked to compliance with reporting conditions. Evaluation is a methodical and thorough analysis of interventions to evaluate the strengths or weaknesses of their performance and is more generally linked to a learning culture. A strong evaluative culture is linked to using evidence in policymaking (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:55). The above can be used to foster administrative reform by identifying areas of improvement on a technical and operational level and can hold officials and institutions accountable for inefficiencies. Administrative reform is, according to Professor James Iain Gow, "a conscious, well-considered change that is carried out in a public sector organi[s]ation or system for the purpose of improving its structure, operation or the quality of its workforce" (Gow, 2012:2).

Evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) can be regarded as a set of standards, programs and approaches, specifically systematic reviews, to improve the use of information and data in policymaking (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:1). This helps policymakers make better and informed decisions and achieve better outcomes. This is done by drawing from research, evaluations and other sources. The Africa Centre for Evidence suggests a five-step process for incorporating evidence into policymaking:

- identify what kind of evidence is necessary for the policy,
- locate and obtain the relevant evidence,
- carefully evaluate the quality of the evidence,
- combine and analyse the evidence, and
- use the evidence to inform and guide the policymaking process (Langer, Ncube & Stewart, 2021:3).

There is limited consensus in the field about what constitutes evaluation evidence. Both statistical and qualitative evidence are useful, however, these are not always definitive. While statistical evidence aims to determine what can be generalised, qualitative approaches to evidence are often more concerned with what is specific and context-specific. Both approaches are essential for establishing a robust evidence base to support effective decision-making. Evidence can also take an experimental form, where proposed policies are tested or piloted before being implemented on a large scale across the entire

population. Good decision-making usually requires evidence about the processes by which a policy, project or programme is going to be implemented. This includes having a clear logic model, or theory of change, which makes explicit from the outset of policy development how the policy is supposed to work. Furthermore, a crucial aspect of effective policymaking and implementation is conducting a thorough assessment of the costs and benefits associated with proposed and implemented policies. This type of evidence is obtained through rigorous economic appraisal methods, including cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, and cost-utility analysis. These methods help evaluate the economic implications and outcomes of policies, providing valuable evidence for decision-making (UCT, 2014).

The benefits of an effective M&E system

M&E, if done effectively, should ensure that the government implements its mandate in all spheres, improve service delivery towards its citizens, and be fully aware of citizen's needs and priorities, using the resources available to it (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:12,15). Effective M&E could result in:

> Improved identification and correction of deviations during programme implementation, the achievement of high performance, improved employee and management competencies, and the enhanced accountability that could as a result lead to the improvement in service delivery (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:12).

Furthermore, EBPM has several benefits to policies and policymakers. First, it reduces the risk of causing unintended harm. When policies are based on theories alone, they can have the opposite effect of what was intended or cause unexpected damage. Second, using evidence can reduce wasteful expenditure and make policies more effective. The harm caused by the social and economic costs of policies is very important. An example of this is South Africa's large human settlements and housing portfolio. This program increased access to housing, but it did not support the transformation and reform of the housing market and ownership patterns. Third, evaluation evidence holds public sector entities accountable for their performance. By objectively assessing the outcomes and impacts of administrative practices, evaluations promote transparency and help identify areas where public officials and institutions need to be held accountable

for their actions or lack thereof. This can serve as a strong motivation for administrative reform. Fourth, when evidence is used, it is more likely that policies will be sensitive toward social issues, equity, and inclusion. It can give the most marginalised a voice and empower groups to advocate for policies that would render them more equal (Langer, Ncube & Stewart, 2021:6-8).

Overall, evaluation evidence serves as a catalyst for administrative reform in South Africa's public sector by providing a strong evidence base for decision-making, promoting accountability, and driving continuous improvement in administrative practices and policies. Evaluation evidence identifies inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and gaps in administrative processes and systems. This information can guide reform efforts to streamline operations, eliminate redundancies, and improve overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Hlatshwayo and Govender (2015:97), examining the case study of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, established that evidence suggests administrative reform strategies should prioritise autonomy, decentralisation, and inclusive public participation. Moreover, the evidence indicates that streamlined and efficient organisational structures, referred to as "lean" structures, are more effective in fulfilling the department's objectives compared to excessively large and inefficient structures.

Monitoring and evaluation in South Africa's public sector

Monitoring and evaluation are extremely intricate and complicated exercises that require skills and discipline. Government-wide M&E is even more complex, especially when the system of the government is decentralised, such as in South Africa, with national, provincial, and municipal spheres of government. In South Africa, policy implementation occurs largely at the subnational level, with provincial governments playing a major role in delivering health, education, social development, and transport services, while policymaking largely happens at a national level. This system requires that knowledge be shared between and within sectors of planning, budgeting, and implementation and interacts with public entities and state-owned enterprises (Engela & Ajam, 2010: vi, 1).

South Africa has been seen as a champion of M&E because of its Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, approved in 2005. Before this framework, monitoring was done irregularly

within different departments (Cloete, 2009:298) and since 2000, all government departments implemented an M&E system, mostly focussing on monitoring. Since then, the scope, number, and quality of evaluations have increased significantly in the country (Abrahams, 2015:3).

The government-wide M&E system was established as an all-encompassing instrument to monitor and evaluate all activities in all government departments. The purpose of this was to make informed decisions at a managerial level to support the implementation of policies, allocate resources based on evidence, and continuously refine policies based on new information (Abrahams, 2015:3). The system was later reinforced by the National Treasury's Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPI) and the South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework. Since 2010, it has sat in the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency (Abrahams, 2015:19). The current framework applies to all local, provincial, and national government entities (Presidency, 2007:1). The goal of the GWM&E Framework is to:

> Provide an integrated, encompassing framework of M&E principles, practices and standards to be used throughout Government, and function as an apex-level information system which draws from the component systems in the framework to deliver useful M&E products for its users (Presidency, 2007:5).

Furthermore, the National Policy Framework (NEPF) was established in 2011. The 2019-2024 NEPF focuses on integrating state-owned enterprises into the National Evaluation System (NES) (DPME, 2019).

South Africa's systems for M&E are bold and all-encompassing on paper, however, the effective implementation thereof (across all spheres) will determine the success of the framework. The GWM&E system was viewed as a panacea to address the many setbacks of the performance of ministers, governments, line departments, state institutions, and public enterprises. South Africa's M&E system is thus all-inclusive and involves government, private and public sectors, donor organisations, non-government organisations, and the citizenry. The framework is flexible, in that it allows for municipal nuances while creating a municipal threshold that needs to be met by all government departments and public institutions (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015:96).

The South African government has also invested in a broad set of structures and instruments to enable EBPM, however, it is not mainstreamed into all spheres (Langer, Ncube & Stewart, 2021:2). There are also no explicit requirements for the use of evidence in South Africa's policy cycle (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:2).

Monitoring and Evaluation in Practice in South Africa

Positively, the President's Office has acted as a political champion for M&E (Engela & Ajam, 2010:9), stating in its 2007 mid-term review that:

> M&E is the lifeblood of sound and efficient planning and implementation, and for M&E to add value to policymaking, policy implementation and to the broader process of social transformation, it has to be 'institutionalised' at all levels. M&E should be based on objective measurements that reflect the ideals of the Constitution: to improve the quality of life of all South Africans and ensure that South Africa contributes to the creation of a better Africa and a better world (Presidency, 2007:32).

The success of South Africa's M&E depends on whether a culture of performance within government entities is established and the continuous reflection on practices and outcomes (Engela & Ajam, 2010:30). Quality evidence and high levels of leadership, skills, and concerted efforts are needed for institutionalisation and administrative reform. The literature highlights that how information is utilised in this space is important. Information that stems from the M&E system needs to be used in such a way as to inform future policies, which in turn, should foster a culture of learning within government spaces (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:14). By examining both successes and failures, evaluations provide valuable lessons that can be used to guide administrative reform efforts and prevent the repetition of mistakes. This chapter seeks to answer the question of whether M&E has been successfully implemented in South Africa's public sector and whether it has acted as a catalyst for administrative reform.

The extent of institutionalisation in South Africa

Due to the complex nature of M&E, especially a system that encapsulates the entirety of the public sector, implementing this system in such

a way as to lead to more successful and specific policymaking is the biggest challenge. South Africa has had various successes in utilising its M&E framework to its advantage, including being a champion of M&E. This section seeks to establish whether it has been as successful at institutionalising a culture of learning and improvement, leading to behavioural changes and whether evidence is effectively utilised to inform policymaking and prompt administrative reform.

The institutionalisation of M&E is when it is a vital part of the development program and leads to improved "planning, policymaking and achievement of objectives" (Mackay, 2006:8) and enables the development of a system that generates information for monitoring and evaluating results that are considered valuable by important stakeholders (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015:93). When implementation is inadequate and service delivery is poor, it places doubt on the institutionalisation of M&E (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015:92).

The literature reveals that the practices and norms of M&E have not been sufficiently institutionalised in the public sector and have not achieved administrative reform. Although South Africa has achieved a great deal in mainstreaming and championing M&E through its policies, in practice, this has not yielded the results to reach its full potential (Plaatjie & Porter, 2013). Improvements have been made, but it is not sufficient to believe institutionalisation has been successful. For example, the DPME created the use of "policy-relevant evidence maps" to provide timely responses to policymakers' requests. This system makes access to information more convenient, however, it does not address the lack of strategic knowledge management throughout the entire public sector (Langer, Ncube & Stewart, 2021:15).

There are many issues such as organisational culture, negative attitudes towards M&E, inefficiency, incompetence, and non-compliance with policies and legislation (Malefetsane, Lungepi & Tembile, 2014:5). Some departments and leaders view M&E as a technical practice alone, rather than a dynamic and continuous process that should eventually lead to better planned and implemented policies, making a difference in the lives of citizens (Abrahams, 2015:22).

Within municipalities, a lack of skill is one of the most prominent factors inhibiting institutionalisation and reform. The knowledge and competence required for implementing a successful M&E strategy are limited (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:13). This implies that upskilling and training of civil servants are not happening continuously.

This further suggests that the implementation and progress of policies are not tracked and evaluated sufficiently, meaning that evidence is not drawn from this and cannot be used for future policy design and implementation. This results in uninformed decisions being made, hampering service delivery and successful policy outcomes (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:13).

The success of institutionalising an M&E system is impeded by the attitudes and cultural norms of organisations towards M&E. According to a study by Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba and Waller (2021) where 127 managers in approximately five national departments in the country were interviewed, 58,8% of respondents indicated that M&E is the sole responsibility of the unit and does not require managers to get involved. Even if they wanted to, some respondents indicated that managers do not have the skill and/or capacity to carry out M&E activities on a daily and continuous basis. Bureaucratic hierarchies also make it hard to openly discuss performance and evaluation results. M&E is viewed as performance reviews of specific people and not as evaluations of the project, making people suspicious of it. Administrative reform for a unit as a whole is hampered by this. Positively, routine monitoring is consistently done, although half of the respondents indicate that this is based on activities alone, not on outcomes. Time pressures inhibit the use of evidence in policymaking, and decisions are made in a rush, without a proper understanding of the problem. In many cases, problems are not viewed as an opportunity for learning and improvement. Often bad results are ignored or deemed untrustworthy – inhibiting evidence-based policymaking (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:60).

Another study indicated that the attitude towards M&E is largely positive, however, the culture of championing M&E is not institutionalised, and evaluation results are not used to influence policymaking, reform and implementation. Cronin and Sadan (2015) interviewed 54 senior government officials, with most of them indicating that it is important to improve the use of evidence in policymaking, however, the understanding of what this entails differed significantly between them. Opinions also differed over what constitutes reliable evidence and therefore the understanding of what needs to be improved also differed. This has consequences for reform efforts (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:2).

Positively, some respondents believe that evidence is being used and that the use of it has improved, however, it is often used to justify decisions that have already been made, specifically to Treasury. This

type of evidence use is referred to as 'symbolic'. The literature revealed that it is common practice for the policy agenda to be set by anecdotes and not evidence (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:5).

It was noted that at the policy design phase, evidence was often utilised more than in any other phase of the policy cycle. This only happens occasionally and more often policies are borrowed from elsewhere with little or no attention paid to the local context. The evaluation of policies rarely prioritises the use of evidence, although this was said to be improving. Policy instability is common, with officials opting to implement new or different policies rather than to use systemic evaluation processes to learn and improve (Cronin & Sadan, 2015).

Based on the literature, the institutionalisation of M&E has not been fully achieved in the public sector and evidence is not fully utilised to spur administrative reform, despite efforts by South African policies to mainstream and champion it. In municipalities, a lack of skills and training for civil servants is a prominent inhibiting factor. This leads to insufficient tracking and evaluation of policy implementation and progress, resulting in uninformed decisions being made, which hampers service delivery and successful policy outcomes. While attitudes towards M&E are largely positive, in summary, the institutionalisation of M&E in the public sector faces several challenges, including organisational culture, negative attitudes, lack of skills and training, and non-compliance with policies and legislation. There is a need to address these issues to achieve successful institutionalisation of M&E and reform the sector in such a way that prioritises efficiency.

Weaknesses in the GWM&E System

Although the literature reveals that the adoption of the GWM&E system has yielded some benefits (as will be described below), several areas for improvement remain. Some weaknesses of the DPME include unsatisfactory information management practices; no culture of coordination; a focus on actions rather than outcomes; and legal frameworks that inhibit coordination and promote an individualistic approach (Abrahams, 2015:20).

A weakness of the GWM&E system stems from the way it was initially developed. The system was built over time and allowed for best practices to emerge spontaneously. While avoiding over-design, this has led to some duplication in its coordination and alignment.

This leads to several reporting burdens being placed on entities that already face a lack of capacity and skill, resulting in reporting fatigue (Engela & Ajam, 2010:21).

Coordination between provincial and national governments is also lacking. All provinces have M&E units, but most do not cooperate systematically with the national structures (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:57). This indicates that an optimal administrative system has not been reached due to the GWM&E system and more attention to optimal administrative reform is needed to ensure efficient cooperation. Furthermore, 50% of respondents in a survey done of 127 managers in approximately five national departments in the country, indicated that the M&E units do not have much influence. The involvement of civil society in these spheres is weak (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:57–58). As such, challenges to service delivery remain, with the literature indicating that this is largely a result of poor M&E (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:15). Weaknesses in the system itself as well as limited institutionalisation and ineffective implementation impacts negatively on the citizens of South Africa. The case studies of the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Basic Education will be set out below to further highlight how M&E can improve the outputs and outcomes of departments and how M&E can be used as a catalyst for administrative reform, but how these systems are utilised massively affect their effectiveness.

Selected Case Studies

Despite the weaknesses in the system as set out above, several government departments have indicated an increase in efficiency and an improvement in service delivery since the adoption of the GWM&E system. These departments include the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Home Affairs. These improvements indicate the value of such a system, although there remains much room for improvement.

The Department of Basic Education

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa was chosen as a case because it is commonly regarded as a pioneer in using evidence (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021). Several evaluations have been carried out since 1996 and the Department was one of the first to integrate the GWM&E system. Despite this, many challenges in the

Department remained and while South Africa's education system has between 97%-83% participation, the quality of education remained severely lacking (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:76).

After a textbook scandal in 2012, in which the Department and the Minister responsible were scrutinised and blamed for a shortage in textbooks, the Department took monitoring and evidence use more seriously. This scandal led to an "improvement narrative [that] resonated with programme managers" (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:79).

Another round of evaluations was carried out and the data from these evaluations were used to improve programs and reform administrative operations. An example of this is for one of the programs the evidence from monitoring, tracking, and data handling was used to identify and justify the need for funding to upgrade the information management system. They approached the government and secured funding for an online system, which has been operational since October 2018. This system has played a crucial role in efficiently managing program-related information, serving as a significant foundation for effective information management. Furthermore, several priority programs were identified, with all of these receiving large amounts of funding. These included early development programs, nutrition, teacher bursaries, and the best methods of teaching and reading (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:79). A further program was the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), aimed at improving health and nutrition among the poorest learners. This program received large funding from the government and reaches over 9 million learners. The NSNP feeds learners at school and teaches them about health and nutrition. In 2014, the Cabinet requested an evaluation carried out by the DBE. An implementation evaluation was carried out by a third-party evaluator. The main goal was to evaluate whether the program had significantly increased the health of these learners and whether there were educational benefits, as well as to identify potential improvements. The DBE approved 80% of the findings, and changes were made to implementation. An approvement plan was accepted by the Cabinet and program managers have been consistent in implementing this plan. The buy-in from the parties involved pointed to "evidence that the evaluation study has strong potential to shape and influence [the] implementation of the NSNP in the near future" (DPME, 2017:19). Regional and international assessments carried out recently indicated a slight improvement in

educational outcomes, although the quality of education remains poor, due to the low baseline.

Institutionalisation has been carried out in the DBE to a large extent. The attitudes towards monitoring, evaluation, and evidence use became more positive. Having support for evaluations was crucial and the concept of enhancing implementation through evaluations was appealing both in theory and practice. Once program managers gave their consent for evaluations to take place, it was simpler for the DBE to collaborate with the DPME to initiate the evaluations (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:80). Despite push-back from the largest education union in South Africa, the importance of the use of evidence in policymaking was recognised and provided for by different sources. The minister has played a role in this view, and demonstrated appreciation for the use of evidence, monitoring, and evaluation, with her long tenure being seen as a stabilising factor (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:80). Furthermore, approximately 75% of evaluation recommendations in the field of basic education since 2013 have centred around enhancing internal operations (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:80). The systems and technical support implemented to foster administrative reform emphasised collaboration and played a significant role in fostering ownership and facilitating learning throughout the process.

Despite the above, some barriers continue to exist to the comprehensive institutionalisation of M&E and evidence use. Some project managers do not understand the value of evaluations and are concerned that these would lead to individual repercussions. The DPME should assist departments in communicating to civil servants and the broader public the value of evaluations for policymaking and implementation. Broader advocacy for these systems is also important, ensuring that those who carry the message across are viewed as legitimate and trustworthy (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:90).

The Department of Home Affairs

The literature reveals an improvement in the service delivery and internal operations of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) since 2015, which is largely attributed to stricter M&E processes and the use of evidence (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021). The goal of the DHA is to enable services to be delivered to citizens, foreign nationals, the government, and the private sector to manage citizenship and civil

registration, international migration, refugee protection, and the population register (South African Government). Together with falling under the GWM&E Framework, the DHA has its own Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate.

According to interviews conducted in 2021 with officials at the DHA:

> The M&E Framework has contributed immensely in ensuring proper accountability and improved delivery of services through specific measurable, time-lined, achievable, and realistic set targets at operational level in the Department. By implementing the M&E Framework, managers are more responsible and accountable for their areas of work and Branches within the Department are able to plan better and ensure optimal utilisation of resources (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:19).

It appears that the Department has taken steps to institutionalise M&E throughout all its operations and that the usefulness and trustworthiness of evidence have increased. This is especially true for key areas of the Department, including the provision of Identification Documents and VISAS. However, a remaining challenge is the utilisation of this evidence in improving service delivery and many sectors of the Department remain inefficient. Evidence-use is thus not an institutional practice and the culture in the Department is not one that prioritises learning and improvement, largely due to a lack of communication and advocacy on the benefits of M&E and the potential solutions to problems of service delivery. The culture remains focused on compliance rather than on generating knowledge that can be worked into policymaking and implementation. Often monitoring masquerades as evaluation (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:20).

Several challenges remain in the Department including unsatisfactory human resource capability, a shortage of skilled officials to carry out M&E practices (especially provincially), a lack of understanding of the M&E Directorate's role in the Department, a lack of training, no effective communication apparatus for M&E results to be incorporated into decision-making, and an unsatisfactory level of involvement from all employees, especially at the operational level (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:22). Joint quarterly performance review sessions, Departmental Planning sessions, Budget Committee and Executive Committee meetings are tools that the Department uses to monitor the extent to which outcomes and objectives are

met, however, these do not have an impact on the operational level (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021:21). Changes to administrative and operational methods led to the use of specific, measurable, time-lined, achievable and realistic targets. The implementation of the M&E Framework made managers feel more responsible and accountable for their work and projects and branches in the Department became empowered to plan better and guarantee the best utilisation of resources (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021).

Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

Several recommendations come to the fore from the literature on how both the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Home Affairs can improve their M&E capabilities. Furthermore, areas of improvement can be identified for government-wide M&E on individual and institutional levels. These will be explained below.

Institutional Level

To enhance the M&E system across the public sector, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of all the steps involved in implementing a policy and achieving a specific outcome. Merely monitoring the outcomes is not enough, and it is crucial to examine the complete process leading to the outcomes. This approach helps to identify any potential weaknesses and establish effective processes (Engela & Ajam, 2010:14). To bridge the divide between theory and practice, it is essential to adopt a more comprehensive and unified strategy (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015:98).

A culture of learning and understanding the importance of M&E needs to be established. Often civil servants view M&E as a punishment or a way of policing their work. This leads to civil servants not trusting these systems and not viewing them as a critical way of improving service delivery for the country. Awareness needs to be raised on all levels of these benefits and that M&E is not an addition but an integral part of government operations. Line managers need to buy into this idea and use M&E outcomes as performance indicators and not merely as something to comply with (Engela & Ajam, 2010:19). The idea of continuous improvement should be stressed, which can be derailed by transitions (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:71). The evaluation process should be broadened to allow Parliament to contribute, however, this should be done in a way that does not create fear in civil servants to be exposed.

The Treasury should require information based on evidence for projects to receive funding, a monitoring system to be in place, and favour donors that support learning (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller, 2021:71). To increase the use of evidence in policymaking, it would be beneficial for all government departments and institutions to produce organisational processes that enable the use of evidence. For example, the Department for Environmental Affairs generates ten-year strategies based on research and evidence to encourage its research team to engage in strategic questions surrounding the use of evidence. Awareness of what evidence is and how it can and should be used is an important first step to creating norms that promote EBPM. Access to evidence needs to be readily available for policymakers for them to utilise it in a timely fashion (Langer, Ncube & Stewart, 2021:22).

Individual Level

Civil servants need to take ownership of M&E systems (Engela & Ajam, 2010:19). Civil servants must realise that their individual contributions are valuable to the developmental strategy of their departments and countries as a whole. This should be done through good communication, advocacy, capacity building, and training (Malefetsane, Lungepi & Tembile, 2014:18). Accounting officers and those responsible for budgeting and budget allocations need to be aware that the final responsibility lies with them and should be well versed in the M&E system and take ownership of it (Malefetsane, Lungepi & Tembile, 2014:20).

Individual leaders should be champions of M&E. Ministers, MECs and Mayors need to engage in M&E as part of their daily responsibilities, not only ensuring that the system exists. This requires leaders to be fully versed in the activities of their departments and skilled in how the M&E system works. Furthermore, the 'tone' of leadership should show a willingness to accept accountability, address weaknesses in a timely fashion, and continuously monitor implementation (Malefetsane, Lungepi & Tembile, 2014:19).

Department of Basic Education

The Department of Basic Education can be viewed as a type of champion in developing strategies to incorporate M&E and evidence into its daily operations. Despite the quality of education remaining relatively low, the department has improved greatly in its internal operations.

Several lessons emerge from the case study of the DBE. First, having stable leadership for a longer period is beneficial when the leadership champions M&E and carries this through to the Department. Second, crises can be utilised for good when it is used as a catalyst for change. Third, the political will to support independent evaluation and evidence must be continued, even if leadership changes. Fourth, evidence champions within the department strengthen the institutionalisation of M&E: "In DBE they worked hard to promote appreciation of evidence, and to act as knowledge brokers linking evidence generation and use by policymakers and programme managers" (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021:89).

The literature reveals several recommendations for the DBE to further support its institutionalisation of M&E. The department could benefit from continuous advocacy for M&E and evidence use, especially since there are remaining civil servants who are doubtful about its effectiveness. This should come from a trusted and respected voice and not one that is known to be too critical of the government, as this may affect the seriousness with which the message is received (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021).

Department of Home Affairs

Specific recommendations for the DHA overlap with some of the general recommendations, such as conducting monitoring at an operational level across all branches and getting buy-in from managers and civil servants. Currently, it is done more on a strategic level than an operational one, which hampers its ability to monitor inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the efficiency thereof. There is a general lack of knowledge of the M&E Framework in the Department. Advocacy, communication, and training are necessary to overcome this problem. Training should be done throughout the Department and the roles and responsibilities of all actors need to be clarified. An advocacy plan could help mainstream M&E as one of the main activities of the department. Another issue is the timely use of information and performance. This should be monitored effectively through a mechanism that will ensure evidence is included in the development, planning, and implementation of policies (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021).

Some lessons learnt from this case study indicate the usefulness of M&E and evidence used to improve service delivery by implementing administrative improvements. Greater consistency in issuing certain documents was reached due to the department implementing

operational changes. The framework also allows civil society to hold the Department accountable by being more transparent (Masilo, Masiya & Mathebula, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, while South Africa has made strides in mainstreaming and championing M&E through its policies, the institutionalisation of M&E practices and norms in the public sector has yet to yield the desired results. Challenges such as organisational culture, negative attitudes towards M&E, inefficiency, incompetence, and non-compliance with policies and legislation hinder the successful implementation of the M&E system and the potential for administrative reform. Additionally, there is a lack of skills and competence required for implementing a successful M&E strategy, limiting the progress of policies and resulting in uninformed decisions being made, hampering service delivery and successful policy outcomes.

Moreover, the use of evidence in policymaking is often symbolic and policies are borrowed from elsewhere with little or no attention paid to the local context. The evaluation of policies rarely prioritises the use of evidence, and policy instability is common, with officials opting to implement new or different policies rather than using systemic evaluation processes to learn and improve. It is clear that the institutionalisation of the GWM&E system is not being prioritised by government officials and leaders in the way that the Presidency champions it.

To improve the institutionalisation of M&E in the public sector, there is a need to address the challenges hindering the implementation of the system. This can be achieved by upskilling and training civil servants continuously and creating a culture that champions M&E. Moreover, policies should be designed with the local context in mind, and the evaluation of policies should prioritise the use of evidence to learn and improve. By doing so, the institutionalisation of M&E practices and norms in the public sector can yield the desired results of improved planning, policymaking, and achievement of objectives.

The above recommendations are strengthened by the case studies of evidence and M&E processes in the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa. While the Department of Basic Education has made progress in institutionalising M&E and evidence use, there are still challenges in

implementing and communicating the benefits of evaluations to all program managers. The Department of Home Affairs has also made strides in implementing M&E and the use of evidence, but there is a need for better communication and advocacy on the benefits of M&E and the potential solutions to problems with service delivery.

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Chapter 4
The Politics of the Use of Evaluations in Policymaking in South Africa: Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

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Abstract

Evaluation use is inherently political, with contestation in the design of the evaluation system, the process of implementing the evaluation, and the change process when the evaluation is complete. First, the study will look at different ways of considering evaluation use and the political considerations therein. Second, it will consider the broad incentives within the political system for evaluation use, which are built into South Africa's public administration and electoral systems. Finally, it will consider the design of South Africa's national evaluation system, which has taken an approach of facilitating learning through an opt-in system by willing departments, combined with guidelines-driven approaches to capacity building. These design features have certain implications for the interface between evaluations and the public administration system, and these drive the politics of evaluation use in government.

While illustrating the value of the National Evaluation System in facilitating evaluative practice in the public sector, the study will interrogate some of the constraints to institutionalising evaluation use across different levels of government. It will highlight how the political environment, i.e., contesting values and shifting power dynamics embedded in public sector institutional arrangements, have shaped the capacity case studies in South African government departments and municipalities. The case studies will serve as valuable vignettes to elucidate the drivers of evaluation use and the challenges in embedding evaluative culture in bureaucratic systems. The chapter seeks to make a valuable contribution to evaluation systems discourse through a critical analysis of the political contestations inherent in public sector evaluative practice and, importantly, recommend some

mitigation strategies to adopt transformative evaluation practices that strengthen a culture of evaluation use in policymaking in South Africa.

Keywords: institutionalisation, evaluation, policymaking, politics, evaluation use, evidence ecosystems, local government, mitigation strategies.

Introduction

Evaluation systems and evaluative practice are both enjoying a period of substantial growth in South Africa's public sector (Abrahams, 2015). Departments and even local government institutions are increasingly interested in building systems of evidence use and finding ways of strengthening the use of evidence in decision-making (Stewart, Dayal, Langer & Van Rooyen, 2019). However, these systems are not being built in a void; government institutions at all levels have complex and multilayered systems of incentives, particularly driven by the political–administrative interface, which shapes the use of evidence (Masiya, David & Mangai, 2021).

As growth in the corpus of knowledge regarding evaluation has taken place, there has been a parallel growth in comprehension of the enablers and constraints to institutionalising evidence-based decision-making, and some of the dilemmas that have been created when the incentives for evidence use are juxtaposed with the compliance requirements, political demands, and other drivers of public sector practice (Chirau & Blaser-Mapitsa, 2020; Munzedzhi, 2020). This chapter will focus on problematising these dilemmas and unpacking the opportunities and challenges to making evaluation meaningful in state institutions, particularly at the provincial and local government levels, which have been slower to invest in these systems for reasons that will be outlined. Furthermore, there has been relatively less research that has taken place on the institutionalisation of evaluation at local government levels for a complex confluence of reasons, including a weak professionalisation of evaluation, limited local capacity for evaluation on both the supply and demand sides, as well as a managerial misalignment around M&E related functions in local, provincial, and national government.

To explore these issues, this chapter will draw on Stewart, Dayal, Langer and Van Rooyen's model of an evidence ecosystem, which includes actors, activities, sectors, and a broad spectrum of practices relating to evidence use (2019). This is important because this

ecosystem is relatively weakly researched within local government; there is often an assumption that this looks like a more localised version of the national evaluation system. This approach allows for an understanding of the political incentive infrastructure, mechanisms, and practices across the range of actors that influence evidence use. While evaluations are a unique and important form of evidence, their use takes place within the same systemic infrastructure as other forms of evidence.

Within the broad theoretical framework adopted, five areas of complexity were established namely role players, activities, sectors, types of evidence, and range of questions for which evidence is sought. We further apply Stewart, Dayal, Langer and Van Rooyen's (2019) framing of complexity within a political governance framework encapsulating micro and macro political factors that help to understand the political factors that shape evaluation use.

The politics of evidence use

Evidence use is inherently political (Blaser-Mapitsa & Landau, 2019; Khumalo, Morkel, Mapitsa, Engel & Ali, 2021; Parkhurst, 2017; Power, 2015) and is shaped by broader societal developments and institutional arrangements (Draman, Titriku, Lampo, Hayter & Holden, 2017; Weyreauch, Echt and Suliman, 2016). The macro governance context of evidence encompasses various diverse actors such as CSOs, the state, media, citizens and the broader political space, which are critical to supporting an enabling environment for evidence use (ibid). Crawley's (2017) six spheres framework presents an understanding of macro-political factors shaping evidence use. He outlines the progression from logistical, technical, and contextual factors shaping decision-making and highlights the importance of understanding the deeper, hard-to-influence factors shaping evidence use, i.e., relational factors, which include issues of trust and collaboration among evidence stakeholders, political factors, which include commitment and buy-in from leadership as key determinants to a conducive environment for evidence use and finally ideological factors which consider the evidence use being a core institutional value resonating within policymakers.

Understanding the micro-political factors shaping evidence use is also valuable to framing the understanding of politics in evaluation use. Rabie (2019) discusses four quadrants that shape decision-making in parliamentary portfolio committees, i.e., pragmatic considerations, evidence, political party commitments

and personal opinions. Similarly, the COMPASS framework (Crawley & Ali, 2017) presents tensions that members of Parliament face, i.e., the incentives and disincentives for using evidence for decision-making. These include contestation between their personal agendas/interests, their constituencies, constitutional mandates, and their political party interests. Rabie (2019) also discusses the influence of longer-term commitments of the party on promises set out in their political manifesto or electoral promises, supporting the party Liné as well as treaties and agreements with international donors and local stakeholders such as unions as key considerations to policy decision-making. These factors draw attention to the values and persona of the policymaker, and provide a valuable understanding of the influence of political incentives in decision-making in government and illustrate the inherently political nature of evidence and that evaluation use is embodied in the values, interests, and incentives of policymakers, which may present contestations. Therefore, it is important to understand who sets the policy agenda in government to understand the power dynamics that influence the use of evaluations. Consequently, scholars such as Crawley (2017) and Goldman and Pabari (2020) highlight the value of leadership champions in supporting a culture of evidence use.

In this chapter, we embed the aforementioned micro and macro political factors in applying Stewart, Dayal, Langer and Van Rooyen's (2019) five complexity areas inherent in evidence ecosystems. For example, a progressive democratic system with active citizenry or non-progressive such as a domineering executive presents macro political factors that shape the relationship between evidence and the multiple role players in local government, the context as well as how they engage with the different evidence questions and available evidence. Thus, political factors present contestations and shape how evidence is used, especially when the values and incentives of policymakers are not aligned with the available evidence.

This chapter will take a case study approach to better understand the complexities within the evidence ecosystem and further consider the political incentives shaping policymaking. These incentives shape the landscape of evaluation use, and as evaluation systems are increasingly expanding to local government institutions, may inform the ways in which this can be done most effectively.

Background

The South African public sector has institutional arrangements such as legislative frameworks, infrastructure, resources and role players that support the evidence ecosystem. In addition to the National Development Plan, the National Evaluation Policy Framework, other progressive regulations such as the socioeconomic impact assessment system (SEIAS) (which requires all proposed policy options to draw on impact evaluations and other forms of evidence that foster the use of evidence in every policy initiative) are critical tenets to institutionalising evaluation use. Notably, the deepening of evidence systems at provincial and local levels remains varied. Some departments and local and municipal entities have dedicated research and M&E units, while others still need to be better capacitated. Stewart, Dayal, Langer and Van Rooyen (2019) demonstrate South Africa's evidence ecosystem as resilient, bolstered by its diverse, connected stakeholders who drive the demand and supply of evidence.

There is a general indication of a performance-based, results-oriented culture in South Africa, partly shown by the vibrant civil society, media and citizen groups increasingly demanding accountability on government expenditure and achievement of development outcomes. However, corruption has infiltrated the public sector in the recent past, such as the state capture inquiry which aggravated public outcries at the need for more accountability and transparency in government expenditure. As such, the importance of evidence-informed policymaking has received increasing recognition across government and non-state actors.

Within South Africa's largely enabling institutional architecture to support evidence use (Stewart, Dayal, Langer & Van Rooyen, 2019), It is important to further examine the contesting incentives for using evidence by policymakers, which may be structural and political and vary by the different stakeholders' values and interests (Blaser-Mapitsa, Ali & Khumalo, 2020). Attitudes towards evaluation practice have varied and shifted over time, from the earlier distrust of M&E as a watchdog function towards the more appreciative role of evaluation systems as critical to public administration and development outcomes.

South African local government has complex, multifaceted sources of decision-making power at the political and administrative levels, in turn resulting in different incentives to use evidence by different role players. Scholars (Cameron, 2010; De Visser, 2010; Thornhill, 2005) have highlighted the challenges with the complex political-

administrative interface evident in South African local government. This is characterised by a conflation of legislative and executive functions in municipalities which brings forth political interference in the administrative functions. De Visser (2010) demonstrates the complexities in the interface, he precludes that the functions of the municipal councils are heavily centred on the preparation and adoption of executive and administrative decisions hence it is difficult for these municipal councils to hold municipal executives and administration accountable. Notably, conflating legislative and executive functions deters the ideal circumstances for the political oversight of the council over the executive and the administration further exacerbated by most municipal councils adopting committee systems that exist to support the executive (De Visser, 2010).

There is also evidence of political interference with party officials being placed in municipal officials' roles (political cadre appointments) which politicises the municipal administration and affects service delivery (De Visser, 2010). Cameron (2010:678) defines politicisation as "partisan control of the bureaucracy i.e., when a civil servant's activity depends more on political than professional norms defined by administration and ruled by law". Cameron discusses the negative consequences of the growing politicisation which he argues results in a degree of political involvement in performance assessments and low levels of performance evaluation. Hence, the multifaceted interface is affecting performance and evaluation culture in local government, given the precedence of political priorities in municipalities.

Further challenges arise with national and provincial Ministers interfering in the daily running of the executive, which blurs the divide between the political and administrative functions (De Visser, 2010). Thus, contestations around who sets the agenda and directs municipal administration are pertinent to shaping the evaluation agenda in local government, and these factors are considered in this chapter as they shape the politics of evaluation use in policymaking in South Africa.

As Parkhurst (2017) asserts, contesting political party values and interests incites biases in evidence used for policymaking. For example, the political arm may lean more towards evidence demonstrating their contribution to service delivery and appeasing their constituencies or political party mandates. Khumalo, Morkel, Mapitsa, Engel and Ali (2021) illustrate the power contestations inherent in macro and micro contexts, highlighting how parliamentarians' conflating interests between their obligations to political parties, obligations to citizens and constituents' politics as well as alignment to their constitutional

roles shape how they use evidence in policymaking. Therefore, one has to recognise the different and often contesting values and interests of the different role players in government (at the different levels and the three shares) that shape how evaluations are ultimately used. The case studies here present some of the challenges at the local policymaking level that constrain the use of evaluations.

South African government institutions have varying degrees of capacity and expertise to support a culture of use. While the National Evaluation Policy Framework with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation established to champion evaluation culture in the public sector has been instrumental in shaping evaluative practice, the adoption has been uneven across the spheres of government and departmentally. There remains limited evidence of a culture of use at the local government levels (Goldman et al., 2019; Goldman, Olaleye, Sixolile, Ntakumba & Waller, 2020). As the empirical evidence in this chapter will illustrate, some departments and local municipalities have grappled with institutionalising evaluations for several reasons, including lack of capacity, resources and fragmentation across departments.

Even though the Municipal Wide M&E system (MWMES) exists to guide municipalities to systematically deliver interventions according to set objectives, its institutionalisation has been challenging, particularly due to the need for more leadership buy-in/ ownership of the system (Kariuki and Reddy, 2017). Kariuki and Reddy (2017) pointed to the lack of institutionalisation of M&E at the local level, primarily as a result of fragmented and uncoordinated M&E systems and political interference (Govender, 2011, as cited in Kariuki and Reddy, 2017). This chapter adds to the discourse of understanding evaluation systems at the local levels by shedding light on the political factors that shape evaluation use and the incentives and disincentives for institutionalising, such as the uneven M&E culture at local government levels. By political factors, we describe the commitment, interests, values, incentives and disincentives to use evaluations. This includes the multiple interests and priorities of political and executive leaders in local government and how they work together to enhance or hinder evaluation use (Parkhurst, 2017).

Methods

The chapter draws on data from six case studies and a general review of the literature on the constraints and enablers of evaluation use in

the public sector. The authors paid special attention to the complex institutional arrangements of the evaluation ecosystem in South Africa embedding the political contestations of evaluation use in local policymaking. The case studies focused on the incentives and contestations of institutionalising evaluations at the different government levels, i.e., national, provincial, departmental and municipality levels. The table below summarises the case studies selected, the sampled participants and the data collection approach.

Table 4.1:   Case studies, sample and data collection approach:

Case Study	Key participants and sampling approach	Data collection approach
Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation	Evaluators: Purposive sampling	Virtual open-ended interviews, secondary data review
National Department of Human Settlements	Evaluators: Purposive sampling	Virtual open-ended interviews, secondary data review
Midvaal Local Municipality	Municipal employees in the performance management/ M&E unit: Purposive sampling	Semi-structured interviews, secondary data review
Emfuleni Local Municipality	Municipal employees in the performance management/ M&E unit: Purposive sampling	Semi-structured interviews, secondary data review
Department of Social Development	Senior officials in the DSD, Treasury and the Presidency: Purposive sampling	Interviews
Mpumalanga Provincial Department	Provincial department officials: Purposive sampling	Workshop engagements

Case studies one and two interviewed evaluators from the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to understand the enablers and constraints of evaluation use at the National Department of Human Settlements. Secondary data was collected from academic journals, available document analysis, reports from the department, different government institutions, government prescripts and websites, regulations, and available newspapers.

The third and fourth case studies were at the municipal level, with the Midvaal Local Municipality defined as high-performing and the other Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) with characteristics of a low-performing municipality. Municipal Managers, managers in the office of the Municipal Manager, performance management manager and employees in the performance management and M&E units were interviewed.

The fifth case study interviewed officials with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mandates within the Department of Social Development, looking at the enablers and constraints of evidence use in relation to the social grant expansion. The sixth case study emerged from a two-day interactive workshop discussion at an evaluation design clinic with Mpumalanga province officials. Discussions centred around supporting and inhibiting factors to evaluation practice in the province.

The case study approach was valuable here, given the benefit of case studies in helping us to understand the processes of events, projects and programmes and discover context characteristics essential to shedding light on issues and phenomena. In this chapter, the case studies provide an empirical understanding of the contestations of evaluation use in different local contexts (Merriam, 1998). The case study approach provides the advantage of exploring complex issues in real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2011). The cases and elements of the case studies were purposively sampled according to the chapter's interest in understanding the factors shaping evaluation use in public sector institutions.

The authors also drew on their experiential knowledge from' their diverse evaluation experiences in the South African government, including implementing the six spheres framework through participatory processes with a number of municipalities, provincial departments, and national departments (Crawley, 2017). While this data was not directly presented, these experiences helped the authors

to make sense of, interpret and analyse the case studies, which presented different examples of incentives for evaluation use and how political factors play a role.

Results

Role-players

Stewart, Dayal, Langer and Van Rooyen (2019) commend South Africa's evidence ecosystem for its complexity and resilience. This is evident through the increased number of role players in South Africa's evaluation system, each with different skills, expertise, and commitment across government and other stakeholders, including civil society, universities, research think tanks, international bodies, and donors. There remain, however, disparities in the evaluation systems at the national level versus the micro government levels, i.e., municipalities whose evaluation systems are at varying levels and embracing a culture of use is still emergent, as the case studies in the chapter elucidate.

Addressing macro-contextual factors that shape evidence use in public sector institutions, Weyrauch, Echt and Suliman (2016:35) present a two-fold characterisation of relationships that influence whether or not evidence interacts with policy. First, they draw attention to the relationships with other state agencies, which include:

- the flow of information between jurisdictions and levels,
- the degree of capacity for the use of evidence in different sections and departments,
- support from government agencies that produce data and research,
- coordination among government agencies and
- policy domains.

These are, in turn, discussed using data from the case studies to understand how these factors shape evaluation use and local policymaking in the South African public sector.

In South Africa, the flow of information between jurisdictions and levels involves how information flows from the national and subnational spheres and how these are connected to support evaluation systems. The flow of information across various departments at national and subnational levels is further complicated by the different

political affinities and multiple stakeholder agendas that shape how evidence is produced, disseminated and used for policymaking.

At a provincial sphere, the role of the governing party was discussed as being a key driver of how evidence is used across spheres of government. As one participant noted:

> When you see evidence is not being used, but you don't see how someone here might be benefiting, you could know, maybe things are happening at national, that someone is pushing for something over there. Because even if you think things should maybe happen in a certain way, you can know that we might all feel pressures from Luthuli House.

In the municipal case study, the research established that the administrative versus political structures in municipalities can present power contestations through the different interests and values of different stakeholders, which has an effect on local policymaking. In Midvaal Local Municipality (MLM), the study found evidence of championing M&E across the administrative and political structures. However, the Emfuleni local municipality (ELM) presented challenges with leadership buy-in to the M&E culture at the administrative level, yet the political level spearheaded M&E initiatives at the municipality. As one participant explained:

While in the ELM, there are M&E champions in the Mayoral Committee, and concerns lie with a lack of championship at the municipal administrative level. Politically there is a championship because the people in the mayoral know what they are talking about with issues of M&E and performance management. Administratively we are struggling, meaning the executive.

When asked if there is enough understanding and buy-in from the political heads (MMCs and Mayor) to the Top Management for the success of M&E, participants expressed that 'understanding of the importance of M&E' is there; however, the challenge is in obtaining the buy-in. There is little interest in ensuring that the municipality fully benefits from M&E; M&E is conducted as an act of compliance instead. As one participant explained:

> … there is an understanding but there is no interest. For example, when a report goes to council, they do not look at the content.

> When performance is reported to be low, there is not enough engagement on why it is low.

In addition, the Department of Housing case study illustrates the limitations of a fragmented evaluation system and the need for coordination between the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS), the provinces and the municipalities. It alludes to the negative effects the lack of synergy has had on the implementation of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) framework which is a guiding framework for institutionalising M&E in the sector. This is also true in the provincial sphere where provinces are now expected to develop Provincial Evaluation Plans as part of the National Evaluation System, but the support functions that DPME has played for national departments, such as the Evaluation Design Clinic, are not as widely available for provinces.

The weak integration across national, provincial, and local government levels, as well as the uneven buy-in and interest in the value of institutionalising M&E across the political and administrative structures, threatens the usability of evaluations. For example, when administrative (executive) and political structures diverge on policy agendas, political interests may influence the use of evidence. As argued above, the nature of the political-administrative divide in municipalities often lends itself to political interference which can be detrimental to effective oversight and evaluative functions (De Visser, 2010). Furthermore, this divide manifests differently in the respective spheres of government. Due to the proximity municipalities have to citizen engagement and service delivery, a divide between politics and administration can be immediately visible to residents and have a tangible impact on services. However, in some contexts, it can also be in some ways difficult to identify and define, because a relatively small number of politicians, administrators, and service providers may mean that multiple interactions happen among the relevant stakeholders in different forums. On the other hand, in the national sphere, the impact can be widespread and systematic, but less apparent to the general public.

On the degree of capacity for the use of evidence in different sections and departments, South African government departments and entities have variations in capacity to support evaluation use. Some local government structures are constrained both in their infrastructure and in investing in human capacity for M&E. The case studies illustrate how resource and capacity constraints impede the

institutionalising of evaluation systems. Resource allocation and prioritisation of MEL activities in local government can have political connotations based on whether there is leadership interest and buy-in, there is the likelihood to support evaluative function.

In the case of the Department of Human Settlements, the study revealed a slow uptake of the evaluation findings because of a lack of technical skills in evaluation throughout the government. The limited implementation of the MEIA framework was a further result of M&E capacity constraints in the department. One participant explained why the framework has faced challenges with its implementation:

> … because of the shortage of qualified skills within the M&E unit, and although the MEIA was introduced to provinces, it has never been implemented. As it is not good to hire external service providers, which will be changing at all times. There is a need to have provincial officials who are linked to MEIA trained in this regard and fully use it (Participant interview).

While challenges were noted with resourcing and infrastructure to support the institutionalisation of evaluations in both municipalities, the study found this to be quite uneven as MLM was better resourced and invested in building staff capacity for M&E, for example conducting regular performance assessments to ensure staff possessed the requisite skills and capacity. On the contrary, ELM, which is already impeded by limited financial resources, has very limited staff and resources to support M&E processes adequately. These capacity constraints deter the institutionalisation of evaluation use at the municipality as resources are critical to institutionalising evidence systems (Goldman et al., 2019; Kariuki & Reddy, 2017; Stewart, Dayal, Langer Van Rooyen, 2019).

Support from government agencies that produce data and research depends on the level and depth of interaction between a particular government institution with bodies such as national research science councils, statistics bodies, policy think tanks and other evidence bodies. The case studies illustrated some efforts to interact with these evidence producers, particularly in the NDHS, where the evaluations were all conducted by external service providers due to limited internal constraints. There were efforts in place to enforce improvement plans to ensure that the recommendations from the evaluations were implemented in practice.

Coordination between government entities is beneficial for sharing, disseminating and using evaluations (Weyrauch et al., 2016). Weyrauch et al. (2016) further note how institutional silos can limit access to different evidence from government to other agencies. Coordination is thus critical in policymaking as the co-production of knowledge widens the windows of opportunity. The NDHS case study illustrates the need for more synergy and coordination from national to provincial government levels; in particular, how the DPME processes complement existing subnational processes and structures for more effective evaluation systems. One participant explained the lack of synergy between the DPME, and the provinces as follows:

> A good relationship exists between provinces and NDHS, but I think that this is lacking between the provinces and DPME. There are working in silos. For example, a couple of evaluations were undertaken in Mpumalanga without the knowledge of NDHS. There is a need to have better coordination. The national department is not doing a lot of evaluation as provinces do, but they do not share the evaluation results thus it creates duplication. (Participant interview)

Policy domains account for how government institutions interact and share knowledge or not. For example, some sectors interact and share and use knowledge more than others, such as the health sector which has been a primary driver of evidence-informed policymaking, and disseminating information to key stakeholders, especially during the COVID-19 era where there was a dire need for evidence to inform everyday practices. In the case studies, it was evident that both municipalities have systems in place to disseminate knowledge to citizens on relevant service delivery issues, which is pertinent to supporting a culture of evaluation use. There are also strides with citizen engagement incorporated into evaluation systems. However, this has not been as effective at the grassroots level, as a participant explained:

> Citizen engagement is key and happening at subnational levels. Hence, forums within national departments enable these engagements. These are called Technical MINMEC and MINMEC where the political leaders and department executives meet. There are also Executive Management Teams, Ministerial Committees and Inter-ministerial Committee (IMC) where these evaluations are presented. However, there is a need to improve on

the academic side to see the evaluation reports published. There should also be engagements with the communities in provinces where people are informed on the changes made in the policies because of new strategies, interventions or recommendations to improve the programme or a policy (Participant interview).

Activities

Legislative frameworks supporting the institutionalisation of evaluation such as the NEPF and the MWMES as well as the DPME guidelines for implementing M&E processes, play a central role in supporting activities to produce and use evaluations in policymaking. Goldman and Pabari (2020) highlight the central role of knowledge brokers in supporting the flow of evidence from its production to its use, for example in the case of the Department of Basic Education, knowledge brokering by an evidence champion, the Chief Directorate helped to identify areas to evaluate and to maximise ownership of the findings and recommendations. Notably, in practice, the progression from knowledge production to effective synthesis, and dissemination presents different values which shape considerations on investments in time, capacity, resources and interests at the different levels and activities of the evidence ecosystem. These processes also demonstrate the complexity in progression from the production of useful and accessible evidence to the use of evidence policymaking process.

The political nature of evaluation needs to be taken cognisance of in understanding the activities that support evaluation use and in defining the values for the different stakeholders in the evaluation process. This renders the flow of evaluation activities even more complex given the varying incentives and disincentives for institutionalising evaluation in government:

Most people do not see M&E as a tool that assists in improving their work. This is mainly due to corruption; hence people see M&E as police officials. Besides, some entities do not support the national M&E work, but they would love to start their evaluation work by putting aside what the NDHS has done. There are also political factions within the government, where officials do not see eye to eye (Participant interview).

Sectors

One participant summarized the challenge of multisectoral coordination eloquently as follows: "The difficulty is that often, the sector making the decision isn't the same as the sector that holds the evidence, and they have different institutions with different incentives." At the local sphere of government multisectoral planning has limited geographic boundaries, which creates some options for synergy through coordinated IDP processes, as well as common participation mechanisms (Einstein et al., 2019).

A widely acknowledged challenge of evaluation practice is the frequent need to bring together multistakeholder teams and experts with diverse sectoral backgrounds. This poses several challenges, the key among them being the varying ways in which evidence is valued and legitimised in different sectors (Schmidt et al., 2020). This further informs the focus and systems of evidence generation across different departments.

As discussed above about role-players: several organisations have important roles in establishing the 'rules of the game' but may require different evidence than either the producers or consumers of evaluation. Examples include the National Treasury and the Auditor General of South Africa, both of which play critical roles in determining the work plans and areas of focus of government departments and municipalities, through report requirements, regulatory frameworks, and oversight. However, they both require and use different kinds of information than those institutions that are directly implementing activities. This mismatch of both priorities and power creates an important misalignment in the ways in which departments are incentivised to use evidence. A recent survey within the city of Johannesburg indicates that nearly 75% of officials' time was spent reporting to the provincial and national government (Chirau & Blaser-Mapitsa, 2019). Furthermore, only about 1 in 10 municipalities received a clean audit report. These two pieces of information, taken together, illustrate both the tremendous burden and tremendous importance of monitoring and reporting in government (Mnguni and Subban, 2022).

Types of evidence

What used to be an established hierarchy of evidence, with systematic reviews and meta-evaluations near the top, and individual anecdotes and experiences near the bottom, has now been called into question.

This is particularly true in South African departments or arenas of government that deal with direct service delivery, where community narratives and individual experiences can spark community mobilisations from experiences of exclusion, or growing inequality (Masiya, Davids and Mangai, 2019).

Within the government, whether or not data has 'official' status is important for its use in decision-making, with StatsSA service as the custodian of data that has been government-approved (Tintswalo et al., 2022). This impacts its usefulness for a range of public-sector decision-making functions. Furthermore, it is also critiqued by those who find its processes of data generation exclusionary, or limiting (Alenda-Demoutiez, 2022).

Citizen-generated evidence plays an important role in political decision-making, due to the importance of strengthening feedback mechanisms between citizens and people in institutions which provide service delivery (Pophiwa, Deliwe, Mathe & Taylor, 2021). Increasingly, service delivery protests are emerging as a form of citizen engagement that often less illustrates the empirics of state performance, but rather the experiences of exclusion people feel by local government, and the limited range of tools at their disposal to improve government performance (Alexander, 2010). As one official explained:

> [The protesters] want water. I know we don't have a solution beyond tankers, because even though we're laying pipes, those pipes are not connected to anything, and there are lots of challenges before that can happen. But if I bring them my evidence, of pipes laid, and procurement schedules – they will say I'm thirsty.

Contested sources of evidence, one using input data, and the other using results data, clearly appraise the performance of service delivery differently. We see similar differences of opinion between officials and politicians, whose job performance has different drivers, with one relying on election cycles, and the other with established KPIs.

Range of questions to be answered

Government at all spheres and tiers is faced with a huge diversity of decisions requiring evidence for decision-making. In a context of increasing complexity and uncertainty, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and unprecedented inequality, the approach

evaluation often takes, of asking relatively incremental effectiveness questions about programmes already being implemented, is less and less able to respond to the transformative, imaginative needs of government. Similarly, existing systems of evidence are often ill-equipped to deal with transdisciplinary, multi-scalar, transboundary questions. As one official explained:

The difficulty with social grants is that everyone wants them to do everything, and it's only one tool. Social development wants to see people lifted out of poverty. Treasury wants to see people move into employment and SARS wants to see a growing tax base. The African National Congress (ANC) wants to win votes. Everyone is so busy chasing their own agenda that it's hard to get a clear view of what grants do and what they don't do. Then you add in outside factors, like the weakening rand, or load shedding, and it's a very confusing picture.

A combination of factors creates a gap between the production and use of evidence for policy decision-making. These include the comparatively academic and theoretical focus on research taking place within higher education institutions, an important set of evidence-generating stakeholders. This body of knowledge places more emphasis on generalisability and theoretical value than instrumental use in practice. Additionally, the scope and scale of Africa's research capacity mean that much available evidence is not often specific to the sectors or scales of the decisions that need to be made (Khumalo, Morkel, Mapitsa, Engel & Ali, 2021).

The current monitoring systems in government are structured to answer questions about what has been done. Whether budgets are being spent, and activities are being carried out in the ways planned. While this is certainly important, it also does not necessarily respond to political imperatives for constituency representation and re-election. This inherently creates a divergence between political and administrative stakeholders in the way in which the same evidence will be used, and which kinds of evidence will be demanded. A surge in the application of 'rapid evaluation' methods in the public sector illustrates the need for evaluations to align their processes to meet the needs of the policy cycle.

Discussion

This section will use the theoretical framework presented above to connect the evidence provided in the case studies to the complexities of evidence ecosystems.

Institutional capacity for evidence use

Institutional capacity for evidence use within government is complex for a number of reasons. Perhaps most importantly, a lack of consensus around what constitutes legitimate systems of evidence use, and therefore what capacities are needed for them to be built, is contested on several levels (Blaser-Mapitsa & Landau, 2019). As one participant highlighted, "Everyone uses the data that is relevant for them. I'm not an economist, and the economists don't use GIS. The pieces are mostly in place, but nobody puts them together in the same way."

There is contestation around the political and administrative interface within the government. What some people see as a strength of democratic contestation, and a strength of diverse, co-existing ideologies of governance, others see as political interference. Political interference is seen as a primary threat to evidence use, particularly at a local level. While there are certainly examples of situations where political leaders do not see the value of evidence used in decision-making (Khumalo, Morkel, Mapitsa, Engel & Ali, 2021), emergent research suggests that there are equally examples in which there is support and buy-in for evaluation use. However, the concomitant administrative support structures are not in place (Gwazela, 2023). In one Gauteng municipality, Gwazela (2023:83) notes that "there are members in the Mayoral Committee that play the champion role; however, the municipality lacks such a champion at an administrative." Several participants link this to a lack of legislative mandate for evaluation, that many other compliance functions already have in place. Particularly for resource-constrained municipalities, investing in activities that will contribute to positive audit findings is often a priority. Some argue that this is what is required, given that many of the legislation and policy pieces are in place, but are simply poorly implemented (Fourie & Malan, 2020). Others argue that the current policy environment has a number of overlapping mandates, contradictions, and gaps that make the meaningful institutionalisation of a coherent bureaucratic system challenging (Dawson, 2014).

The separation of powers between the political and administrative functions was founded by the Local Government Systems Act (2000).

The political power is vested in the municipal council, with some powers delegated to the office of the Executive Mayor, while the administrative arm is primarily controlled by the municipal manager, with some delegated powers to senior administrative officials (Vilakazi & Adetiba, 2020). As Vilakazi and Adetiba (2020:54) argue, the principle of separation of powers has yet to be well applied in practice in the political sphere and it will triumph over the administrative sphere's jurisdiction. This unequal balance of power presents jurisdictional tension, with political agendas often dominating administrative functions in practice. This has implications for how evaluation systems are institutionalised at the municipal level and, ultimately, the usability of evaluations for policymaking. In addition to the interconnections mentioned above with state agencies, Weyrauch et al. (2016) discuss the importance of relationships with non-state agencies in supporting evidence ecosystems. The authors assert the importance of considering the interests of important political players in evidence ecosystems as strong vested interests may impact policymaking decisions.

Interaction with non-state actors involves policy forums and community networks for sharing knowledge and expertise, channels of communication with other research institutions, civil society organisation actors involved in decision processes and the degree of vested interests: for evidence use, citizen engagement and relationships with donors (Kone & Blaser Mapitsa, 2021). The relationships among government entities and non-state actors and their participation in policymaking processes in South Africa are diverse and as the vignettes demonstrate, the nature of political leadership and the way that this shapes incentives for evidence use influences the ways in which evaluation is institutionalised. While the bureaucratic structures of evaluation can be shared across a number of different systems, the nature of political leadership can influence whether these structures will promote evidence use, or whether they will be used for political gain at the expense of good governance and developmental performance.

Conclusion

The drivers of evaluation use in South Africa are complex, due to the multiplicity of ways that evaluation has been embedded within public sector institutions, and within the entirety of the evidence ecosystem in the country. This has several causal mechanisms. For example, people have divergent views of what constitutes evaluation, and what used to

be quite a specific and narrowly defined practice, is now broadening to include issues of evaluative practice, action research, and other adjacent approaches. Another factor to consider is that there is a wide range of evidence that is required for decision-making, and while evaluations are particularly fit-for-purpose for policymaking, the range of policies and programmes that have been evaluated remains relatively low. Furthermore, the weak legislated function of evaluation has meant that the function has been institutionalised in diverse and inconsistent ways within government entities.

It would be unduly reductionist to conclude that specific incentives or institutionalised features work for, or against evidence use across levels of government or departmental context. The landscape is too diverse and varied, and in practice, policies or institutional arrangements that enable evidence use in one context may be manipulated for political gain in another context. What this points to is a need not to focus on finding a 'best fit' model that will encourage evidence use across government, but rather to continue investing in the hard work of good management, which builds a culture of acknowledging failures, investing in continuous improvement, and using available evidence to improve practice.

On the surface, it is easy to condemn political interference with evaluations as inherently damaging and to assume that evaluations should provide recommendations that should be instrumentally implemented as part of an administrative process. However, the contestation of evidence is often an indication of a robust democracy and should not immediately be condemned.

It is important to distinguish between undermining the legitimacy of evaluation systems and evaluative practice, which could be considered political interference, and political engagement, which will contest the implications of findings through the lenses of different development paradigms. The latter should be encouraged, in the spirit of robust evidence systems. The former is a concerning indication of a state not building systems to respond to the needs of citizens. The vignettes above found all cases at different levels of government, suggesting that the way in which evaluation is institutionalised does not drive any specific political engagement, but rather that political leadership shapes the capacity and use of whatever evidence system is in place.

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Chapter 5
Evidence-Based Policymaking and Analysis: Systems and Techniques

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Abstract

In South Africa, evidence-based policymaking considers the past, present, future, challenges, and institutionalisation in daily decision-making processes. Knowledge governance is a particular phenomenon that touches various areas of management and is an intersection of knowledge management, strategic management, and theories. The assessment of knowledge governance can be categorised as the accumulation, storage, and transfer of knowledge. This chapter provides an overview of how knowledge informs policy. The goal was to identify and propose solutions for evidence-based policymaking. To this end, the existing literature on the policymaking process, factors influencing decision-making, barriers to bridging the evidence-policy gap, and knowledge governance were reviewed and summarised. The findings of the review show:

- There is substantial literature on evidence-based policymaking internationally, but it is contextually limited in relation to South Africa.
- There is overlap and consensus on improvements in the use of evidence in policymaking.
- The absence of evidence-based policymaking points to challenges that need urgent attention.
- The positivist paradigm is the dominant school of thought on evidence-based policymaking, where evidence is used to bridge a gap on an identified policy issue

Recommendations for improving the interaction between evidence and policymaking are suggested.

Keywords: evidence, evidence-based policymaking, policy, policy analysis, governance, decision-making, systems, techniques.

Introduction

In South Africa, various effects on people and businesses result from government policies and service delivery. Government demand for better services necessitates a readiness to re-evaluate future-looking, outcome-oriented, and evidence-based policies that incorporate a variety of knowledge (Mangena, 2006; UK Cabinet Office, 1999). According to the Council of Science and Technology Advisors (CSTA, 1999), complex issues that require decisions with societal and economic repercussions are faced by most governments, including that of South Africa. The complexity of issues facing governments and societies today necessitates the use of solid data when formulating policy. At the regional, national, and provincial levels, there is thought to be strong political will to address sustainability-related issues, particularly the threats and opportunities posed by various factors like climate change. This includes investment in international negotiations and close links to trade and other economic negotiations and considerations (DST, 2008).

To promote the incorporation of evidence into policy, it is critical to foster collaborative dialogue and create an environment in which policymakers from the research community can draw on evidence. The following sections explore how evidence informs policy, the policymaking process, decision factors, gaps between evidence and policy, knowledge management as a driver of the policymaking process, and recommendations for improving the interaction between evidence and policymaking.

Evidence-Based Policy: A Synopsis

In South Africa (and globally), policymaking is shaped by the social and political context of the country (Shaxson, 2005) and by (scientific) evidence in the context of policy development and decision-making (Bielak, Campbell, Pope, Schaefer & Shaxson, 2008; Sutcliffe & Court, 2006). Definitions of evidence vary. The term 'evidence' includes either science alone (Sutcliffe & Court, 2006) or various other sources of knowledge (UK Cabinet Office, 1999) such as indigenous knowledge, expert knowledge, and public opinion.

Internationally, evidence is increasingly being used to support policy, with a focus on evidence-based policy as governments have become more receptive to the role of evidence in policymaking. Evidence-based policymaking is "systematic and research-based"

(Sutcliffe & Court, 2006), with researchers as producers and suppliers of evidence (Morgan, Smith, Blakey & Wilson, 2007). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002:2), research can be divided into basic research primarily aimed at acquiring new knowledge without a specific application or benefit in mind, and applied research primarily aimed at a specific practical goal. Governments such as that of the United Kingdom have adopted a broader definition of evidence that includes "expert knowledge, existing national and international research, existing statistics, stakeholder consultations, evaluation of past policies, relevant new research, or secondary sources, including the Internet" (UK Cabinet Office, 1999:4).

According to Davis (2004), the evidence-based policy approach enables stakeholders to make informed policy decisions by incorporating the best available evidence into development and implementation. Evidence-based policy is believed to lead to better outcomes (Sutcliffe & Court, 2006). For evidence to be accepted by policymakers, it should be accurate, objective, credible, generalizable, relevant, available, sound, and practical (McNie, 2007; Wilson, Smith, Blakey & Shaxson, 2007; Young, 2008). Ideally, policy should be based on a solid foundation of evidence (evidence-based), rather than policymakers using data to justify preconceived policy options that fit their own policy agenda (evidence-based) (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004). Thus, the acceptability of evidence depends on the policy context, credibility, and knowledge, as well as the influence and legitimacy of the link (interface) between the policy and the evidence-based environment.

Typically, evidence-based policy and implementation processes go through six phases (Young & Quinn, 2002) (Figure 5.1).
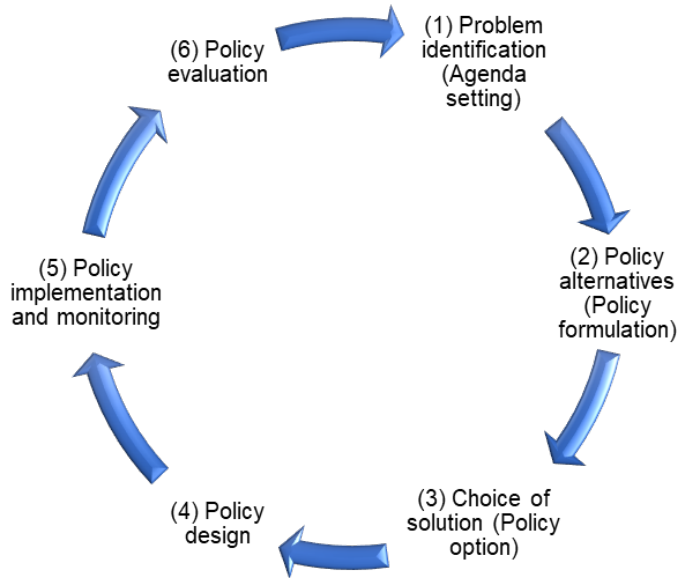
Figure 5.1: The Policy Cycle

Source: Adapted from Young and Quinn (2002)

This conceptualisation is important because it shows that research has the potential to influence the process at every stage, for example, by providing information and correcting planning and implementation. So, this view of the policy process also helps to break down the policy cycle and try to identify the different types of research or evidence that may be needed. For example, it may well be that successfully influencing an agenda often requires a different approach than influencing policy implementation. The value of this view of the policy process is that it is not tied to a particular set of institutions and thus allows for the analysis of a range of actors (not just government) and their interaction in relation to a policy issue, a component of the process, and time.

For the purposes of this chapter, the functions of the policy processes are simplified into four categories (Young & Quinn, 2002):

- Agenda setting: awareness of an issue or problem and the priority assigned to it.
- Policy formulation: the ways in which (analytical and policy) options and strategies are developed.
- Policy implementation: the forms and nature of policy administration and activities on the ground.

- Policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E): the ways in which the need for, design, implementation, and impact of policy are monitored and evaluated.

The Political Decision-Making Process

The decisions and actions of policymakers (policy actors) are influenced by a few factors, which include scientific evidence (human, social, or natural). However, most scientific evidence is only one source of evidence for the policymaking process. Therefore, an understanding of the interrelationships and divergences between decision-making and policymaking in relation to evidence is of paramount importance. Such an understanding would promote effective and sound decision-making strategies.

Evidence can influence policymaking in a variety of ways. Mitchell, Clark, Cash and Alcock (2004) identified three ways in which evidence can influence policymaking. First, stakeholders involved in policymaking can incorporate evidence into current debates. Second, evidence can be used to explain the 'impact of stakeholders' behaviour,' which can lead to behaviour change. Third, evidence can be used to convince stakeholders that a problem (real or imagined) exists. These three options are ideal and can be used when the political process is direct (well-structured) and the answer is known with a reasonable degree of certainty (Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 2001; Shaxson, 2008; Snowden & Boone, 2007). The reason is that the influence of policy is often indirect (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004) and it takes a while for its effects to become apparent. For example, policy has done little to address climate change through emissions since the Industrial Revolution (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004). The problem of global warming is an example of the links between human activities, ozone depletion, increased radiation, and human health where available evidence could influence decision-makers (Watson, 2005).

Notwithstanding the availability of evidence-based policy guidance, there are also frustrations. In most cases, the evidence does not always have the expected impact on policy processes and outcomes (McNie, 2007; Wilson, Smith, Blakey & Shaxson, 2007; Young, 2008). Policymakers often respond to rigorously structured but difficult problems (Turnhout, Hisschemöller & Eijsackers, 2007). Because the policy process involves stakeholders from different disciplines and backgrounds, "conflicting values and facts may exist"

(Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 2001:48), as may conflicting conclusions and different solutions to the same problem (Turnhout, Hisschemöller & Eijsackers, 2007).

Factors Influencing Decision-Making

In South Africa, the decision-making process is influenced by several factors:

- societal factors such as structure, function, and composition;
- socioeconomic context (Bowen & Zwi, 2005);
- communication and the characteristics of the message (Haas, 2004);
- credibility of information (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004);
- credibility of evidence; and
- the extent to which policymakers seek to understand each other's viewpoints (Roux, Rogers, Biggs, Ashton & Sergeant, 2006), as well as ethics and priorities.

In addition, several human factors influence decision-making, including personal value systems and beliefs (Bowen & Zwi, 2005), perceptions, the limits of human capabilities, the influence of political power, and time constraints (Cloete et al., 2006).

Both individual and societal factors influence the incorporation of knowledge into decision-making processes by affecting the compatibility of new knowledge with values and belief systems. The decision-maker's "personal qualities and capabilities", such as values and beliefs, leadership, knowledge and skills, resources, partnership relationships, and networking abilities, play a critical role in the adoption of evidence (Bowen & Zwi, 2005). If stakeholders involved in policymaking view evidence as useful, understandable, and consistent with experience, it is more likely to be incorporated into the decision-making process (Bowen & Zwi, 2005; Haas, 2004).

Barriers to Evidence-based Policymaking

Despite the link between evidence and policy, there are barriers and divisions among policy actors that can hinder effective interaction and incorporation of evidence into policy. These include philosophy, self-interest, limited commitment, uncertainty, time, and knowledge. These barriers are briefly outlined below.

Policymakers' Philosophies

All actors involved in policymaking have their own philosophies that influence the way they see, understand, and experience the world, and thus their behaviour (Limoges, 1993; Pohl, 2008; Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007). It is possible for actors with different philosophies to communicate with each other. However, actors involved in policymaking (especially academics and policymakers) must be sensitive when sharing certain policy-relevant information. Given the differences in the interpretation of the information and the resulting reactions compared to the predicted reactions, caution should be exercised when sharing information (Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007).

Individual philosophies can directly or indirectly influence the culture and goals of stakeholders (Briggs, 2006), as can their environment (Potočnik, 2008). While the goal of some stakeholders in the policymaking process may be to promote knowledge, it may also be to gain popular support (Choi et al., 2005). For example, policymakers may receive recognition from a variety of sources, including supervisors, managers, and other influential leaders (Briggs, 2006). For example, recognition, feedback, and rewards for certain policymakers (political officials) may be rapid and usually results-oriented. Other policymakers (academics) may receive recognition through participation in conferences and publications, with rewards that are either slow or moderate and results-oriented (Briggs, 2006).

Policymakers' Own Interests

Different actors in policymaking are accountable to different entities. For example, scientists are accountable to their funders, peers, and journal editors. Cabinet ministers and elected politicians, on the other hand, are accountable to the government, taxpayers, and political parties (Choi et al., 2005). These differences in accountability among those involved in policymaking can lead to misunderstandings between and within working environments and responsibilities. Thus, close collaboration among actors involved in policymaking can be challenging given the favourable (unfavourable) environments in which they work and in which rewards are limited (or non-existent).

In cases where the government sets research funding, it may also be responsible for agenda setting and thus exert pressure to comply (Choi et al., 2005; Zussman, 2003). Bias may also be evident among other funders (Haas, 2004). Several individual factors may also influence policymakers. These can include both economic and

emotional interests, such as philosophical and political interests, which can influence the achievement of desired policy goals' (Rosenstock & Lee, 2002).

Limited Engagement of Policymakers

The need to communicate and manage scientific knowledge has become more important in South Africa over the years (Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007). However, the successful communication of scientific knowledge to policymakers remains unclear (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008; Mubyasi & Gonzalez–Block, 2005). This is exacerbated by the perceived limited relevance of scientific evidence to current policy problems and the insistence of policymakers on accurate answers even when they are not available (UK Government, 2008). Conservatism is perceived in the dissemination of knowledge by scientists in cases where major policy changes are expected (Glasgow & Emmons, 2007; Raffensperger & DeFur, 1999). Selective, inappropriate, and out-of-context use of knowledge can be the norm, even when not intended (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008; Owens, Petts & Bulkeley, 2006).

Inadequate knowledge transfer can lead to limited engagement among those involved in policymaking, which can be exacerbated by various barriers in the communication process. These include inadequate dissemination of knowledge (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008; Owens, Petts & Bulkeley, 2006), which is exacerbated by inadequate funding for this purpose (Choi et al., 2005), and frequent overload of low-quality scientific evidence and information (Jewell & Bero, 2008). In addition, the inability of policymakers to place themselves in the decision-making context (Eppler, 2007) can lead to limited understanding of the evidence (Jewell & Bero, 2008; Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008), which in turn can lead to uncertainty and the inability to adequately articulate policy needs (Eppler, 2007). Other problems can include reservations on the part of policymakers (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008), as well as a lack of incentives for technology and innovation, organisational constraints (Eppler, 2007), and a lack of institutional channels for incorporating evidence into policy (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). All of these can lead to a lack of balanced perspectives that often distort facts and evidence and prevent policymakers from forming an informed view of "current policy issues" (Yankelovich, 2003:8), resulting in limited or no participation in the policymaking process.

Uncertainty of Policymakers

There is scepticism about the use of evidence by policymakers' interest groups to promote policy agendas or ideologies (Choi et al., 2005; Wolfe & Behague, 2008). On the one hand, policymakers would rather make uninformed decisions than admit to knowledge gaps that could reduce support for their programmes (Choi et al., 2005). On the other hand, the available evidence may not appear credible to policymakers (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). This assumption is reinforced by vanity sensitivities and 'tunnel vision' (Choi et al., 2005). Thus, policymakers may focus on evidence that is inconsistent with their point of view (Elaad, 2022).

The credibility of evidence can influence knowledge communication among policymakers. Credibility is based on 'expertise and trustworthiness' (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004), i.e., whether the facts are communicated realistically (Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007), 'true' and better than other information (Mitchell, Clark, Cash & Alcock, 2004). The competence of a scientist as a policy stakeholder depends on his or her knowledge and experience (Rogers, 1995). Trust among stakeholders involved in policy can be achieved through an understanding of existing perspectives (Roux, Rogers, Biggs, Ashton & Sergeant, 2006) and is built through ongoing engagement and communication (Rogers, 1995). This in turn would facilitate the communication of knowledge about uncertainty and risk.

In South Africa, risk knowledge is rooted in cultural and social issues and cannot be overcome simply by applying more and better knowledge (Jamieson, 1996; Yankelovich, 2003). Most forms of risk knowledge may be associated with various uncertainties that cannot be resolved through scientific or other knowledge. The uncertainties associated with risk knowledge can be discussed, and alternatives and solutions can be conceived or sought (Yankelovich, 2003). Evidence is often available with absolute certainty. Therefore, knowledge of risks associated with uncertain evidence must be communicated to policymakers and the public (Jones et al. 2008, Yankelovich, 2003).

Time Frame for Policy

Gathering evidence is a slow, cumulative process compared to the response times and trade-offs possible in policymaking (Briggs, 2006; Choi et al., 2005, Harries, Elliot & Higgins, 1999; Jones & Walsh, 2008). In contrast to rigour, rationality, and systematic evidence gathering (Lavis, 2006; Yankelovich, 2003), policymaking

is rapid and unpredictable (Lavis, 2006). Alternatives and reviews are limited and sometimes non-existent (Briggs, 2006; Choi et al., 2005; Yankelovich, 2003). When evidence does not match the needs of those involved in policymaking (decision-makers and policymakers), it can often have a negative impact on policy (Haas, 2004). In most cases, the unavailability of information to policymakers at critical times in policymaking is seen as a lack of knowledge or information (Owens, Petts & Bulkeley, 2006). Policymakers therefore need credible facts on which to base their decisions. However, these are rarely available when they are needed (Briggs, 2006).

Developing credible knowledge takes significant time, in contrast to the short-term needs of policymakers to use that knowledge in much shorter time frames (often months and years) (Haas, 2004; Owens, Petts & Bulkeley, 2006; Yankelovich, 2003). However, knowledge generation can be longer-term (Briggs, 2006; Choi et al., 2005) and therefore precede the policy agenda (Owens, Petts & Bulkeley, 2006). Therefore, knowledge can be useful to policymakers in setting future policy agendas.

Policymakers Knowledge and Power

Those involved in policymaking are holders of both knowledge (scientists) and power (policymakers) (Briggs, 2006). According to Briggs (2006), scientists have a monopoly on the interpretation of knowledge by keeping knowledge away from policymakers. At the same time, policymakers do not welcome scientists into their circles of power. Such attitudes are generally not conducive to collaboration across sectors and within policy actors.

The notion that evidence can bridge the gap between evidence and policy through science education and the promotion of scientific thinking leads to the attribution of ethical and intellectual superiority to scientific evidence (Yankelovich, 2003), which increases the need for evidence-based policymaking. Moreover, there is a difference between truth and power, as evidenced by the fact that scientific evidence translated as knowledge can be used to support policy efforts (Haas, 2004; Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008; Parsons, 2002).

Improving Evidence-Policymaking Interaction

Issues such as values, knowledge, communication, decision-making, relationships, and the role of ICT are critical to improving evidence-based policy interactions. These issues are highlighted below.

Policymakers' Values and Evidence

Decision-making is a "highly value-laden" process for which sound evidence alone is insufficient (Watson, 2005:472). Policymakers limit their experience in decision-making when they fail to distinguish between "rational and reasonable choices" and "fail to recognise the influence of these political and institutional factors" (Lomas, 2000:237). Evidence creators and communicators need to understand the processes of knowledge management (Bielak, Campbell, Pope, Schaefer & Shaxson, 2007; Crewe & Young, 2002). They also need to understand how evidence is transformed into general knowledge and what value systems are involved in this transformation of knowledge from "scientific evidence" to "general evidence" (Lomas, 2000:237).

In transforming scientific evidence into general knowledge for use in policymaking, communicators of relevant policy information may be influenced by personal values (Lomas, 2000) and by the values inherent in the social, cultural, and economic context of their time, as well as by the evidence they produce. Therefore, they must be aware of their own philosophies, biases, and values if they are to influence the political process. Understanding the policymaking process and its underlying values helps policymakers develop useful ideas based on specific insights (Lomas, 2000). The challenge for policymakers, then, is to transform the information they produce into actionable knowledge.

Actionable knowledge as evidence for policymaking

Knowledge is useful if it is relevant to current policy needs (Briggs, 2006; Choi et al., 2005; Young, 2008). Useful knowledge meets certain value requirements of decision-makers and may represent a desired situation, object, or state in interactions with the population (McNie, 2007). Useful knowledge can meet the requirements of sensitivity, credibility, and legitimacy (Cash & Clark, 2001; Cash et al., 2002; McNie, 2007) and "improves policymaking by expanding alternatives, clarifying choices, and enabling desired outcomes to be achieved" (McNie, 2007:18).

The policy and institutional context must be aligned with the evidence to be used. The overall context should be considered, and additional context should be added to the evidence to make it useful for decision-making and thus justify its value and use (Lomas, 2000). An integrated information base is also less susceptible to bias against a funding agency or policy client (Haas, 2004). Policymakers should also develop ways to ensure the quality, integrity, and objectivity of the knowledge they use. The best or most useful knowledge will have no impact on policymaking if it is not successfully disseminated to policymakers (Haas, 2004).

Communication and the decision-making process

Inadequate communication and a lack of commitment have previously been identified as barriers to knowledge use in the conflict between evidence and policy. In South Africa, a shift in policymaking occurred after 1994, leading to a change in the perception of scientific evidence as well as a rethinking of the role of evidence in policymaking (Lawrence, 2006). The increasing emphasis on assessing the impact of policies, combined with improved communication networks and the resulting flood of information, has highlighted the importance of disseminating evidence (Lawrence, 2006).

This has led to the need for an understanding of the intricacies of the policy process to learn the proper steps to incorporate relevant evidence (Young, 2008). Such an understanding would be helpful in identifying the information needs of policymakers and preparing and presenting the information in a way that improves people's lives (Briggs, 2006; McNie, 2007). Relevant information must be presented concisely (Choi et al., 2005; Mubyasi & Gonzalez-Block, 2005). However, the responsibility lies not only with the producers of facts but with everyone involved in policymaking. A higher level of knowledge and understanding requires successful dialogue among policymaking actors (Choi et al., 2005). For policymakers to benefit from evidence, they must become familiar with it (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). Policymakers should be proactive and actively seek advice from experts. Therefore, stakeholders involved in policymaking should be supported and encouraged to interact with each other.

Relations between the actors of policymaking

Policy communities can be formed through collaboration between actors (policymakers and researchers) (Elaad, 2022). This requires knowledge

of relationship management at the interfaces of policymaking (McNie, 2007). The interface between government and evidence determines the degree and extent to which evidence underpins the political economy by informing decisions and policymaking processes at the government level (Turton, Hattingh, Claassen, Roux & Ashton, 2007). Understanding the cultural and operational differences among stakeholders would support communication and foster a sustainable working relationship. Attempted partnerships with stakeholders often fail due to a lack of mutual respect or cultural ignorance (Briggs, 2006). All parties should not intimidate or dominate the others. Policymakers should therefore have early access to knowledge to enable processing and cross-fertilisation of ideas and knowledge. A policymaking process based on current knowledge is better than no deliberation based on uncertainty (Briggs, 2006).

An expert intermediary or knowledge broker is often needed between key stakeholders in policymaking (Lewenstein, 1991; Lomas, 2000; Reardon, Lavis & Gibson, 2006; Saywell & Cotton, 1999; Shaxson, 2009).

In South Africa, personal relationships are important for translating evidence into policy (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). Policymakers often need personal knowledge and trust in evidence sources to be convinced of their credibility (Harries, Elliot & Higgins, 1999). Efforts by policy actors to build personal relationships can therefore be critical to extending and enhancing existing links between evidence and policy (Crewe & Young, 2002; Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). However, the policymaking process can be disrupted or stalled when such relationships end. Policymakers' stakeholders could network with 'epistemic communities' (Hanney, Gonzalez-Block, Buxton & Kogan, 2003) to inform the policy process. These networks could link individuals and organisations based on shared interests or values (Court & Mendizabal, 2005). Member-driven networks are a powerful tool for developing evidence, practises, and strategies and can inform the policy process (Mendizabal, 2008). This can be achieved by incorporating high-quality evidence into the policymaking process, fostering linkages among policy actors, and creating an informal and constructive environment for consensus (Court & Mendizabal, 2005). However, for effective and transparent decision-making processes, the involvement of all relevant stakeholders is critical (Watson, 2005). A strong 'evidence-society interface' is essential for good knowledge governance, so it is important to develop an understanding of such a relationship (Cash et al. 2002; McNie, 2007).

The role of ICT at the 'interface between facts and politics

An informed and engaged population stimulates political dialogue, promotes participation in policy development and benefits policymaking. A stronger "evidence- society" (Turton, Hattingh, Claassen, Roux & Ashton, 2007:34) and thus greater public participation in evidence-based policy debates (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008) suggests that evidence should be made available to the public. An appropriate environment for communication should be created (Meyer, 2006). In addition, government decision-making processes should be open and transparent, both to the stakeholders of policymakers and to the public. This includes giving the public access to facts and explaining how they have been used in influencing decisions and how they fit into policy agendas (NERC, EA & DEFRA, 2005). In this context, ICTs play an extremely important role in disseminating knowledge, primarily to the public (Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007), but also to decision-makers who, despite their capacities, are part of the population and subject to the same media influences.

ICTs play three main roles at the interface. First, they report and critique policy and factual issues, as well as the relationships between policymakers' stakeholders or their decisions. Second, they report on the public's reaction to and perception of various evidence-based policy issues. Third, ICT also provides a balanced view of issues. For this reason, ICTs have an important educational and informative role in policymaking. However, one should be aware of the limitations of ICT (Sandman, 2002).

Involvement in the political decision-making process

Neither is fact-gathering a product nor policymaking an event; both are processes (Lomas, 2000). Understanding these processes is critical to fostering interaction among policymaking actors. Therefore, all stakeholders (direct/indirect) should be involved in all stages of knowledge development (Lomas, 2000; Mubyasi & Gonzalez-Block, 2005). At the same time, it is important for scientists to be involved as critical actors in the policymaking process by interpreting the meaning of evidence (Jones, 2008; Wilson, Smith, Blakey & Shaxson, 2007) and acting as knowledge brokers (Bielak, Campbell, Pope, Schaefer & Shaxson, 2007). In addition, the gap between evidence and practice can be bridged through workshops aimed at equipping policymakers with the evidence and the skills to evaluate it. Close collaboration

among stakeholders should be fostered by integrating functions (Briggs, 2006).

Evidence-Based Policymaking Systems and Techniques

Systems and techniques for evidence-based policymaking are critical components of sound decision-making processes (Watson, 2005). The purpose of these systems and techniques is to ensure that policy is based on rigorous evidence, trustworthy data, and sound analysis. Policymakers can improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of their decisions by applying evidence-based approaches (Lomas, 2000). This section provides an overview of the major evidence-based policymaking systems and techniques.

- **Systematic literature reviews** are a common technique used in evidence-based policymaking. This involves a thorough and systematic search of relevant research studies and publications to identify and synthesize existing evidence on a particular policy topic (Bielak, Campbell, Pope, Schaefer & Shaxson, 2007; Crewe & Young, 2002; Jacobs, Garfin & Lenart, 2005; McNie, 2007; Reardon, Lavis & Gibson, 2006; Wilson, Smith, Blakey & Shaxson, 2007). Policymakers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the available evidence, identify knowledge gaps, and make informed decisions by critically evaluating and analysing the results of multiple studies.
- **Meta-analysis** is a statistical technique that combines and analyses data from multiple studies to draw general conclusions and estimate the magnitude of impact (Lomas, 2000). Policymakers can use this technique to quantitatively summarise the findings of multiple studies, assess the consistency and generalisability of the findings, and make more accurate estimates of the impact of interventions or policies. Meta-analysis is a robust and rigorous method for synthesizing evidence that supports evidence-based decision-making (Bielak, Campbell, Pope, Schaefer & Shaxson, 2007; Crewe & Young, 2002).
- **Randomised controlled trials** (RCTs) are widely regarded as the gold standard for assessing the efficacy of interventions or interventions. Individuals or groups are randomly assigned to different interventions or control conditions in these trials, and outcomes are measured to determine causal effects. RCTs provide rigorous evidence of the efficacy of specific interventions to

policymakers, allowing them to make informed decisions based on empirical data (Briggs, 2006; Choi et al., 2005; Young, 2008).

- **Cost-benefit analysis (CBA)**: A cost-benefit analysis compares the costs and benefits of various policy options (McNie, 2007). It entails weighing the economic costs and benefits of policies, taking both monetary and non-monetary factors into account. By quantifying costs and benefits and identifying policies that provide the greatest net benefit to society, cost-benefit analysis assists policymakers in determining the most efficient use of resources (Cash & Clark, 2001; Cash et al., 2002; McNie, 2007).

- **Stakeholder and expert consultation** are critical components of evidence-based policymaking (Lomas, 2000). Policymakers can gain access to diverse perspectives, local knowledge, and lessons learned by involving stakeholders and experts throughout the policy process (Haas, 2004). This involvement can aid in identifying relevant sources of evidence, contextualising findings, and ensuring that policy addresses the needs and preferences of stakeholders.

- **Monitoring and evaluation systems** are critical for evidence-based policymaking. These systems entail the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to assess policy implementation and impact (Lawrence, 2006). Policymakers can track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to ensure policy effectiveness and respond to changing circumstances through continuous M&E (Choi et al., 2005; Mubyasi & Gonzalez-Block, 2005).

- **Knowledge transmission and communication**: Effective knowledge transmission and communication strategies are essential for closing the knowledge gap between research findings and policy decisions (Choi et al., 2005). Policymakers must communicate complex knowledge in clear and understandable ways to diverse stakeholders (Jones & Walsh, 2008). This includes translating research findings into policy-relevant messages, as well as using visual aids, infographics, and simple language summaries to improve understanding and facilitate uptake of findings.

Thus, evidence-based policymaking systems and techniques offer a methodical and rigorous approach to decision-making. Policymakers can ensure that their decisions are based on sound evidence and have a higher likelihood of achieving desired outcomes by conducting systematic literature reviews, meta-analyses, RCTs, cost-benefit

analyses, stakeholder engagement, M&E systems, and effective knowledge translation.

Conclusion

Through a review and summary of the literature, this chapter investigated the challenges to evidence-based policymaking. The goal was to identify and propose evidence-based policymaking solutions. In this context, four points are important. First, there is substantial literature on evidence-based policymaking at both the international and national levels. Second, there is overlap and agreement in the literature on how to improve the use of evidence in policymaking. Third, the lack of evidence-based policy indicates problems that must be addressed immediately (Strydom, Hill & Eloff, 2007). Fourth, the literature on South Africa is contextually limited (Jones, Jones & Walsh, 2008). Finally, in terms of evidence-based policymaking, the positivist paradigm is the dominant school of thought, in which evidence is used to fill a gap in an identified policy problem (Greenhalgh & Russel, 2009). The weaknesses of the paradigm are ignored because it assumes the reality of the factors associated with decision-making processes.

It is suggested that further evidence and policy research be conducted. This can be accomplished by:

- recognising the complexities of policymaking, its philosophy, its actors, and the intricate relationships among policymakers;
- evaluating the structure and system underpinning the policy process; and
- incorporating lessons learned into the policymaking process.

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Chapter 6

Key Actors Involved in Evidence Generation and Monitoring & Evaluation in the South African Public Sector

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Abstract

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) assist policy actors in making better decisions by providing evidence-based results in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. This evidence generated usually becomes tangible information used by a range of policy stakeholders for analysis, and the outcome is made readily available. While there is a National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) developed to complement the government's determination to step up the use of evaluations in the public sector in South Africa, it has not been able to provide the evidence adequately. Hence, one of the objectives of the chapter is to examine the causes of inadequate evidence generation in the sector and to scrutinise systemic hurdles. Furthermore, this chapter aims to identify the roles of respective key actors involved in evidence generation and M&E. In this regard, the first section of this chapter probes the role of the government in setting up institutions and frameworks for performance, M&E. This will be followed by the oversight and accountability role of the parliament in the second section, while the third section focuses on the role of the academia in providing essential M&E knowledge and skills. Lastly, this chapter explores the factors influencing evidence generation by the various actors such as the government, parliament, academia and civil society. This chapter adopts a systematic literature review of relevant academic literature and books on the roles of various stakeholders in evidence-based M&E to achieve its objectives. It concludes by reviewing the challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to surmount these challenges as well as the future role of evidence generators in view of the transformation M&E is experiencing.

Keywords: policy actors, evidence generation, monitoring, evaluation, performance, framework, implementation, South African public sector.

Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are highly significant in guiding the transformation of the public service into an efficient establishment that fulfils the government's objectives. M&E entails the activities that enable policy actors to analyse in what manner an intervention unfolds over time (Berthe et al., 2018). It also shows how efficiently a programme was executed and whether there are lapses or gaps between what was planned, and the actual results achieved. Monitoring deals with collecting and analysing data, requiring a suitable and dependable monitoring system. Such a system is essential for purposes of evaluation. Evaluation activities analytically and empirically measure all the components of a policy intervention to ascertain its general value or importance (Kusek & Rist, 2011). The goal is to deliver reliable evidence for decision-makers to accomplish the anticipated results.

Evaluation can be divided into two categories, namely performance evaluation and impact evaluation (Maepa, 2014). Performance evaluation's emphasis is on gauging the quality of service delivery and the results realised by a policy intervention such as a programme. Activities associated with performance evaluation are normally performed based on information accumulated through a monitoring system. Performance evaluation furthermore endeavours to establish whether a policy programme yielded the desired positive outcomes and to pinpoint success factors (Sibonde & Dassah, 2021).

Impact evaluation in turn aims to assess the intended and unintended effects of a particular policy intervention. It aims to determine the causal relationship between the intervention and its observed impacts, going beyond mere correlation. The primary purpose of impact evaluation is to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of an intervention in achieving its intended goals and to measure its broader effects on various social, economic, and environmental outcomes. It provides evidence-based insights on whether the intervention has made a difference and helps decision-makers in designing and implementing effective policy programmes.

M&E furthermore encompasses statistics regarding cost-benefit ratios of policy programmes enabling policy actors to maximise

return on investments. As such, M&E are essential ingredients of the policymaking process by obtaining evidence pertaining to policy planning and implementation but also fostering accountability and transparency in policymaking. In this regard, Keegan and Rowley (2017) argue that evidence generated by means of M&E reveals accomplishments towards policy objectives and appraises the policy's efficacy, fruitfulness and benefits.

Methodology

A desktop literature review of relevant academic literature and books related to the roles of various actors in evidence-based M&E was utilised to uncover challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to surmount these challenges. This type of review involves collecting data from existing resources, synthesizing the findings, and consequently interpreting them (Eichler & Schwarz, 2019). The process enabled the author to gather and create a summary of current findings regarding the roles of various stakeholders in evidence-based M&E, alongside the challenges faced in the South African public sector and the mitigating mechanisms. Furthermore, the author made use of numerous search engines such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus to identify related articles, including government portals and official documentation.

The Role of the Government in Evidence Generation and M&E

The Government of South Africa established the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&ES) that assesses the performance of various ministries, public institutions, entities and agencies in order to improve service delivery (Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015). The GWM&ES was designed in 2005 but was only fully implemented in 2009. Consequently, in 2010 the Department of Performance M&E (DPME) was created and in 2011, the Cabinet approved the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) to complement the government's determination to improve performance M&E (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014).

The DPME aims to increase government-wide accountability, coordination and collaboration. It also concentrates on policy planning as well as on the M&E of policy implementation and outcomes (Mbanda & Fourie, 2020). To operationalise these aims, the DPME launched several initiatives including the assessment of

managerial performance of national and provincial departments, the introduction of a monitoring system of front-line services, the design of a national evaluation system, as well as the development of a municipal performance assessment tool. These initiatives significantly increased the amount of evidence generated regarding policymaking (Umlaw, 2015).

The performance of government in all spheres often does not live up to expectations. In the local sphere of government, for example, local, district and metropolitan municipalities are mandated to render basic services to communities. However, due to poor service delivery violent protests by communities have become commonplace (Umlaw, 2015). Political observers often maintain that poor service delivery can be addressed by improving performance M&E, evidence generation as well as political and administrative accountability. Kariuki and Reddy (2017), for example, argue that substandard policy planning as well as the inability to align policy implementation with institutional strategic plans seriously hamper service delivery. DPME therefore intends to address these limitations by strengthening managerial accountability, enhancing policy planning and encouraging a synergistic relationship between government ministries. Public institutions are therefore expected to focus on common national policy priorities instead of only focusing on divergent institutional endeavours. This has led to improved alignment, synergy and cooperation in government. National Treasury and the Department of Public Service and Administration, for example, significantly strengthen the mandate of the DPME by generating M&E evidence. National Treasury plays a support role by promoting financial accountability through the implementation of the Programme Performance Information Reporting System. This System requires ministries to report on the relationship between financial inputs and actual outputs, which has helped to improve the M&E of policy programmes and service delivery (Abrahams, 2015). The Department of Public Service and Administration, on the other hand, support DPME by accentuating performance activities and promoting mechanisms for M&E in the public sector. These mechanisms include promoting the use of evidence-based decision-making and implementing performance management systems to improve the delivery of public services. The involvement of these key actors in evidence generation, and M&E, highlights the importance of a collaborative and coordinated approach towards building accountability and improving service delivery in South Africa (Abrahams, 2015).

The Role of the Parliament in Evidence Generation and M&E

The role of the Parliament of South Africa in evidence generation and M&E is particularly critical. As the legislative arm of government, Parliament is responsible for holding the executive accountable for its actions and ensuring that public resources are used efficiently and effectively. To fulfil this mandate, Parliament must have access to timely, relevant, and accurate evidence to inform its decision-making and oversight functions (Malatjie, 2017; Nelson, 2016).

Evaluation is the principal oversight role of Parliament. This includes determining whether allocated budgets are used in cost-effective and efficient ways, establishing whether strategic objectives are realised, and targets are met, and reviewing the impact of policy interventions on society. In order to perform this oversight role, Parliament heavily relies on evidence generation, which requires the availability of accurate and timely data, statistics and information (Adaku, Agomor, Amoatey & Tandoh-Offin, 2022; Rabie, 2019).

It may be argued that the intricate and multifaceted structure of Parliament in South Africa presents a challenge for the generation and application of evidence in its oversight responsibilities. Parkhurst (2017) holds that the various levels and layers of Parliament's structure can be quite ambiguous and make it difficult to determine what information is pertinent. Furthermore, much of the information that members of Parliament (MPs) use to hold the executive accountable is provided by the executive itself, leading to a lopsidedness of information. This makes it difficult for MPs to effectively carry out their oversight role (Malapane, 2016). The provision of independent information may seem like a solution. However, the complication of several sources of information, along with the developing political reform and persuasion from various policy actors, mean that decision-making ultimately becomes a matter of priority concerns and sound judgement. There is therefore a need for Parliament to have access to objective, timely, relevant and reliable evidence to effectively carry out its oversight mandate.

A positive development is the integration of the M&E Office with other offices within Parliament. This has resulted in more coordinated oversight processes, which also have the potential to enhance the use of M&E reports (evidence) in assessing the work of Parliament itself but also those of executive institutions. The use of a more integrated oversight framework as well as the adoption of a balanced scorecard are positive steps in improving Parliament's functions. However,

there is still room for improvement in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of M&E in Parliament. The M&E Office continues to work towards improving its systems, processes and capacity to generate and use evidence for decision-making, while also collaborating with other actors, such as academia and civil society, to enhance the quality and relevance of the evidence generated.

Parliamentary committees are important instruments for overseeing the functioning of government departments and promoting accountability. Portfolio committees are aligned to specific government departments and have the mandate to exercise oversight over departments and public agencies and entities. Select committees of Parliament oversee a cluster of government departments. Joint committees of Parliament can also be formed, and ad hoc committees may be established through the resolutions of the Houses (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013). Jointly these Parliamentary committees play a crucial role in ensuring that the executive is held accountable and that policies are thoroughly scrutinised before being adopted. These committees also serve as a platform for MPs to engage with government officials, experts, and other actors to gather relevant evidence, thereby promoting informed decision-making.

It is important to note that the engagement with evidence by Parliamentary committees is multifaceted in nature and governed by a range of legal protocols and procedural rules. Committees are able to summon various individuals and organisations to provide evidence and documents for consideration (Matebese-Notshulwana, 2019). This means that they are able to engage with a wide range of actors in order to gather relevant evidence. Additionally, committees are required to develop strategic plans and conduct self-assessment reports on their implementation, which allows for ongoing engagement with evidence throughout the parliamentary term. The legacy reports compiled at the end of each term then provide a comprehensive record of the committee's work, which can serve as a valuable platform for the functioning of future committees. Parliamentary committees use various methods including oversight visits, surveys, colloquiums, and legacy reports to generate evidence (Forkert, 2017; Muller, 2021; Oronje & Zulu, 2018; Stewart, Dayal, Langer & Van Rooyen, 2019). These methods enable committees to generate their own evidence and supplement evidence provided by the executive to better inform their oversight and legislative functions. Overall, the institutionalised oversight focus of committees is centred around engaging with

evidence in order to hold government entities accountable and promote good governance (Zantsi, 2020).

Over and above the functioning of committees of Parliament, researchers and content and legal advisors play a crucial role in analysing evidence-based information for MPs, allowing for effective engagement with the evidence and facilitating oversight (Datta & Jones, 2011). These researchers and advisors are also required to track progress towards policy priorities through in-year monitoring and following up on implementation, which provides a comprehensive platform for continuous oversight (Calland & Seedat, 2015).

Several factors that may influence evidence use in Parliament, include the electoral system, political party dynamics, governance structures, technical capacity, and actor networks. The electoral system has implications for committee composition and political party dynamics, which in turn influences evidence use (Rabie, 2019). Political party discourse is generally characterised by a polarised political culture and decision-making. Governance structures are constantly evolving with reviews of approaches, models, frameworks, rules, and mechanisms for executing constitutional obligations. While Parliament has invested significantly in the development of appropriate governance structures and strategic actor networks, it may be argued that there is still room for improvement regarding the use of evidence. It is evident that evidence used in Parliament is shaped by political interests and values which can result in partial, distorted, or selective use of evidence (Khumalo, Morkel, Mapitsa & Engel, 2021).

The Role of the Academia in Evidence Generation and M&E

Academia plays a crucial role in evidence generation and M&E in South Africa. Some of the most significant roles that these key actors play are highlighted below.

Research

Academics and public and private institutions of higher education generally produce high-quality research that contributes to evidence generation in various policy fields. Such research is often used to inform policymaking and policy programme implementation. Through research, academics generate new knowledge and insights on various topics, which inform policy development and assist in gauging the outcomes of policy interventions. Such applied research is typically

conducted through quantitative and qualitative research designs, case studies, meta-analyses, and randomised control trials (Ntshotsho, Prozesky, Esler & Reyers, 2015).

Academics often work with government institutions, entities and agencies, non-governmental organisations, and other actors to design and implement studies that generate evidence on important policy issues (Stewart, Dayal, Langer & Van Rooyen, 2019). In terms of M&E, these academics thus play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies. Through evaluations and impact assessments, academics can provide evidence on whether policies and programmes are achieving their intended goals and objectives. This can help policymakers and practitioners identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of interventions (Székely, 2014). Academia also contributes to the development of suitable M&E frameworks and appropriate methodologies for evidence generation. They can work with policy actors to develop performance indicators and quality metrics that can be used to measure progress and track performance over time. This can help ensure that M&E efforts are rigorous, systematic, and standardised across different programmes and sectors (Besharati, Rawhani & Rios, 2017). It is evident that through their expertise and knowledge, academics can contribute to the development of rigorous and reliable evidence, as well as frameworks and methodologies for monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes.

Capacity Building

Academia plays a key role in policy and M&E capacity building through formal training programmes, the hosting of workshops, and conference proceedings. These initiatives help to build the capacity of individuals and organisations to conduct research, monitor and evaluate programmes, and use evidence to inform decision-making (Ishengoma, 2016).

Academic institutions offer a range of degree programmes, including undergraduate and graduate programmes in disciplines such as statistics, economics, public policy, public health, social work, and many others. These programmes provide students and practitioners with the theoretical and practical knowledge needed to design and conduct rigorous research studies, analyse data, and effectively communicate their findings to policymakers and other stakeholders (Stewart, Langer, Wildeman & Erasmus, 2018).

In addition to formal degree programmes, academia also provides a range of training opportunities in evidence generation and M&E. These include short courses, workshops, and seminars that focus on specific research methodologies, data analysis techniques, and evaluation frameworks. These training opportunities are often tailored to the needs of specific organisations or sectors and can be designed to address specific knowledge or skills gaps. Academia also plays a role in building the capacity of policymakers, programme implementers, and other stakeholders to use evidence to inform decision-making. This includes providing technical assistance to organisations to help them design and implement M&E systems, and offering training and capacity-building opportunities to help stakeholders use data and evidence to make informed decisions (Naude et al., 2015; Stewart, Dayal, Langer & Van Rooyen, 2019; Uzochukwu et al., 2016).

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance refers to the provision of specialised expertise, knowledge, and skills to support the implementation of policies. Academia provides technical assistance to the government and other organisations in designing and implementing research studies, M&E frameworks, and data collection and analysis tools. Academia can also play a significant role in providing technical assistance to governments, organisations, and individuals engaged in evidence generation and M&E (Besharati, Rawhani & Rios, 2017; Uzochukwu et al., 2016).

Academic institutions can offer technical assistance in various ways, including the following:

- Consultancy services: Academic experts can provide consultancy services to help organisations and governments develop M&E frameworks, design and implement research studies, analyse data, and develop evidence-based policies.
- Training and capacity building: Academic institutions can provide training and capacity-building programmes to develop the technical skills of individuals and organisations engaged in evidence generation and M&E. This includes workshops, short courses, and long-term training programmes on research methodology, data analysis and M&E techniques.
- Knowledge sharing and dissemination: Academic institutions can also support the dissemination of evidence and best practices through academic publications, conferences, and seminars. This enables the wider sharing of knowledge and expertise, which

can contribute to the strengthening of evidence-based decision-making processes.

Innovation

Academia drives innovation in evidence generation and M&E by developing new methodologies and approaches that improve the quality and effectiveness of data collection, analysis, and reporting. This involves developing new and creative methods for collecting and analysing data, as well as exploring new ways of presenting and using evidence to inform decision-making (Grobbelaar, Tijssen & Dijksterhuis, 2017).

In terms of evidence generation, academia can contribute to innovation through the development of new research methods and techniques, such as the use of big data, machine learning, and other emerging technologies. This can lead to more efficient and effective data collection and analysis, as well as the identification of new sources of evidence that may not have been previously considered (Goldman et al., 2019).

In terms of M&E, academia can promote innovation through the development of new tools and approaches for monitoring and evaluating programmes and policies. This can involve the use of new technologies, such as mobile applications or remote sensing technologies, to collect data in real-time and monitor programme implementation. Academia can also develop new frameworks and models for M&E that take into account the complex and dynamic nature of development programmes and policies.

In general, academia can play a critical role in promoting the use of evidence in decision-making by developing innovative ways of presenting and communicating evidence to policymakers and other stakeholders. This can involve the use of data visualisation tools, infographics, and other interactive media to make evidence more accessible and engaging. Academia can also explore new ways of using evidence to inform policy debates and promote evidence-informed decision-making at all levels of government and society (Branson, Culligan & Favish, 2020; Robinson, 2016).

Dissemination

Academia plays an important role in disseminating research findings and promoting evidence-based decision-making through academic

journals, conferences, and other means. These findings may include evidence generated through research of M&E activities. Academic institutions often have established channels and platforms for sharing research findings and best practices with a wider audience, including policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders (Marais & Matebesi, 2013).

Academic publications, such as peer-reviewed journals and books, provide a rigorous and credible platform for disseminating research findings. Conferences and workshops further offer an opportunity to engage with a wider audience, and share research findings and best practices. In addition, policy briefs and white papers are concise and accessible documents that communicate key research findings to policymakers in a timely and relevant manner. Online platforms, such as blogs, social media, and websites, provide a means of disseminating research findings to a wider audience (Lemmens & Ntshabele, 2021). Through these channels, academic institutions can help bridge the gap between research and practice and ensure that evidence generated through research and M&E is accessible and usable by those who can benefit from it.

In summary, academia plays a central role in evidence generation and M&E in South Africa by producing high-quality research, building capacity, providing technical assistance, driving innovation, and disseminating knowledge. Collaboration between academia, government, and other actors is essential for ensuring that the evidence generated is used effectively to inform policymaking and programme implementation.

The Role of Civil Society in Evidence Generation and M&E

A further factor in evidence generation and M&E is civil society. Civil society actors refer to individuals, organisations, and groups that operate outside of the government and the private sector, aiming to promote social change, advocate for specific issues, and enhance democratic processes. They play a crucial role in shaping public discourse, engaging in policy debates, and mobilising communities to address various social, political, and environmental challenges. Civil society is typically represented by interest and pressure groups, think tanks, advocacy groups, activists, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, and social movements. Some of the key roles that civil society plays are scrutinised below.

Advocacy

Civil society organisations (CSOs) advocate for particular policies and programmes that advance the social, economic, and political interests of communities. Evidence generated through M&E can inform advocacy efforts by providing data on societal needs and priority concerns as well as the effectiveness and impact of targeted policies and programmes (Pabari, Amisi, David-Gnahoui, Bedu-Addo & Goldman, 2020).

Community Engagement

CSOs engage with communities to understand their needs and perspectives, and to involve them in policymaking and implementation processes. Evidence generated through M&E can help to ensure that the voices of communities, including marginalised groupings such as women, the youth, the elderly and the poor, are heard and that their needs are addressed.

Monitoring

CSOs monitor the implementation of policies and programmes to ensure that they are being implemented as intended and that they are achieving their objectives. Evidence generated through monitoring can inform CSOs' advocacy efforts and help them to hold the government accountable for its actions (Fox, 2016).

Evaluation

CSOs conduct evaluations of policies and programmes to assess their impact and effectiveness. Evidence generated through evaluations can inform CSOs' advocacy efforts and help them to identify areas where improvements are needed.

Data Collection

CSOs often collect data on various issues, including human rights violations, social inequalities, and environmental degradation. This data can inform evidence generation and monitoring efforts and can help to identify areas where policies and programmes are needed.

It is evident that CSOs play a crucial role in evidence generation and use by bringing the voices of citizens and communities into policy debates and decision-making processes. They can provide unique insights into the needs and concerns of marginalised groups,

which may be overlooked by formal research processes. CSOs can also engage in data collection and analysis, which can complement or fill gaps in official statistics. Furthermore, CSOs can act as advocates for evidence-based policies and hold governments accountable for the implementation of policies and programmes. They can also play a role in disseminating evidence to the wider public, helping to build awareness and support for particular issues. CSOs can help to ensure that evidence is not only generated but also used in policy and practice to achieve better outcomes for communities and societies (Botchway, 2018; Haywood, Funke, Audouin, Musvoto & Nahman, 2018).

The Transformation of M&E

Activities and processes of government are never static and are evolving due to new developments, changing conditions, and fluctuating demands. The same holds true for managerial and scholarly fields such as M&E. The field of M&E has experienced significant transformation in recent years, driven by several factors. These factors are briefly highlighted below.

Focus on Results-based Management

There has been a growing focus and emphasis on results-based management (RBM), which focuses on achieving specific results and outcomes rather than just implementing activities. This has led to a shift in M&E towards a more outcome-oriented approach, where the focus is on measuring the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes (Ramogayane & Jarbandhan, 2018).

Use of Technology

The increasing use of technology, such as mobile data collection, data analytics, and data visualisation tools, has revolutionised the way data is collected, analysed, and reported in M&E. This has enabled more efficient and effective data collection and analysis, as well as greater accessibility and transparency of data (Manda & Backhouse, 2017).

Adoption of Participatory Approaches

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of involving stakeholders, particularly communities and beneficiaries in M&E processes. This has led to the adoption of participatory approaches, such as participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) and participatory

impact assessment (PIA), which aim to engage stakeholders in the M&E process and give them a voice in decision-making (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015).

Integration of Gender and Equity Considerations

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of integrating gender and equity considerations into M&E processes. This has led to the adoption of gender-sensitive and equity-focused approaches, which aim to ensure that policies and programmes are responsive to the needs and perspectives of different groups, particularly marginalised and vulnerable groupings (Mukhopadhyay, 2016).

Emphasis on Learning and Adaptive Management

There has been a growing emphasis on learning and adaptive management in M&E, which involves using evidence to make informed decisions and adjust programmes and policies in real-time. This has led to the adoption of more flexible and responsive M&E approaches, such as developmental evaluation and real-time monitoring (Rosenberg, Lotz-Sisitka & Ramsarup, 2018).

The transformation of M&E has generally led to a more outcome-oriented, participatory, and equity-focused approach, enabled by technology and driven by the need for more efficient and effective use of resources. This has helped to improve the quality and effectiveness of evidence generation and use and has contributed to more informed decision-making and improved programme outcomes in South Africa.

Challenges Encountered and the Strategies Employed to Surmount M&E Challenges

There are several challenges encountered in evidence generation and M&E, these include the following among others:

- Limited resources: Evidence generation and M&E require significant resources in terms of time, funding, and personnel. Limited resources can hinder the ability of organisations to collect and analyse data effectively, leading to incomplete or inaccurate information (Abrahams, 2015; Fourie & Malan, 2020).
- Lack of capacity: Organisations may lack the technical expertise or skills necessary to conduct effective evidence generation and M&E. This can include a lack of knowledge of research methods,

data analysis, or M&E frameworks (Abrahams, 2015; Goldman et al., 2018; Madzivhandila & Asha, 2012).

- Limited stakeholder engagement: Evidence generation and M&E can be more effective when all stakeholders are involved, including beneficiaries, partners, and communities. However, stakeholder engagement can be limited due to a lack of resources, competing priorities, or power dynamics (Staunton, Tindana & Hendricks, 2018).
- Data quality: Poor data quality can lead to inaccurate conclusions and ineffective decision-making. Data quality can be affected by issues such as incomplete or inconsistent data collection, bias, or errors in data entry (De Souza et al., 2016).
- Complexity of the intervention: Some interventions may be complex, making it difficult to measure outcomes or assess impact. This can be particularly challenging when working with vulnerable or marginalised populations or when addressing complex social issues (Marjanovic et al., 2017; Rosenberg & Kotschy, 2020).
- Political and social contexts: The political and social contexts in which evidence generation and M&E take place can also pose challenges. For example, political instability, conflict, or social unrest can affect the ability to collect and analyse data, as well as the willingness of stakeholders to participate in M&E activities.
- Time constraints: Evidence generation and M&E require time to plan, implement, and analyse. However, time constraints can make it challenging to conduct thorough and effective M&E, leading to incomplete or inadequate data.

These challenges can be addressed through a variety of strategies, including capacity building, stakeholder engagement, the use of appropriate research methods and data analysis tools, and a focus on data quality and ethical considerations. It is important to recognise that evidence generation and M&E are ongoing processes that require ongoing attention and investment.

- **Strengthening partnerships and collaborations**: Collaboration among stakeholders, including academia, civil society, government agencies, and the private sector, can improve evidence generation and M&E efforts. Collaboration can help to build capacity, share knowledge, and resources, and promote a coordinated approach to addressing challenges (Stewart, 2015).
- **Capacity-building** efforts can help to address challenges related to skills and knowledge gaps among stakeholders. Capacity-building efforts can include training and education programmes,

mentorship, and coaching, and can be targeted at specific groups or individuals (Kasprowicz et al., 2020).

- **Technology and innovation**: Technology can play a significant role in evidence generation and M&E. The use of technology can improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination, and can help to address challenges related to data quality and timeliness. Innovation in data collection methods, such as the use of mobile data collection tools and crowdsourcing, can also help to improve evidence generation and M&E efforts (Ranchod, 2020).
- **Advocacy and awareness-raising** efforts can help to promote the importance of evidence generation and M&E among stakeholders. This can help to increase political will and support for evidence-based decision-making and can also help to mobilise resources and support for evidence generation and M&E efforts (Marais & Petersen, 2015).
- **Flexibility and adaptability**: Finally, flexibility and adaptability are key strategies for addressing challenges in evidence generation and M&E. Recognizing that challenges will arise and being willing to adjust approaches and strategies as needed can help to ensure that evidence generation and M&E efforts are successful. This includes being open to feedback and learning from experience (Fourie & Malan, 2020).

The Future Role of Evidence Generators in View of the Transformation of M&E

The field of M&E is experiencing significant transformation, with new approaches, methodologies, and technologies emerging to improve the quality and effectiveness of evidence generation. In this context, the future role of evidence generators is likely to evolve in several ways:

- Emphasis on mixed-methods approaches: Evidence generators are likely to increasingly use mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This will allow for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex social and economic issues.
- Increased use of technology: Evidence generators are likely to increasingly use technology to collect, analyse, and report data. This will require new skills and capacities, such as data visualisation, data management, and data privacy and security.
- Focus on impact evaluation: Evidence generators are likely to increasingly focus on impact evaluation, which assesses the

broader changes that policies and programmes have on people's lives. This will require more sophisticated methodologies and approaches that can capture complex and indirect effects.

- Collaboration and partnerships: Evidence generators are likely to increasingly collaborate with other stakeholders, such as government, civil society, and academia, to generate and use evidence more effectively. This will require greater coordination and alignment of goals and objectives.
- Greater emphasis on learning and adaptive management: Evidence generators are likely to increasingly prioritise learning and adaptive management, which involves using evidence to make informed decisions and adjust programmes and policies in real-time. This will require greater flexibility and responsiveness in evidence generation and use.

Evidence generators will play a critical role in the transformation of M&E by embracing new approaches, methodologies, and technologies, collaborating with other stakeholders, and prioritising learning and adaptive management. This will help to ensure that evidence is generated and used effectively to improve policymaking and programme implementation in South Africa.

Recommendations

Based on the importance of evidence generation and M&E in South Africa, the following recommendations can be made:

- Strengthen capacity-building efforts: There is a need to invest in capacity-building initiatives that enhance the skills and knowledge of evidence generators, including government officials, civil society organisations, and academics. This will ensure that they have the necessary tools and expertise to effectively generate and use evidence to inform policymaking and programme implementation.
- Foster greater collaboration and partnerships: Enhanced actor engagement in evidence generation should be a collaborative effort that involves multiple stakeholders, including government, civil society, academia, and communities. This will help to ensure that evidence is generated in a comprehensive and coordinated manner and that it is effectively used to inform decision-making.
- Increase investments in technology: The use of technology has revolutionised evidence generation and M&E in South Africa. Therefore, there is a need to increase investments in technology,

including data analytics, data visualisation, and mobile data collection, to enable more efficient and effective data collection and analysis.

- Ensure a focus on equity and gender: Evidence generation and M&E should be conducted with a focus on equity and gender considerations. This means ensuring that the needs and perspectives of marginalised and vulnerable populations are taken into account in the design and implementation of policies and programmes.
- Prioritise learning and adaptive management: Evidence generation and M&E should prioritise learning and adaptive management, which involves using evidence to make informed decisions and adjust policies and programmes in real-time. This will require a shift towards more flexible and responsive approaches, such as developmental evaluation and real-time monitoring.

By following these recommendations, evidence generators can play a key role in driving meaningful change and development in South Africa through the effective generation and use of evidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, evidence generation and M&E play a crucial role in the development and implementation of policies and programmes in South Africa. The government, parliament, academia, civil society, and other actors all have important roles to play in evidence generation and M&E. The transformation of M&E has brought about new approaches, methodologies, and technologies that have improved the quality and effectiveness of evidence generation and use. This includes a greater emphasis on results-based management, the use of technology, participatory approaches, integration of gender and equity considerations, and learning and adaptive management.

Moving forward, evidence generators will need to continue to evolve and adapt to keep pace with these changes. This will require ongoing investments in capacity building, technology, and partnerships, as well as a commitment to using evidence to inform decision-making and improve programme outcomes. By doing so, actors in evidence generation can help to drive meaningful change and development in South Africa.

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Chapter 7
Evidence Use in Policy and Practice: Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward

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Abstract

To improve implementation and departmental performance, there needs to be increased use of evaluation results throughout the planning, design, and implementation stages of policy programmes as part of good governance practices and improved performances. All policy actors, both political and managerial should utilise evaluation results to continuously improve policy and practice. Evaluation results should also be used for organisational learning purposes and for promoting accountability for government decisions and actions. This chapter examines the use of evidence as a result of evaluation praxis and extrapolates lessons from best practices emanating from the international experience regarding evidence-based governance. Cases from countries in the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) alliance, Sweden and others will be utilised for this purpose. The chapter concludes by reflecting on possible strategic areas that may evidence-based policy and decision-making in South Africa.

Keywords: evidence-informed policymaking, policy evaluation, institutionalising policy evaluation, evaluation capacity.

Introduction

Within an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, traditional policy responses and approaches to respond to complex economic, social and environmental challenges are no longer delivering the expected results. Identifying desired outcomes and managing trade-offs in policy decisions are also increasingly complex due to divergent values and the interdependent processes, structures and actors involved in a policy issue (OECD iLibrary, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further reshaped and reignited the demand for evidence for immediate and critical decision-making and saw increased engagement by policymakers with evidence producers (Nesta, 2022). "Accountability in an era of new public management is very much about demonstrating programme impact and results and value for money" (Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:12).

Policy evaluation plays an important role in strengthening an evidence-informed approach by providing a deeper understanding of the policy problem and the potential feasibility of policy options, thereby supporting more effective policy design. Policy evaluation improves accountability and learning by justifying financial expenditures and policy choices, exploring what worked and did not work and the causal mechanisms that lead to policy success or failure (OECD iLibrary, 2020). Evaluations also determine the "merit, quality, appropriateness, and usefulness of government's interventions" by providing credible systematic information about public programmes or policies (AEA, 2022:18). Evidence furthermore reduces ambiguity and uncertainty, challenges pre-existing notions and established biases, and increases trust in policy decision-makers (Nesta, 2022).

While the value of evidence in policymaking is well-motivated in academic literature, evidence use in practice is much more complex (Goldman & Pabari, 2021:233) and the capacity to implement varies greatly across contexts (AEA, 2022:233). In practice, policymakers are required to balance pragmatic considerations, such as resource availability and the current legal framework, political party commitments and personal ideology with evidence from various sources, including scientific research, departmental monitoring data, and popular and social media (Rabie, 2019). Where available, evidence is seldom uncontested (Shergold, 2016:485) and within a politicised environment, conflicting values and goals may lead to different interpretations of the available evidence (Peters, 2015:9). Evidence uptake can become part of the political gameplay, where

evidence is adopted only when it aligns with a pre-determined policy stance (OECD iLibrary, 2020:120) and not rigorously engaged with to challenge and strengthen decision-making. Parkhurst (2017:118) suggests that evidence is appropriate for policy use when three factors come together, which is the evidence addresses the key policy concerns at hand, it is constructed in a way that is useful to the policy concern and the evidence applies to the local context.

This final chapter will reflect on the current challenges with evidence-based policy and decision-making in South Africa. This is followed by an international comparative review, drawing on two comprehensive surveys by the OECD (2020) and the UNDP (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015) that captured the existing national evaluation capacities and reflected on how countries responded to policy evaluation findings. This analysis informs a reflection on comparative practices in South Africa, supported by the rapidly expanding set of publications on the topic from our local context. The chapter concludes with a set of considerations to strengthen evaluation and evidence uptake in the Southern Africa context.

Debates on Evidence-Based Policy and Decision-Making

Chapter 4 of this publication probed potential drivers and barriers to the uptake of evidence in policy decisions in South Africa. This includes a lack of institutionalised M&E capacity in departments, technical and resource constraints, political impediments and a lack of coordination between evidence producers and evidence users. This section presents arguments in national and global debates that acknowledge that evidence, while important, is only one of the considerations in value-laden policy decisions.

While earlier writing advocated for the adoption of an evidence-based policymaking approach, where evidence is put at the heart of decision-making (see Davies, Nutley & Smith, 1999), various constraints hinder a pure evidence-driven approach to policymaking. This includes a lack of available evidence, especially when facing new policy challenges, incomplete evidence that hinders accurate cost-benefit analysis, or evidence that is not available in time (see Bekkers et al., 2017). Available evidence often fails to provide clear, uncontested solutions to complicated problems (Shergold, 2016: 485), but rather tries to give effect to multiple values and goals that result in ambiguity and possible contestation (Peters, 2015:9). Faced with time and political constraints, policymakers cannot consider all the evidence relevant to

the policy but rather use their emotions and beliefs to identify the most relevant evidence to support quicker decision-making (Cairney, Oliver & Wellstead, 2016:399) and a mixture of science, value judgements and practical considerations ultimately determine policy decisions (Head, 2010:13).

In the South African context, earlier research by Cronin and Sadan (2015) found that officials agreed that there is an urgent need to improve the use of evidence in policymaking, but favoured a more heuristic, iterative approach that allows for an emergent, inclusive and context-specific approach to evidence and learning. The respondents offered different opinions of what constitutes "reliable" evidence, which ranged from information obtained through personal networks, self-identified experts, and study tours to information from research papers, administrative routine monitoring data and when available, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:2).

Stakeholders usually have different ideas of what constitutes 'evidence' and that each evidence source may offer advantages and limitations. While evidence produced through rigorous, research-based studies offers data systematically and transparently (Boaz et al., 2019), such research is not always responsive to the information needs of policymakers (Marais & Matebesi, 2013:357) with uptake further limited by distrust between the scientific community and policymakers (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:8). Routine monitoring data, evaluation reports, commissioned evaluation reports and evidence produced by departmental research units often offer more contextualised, customised and responsive information to policymakers, but may be challenged in terms of reliability and consistency (Cronin & Sadan, 2015; Head, 2015). Popular media articles and increasingly social media communications offer more immediate insights into the viewpoints of society or 'commons' knowledge (Lievrouw in Bekkers et al., 2017: 305) that can complement or contradict other authoritative processes of knowledge production. Rabie and Ajam (2021:44) conclude that policy evidence is a multifaceted concept that includes:

> Sound and defensible scientific evidence, contextualised internal monitoring data, observations of contemporary media reports and opinions, and an understanding of the 'commons', being the shared communal understanding of the issue at the grassroots level.

Within the contested space of different evidence sources advocating different courses of action, the policymaker needs to reconcile ethical values, community attitudes and political ideologies (Shergold, 2016:485) with pragmatic considerations such as available financial resources, implementation capacity and trade-offs with other pressing priorities (Rabie, 2019:31). A more realistic, integrated model for policy decision-making acknowledges that policymakers consider multiple forms of evidence when making policy choices, with includes (see Rabie, 2019:35-36):

- Pragmatic considerations consider financial feasibility and alignment with government mandate and current legislation. It considers whether the policy option will have traction and be implementable within the available resource frame.
- Evidence from various sources, e.g., scientific evidence based on rigorous research principles, internal monitoring data, media reports or commons knowledge emanating from social and popular media.
- Political party commitments consider policy options preferred in the past, agreements with various stakeholders and future commitments made by the political party.
- Personal views, including personal ideology, individual interests and pet projects.

While many evidence sources are potentially available to policymakers, Cronin and Sadan (2015:8) find that only eight of the 39 (20%) reported cases of evidence use were examples of sound evidence use. Goldman et al. (2021:72) in a review of evidence use in Uganda, Benin and South Africa, found that only 50% of managers value and use evidence. With specific reference to South Africa, the authors found that 50% of managers regard M&E as a "separate area of responsibility", restricted to the M&E unit and not all managers, with M&E largely regarded as a compliance and punitive function (Goldman et al., 2021:69), rather than a strategic management and improvement tool. Routine monitoring data are not always useful for performance management, as it does not provide good performance reports against the APP (Goldman et al., 2021:68), with misalignment between departmental strategic plans and budget and national priorities and policies restricting the ability to manage outcomes in a whole of government approach (Orlandi, 2020). While the symbolic placement of M&E in the Office of the Presidency and the Office of the Director General in national departments provide strong leadership impetus, Goldman et al. (2021:69) found that 40%

of respondents felt that senior managers do not champion the use of M&E evidence.

Goldman et al. (2021:69) identify the following systemic factors that limit the generation and response to evidence:

- Capacity constraints to generate robust evidence that may inform policy and programme changes, as only a small portion (25-30%) of managers have the skills to undertake evaluations or to understand and use evaluation recommendations.
- The lack of integration between planning, budgeting and M&E, is worsened by weak manual data-driven systems, duplicate reporting and reporting fatigue.
- Reactive identification of information needs, and weak qualify of administration data and evaluation findings.
- Poor oversight and accountability to civil society.

On the practical implementation level, Nedson et al. (2021:87-88) maintain that managers may be hesitant to respond to evaluation findings given that managers are accountable for the programme or policy under evaluation. This unwillingness to encourage the production and communication of evidence on the performance of the policy or programme becomes more pronounced when the evidence may have negative political implementations or result in negative media publicity. The response to available evidence is also dissuaded when recommendations are inconsistent with the law, too expensive to implement, impractical, lacking managerial support or enforceable within the current legislative framework (Nedson et al., 2021:88).

Mayne and Rist (2006) argue that while it is critical to strengthen the demand for evidence in organisations, it is also important that evaluators change their perspective about their role and value addition to the organisations they support through evidence. Mayne and Rist (2006:95-96) admonish evaluators for their limited focus on producing evaluation studies, rather than adopting a more integrated role to strengthen the evidence ecosystem within organisations. The authors argue that evaluators should focus on further value-adding services, which include support in the design and implementation of monitoring systems and strengthening the capacity of managers to reflect on performance, programme theory and performance measures (Mayne & Rist, 2006:101). Strengthening results-based management systems, organisational learning, knowledge management, analytical thinking and evaluative knowledge creation in the organisations, evaluators can help to build the evaluative capacity of organisations

(Mayne and Rist, 2006: 99–101) while being mindful of the need to protect the relative independence of evaluators when involved in the design of performance management systems (Mayne & Rist, 2006:103).

Evaluators and evidence producers have an important role in increasing the uptake of evidence in policy decision-making. Adopting a more timeous and supportive role to strengthen the evidence and evaluative capacities of the organisations can increase the stature and role of evaluators beyond mere producers of evaluation studies. By ensuring that information is available when needed, evaluators can become more aware of ongoing policy initiatives, and can actively prepare and present evidence from monitoring systems, evaluations and other studies, thereby obtaining a seat at the decision-making table (Mayne & Rist, 2006:107).

International Comparative Practice to Promote Evidence-Use in Policymaking

According to Lamarque (2023), the first systematic comparative overview of evaluation culture and practices in OECD countries was the 2002 International Atlas of Evaluation. It adopted nine indicators to reflect on the degree to which evaluation is institutionalised. This included evidence of regular evaluation across various policy fields, a supply of evaluators across different disciplines, a national evaluation discourse, the existence of an evaluation society and institutional arrangements in government and Parliament, separation between the commissioners and implementers of evaluation and evaluations that focus on inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact of public interventions (Lamarque, 2023:162).

A commitment to strengthening national evaluation capacities through 18 commitment statements was signed by representatives from 60 countries in Sao Paulo in 2013 (UNDO, 2013: xiii). This included commitments to strengthen national data systems and the institutional set-up for evaluation, promoting the use and follow-up on evaluation recommendations, strengthening evaluation methodologies and independence, assigning sufficient resources to evaluation, mapping coordination mechanisms and practices between central evaluation units and sectoral structures, and incorporating gender perspectives in evaluation (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xi-xii).

The 2015 UNDP baseline study offers insights into the existing national evaluation capacities in 43 countries (Soares, Marcondes,

Nogueira & Hofer, 2015). A comprehensive and insightful OECD (2020) survey analysed the institutionalisation of policy evaluation practices in 42 OECD and non-OECD countries, including the mechanisms adopted to strengthen policy evaluation and the uptake of evaluation findings (OECD iLibrary, 2020). The commitment to strengthen evaluation practice is confirmed again by the OECD survey where respondents reflected on the commitment to support policy evaluations as a means to improve performance and value for money, provide evidence for decision-making, enhance trust in public institutions and increase transparency in service delivery results and public resource allocation (OECD iLibrary, 2020:14).

The sections below reflect on international practices in promoting the use of evaluation and evidence in policy decision-making by reflecting on emerging themes that strengthen or when absent deter, the uptake of evaluative evidence in policy decision-making. It draws extensively on the UNDP (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015) and OECD (OECD iLibrary, 2020) survey results to capture international practice, before reflecting on the South African experience.

Adopting a Legal Framework and Guidelines for Policy Evaluation

Adopting conducive legal and policy frameworks captures high-level commitments and provides guidance and clarity for policy evaluations. Davies (in Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:2) regards increased legislative and executive mandates as the main driver of evaluations in the public sector. In many countries, constitutional provisions assign responsibilities to particular entities and define approaches and scopes of evaluation practice (OECD iLibrary, 2020).

The OECD survey found that 29 countries, including Chile, Norway, Poland and Slovenia, have developed a legal basis for evaluation, (OECD iLibrary, 2020), while twenty-one countries, including Estonia, Japan, Korea, Colombia and Costa Rica, adopted policy principles and specific guidelines to organise policy evaluation across a sector or whole of government (OECD iLibrary, 2020). This trend is also prevalent in the UNDP review that finds that some countries have a national evaluation policy (e.g., Benin, South Africa, Uruguay and Uganda), while others have draft policies waiting for legislation (Bhutan, Kenya and Niger) (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xiii). To further support national-level policies, the adoption of evaluation policies, procedures, frameworks and processes at the departmental or agency level can further strengthen

the evaluation culture in organisations and increase the response to evaluation findings (Preskill & Boyle, 2008:454–455).

The practical implementation of evaluation policy frameworks is often captured in evaluation plans. Such plans describe what programmes, services, and processes of policies will be evaluated, and for what purpose and how, thereby enabling government and government institutions to be proactive about evaluation processes and resources (Preskill & Boyle, 2008). The OECD survey found that 28 countries (e.g., Spain and Mexico) adopted evaluation plans to ensure regular evaluation of public programmes (OECD iLibrary, 2020:47).

South Africa adopted the first National Evaluation Policy Framework in 2011, which for formally evaluated and reviewed to inform the approval of the revised National Evaluation Policy Framework in 2019 (Goldman et al., 2019). The framework guidance on different types of evaluations and evaluation approaches, institutionalising evaluation in the policy and programme cycle, and practical guidelines to plan, prepare and implement evaluations and improvement plans for national and departmental government departments, municipalities and state-owned enterprises and companies (DPME, 2019). Chirau et al. (2021b:544) warn that the development of the NEP "requires political support, buy-in, ownership and inclusivity to prevent the policy becoming yet another layer of compliance and programme policing". While regulations help to drive institutionalisation at the level visible to the public eye, "it cannot replace the individual and collective commitment to adopt an ethic of effectiveness in public administration" (Lamarque, 2023:164).

Institutionalising Policy Evaluation

Establishing dedicated institutional capacity plays an important role in encouraging the use of evaluations and promoting transparency and accountability in the management of evaluations (OECD iLibrary, 2020:10). Countries adopt diverse institutional settings and may include a central evaluation unit often tasked with M&E of national plan implementations (e.g., Brazil, India, Malaysia, and Nepal) while others adopt decentralised evaluation units across sectoral ministries (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xiv).

Evaluations are most often spearheaded by the centre of government, and strongly supported by ministries of finance, leading to a strong economic impetus in proving public results (OECD iLibrary, 2020). Centre of government actors play a critical role in incentivising

other institutions to use evaluation findings (OECD iLibrary, 2020:35). In Norway, Sweden and Italy, autonomous individual agencies conduct independent evaluations as part of a decentralised evaluation system (OECD iLibrary, 2020:52,61). In Finland, policy evaluation is jointly driven by the ministries of finance and justice and the prime minister's office (OECD iLibrary, 2020:52). In most of Latin America, evaluations are driven by ministries of planning, though Chile has located policy evaluations in the Budgets Directorate, which forms part of the Ministry of Finance (OECD iLibrary, 2020:52). Supreme audit institutions can also play a significant policy evaluation function, with good practices in Switzerland, the United States and France, while parliaments can also request evaluations or performance audits with an evaluative approach (OECD iLibrary, 2020:63).

Locating the office of evaluation close to political decision-makers enables it to be more effective in commissioning evaluations and following up on political commitments (OECD iLibrary, 2020). Evaluations coordinated by autonomous agencies seem to offer a greater perception of trust, unbiased results and accountability (OECD iLibrary, 2020). However, Mexico offers a decentralisation success case where CONEVAL (*Consejo Nacional de la Politica de Desarrollo Social* [National Council of Social Development Policy]) coordinated standards and the evaluation of social policies as a decentralised body with budgetary, technical and management autonomy (OECD iLibrary, 2020:52).

In South Africa, the National Evaluation Plan captures the government evaluation agenda as identified by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in consultation with critical oversight institutions such as the National Treasury, the Public Service Commission, the Auditor General, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and various other oversight structures (DPME, 2019:32). Statistics South Africa is the central government agency responsible for collecting and analysing national data (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015:23).

National and provincial evaluation plans play an important role in systematising evaluation practice as part of policy and programme reviews, while partnerships with the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) create platforms that link evaluation users and producers across various sectors of society (e.g., government, academia, civil society, private consultants, and donors) (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015:21). The findings of completed

evaluations must be incorporated in the Annual Performance Plans of responsible Government institutions and monitored through the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (DPME, 2019:39). Evaluation findings are to be tabled to Cabinet and considered for mid-term national budget allocation (DPME, 2019).

As much of the detailed discussion of findings occurs within the Parliamentary Committees, the DPME engaged extensively with the Standing Committee on Appropriations (SCOA) between 2010 and 2014 to enable the committee to champion the M&E Parliament. Unfortunately, in 2014 DPME was required to report to another committee and institutional memory, established capacity and working relationships were lost during the transition (Chirau et al., 2021a:115).

Political Interest and the Demand for Policy Evaluation

Okello identified several barriers in Chapter 5 of this book that impede the uptake of evidence in policymaking. This included the inadequate dissemination of evidence, irrelevance of scientific evidence, the personal ideology through which the policymaker analyses the evidence, vested interest, and the accountability of evidence producers to the scientific community and policymakers to the political sphere. Cairney, Oliver and Wellstead (2016:399) agree that policymakers cannot consider all evidence relevant to policy, but rather rely on emotions, beliefs and "rational" ways to quickly identify relevant evidence to enable a quick response to policy issues (Cairney, Oliver & Wellstead, 2006:399).

Evaluation use may be limited when evaluation is perceived as a political mechanism or a marketing tool that only focuses on the performance or programmes that are politically important (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xiv). Evidence uptake is also constrained when policymakers only seek and respond to evidence from trusted or familiar individuals and organisations. It is therefore important to actively invest in strengthening the M&E capacities of evidence users, supported by guides and methodologies to ensure sustainable practice (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xiv).

Stimulating the political interest and demand for policy evaluation is a critical enabler to successful government reforms and to incentivise civil servants to prioritise evaluation amongst competing management responsibilities (OECD iLibrary, 2020:38). A more evidence-informed and accountable decision-making approach

can be encouraged through technical training to senior policymakers to increase their capacity and confidence to appreciate and actively promote evidence use (Crawley, 2017:7) as well as strengthening rules and norms of practice that enables institutions to demand and respond to evidence (Parkhurst, 2017:43).

Almost all 60 countries that responded to the UNDP survey reported deliberate efforts to promote the use of evaluations by parliamentarians, evaluation professional associations, universities, donors and other stakeholders (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xiv), except for Albania, Burundi, Egypt and Russia. Six clusters of skills can strengthen the ability of policymakers to engage successfully with evidence. This includes understanding what evidence-informed policymaking entails, how to obtain evidence, how to interrogate and assess evidence, using and applying evidence in policymaking, engaging stakeholders and evaluating the success of different evaluation approaches and tools in the policy life cycle (OECD iLibrary, 2020:136). Countries like New Zealand, Japan and Costa Rica have developed guides to encourage the use of evidence in policymaking by explaining different sources of evidence, when and how to use and how to respond to information gaps and how to engage with cultural values and different stakeholders (OECD iLibrary, 2020:134).

In Chapter 6 of this book, Ofusori indicated that the multifaceted and intricate structure of the South African parliament makes it difficult to determine what information is pertinent, thus presenting a challenge for the use of evidence in policy decisions. South Africa has long engaged in initiatives to strengthen the demand side of policymakers through workshops and an individual mentorship programme that enables those with a strengthened appreciation of evidence-informed practice to support others to integrate evidence into their work (OECD iLibrary, 2020). Strengthening the capacity of the members of Parliament and committees to use evidence needs to be complemented by efforts to strengthen the capacity of internal technical structures and strengthened networks to external evidence producers (Chirau et al., 2021a). Increased capacity needs to be complemented by political will and dedicated evidence champions to strengthen the uptake of evidence in the South African policymaking space (Chirau et al., 2021a).

Coordinating the Uptake and Response to Policy Evaluations

Conducting policy evaluations is only the starting point to effecting change. It is important to encourage a response to evaluation findings, as unused evaluation findings may complicate motivations for financial, human and time investment in future policy evaluations and serve to delegitimise future policy evaluation efforts (OECD iLibrary, 2020).

Planning for evidence should consider needs and then align it with individual and institutional cultures (Goldman & Pabari, 2021:233). A positive evaluation culture, high-quality results and a strong impetus to respond and use the findings, significantly strengthen the uptake of evidence (OECD, 2020:20). Communication of evidence should be strategic, tailored to specific users and synthesised to digestible information chunks to increase uptake and response (OECD iLibrary, 2020:130). The adoption of coordination mechanisms, such as coordination platforms or compulsory management responses or the establishment of public evaluation databases and portals (OECD iLibrary, 2020:129) can further help to facilitate access and responses to evaluation findings.

Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry and Gilbert (2014:4) advocate that an organisational learning culture is promoted when there is a clear and supported vision and mission, where leadership support learning and experimentation and where the organisation can transfer knowledge effectively and engage in teamwork and cooperation to respond to findings. These factors may be restricted in large-scale bureaucracies, where the division of work into units separates the evaluator from the programme implementers, thus resulting in a more limited uptake of findings (Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:11). Three noteworthy responses from the OECD (OECD iLibrary, 2020) survey, however, indicate that it is possible. The United Kingdom's 'What Works Network' supports the government in creating high-quality evidence and synthesis reports specifically aimed at improved public services (OECD iLibrary, 2020:132). Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication annually publishes a report on how evaluation findings have informed policy planning and development (OECD iLibrary, 2020:143). Lithuania precedes budget discussions with a summary of evaluations and the progress achieved by the agency in terms of addressing identified shortcomings or implementing recommendations (OECD iLibrary, 2020:146), though the survey suggests that the link between evaluation findings and budget allocations is limited.

In South Africa, several organisations actively strive to stimulate and strengthen the demand for policy evidence including the South Africa Centre for Evidence and African Evidence Network, VakaYiko, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), ODI and others. The DPME adopted an active role to stimulate the interest and demands for evaluations by engaging senior managers and parliamentarians on how to use evaluation findings. On an implementation level, the National Evaluation Policy Framework (DPME, 2019) requires managers to formally respond to evaluation findings and to adjust the annual performance plans to include accepted evaluation recommendations (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015:22). However, lessons from the first years of implementation suggest that findings should be shared more widely. Chirau et al. (2021a:117) suggest that there should be more formal and automated sharing of evaluation reports with parliamentary institutions and that parliamentary committees are equipped to oversee the implementation and response to evaluation findings. Furthermore, Chirau et al. (2021b:540-541) indicate that the response to policy evaluation findings is limited as the compilation of findings is time-consuming, the dissemination of information is too technocratic and linking evaluation to planning and budgeting remains problematic. Establishing procedures and policies that connect evaluation responses to budgetary processes enables government executives to use evaluation findings to exert control over implementing agencies or departments (Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:2).

Strengthening the Quality of Evaluation Findings

In Chapter 6 of this book, Ofusori indicated that evidence generation is hindered by limited resources, lack of capacity, limited engagement between various stakeholders, weak data quality, the complexity of interventions, political instability or social unrest and time constraints. For evaluations to be of high quality and useful for policymaking, it should be possible to evaluate the policy in the first place. This requires that policies adopt clear objectives, theories of change and results chains that can inform the evaluation of the policy (OECD iLibrary, 2020:87). Policy evaluation is further promoted if routine programme monitoring data and other generated statistics (e.g., through big data, sector and cross-sectoral surveys) are readily available (OECD iLibrary, 2020:88). It is evident that strengthening evidence use requires a concerted effort to strengthen the supply of reliable, valid and useful evidence, framed in an ethically responsible

manner and communicated in a manner that resonates with potential users (Parkhurst, 2017).

Various mechanisms can be adopted to strengthen the quality of evaluation evidence. This includes quality control and assurance mechanisms, such as peer review mechanisms, self-evaluation checklists, or adopting standards for evaluations and commissioning met evaluations (OECD iLibrary, 2020:104–108). Countries adopt different variations of these mechanisms as appropriate and aligned to the local context. While 17 of the OECD (OECD iLibrary, 2020:114) respondents, including the United States, Japan and Norway indicated that they have an established network of evaluators, the use of such networks differs. Japan employs academic experts to ensure that policy evaluation is objective and rigorous (OECD iLibrary, 2020:105) while Germany uses a diverse group of internationally recognised experts to also obtain diverse insights on its sustainability strategy (OECD iLibrary, 2020:106). Many countries indicated progress in establishing evaluator competencies, while the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Estonia, Great Britain, Korea, Poland and Costa Rica are among the countries that have adopted standards for the ethical conduct of evaluations (OECD iLibrary, 2020:11,102).

In South Africa, the DPME offers various guidelines, templates, standards and competencies for evaluators to support robust evaluations. The DPME drafted Standards for Evaluation in Government (DPME, 2014) that promote free, open and ethical evaluation throughout the planning, implementation, reporting and follow-up process of the evaluation. Formal evaluations included in the national and provincial evaluation plans are conducted by external evaluators, with oversight by joint steering committees that comprise government experts, DPME officials and other stakeholders and further quality control by two independent peer reviewers (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015:22). Completed evaluations are auditing in terms of their quality, and the completed evaluation reports and audit findings are available on the DPME website (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015). Partnerships between the DPME, the National School of Government, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and various universities promote training on evaluator competencies. SAMEA adopted a competency framework to strengthen evaluation and evaluators (SAMEA, 2020), grounded in the African Evaluation Principles (AfrEA, 2021). These principles provide a guiding framework for good evaluation practice in Africa that empowers Africans, are technically robust, ethically

sound and rooted in Africa while connected to the rest of the world (AfrEA, 2021:5). However, as Khumalo reflected in Chapter 4 of this book, vested political interest impact on policy decision-making, M&E is often only a compliance function for reporting purposes, but do not engage and unpack identified gaps in performance, while resource, technical and capacity constraints still impede the institutionalisation of evaluation monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

Building Evaluation Capacity

Evaluation capacity building involves strategies to enable effective, useful and professional evaluation practices (Preskill & Boyle, 2008:444). The assumption is that increased evaluation capacity will lead to more frequent evaluations, increased funding for evaluations, and a greater uptake of evaluations to allow leaders to make timely decisions and organisations to learn and adapt to changes (Preskill & Boyle, 2008:447). Capacity-building initiatives are often directed at promoting the skills and competencies of evaluators and managers, rather than improving the capacity of policymakers to use evidence (OECD iLibrary, 2020:11). Preskill and Boyle (2006:445) advocate that a multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building should focus both on building the evaluation knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals as well as promoting sustainable evaluation practice through the introduction of evaluation policies, frameworks, knowledge management systems, shared beliefs and dedicated resources.

Twenty-one countries reported strategies to train evaluators to strengthen the quality of evaluations (OECD iLibrary, 2020:110). Evaluation training curricula can be created by individual ministries (e.g., in Slovakia) or standardised across government (e.g., in Austria) (OECD iLibrary, 2020:111). Many countries actively promote evaluation as a profession, though only two countries (Korea and Colombia) have adopted certification systems for competency development (OECD iLibrary, 2020:112). National associations of evaluators play an important role in promoting competent evaluators and quality evaluations, with some (e.g., Canada) developing professional designation programmes that impose minimum competencies to be considered an evaluator (OECD, 2022a:118). In Ireland, the Government Economic and Evaluation Service was created in 2012 specifically to encourage analytical capabilities for evidence-informed policymaking across government, while the United Kingdom encourage social research professionals to work with other analysts to explain and

predict social and economic phenomena for policymaking (OECD iLibrary, 2020:111).

In South Africa, the National School of Government, universities, and the South African M&E Association offer evaluation capacity building in line with the NEPF. However, evaluation capacity within government departments remains a challenge and the majority of formal evaluations are produced by external evaluation experts, consultants and researchers (Chirau et al., 2021b:542). Strengthening the internal capacity to implement evaluations and deliver quality evidence is important to unlock the lessons to be learned from routine monitoring data. Ajam (2021:244) also advocates that parliamentarians often favour internally produced evidence (by parliamentary researchers, Public Benefit Organisations, legal advisors and policy analysts, etc.) given that the evidence can often be generated as demanded, thus enabling quicker turnaround times more specific to the needs of committees and members of Parliament.

Ensuring sufficient resources for policy evaluation

In the public sector, the evaluation function is typically assigned to internal evaluation units, auditing agencies or contracted evaluators. Independent institutions like universities and private agencies play a smaller role in contributing evaluation findings to government (Davies in Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:2). Contracting evaluations out may weaken the ability of internal evaluation units to become ongoing sources of advice and wisdom (Breem & Associates in Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:3).

Allocating financial and human resources are critical to producing consistent data and disseminating result to various users (OECD ILibrary, 2020:38). Obtaining consistent, reliable high-quality data useful for policy design, service delivery and internal operations requires investment in technical infrastructure, human capabilities and less tangible resources like the interest and commitment to using data (OECD iLibary, 2020:38). Beere (in Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:2,3) warns that internal evaluation units have the risk of being shut down if there is insufficient internal demand for quality data in the organisation and especially from senior officials and ministers. The AEA (2022:20-21) recommends that effective evaluation of government programmes can be improved by ensuring the availability of dedicated, experienced evaluators at a sufficient level of seniority to coordinate evaluations and influence decisions at all levels of

government, ensuring the availability of sufficient funding, plans, and human resource capacity to successfully implement required evaluations and safeguarding and supporting the evaluation function to execute its mandate successfully and without undue interference. To strengthen the relationship between evaluations and legislative activities, resources can be earmarked for evaluation activities during the approval process, with an expectation for clear evaluation plans, early implementation reviews and the monitoring of performance indicators (AEA, 2022:26). Dedicated funding for strengthening evaluation capacity, encouraging innovation and enabling the procurement of long-term evaluations that extend the statutory process can play an important role to ensure sustained capacity for policy evaluation (AEA, 2022:27).

In South Africa, the implementation of the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (The Presidency, 2007) catalysed the establishment of dedicated M&E units in many national and provincial departments. Stemmet, in Chapter 3 of this book, proposed that the spontaneous and ad hoc development of the GWM&ES increased the reporting burden on departments despite the prevailing lack of capacity and skill. The launch of the first National Evaluation Policy Framework in 2013 provided an important symbolic and resource injection on the importance of routine evaluations. However, capacity in established evaluation units varies in terms of staffing, skills, allocated financial resources and the power position of the unit to influence strategic and operational decision-makers. Coordination between different producers of evidence is still nascent, established M&E units generally have little influence on decision-making, and involvement from civil society to encourage evidence uptake is limited (Goldman et al., 2021:57-58).

Increased Stakeholder Involvement in Policy Evaluations

Engaging stakeholders in every stage of the evaluation process can ensure that the evaluation is fit for purpose, responsive to the needs of different users, build relationships and increase opportunities for evaluations to impact policymaking (OECD, 2020:24). The OECD survey finds that 65% of countries have adopted formal requirements for stakeholder engagement, with representatives from academia more prevalent than other citizens, suggesting that countries mostly engage with stakeholders from traditional sources of authority and expertise (OECD iLibrary, 2020:124). Many governments indicated concerted efforts and processes to ensure the involvement of representatives or

programme beneficiaries in evaluation processes. (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xv). Seventy-two per cent (72%) of OECD respondents also indicated the involvement of stakeholders in policy evaluation to strengthen consensus and the perceived legitimacy of the policymaking process (OECD iLibrary, 2020:121). While this is an important step, further effort is needed to ensure that evaluation processes and findings respond to gender, ethnic and cultural issues (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xv). Donors seemed to have played an influential role in promoting administrative reforms to increase transparency, accountability and good management in the use of evidence (Soares, Marcondes, Nogueira & Hofer, 2015: xv).

In South Africa, the appointment of governing steering committees to oversee evaluations plays an important role in ensuring diverse voices and perspectives in the design, implementation and finalisation of evaluation findings. Effective oversight by civil society however remains nascent.

Evaluation results are increasingly open and transparent to various potential users as well as the public (OECD, 2020:25) but could be further strengthened by engaging a wide variety of stakeholders. Evaluators need to adopt an active advocacy role to develop evaluation in government, parliament and central auditing institutions (Lamarque, 2023:166) and evaluation societies can play an important role in this regard. Administrators, who may favour evaluations that support the efficient execution of legal obligations or help to justify budget cuts should be encouraged to focus on evaluations that best support decision-making (Lamarque, 2023:163). Similarly, auditors should be encouraged to focus on performance auditing, rather than compliance auditing (Lamarque, 2023:165). Parliaments play a critical role in improving law-making, fostering public performance and holding the executive to account, but often play a weak role in evaluation in Europe (Lamarque, 2023:164). The same applies to many African Parliaments that "inherited a Westminster style system of government, with a political culture which relegated oversight to opposition MPs rather than regarding it as an obligation of parliament as an institution" (Ajam, 2021:238). Efforts are needed to strengthen evidence use in parliament, with due consideration for the macro and minor workings of parliament (Rabie & Ajam, 2021:75). Public discourse on the production and use of evaluations should be encouraged to strengthen civil society oversight and stimulation of evidence in decision-making (Lamarque, 2023:166).

The engagement of stakeholders needs to be carefully considered. Witter, Kardan, Scott, Moore and Shaxson (2017:7) found engaging end-users can be problematic when stakeholders do not have a clear agreement on what they wish to evaluate or how to best design the evaluation. Stakeholder engagement is maximised when the evaluations are relevant, offer credible findings, align with political priorities and decision-making time frames, offer clear direction and find traction in a flexible policy formulation process that responds to the findings (OPM, 2015).

In concluding this section, the OECD survey shows that while there is an increased acknowledgement of the importance of policy evaluation, the actual use of findings remains problematic, hampered by the absence of a whole-of-government approach to encourage evidence uptake, limited human resource capabilities and capacities, poor evidence quality, lack of political interest and demand for policy evaluation and financial resource constraints for both conducting and coordinating evaluations across government (OECD, 2020:6-7). While two-thirds of countries surveyed by OECD have adopted "some kind of legal framework and three-quarters have adopted evaluation guidelines, the institutionalisation of evaluations as part of the responsibility of the government remains difficult to achieve" (Lamarque, 2023:163).

Promoting the Use, Response and Uptake of Evaluative Evidence in South Africa

As is evident in the preceding section, strengthening the evidence-use landscape requires an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach to strengthen demand and capacity for evidence production, use and response. This includes a supportive macro framework, appropriate institutional arrangements, and sufficient and sustainable allocation of resources to continuously strengthen not only capacity but also the evidence culture.

South Africa has adopted a policy framework that promotes routine evaluation, supportive guidelines to promote the quality of evaluation findings, and processes to encourage the engagement and response to evaluation findings by strategic management, programme implementors and parliamentarian oversight. There are however concerns that the response may be too bureaucratic and compliance-orientated, and not sufficiently focused on learning, accountability and the acknowledgement and response to performance gaps. There is

a need to further strengthen the alignment and supportive relationship planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and accountability to promote a learning and responsive culture. While a centralised evaluation system facilitates greater central control of the procedures, methodology and quality assurance of evaluations, such evaluation may be regarded as externally imposed and thus not responded to. In contrast, decentralisation increases the ownership and use of evaluations by ministries, sectors and agencies (Chirau et al., 2021b:542). Further effort is needed to ensure an appropriate balance between a central quality control system that responds to the decision-making needs of national policymakers and a decentralised implementation system that responds to the decision-making needs of sectoral and provincial decision-makers.

The adoption of the 2007 Government-wide M&E system resulted in the establishment of M&E units across the public sector. Priorities for national evaluation and routine monitoring are informed by multiple departments in the centre of government, leading to potential fragmentation during implementation where different custodians pursue their individual mandates, rather than an integrated government-wide performance discussion. Executive oversight by parliament remains suboptimal, and the engagement with evaluation findings by the general public is largely absent. Further efforts are thus required to reduce the silos between government departments and to strengthen collaboration and networks between the scientific producers of knowledge, think tanks, dedicated research institutions and policymakers and public functionaries. Fostering productive relationships will enable the producers of knowledge to include information relevant to policy issues, present findings in a user-friendly manner that supports decision-making by various users in the ecosystem, and share information with public and civil oversight stakeholders to promote accountability and the uptake of available evidence. Networks and conversations can help to appreciate the constraints faced by politicians and scientists in their respective fields, while incentives and knowledge brokers can help to facilitate the production and access to relevant research (Cairney, Oliver & Wellstead, 2016:401). Evaluators need to maximise both their responsiveness and independence by "consulting extensively, considering context, identifying and understanding stakeholder relationships (and) responding to information needs" while maintaining independence through accurate methods, balanced reporting, transparency, and the acknowledgement of data and political constraints (Cousins, Goh, Elliott, Aubry & Gilbert, 2014:11).

South Africa has embarked on various efforts to strengthen the commitment and capacity for evidence use in government. This includes initiatives by the DPME, SAMEA, the National School of Government and universities to strengthen the capacity of members of parliament, parliamentary committee members, senior and programme managers and M&E practitioners and specialists to engage with the evidence. Strengthening evidence use requires effort to increase both the supply of evidence and the demand for evidence. Goldman and Pabari (2021:25) advise that the supply of evidence can be promoted by ensuring that research evidence is accessible, relevant to the current policy topics, and credible, timely and useful to the policy process. The uptake of evidence can be pursued by instilling an evidence culture through processes, systems and incentives while strengthening the analytical ability of users to interpret and apply the evidence. Further strengthening of the evidence ecosystem can be attained by knowledge brokers that can pre-empt information needs and facilitate knowledge production and sharing through efficient networks (Goldman & Pabari, 2021:25). Knowledge brokers can ensure access to credible information when required by decision-makers and in the format and medium that will have the most traction and requires strengthening of the technical skills of service support staff who are ideally placed to take on knowledge brokering roles (Ajam, 2021:245; Chirau et al., 2021a:106). Finally, the sustainability of an evidence culture is best attained when the demand for evidence to justify decisions is applied by the public, think tanks and parliament (Goldman & Pabari, 2021:25). There is a need to significantly strengthen oversight by civil society and the ability to critically engage with evidence, policy decisions and to challenge policy and programme decisions that do not seem to align with the available evidence.

Sufficient financial resources to commission policy evaluations, analyse available data and package findings in user-friendly formats remain constrained. Monitoring efforts are mostly focused on inputs, activities, fiscal accountability and outputs, rather than on results to improve effectiveness, efficiency, impact and organisational learning and programme adaptation (Chirau et al., 2021b:545). Sufficient financial allocation is needed to strengthen M&E systems and to ensure appropriate administrative support and technical capacity to generate and communicate information (Crawley, 2017:7). Financial resources need to be complemented by the unwavering commitment of political and executive leaders to promote learning and response to identified challenges, rather than a compliance approach that responds to audit requirements. Closing the gap between performance results

and financial allocation can be achieved by ensuring that the targets, objectives and resource allocation in annual performance plans are supported by evidence and that performance gaps reported in annual performance plans inform the development of annual evaluation plans to ensure that performance gaps are addressed by relevant evidence to promote learning and improvement.

Finally, the success in strengthening the evidence landscape should not measure the success of such engagement by undisputed examples of academic influence. Within a complex policymaking system, evidence use may be characterised by indirect nudges rather than direct cause-and-effect relationships (Cairney, Oliver & Wellstead, 2016:401). It is important to adopt a longer-term strategy to change the evidence landscape, rather than focus on short-term gains. "Parliaments and individual MPs are deeply embedded in power relations and value contestations which inherently shape what evidence is demanded, selected, and, ultimately, used for policymaking" (Ajam, 2021:239). An overfocus to drive evidence use may promote the selective uptake of evidence and discourage engagement with information that discredits ideology or a predetermined course of action. Furthermore, Khumalo, Crawley, Manyala and Hassan (2021:155) found:

> Parliamentarians indicated that they were more amenable to consider and use evidence on non-contentious policy issues. [Evidence use] was reported to be easier at the portfolio committee level where there was adequate time, personalised support from technical staff and familiarity with other parliamentarian colleagues (Khumalo, Crawley, Manyala & Hassan, 2021:155).

A culture of evidence use can be promoted by focusing first on less contested areas and building the demand and capacity for evidence use in these more conducive settings.

Finally, acknowledging that policymakers may respond to a variety of information sources opens the potential avenues to engage and influence policy decision-making. Mapping different types of evidence and evidence sources in terms of their respective value can enable knowledge brokers and evidence advocates to select which type of information is relevant for different decisions. Common knowledge and formal and popular research may be more useful during the initial design and conceptualisation of the policy issue. Routine monitoring can identify performance gaps, and enable learning, response and

administrative accountability to improve the implementation process. Commissioned research, evaluation studies and citizen engagement can also help to unpack how and where changes occur or do not occur, thus strengthening learning and policy decisions on the overall performance of the policy.

Conclusion

This chapter reflects the significant symbolic and practical advances that have been made in promoting evidence in policymaking by governments across the world and on the African continent. South Africa has all the building blocks to create a conducive evidence landscape but faces several constraints in the practical implementation. Overcoming these challenges requires realistic expectations and commitment to a long-term systemic change agenda by evidence producers, which requires aligning evidence production with the needs of policy decision-makers without compromising the integrity of produced evidence. While the adopted policy frameworks and routine systems of government provide for evidence uptake, there is a need to further strengthen resource availability, technical capacity and the analytical abilities of evidence users at all levels of the system. There is a need to counter a culture focused on compliance reporting and to encourage the generation of potentially contentious evidence that facilitates frank engagements on governance performance, equity and sustainable development. A sustainable evidence landscape requires continuous effort. This requires strengthening the capacity of civil society to access and engage with evidence and to use such evidence to promote accountability and policy performance.

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