

# T01P08 / Evidence-Based Policy Making in Africa

**Topic :** T01 / POLICY PROCESS THEORIES

**Chair :** Justa Mwangi (Kenyatta University)

**Second Chair :** Wilson Muna (Kenyatta University)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

### Evidence-Based Policymaking in Africa

#### General Objective

The objective of this panel is to explore the dynamics of evidence-based policy making in Africa, focusing on how empirical research, data, and evidence can be more effectively utilized in the policymaking process across the continent. The panel seeks to address the structural, institutional, and political factors that impact the adoption and application of evidence-based policymaking in various sectors, such as health, education, economic development, and environmental policy. The panel will bring together interdisciplinary insights from political science, public administration, economics, and development studies.

#### Research Question

This panel will investigate the following research question: How can African governments improve the uptake of evidence in the policy-making process? We will explore several hypotheses:

**Institutional Capacity Hypothesis:** Governments with stronger research institutions and data infrastructure will have higher levels of evidence integration in policy processes.

**Political Economy Hypothesis:** The degree to which evidence is used in policymaking is influenced by political incentives and power structures.

**International Influence Hypothesis:** Donor influence and international development organizations play a critical role in shaping evidence-based policymaking in African countries, but this may sometimes skew priorities.

**Community Knowledge Hypothesis:** Indigenous and local knowledge systems, if integrated with formal research evidence, can lead to more culturally relevant and accepted policies.

Through these hypotheses, the panel will aim to uncover key factors that promote or hinder evidence-based policymaking in Africa and highlight best practices that can be scaled or adapted to different contexts.

#### Scientific Relevance

This topic is of high scientific relevance given the increasing global emphasis on evidence-based policymaking as a tool for improving policy outcomes. In Africa, where development challenges are profound, evidence-based policymaking holds significant potential for transforming governance and service delivery. However, the region faces unique challenges, including weak data infrastructure, political economy factors, and limited research capacities. This panel seeks to contribute to the scholarly debate by exploring how these barriers can be overcome, drawing on African case studies to provide a rich understanding of both the obstacles and potential pathways to success.

#### Context and Brief State of the Art on this Topic

In recent years, global trends have pushed for the integration of evidence in policy making, with international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations advocating for data-driven decision-making (Parkhurst, 2017). In Africa, the rise of institutions like the African Evidence Network and the adoption of frameworks like the African Union's Agenda 2063 reflect this growing interest in evidence-based policymaking (Langer et al., 2016). Despite these efforts, however, the use of research evidence in policymaking remains inconsistent, with many African governments relying on ad-hoc decision-making processes, often driven by political expediencies or donor priorities (Newman et al., 2012). Limited resources, lack of reliable data, and political resistance further complicate the integration of evidence into policy frameworks.

#### References:

Langer, L., Tripney, J., & Gough, D. (2016). The science of using science: Researching the use of research

evidence in decision-making. London: EPPI-Centre.

Newman, K., Fisher, C., & Shaxson, L. (2012). Stimulating demand for research evidence: What role for capacity-building? IDS Bulletin, 43(5), 17-24.

Parkhurst, J. (2017). The politics of evidence: From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence. London: Routledge.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### **Call for Papers: Evidence-Based Policy Making in Africa**

This panel invites submissions for papers that investigate the role of evidence in the policymaking process in Africa. We are particularly interested in empirical and theoretical contributions that explore the challenges and opportunities of integrating evidence into public policy in sectors such as health, education, governance, environmental sustainability, and economic development. Papers that address the political economy of evidence-based policy making, the role of research institutions, or the influence of international development actors are especially welcome. We encourage papers that respond to the following research question: How can African governments improve the uptake of evidence in the policy-making process? Submissions can approach this question through various theoretical lenses and methodological approaches, including case studies, comparative analyses, and qualitative or quantitative research.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- The role of political incentives in shaping evidence use.
- Institutional capacity and its impact on evidence-based policy making.
- The influence of international organizations and donors on policy decisions.
- Integration of indigenous and local knowledge systems into formal policy frameworks.
- Case studies on successful or failed attempts at evidence-based reforms in Africa.

We encourage submissions from early-career researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Papers should offer insights that are applicable across the African context or provide in-depth analysis of specific countries or regions.

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**Chair :** Justa Mwangi (Kenyatta University)

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Session 1 Power, Politics, and Evidence: Rethinking policymaking in Education, Knowledge Translation, and International funding in Africa

Friday, July 4th 16:00 to 18:00 (B2)

## **Discussants**

Fatuma Guleid (KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme)

Anne Macharia (Kenyatta University)

## **(Virtual) Enhancing Evidence-Based Policy-Making in Kenya's Secondary Education Sector: Insights from the 8-4-4 and Competency-Based Curriculum Reforms**

Anne Macharia (Kenyatta University)

## **The Influence of Actors' Identities, Roles and Power on Knowledge Translation for Health Policy in Kenya**

Fatuma Guleid (KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme)

## **(Virtual) International Influence in Evidence-Based Policymaking in Africa: Examining Donor Domination in the Research Landscape**

Justa Mwangi (Kenyatta University)