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# Examining the incentives and motivations for research-based legislation in Uganda

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of the paper is to discuss the factors that would increase or decrease the prospects to use research evidence in legislation in a developing country.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to identify the gaps in ability to utilise research evidence among policymakers. A combination of expert analysis of five policy brief formats, 13 self-administered semi-structured interviews with policymakers, focus group discussion and literature analysis informed data collection.

**Findings** – The incentives and motivations for research-based legislation are classified into three categories: those that concern legislators and researchers, those that concern legislators only and those that concern researchers only.

**Originality/value** – The work discusses the need for policymakers to make decisions based on facts. The findings are a reflection of a long interaction the author had with policymakers and researchers in Uganda.

**Keywords** Researchers, Uganda, Legislation, Policymaking, Research evidence

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

For generations, governments have promised and shown commitment to provide the best services to their citizenry. This often starts with budgeting and legislation, in places or aspects where legislation is needed. However, the current global challenges have indicated that most governments have failed to honour their responsibilities in many ways. In the developing world, especially in Africa and the Middle East, there have been uprisings, all stemming from the failure of the governments to honour the demands of their citizenry. In Uganda, there have been disappointments for the government's failure to address the most pressing budgetary problems. Without accurate, reliable and timely information, decision makers across the globe, in Africa and specifically Uganda, would be resigned to shooting in the dark (Sanya, 2011).

The need to make decisions based on facts has been echoed in a number of forums, the most recent being at the 16th United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference in honour of the African Statistics Day (UNECA, 2011). Universal and equitable access to national resources and realising the Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved without evidence-informed policies and actions (Chalmers, 2005; Lavis *et al.*, 2004;



Oxman *et al.*, 2007). Poorly informed decision-making is one of the reasons why services fail to reach those who need them most. This is attributed to low production and limited access to relevant research, as well as lack of willingness and expertise to assess and evaluate evidence (Chalmers, 2005; Lavis *et al.*, 2004; Oxman *et al.*, 2007; “SURE, 2009 for policy”). Yet evidence is needed to clarify what services and programmes to offer or cover, how to deliver them, financial arrangements, governance arrangements and the implementation. Previous research suggests that policymaking has relied on common sense, personal stories and standard operating procedures, whereas policymakers are concerned primarily with recognition and re-election (Jewell and Bero, 2008). The objective of this study is to identify the incentives and motivations that drive legislators to consider research evidence amid cognitive and institutional features of the political process.

The significance of this research is echoed in “SURE (2009) for policy”, where the need to have answers to significant questions that have remained unanswered, mostly in developing countries, concerning how best to adapt mechanisms to contexts where the nature of policy, the cultural context, societal expectations and the skills of policymakers, researchers and civil society, has remained poorly addressed. This research will inform the effective ways in which policymakers can be motivated to use research evidence during legislation to help in bridging the gap between research and policymakers. To achieve this, the study will assess the demands of policymakers for evidence-informed research information in Uganda, and examine the incentives and motivations which would drive legislators to consider research evidence as a requisite in decision-making. Through reviewing the literature, the study has been able to evaluate initiatives undertaken in previous studies to learn systematically from their experiences on how best to improve the use of research evidence to inform policy decisions across different contexts in low- and middle-income countries. The study addresses the following specific questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders and what roles do each play in the policymaking process?
- How do stakeholders in the policymaking process promote the use of research evidence?
- What are the characteristics and determinants of evidence-informed research information?
- What would inspire legislative drafters and policymakers to use research information?

## 2. Literature review

Evidence-informed decision-making refers to using the best available evidence and excluding spurious information competing factors, all in the context of other political and institutional features (Jewell and Bero, 2008). Several studies have explained the role of research evidence in policymaking (Fretheim *et al.*, 2006; Innvaer *et al.*, 2002; Larsson *et al.*, 2003; Lavis *et al.*, 2005; Lomas *et al.*, 2005; Milne and Clegg, 2003; Nilsen *et al.*, 2006; Sanya, 2011; “SURE, (2009) for policy”, 2009) and the hindrances to use research evidence (Chalmers, 2005; Lavis *et al.*, 2004; Oxman *et al.*, 2007; “SURE, 2009 for policy”), and have suggested appropriate facilitators of research evidence (Chalmers, 2005; Innvaer *et al.*, 2002; Lavis *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Moynihan *et al.*, 2006; Milne and Clegg, 2003; Oxman *et al.*, 2007; “SURE, 2009 for policy”). It is important to note that a large

percentage of this research concerns the use of research evidence in health policymaking (Chalmers, 2005; Frøtheim *et al.*, 2006; Innvaer *et al.*, 2002; Larsson *et al.*, 2003; Lavis *et al.*, 2004; 2005; Lomas *et al.*, 2005; Moynihan *et al.*, 2006; Milne and Clegg, 2003; Nilsen *et al.*, 2006; Oxman *et al.*, 2007; “SURE, 2009 for policy”).

Policymaking is a highly complex process that is often affected by cognitive and institutional features of the political process, which makes it difficult to predict or influence (Jewell and Bero, 2008). Because of the intrinsic complexities and ambiguities associated with policymaking, political debate is often a struggle over the meanings of concepts and the dominant metaphors used to depict a policy situation (Stone, 2002). The increasing interest in and visibility of evidence-based decision-making as an approach, coupled with acute financial situations, often allows officials to frame their initiatives as opportunities to make public services less effective for more money (Jewell and Bero, 2008).

Government support units (GSUs), such as professional associations or groups, local universities, policy study centres, lobbyists and consumer advocacy groups, established both locally and internationally, support the use of research evidence and are seen as credible foci for institutional memory (“SURE, 2009 for policy”). In the developed world, GSUs are characterised as small units that respond rapidly, have close links with policymakers, publish drafts for public comment and are independent and financially stable. Through networks, and personal contacts, these groups support well-informed policy decisions by producing relevant, reliable, accessible and timely research syntheses for policymakers. They also develop and evaluate effective strategies for improving access to and use of research evidence in policy development, and develop capacity for evidence-informed policy development (Jewell and Bero, 2008; Steinberg and Luce, 2005). Previous research has indicated that in developing countries, these GSUs have had inadequate human resources and limited independence and financial support, as well as insufficient time for research and analysis.

Previous research envisions that through partnership and collaboration, access to policymakers and stakeholders, seeking secure public funding, fostering professional development, being involved in international networks, avoiding duplication of effort and remaining independent and transparent in regards to approach and methods, GSUs will be able to promote the use of research evidence. However, this evidence has often been limited and has almost entirely come from high-income countries (“SURE, 2009 for policy”). This study endeavoured to test this hypothesis through reviewing policy drafts and engaging researchers, clerks, chairpersons of parliamentary committees and staff of library and research and legislative and legal departments in interviews. These interviews aim to assess and confirm that interactions between researchers and policymakers increase the prospects for research use by policymakers, and that timing and timeliness increase (and poor timing or lack of timeliness decreases) the prospects for research use by policymakers. For example, policymakers’ negative attitudes towards research evidence decrease the prospects for research use by policymakers; a lack of skills and expertise decrease the prospects for research use by policymakers; policy networks and trust in the researcher increase the prospects for research use by policymakers, while lack of confidence or perceived relevance, use of jargon and only publishing for a scholarly audience decrease the prospects for research use by policymakers. A relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use by policy drafters, whereas

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a lack of support by the management and front-line staff who had influence in the area where change is required decreases the prospects for research use.

Inadequate training, expertise and experience among researchers to appraise evidence critically result in research evidence presented in formats that are not user-friendly, subsequently not being read and failing to influence policy (Boaz *et al.*, 2006; Briner *et al.*, 2009; Denyer *et al.*, 2008; Hansen and Rieper, 2009; Lavis *et al.*, 2006). The characteristics of research evidence and the format in which it is presented contribute much towards its use in decision and policymaking. While some research has been focused on the design and evaluation of user-friendly formats for policymakers (Boaz *et al.*, 2006; Denyer *et al.*, 2008; Sandelowski *et al.*, 2012), little has been done to improve policy brief formats (Campbell *et al.*, 2011; Jewell and Bero, 2008; Liberati *et al.*, 2009; Pawson *et al.*, 2005; Sandelowski *et al.*, 2012; Voils *et al.*, 2011). This is very specific to the African context, where verbal modes of communication are preferred over written words (Healey, 2004; McKinney, 2000; Sample, 1989). This collaborates with the 2011 (“Use of Scientific”) report which confirmed that the preferred method of communication demanded by Ugandan MPs is face-to-face, which according to the report imposes more burden and increases workload on parliament staffers. Through interviews with researchers, clerks and library and research staff, this study will identify the best formats in which research evidence will be repackaged and presented to motivate legislative drafters to use research evidence. In addition to communication challenges, information-seeking behaviour studies (Borgman, 1996; Case, 2012; Emanuel, 2011; Fidel, 2012; Fisher *et al.*, 2005; Mi and Weng, 2008; Tenopir, 2003) have indicated that ease of access and satisfaction play a bigger role in the use of evidence in such contexts as African societies, where access to peer-reviewed research is still a challenge. This research will look into integrating open access as a solution to ease of access and satisfaction.

Recent studies have indicated that systematic reviews, research synthesis, measurement performances, economic analyses and surveys constitute more appropriate sources of research evidence for decision-making than the latest or most heavily publicised research studies (Boaz *et al.*, 2006; Briner *et al.*, 2009; Campbell *et al.*, 2011; Denyer *et al.*, 2008; Hansen and Rieper, 2009; Liberati *et al.*, 2009; Pawson *et al.*, 2005; Sandelowski *et al.*, 2012; Voils *et al.*, 2009; 2011). However, they are always influenced by factors other than evidence, including political, economic, cultural and sociological factors. (Bero and Jadad, 1997; Mulrow, 1994; “SURE, 2009 for policy”). Systematic reviews involve research literature with an explicit question, an explicit description of the search strategy, an explicit statement about what types of research evidence were included and excluded, a critical examination of the quality of the studies included in the review and a critical and transparent process of interpretation of the findings of the studies included in the review (Briner *et al.*, 2009; Campbell *et al.*, 2011; Sandelowski *et al.*, 2012; “SURE, 2009 for policy”; Voils *et al.*, 2011). Systematic reviews are essential but not sufficient (“SURE, 2009 for policy”) and therefore policy needs more than a presentation of the best research evidence. On that note, research synthesis and evidence from other types are essential. This study will establish research reviews and other types of evidence that would motivate policymakers to use research evidence in Uganda.

Research syntheses go beyond systematic reviews (Briner *et al.*, 2009; Campbell *et al.*, 2011; Voils *et al.*, 2011; “SURE, 2009 for policy”), in that they are intended to support decision-making in a specific context (Lavis *et al.*, 2006). In a research synthesis, research evidence is interpreted in relation to the specific context and evidence that is

specific to the problem being dealt with. This therefore will mean the context is incorporated, including evidence of the presence of modifying factors, needs, values, costs and the availability of resources (Cooper and Hedges, 1994; Oxman *et al.*, 2006). The use of systematic reviews and research synthesis requires skills and careful judgement, and their use is limited by a lack of capacity to synthesise research evidence (Oxman *et al.*, 2006). Given the relevance of research syntheses and systematic reviews as evidence, through expert reviews, this research will investigate the usage of these reviews in the existing policy drafts; then, through interviews and group discussions with professionals from GSUs, legislative aides and committees' chairpersons will identify the incentives and motivations that compelled them to consider or decline using research evidence.

Improving policymakers' access to and use of research evidence that is relevant, reliable, accessible and timely requires involvement of professional groupings like journalists. Accurate reporting of research that is relevant to policymaking is important. However, there are many constraints on the abilities of journalists and researchers, including lack of training, limited expertise and experience to write research findings into press releases or stories, failure to link research to action in resource-constrained settings and the ignominious use of jargon. While the role of research evidence in policymaking has been widely studied, the use of research information has remained a challenge worldwide, and notably in developing and under-developed countries. A number of studies have showed that the use of research evidence in developing countries like Uganda is influenced by a variety of factors, including values and beliefs; stakeholder power; institutional constraints; donor funding; insufficient, poorly appraised and untimely research evidence; scarce resources; ill-informed public and civil society; and the lack of mechanisms to support collaboration between policymakers and researchers (Fretheim *et al.*, 2006; Innvaer *et al.*, 2002; Larsson *et al.*, 2003; Lavis *et al.*, 2005; Lomas *et al.*, 2005; Milne and Clegg, 2003; Moynihan *et al.*, 2006; Nilsen *et al.*, 2006; "SURE, 2009 for policy"). Through expert reviews of policy drafters and interviews with committee chairpersons and their aides, clerks and researchers, this study examined the aforementioned limitations and identified the incentives and motivations that would drive legislative drafters to consider research evidence.

The pressure to make decisions quickly on a wide range of policies obviously limits policymakers' ability to accumulate much information about any one issue, thus getting overwhelmed with information. Legislators lack knowledge on issues discussed, most especially those that fall outside their areas of expertise; have limited research skills of how evidence can be used or misused and therefore cannot distinguish between good and bad data; and they are often inundated with information from a wide array of interest groups (Jewell and Bero, 2008). There are no well-known evaluations of rapid response mechanisms that are designed to respond to policymakers' needs for research evidence (Jewell and Bero, 2008). This can be solved by studying and understanding the policymakers' daily needs for research evidence and by developing and evaluating mechanisms for responding rapidly to those needs. To address the aforementioned challenges, this study will concentrate on the personal contact between researchers and policymakers, the timely conveyance of germane and concise information to facilitate the use of research and researchers' skills to translate and communicate research (Innvaer *et al.*, 2002).

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### 3. The law-making bodies in Uganda

When Uganda was declared a protectorate, a codified legal system was introduced and received in 1894. Over a period of years, there have been various formal law-making bodies in Uganda and these have passed various principal laws. For example, between 1889 and 1893, the British Monarch in Council in England was the law-making body and the principal law was known as Order in Council. During the period 1894-1920 and 1921-1961, the law-making bodies were His/Her Majesty's representative in Uganda, known as the Commissioner Governor, and the Legislative Council (LEGCO), respectively, and Ordinance was the name given to the principal law. During the military regimes (1971-1979) and after the liberation war (1986-1995), the National Resistance Council was the law-making body, and Decrees and Statutes were the principal laws.

Following the promulgation of the Constitution in 1995, the Uganda Parliament was established as the main law-making body in 1996, as provided for under Chapter Six of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. However, laws are also made by the President, ministers, local government councils (LGCs) and other bodies authorised under various Acts of Parliament. Parliament is vested with powers to pass bills which are then assented to by the President. The President in consultation with the cabinet may make subsidiary laws in form of proclamations. This is done in case there is a state of emergency in any part of the country. A proclamation declaring a state of emergency is laid before the parliament by the President for approval within 14 days after it has been issued. A state of emergency declared by the President will remain in existence for 90 days only, although it may be extended by the parliament for a period not exceeding 90 days at a time. Most of the Acts of Parliament have specific provisions that empower the responsible minister and other authorities like LGCs to make regulations or rules, known as subsidiary laws, for the effective implementation of the provisions of the principal law. This is usually exercised by making statutory instruments that are signed by the respective minister or authority and published in the Gazette. Under the Local Governments Act, district councils are empowered to make ordinances, while urban, subcounty, division and village councils are empowered to make bylaws, consistent with the Constitution or any other law made by the parliament.

#### *3.1 Law-making process in Uganda*

The process of making laws in Uganda varies depending on whether it is principal or subsidiary law. Bills passed by the parliament and assented to by the President are referred to as Acts of Parliament and constitute the body of law known as principal laws; as the subsidiary law is often limited to administrative and procedural matters, it is made by the minister under the authority of a principal Act of Parliament and is meant to operationalise certain provisions of that act; it must not conflict with the principal act.

Proposals for a law to be enacted by the parliament are contained in a bill introduced and defended before the parliament by the responsible minister on behalf of the government (government bills) or by any member of parliament (private member's bill). Government bills are formulated and are a reflection of the government policy. Legislative proposals originate from policies initiated by government; proposals from responsible ministries, recommendations spearheaded through the Uganda Law Reform Commission or Statutory Bodies or Ad Hoc Commissions established for a particular purpose; emergency situations that call for reform of the law; obligations arising from international or regional treaties,

agreements, e.g. United Nations, the East African Community; and recommendations initiated by non-governmental organisations and interest groups.

The law-making process begins with a consultative process, done on behalf of the government by the Uganda Law Reform Commission, through studies initiated in a particular area of law from which legislative proposals are formulated before they are enacted into law by the parliament. The consultative documents introduced by the government are in the form known as green or White paper. A green paper is a document produced by the government outlining policy areas in which the government wishes to legislate and provides various alternatives and invites discussion and comments on the alternatives. A white paper is a policy document containing the specific policy issues and the detailed proposals for law that the government intends to make. When the consultative process is complete, a report is submitted to the instructing ministry. The ministry approaches the cabinet through a Cabinet Memorandum with a proposal for the cabinet to approve the principles for drafting the bill. A Cabinet Memorandum contains the purpose, background issues, gaps in the existing law and financial considerations or implications of the proposed law. In principle, cabinet approval is required before drafting of the subject legislation. However, in special circumstances, the Attorney General or Solicitor General may authorise a bill to be drafted without reference to the cabinet. The cabinet indicates its approval or decision through a Cabinet Minute which includes authorisation to responsible minister to give drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Chambers to prepare the bill. The proposals in the bill must be exact, clear and must not leave any loopholes.

Drafting the bill is usually done by the technical staff in the office of the First Parliamentary Counsel, a public office under the Attorney General's Chambers that provides a unique interface between the executive and the legislature. The drafting instructions comprise a clear and comprehensive statement of the nature of the problem by providing background information, the purpose of the proposed legislation, the means by which those purposes are to be achieved and the impact of the proposals on existing circumstances and laws. The instructions are accompanied by the Cabinet Memorandum, Cabinet Minute and all documents relevant to the proposed legislation. While at the drafting stage, the bill goes through the following process:

- Meeting of the First Parliamentary Counsel and the responsible ministry to discuss the bill and arrive at an agreed draft.
- The ministry concerned may consult stakeholders as to the contents of the bill.
- Where the proposed legislation will involve the amendment of the constitution or affect existing laws, the First Parliamentary Counsel must draw the attention of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General to that fact about the draft legislation.
- After drafting, the Ministry concerned will have to submit the bill to the cabinet for approval together with a Cabinet Memorandum and any comments of the stakeholders.

When a bill is submitted to the cabinet for approval, it must be accompanied by a certificate of compliance issued by the office of the First Parliamentary Counsel to the effect that the bill was drafted in accordance with the appropriate cabinet decision or on the basis of a waiver of prior cabinet approval by the Attorney General or Solicitor

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General. Cabinet may approve or reject the bill or may approve the bill subject to amendments. Where there are amendments, the office of the First Parliamentary Counsel incorporates the amendments as approved by the cabinet. After the cabinet approval, the bill is published in the Gazette to enable the general public and stakeholders peruse the bill so that they can make any representations they may wish before it is debated and enacted into law. On publication, copies of the bill are sent to the Clerk of Parliament who distributes them to the members of parliament. Each bill before the parliament is accompanied by a certificate of financial implication and explanatory memorandum signed by the minister or member (in case of a private member's bill). The certificate sets out the outputs and outcomes of the bill and how they fit within government policies and programmes, budget and financing methods.

### *3.2 Stages of the bill through parliament*

All bills must be read three times before being passed by the parliament, and after each reading, the bill is referred to the Committee of Parliament for further consultation and thereafter to submit its findings to the parliament. The first reading is the formal introduction of the bill to the parliament by the minister or a private member responsible for the bill, and the main purpose is to bring to the attention of the legislators the existence of the bill so that they can read it. At the committee stage, the minister or member promoting the bill is required to appear before the committee to answer any questions that the committee may have. In addition, individuals, associations or corporate bodies whose interests may be affected by the proposed bill may appear physically, submit a memorandum on the bill or be represented by an advocate. Upon the second reading, the bill is subjected to detailed house discussion on the basis of the explanatory memorandum and the report from the committee. After the third reading, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole house and the goal is to scrutinise the bill in detail, to discuss any suggested amendments and report back to the whole house. After the third reading, a final vote is taken and, if approved, the bill is said to have been passed by the parliament and will be assented to by the President and thereafter published in the Gazette.

Like the principal laws, the process of making subsidiary laws either by the minister or local councils follows similar stages; however, there are significant differences in the process specifically at the local government level. This is because the local councils are empowered by the Local Government Act to form ordinances and bylaws. For the purposes of this research, emphasis has been put towards the formation of the principal law and what is discussed is limited in scope to the stakeholders involved in the legislation process.

## **4. Methodology**

“Measuring policymakers’ capacity to use research is not simple”, said Fran Deans, International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) in conversation. Many policymakers are not aware of their own gaps in capacity to use research; i.e. they don’t know what they don’t know, and they will never admit that they don’t know. Between October 2011 and August 2012, this study was carried out to examine the incentives and motivations that would prompt policymakers to consider research evidence for informed decision-making in low- and middle-income countries like Uganda. This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to identify the gaps in ability to utilise research evidence among policymakers. However,



the overall approach was qualitative because qualitative methods focus on the experiences of people involved, and attempt to understand the reasons behind certain behaviour description. Three methods of data collection techniques were used: a combination of expert analysis of policy brief formats, semi-structured interviews and group discussion and literature analysis informed data collection. Data collection tools including semi-structured interview questionnaire guides and policy brief assessment forms were designed and pretested with the legal and legislative staff at the parliament.

Expert analysis of four policy briefs which included systematic reviews, research synthesis, measurement performances and economical analyses and surveys was carried out. The analysis was centred on evaluating the document format, presentation and layout, methodology used and comprehensiveness. A focus group discussion with five staff from the Legal and Legislative Services office and two legislators was conducted. Participants were asked to evaluate common structural elements and content of four policy briefs. The researcher evaluated and measured their ability to easily identify the different sections of the documents and their ability to make sense and meaning from the documents.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 13 policymakers, of which eight were committee chairpersons and five were legal and legislative services staff. In this paper, the term "Legal and Legislative staff" is interchangeably used to mean parliament administrative staffers or assistant clerks. Committee chairpersons were given more attention because the hierarchies in the political parties concentrate much of their power in senior members and committee chairs who have more parliamentary experience and are experts in the subject area addressed by their committee. Legal and legislative services staff were selected because the activities of this office impacts directly on government services and the interests of the public.

The study originally planned to select all eight chairpersons and their aides of the standing committees of parliament, including:

- (1) Appointments Committee.
- (2) Committee on Rules, Discipline and Privileges.
- (3) The Public Accounts Committee.
- (4) Committee on Budget.
- (5) Committee on National Economy.
- (6) Committee on Equal Opportunities.
- (7) Committee on Government Assurances.
- (8) Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises.

Given their tight schedules, chairpersons of temporary committees were included to expand the scope. Of the 23 committee chairpersons, eight were involved in this study, including Gender and Social Services, Local Government and Public Service, Science and Technology, Committee on Statutory Bodies and State Enterprises, Equal Opportunities, Foreign Affairs, Finance Committee and Legal Committee. In each of these committees, either the chairperson or the deputy was interviewed on availability basis.

Legislative staff/parliament clerks who provide legal guidance to legislators during legislation were a very vital group of respondents in this study. Given its role in the provision of a vision and leadership to the parliamentary service, the office of the clerk

to the house is central in evaluating legislative drafters' ability to access and use evidence. Originally the study aimed at the departmental heads; however, given their tight schedules, it was not possible. Later other staffers were included and five staff from the Legal and Legislative Office participated. As earlier indicated, legislators have trust and belief in the clerks. So the question would be why do legislators do so? Would these staffers be an incentive and motivational factor for research-based legislation? If so, what is their role?

Given their role as a public office under the Attorney General's Chambers that provides a unique interface between the executive and the legislature, and their participation in the bill drafting, First Parliamentary Counsel staffers would form a potential group of respondents in understanding the policymaking process. Prior to the study, this group of participants were not considered as potential respondents and therefore were not directly involved in the study. However, research has shown that their role in the legislation process would warrant a detailed study to show how they continue to influence the legislation and policymaking process.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with ten staff from organisations that are engaged in policymaking research. These included Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC), Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), Uganda Law Reform Commission and Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). Previous research has shown that research evidence is of poor quality and limited applicability, and, often, it does not translate directly into policy and rarely addresses pressing policy issues which later may require a lot of expertise to formulate on the part of the policymakers (Jewell and Bero, 2008). The earlier plan had been to involve all GSUs; however, this was not feasible, given the scope, time and budget limitations. Later the EPRC, ACODE, Uganda Law Reform Commission and MISR were selected because the legislators and administrative staffers referred to them during the interviews.

## 5. Data analysis, discussion and recommendations

Presented here is the analysis of the data collected from a sample of the stakeholders involved in the policymaking process in Uganda, including researchers, legislators and their aides and legal and legislative staff (administrative staffers). These categories represent a wider range of respondents: e.g. researchers included GSUs and all organisations engaged in policymaking research; legislators are committee chairpersons; and administrative staffers/legal and legislative staff are assistant clerks.

### 5.1 Analysis and discussion of research findings

The data are grouped by stakeholder categories, i.e. researchers/GSUs and legislators/committee chairpersons. Comparisons are made to make conclusions. The main objective is to identify the incentives and motivations for research-based legislation in Uganda.

*5.1.1 Researchers/GSUs.* Of the 11 participants, three had PhDs and eight had master's degree qualifications with specialisations matching their employer research mission. For example, respondents from EPRC were specialists in economics and related subjects. On average, the participants had 2.5 years of experience in their current positions – doing research for policymaking - while their overall average policy research experience was 8.2 years. Eight indicated that they had had training in assessing/evaluating research evidence

and writing for policymakers. Courses attended included evaluation of research projects and writing for policymakers, all initiated by the employer.

All researchers had had their research findings published in newspapers dailies – *Monitor* and *New Vision* preferred – with contact initiated by the employer through the Information and Communications/Public Relations office. None of the participants reported ever receiving training in journalism; this means that researchers have no or limited skills in media writing and reporting, which limits their capacity to accurately report research evidence. However, publishing research in newspapers would not be a good idea because it is the least preferred source of evidence used by policymakers.

Researchers disseminate their research findings through conference proceedings, academic peer-reviewed journals, their employer/organisational websites, open-access peer-reviewed journals, professional groups'/associations' publications and newspapers. The most preferred method of research dissemination is conference proceedings, academic peer-reviewed journals and their employer/organisational websites, while the least preferred is newspapers in general, magazines and newsletters and personal websites.

Limited time to translate research into press releases, lack of training and limited expertise and experience to write research findings into press releases or stories are the most limiting factors for researchers to publish their research findings in the media. Researchers indicated that they prefer to disseminate their research findings through public dialogues, media and policy briefs, but they lacked the skills and time to perform this function.

Researchers indicated that it is easier for them to develop research synthesis and systematic reviews than any other policy brief formats, and proposed that their employers can help them promote the use of research evidence through initiating ways to get access to policymakers and other stakeholders, partnerships and collaborations with other researchers and organisations engaged in policymaking research and seeking secure public funding.

The researchers were asked to rank the 11 factors that either increase or decrease the prospect of using research evidence during legislation. The following factors were ranked (in decreasing order of influence) as those that increase the prospects of using research evidence, where (1) is most important while (7) is least important:

- (1) Interaction between researchers and policymakers increases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (2) Timing and timeliness increase (and poor timing or lack of timeliness decreases) the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (3) Lack of confidence or perceived relevance decreased the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (4) Publishing only for a scholarly audience decreased the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (5) A lack of skills and expertise decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (6) Policy networks increase the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (7) A relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use by policy drafters.

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Researchers indicated that the most motivating factors to pick a research problem include policymaker's needs, community needs, government services and their employer's needs, while the least motivating factors are products makers and donors/grant providers. However, this finding may need further investigation through a more detailed interview so that researchers give detailed explanation on their views. That said, there is a very big disparity between the researchers' and policymakers' views on the factors that either increase or decrease the prospects to use research evidence. Comparison shows that the most important factors that would either increase or decrease the prospects for using research evidence include the following:

- A lack of skills and expertise decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- Policy networks increase the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- A relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use by policy drafters.

*5.1.2 Analysis of the policy brief formats.* The analysis of the policy brief formats showed that of the seven standard elements of the policy brief – Title, Executive summary, Context and importance of the problem, Critique of policy options, Policy recommendations, Appendices and Sources consulted or recommended:

- None of the policy briefs had elements arranged in their proper order as stated earlier. Most of the elements were disorderly and organised without following the proper order.
- Two elements – Critique of policy options, Policy recommendations – were not explicitly stated in the policy briefs as sections.
- Of the seven policy briefs analysed, only two had the Executive Summary, only one had appendices and three had no recommendation.
- For those with an Executive Summary, it was too lengthy with over 400 words. The recommended wording of the Executive Summary should be between 150 and 250 words.
- None of the policy briefs indicated timelines (when the issue at hand started and when it ended).
- The analysis showed that the outcome of the policy briefs was influenced by three factors – economic, research evidence and cultural and sociological factors.
- The citation styles used for the references differed widely and never had description or evaluations. Only one policy brief's references had notes.
- While some policy briefs had references, these were not organised into further readings and/or recommended readings.
- Only one policy brief had a closing paragraph re-emphasising the importance of the recommended action or providing a corrective course of action.
- While the style and language used in the policy briefs were professional and easy to understand, font size, layout, title and headings, sub-sections, use of graphs and length never met the recommended standards.

Due to the inconsistency and disparity in the arrangement of the policy briefs' format it became problematic for the policymakers to be able to use these as evidence. A policy brief should have the following elements: Title, Executive summary, Context and importance of the problem, Critique of policy options, Policy recommendations, Appendices and Sources consulted or recommended. These should be organised, formatted and laid out (styled) with readable font size; styled formatting; descriptive, punchy and relevant title; and highlighted headings and sub-sections; and should use graphs to illustrate figures.

*5.1.3 Group discussion with committee chairpersons and legal and legislative staff.* During the focus group discussions, committee chairpersons (legislators) and legal and legislative staff were each presented with five policy briefs that included systematic reviews, research synthesis, measurement performance and economic analyses and surveys. Prior to the exercise, the participants were briefed on the differences between the two documents based on their characteristics. The documents were labelled (a), (b), (c) and (d) to represent systematic reviews, research synthesis, measurement performance and economic analyses and surveys, respectively. The participants were asked to evaluate common structural elements and content, including assessing the document formats, presentation and layout, methodology used and comprehensiveness. Then the researcher evaluated and measured the participants' ability to easily identify the different sections in the policy briefs and their ability to make sense and meaning from the documents. The observations were as follows:

- Overall the participants found it easy to use policy briefs (c), (a), (b), (d<sub>1</sub>) and (d<sub>2</sub>), respectively. This was because policy brief (c) had a title in the form of a question, the Executive Summary was on the first page, it was illustrated with graphs, annotated references and headings and sub-sections were well-formatted. The participants preferred a policy brief whose title is in the form of a question rather than a statement or phrase, to ease understanding and give a view of what exactly was investigated; further, the title should indicate the target audience to avoid looking over the document for the intended audience.
- The Executive Summary should come immediately after the title but should be formatted and title styled to ease identification from other summaries.
- Each section or sub-section of the policy brief should be brief and punchy, if not then it should state the number of words to keep the reader aware how much is required. But a lengthy wording is problematic to read and can be boring. For example policy brief (b).
- The participants liked the quotes captured from the field and they preferred that these could form part of the appendices so that such evidence can be used during debates. The participants liked the section "key messages" in policy brief (a) which they said would work very well as part of the Executive Summary.
- The participants liked the policy options provided in policy briefs (a) and (d<sub>1</sub>) because they give them options on different directions to take and the circumstances that may arise from them.
- Overall the participants easily identified the title and the references/sources consulted, but had difficulties identifying the Author's biography, Context and importance of the problem and Critique of policy options.

- It was interesting to see that the authors expected to find policy recommendations from the policy briefs; however, it was disappointing to see that most of the policy briefs did not state the recommendations explicitly and those that did gave them different headings, e.g. implementation considerations, policy options, and conclusions.

5.1.4 *Legislators/committee chairpersons.* Legislators who included committee chairpersons were asked to rank 11 factors that either increase or decrease the prospect of using research evidence in legislation. Listed in the following text are the factors arranged in decreasing order of influence, where (1) was ranked as most important while (11) is least important:

- (1) A relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use by policy drafters.
- (2) A lack of skills and expertise decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (3) Policy networks increases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (4) Trust in the researcher increases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (5) Interactions between researchers and policymakers increase the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (6) Timing and timeliness increase (and poor timing or lack of timeliness decreases) the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (7) Publishing only for a scholarly audience decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (8) Lack of confidence or perceived relevance decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (9) Use of jargon decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers.
- (10) A lack of support by the management and front-line staff who had influence in the area where change is required decreases the prospects for research use.
- (11) Policymakers' negative attitudes towards research evidence decrease the prospects for research use by policymakers.

Legislators network with different groups of organisations for different purposes; however, they network mostly with groups/individuals who are affiliated with policy study centres, professional associations/groups, Civil Society Organisations and lobbyists; they network least with higher-education institutions and consumer advocacy groups. One legislator indicated that academic institutions provide purely academic research in the form of dissertations that are not well-researched and therefore may not provide the best evidence. However, they prefer to network with individual researchers from academic institutions rather than networking with the whole institution. Legislators believe that professional associations, policy study centres, and Civil Society Organisations (community) are the groups that provide the most consistent and relatively stable evidence that can be used for legislation.

Legislators prefer to work with and trust their personal aides as a source of evidence more than anything else. Online sources and databases (journal articles) and textbooks are preferred among other information materials. However, during discussion, most legislators could not mention any scholarly journal database that they have used before apart from Google search engine, which justifies Fran Dean's comment that policymakers will never admit that they don't know. Some legislators and parliamentary staff prefer to use legal websites of other organisations and developed countries such as United Nations and its organisations, while parliamentary staff prefer to use textbooks as reference materials and guides. However, legislators indicated that they would avoid using newspapers and magazines as sources of evidence. Legislators believe that online sources and databases (journal articles) and their personal aides provide the best evidence for legislation.

Legislators overwhelmingly indicated that they prefer to use locally provided evidence to international evidence; however, in certain cases where local evidence is lacking, international evidence is preferred or, usually, comparisons are made between local and international evidence for certain legislations. Policymakers believe that online sources and journal databases and their personal aides (research assistants) provide the best evidence of all information materials. While they could select and easily use textbooks, they do not believe that textbooks provide good evidence. This could explain why legislators never use the library because they think that everything in the library or in print form and bound is a textbook.

Legislators believe that research evidence provided, political pressure/stakeholder power, cultural and sociological factors, personal values, influence from political organisation and economic pressure – in that order – are the most influential factors for their decisions during legislation. They indicated that the source of research evidence, donor funding and influence from colleagues are the least influential factors – in that order.

## 6. Recommendations

The incentives and motivations for research-based legislation are categorised as those that concern legislators and researchers, those that concern legislators only and those that concern researchers only. Following text mentions the recommendations that would lead to research-based legislation in Uganda:

### 6.1.1 Legislative staff and researchers

- Lack of skills and expertise decreases the prospects for research use by both policymakers and researchers. Researchers lack skills to translate research into policy, while policymakers lack skills to access, use and understand research. This research recommends that: employers should initiate training programmes for researchers on how to assess/evaluate research evidence to research synthesis and systematic reviews following recommended formatting styles detailed in the second article of this research. Policymakers preferred using both research synthesis and systematic reviews to other policy brief formats. As legislators lack the time to assess research evidence, but have the trust in their aides and in the legal and legislative staff of parliament to perform preliminary studies, training programmes should target legislators' aides and legal and legislative staff, while legislators should be made aware of the availability of the research evidence.

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- Policy networks increase the prospects for research use – legislators believe that professional associations, policy study centres and Civil Society Organisations (community) are the groups that provide the most consistent and relatively stable evidence that can be used for legislation. The networks between policymakers and researchers can be initiated and maintained at institutional level through partnerships and collaborations. Policy networks are institutionally established formal and informal pressure groups whose activities allow the free flow of research evidence from researchers to policymakers. By examining the nature of different institutional frameworks and differences in their policymaking expertise, experience and specialisation, the parliamentary clerk matches committee and legislators’ needs to suit the institutional demands. Such networks are enhanced through continuously organised public dialogues because it is the most preferred research dissemination method by researchers.
  - A relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use by policymakers. Because legislators lack the time to do research, their aides and parliamentary staff are involved in the research process. This collaborates with the fact that legislators would still institute independent investigations through their own aides for any evidence that is provided. Furthermore, research findings already showed that policymakers have trust and belief in their aides and legal and legislative staff, which means that the decisions of these administrative staffers play a part in the policymaking process. While the final legislation decision is vested with legislators, parliamentary staffers provide technical and specialist advice, and are thought to be impartial. The legislators, therefore, trust them, and their views are taken as informed positions.

*6.1.2 Legislators.* In addition to the factors described earlier which would increase the prospects for research-based legislation for both legislators and researchers, the following factors are specific to legislators, which would motivate them to use research evidence:

- Trust in the researcher increases the prospects for research use by policymakers. Research findings showed that legislators believe in professional associations, policy study centres and Civil Society Organisations (community) as the groups that provide the most consistent and relatively stable evidence that can be used for legislation. Higher-education institutions and consumer advocacy groups are the least preferred. Through networks, the trust between legislators and these groups can be initiated and strengthened at institutional level that includes administrative staffers and legislators’ aides. For example, a formalised relationship between the EPRC and Ugandan Parliament through a Memorandum of Understanding. As indicated earlier, legislators believe and have trust in their aides and administrative staff, who play a significant role in the legislation process.
- Interaction between researchers and policymakers increases the prospects for research use by policymakers. Interactions happen at different levels including publications; face-to-face (public dialogues, and media policy briefs); and workshops, conferences, and seminars. Research findings showed that researchers disseminated



their research findings through conference proceedings, academic peer-reviewed journals, their employer/organisational websites, open-access peer-reviewed journals, professional groups'/associations' publications and newspapers. However, they prefer to disseminate through conference proceedings, academic peer-reviewed journals and their employer/organisational websites; the least preferred are newspapers, magazines and newsletters and personal websites. Interestingly, legislators and administrative staffers prefer to use online journal databases that include conference proceedings and academic peer-reviewed journals. Surprisingly, the legislators could not mention any journal databases used, apart from free web resources such as Google.com. The administrative staffers on the other hand mentioned a couple of journal databases. Both legislators and administrative staffers are not aware of any open-access journals and that research evidence can be accessed from websites of organisations engaged in policy research. Training researchers to publish research evidence in newspapers would be irrelevant because legislators indicated that they would avoid using newspapers and magazines as sources of evidence. Legislators and administrative staffers use textbooks as legal guides, not as sources of research evidence.

- Timing and timeliness increase (and poor timing or lack of timeliness decreases) the prospects for research use by policymakers. Assessment of policy briefs showed none of the indicated timelines (when the issue at hand started and when it ended). As indicated earlier, bills presented and discussed in parliament do not contain references, while white papers that contain evidence and references are labelled as classified. Legislators lack the time to assess research evidence, but have trust in their aides, and in the legal and legislative staff of the parliament. Given timeliness challenges, training programmes should target legislators' aides, and legal and legislative staff, while legislators should be made aware of the availability and usefulness of the research evidence. Research findings showed that limited time to translate research into press releases, lack of training and limited expertise and experience to write research findings into press releases or stories are the most limiting factors for researchers to publish their research findings in the media. However, researchers should concentrate more on face-to-face interactions such as policy briefings and dialogues that include not only the legislators but also their aides and administrative staffers, organised and initiated by the employers.
- Publishing only for a scholarly audience decreased the prospects for research use by policymakers. Research findings showed that legislators believe that academic institutions provide purely academic and scientific research in form of dissertations and theses that may not be a representation of the views of their constituencies and therefore do not provide the best evidence. However, they prefer to network with individual researchers from academic institutions instead of networking with the whole institution. Research published in online peer-reviewed journals is equated to individuals as opposed to institutions and this explains why legislators maintain individual contact with individual researchers as opposed to their affiliate academic institutions. Publishing research in institutional repositories and open-access journals would help to promote the profile of academic institutions as the case with policy research organisations that promote and disseminate their research findings with a corporate or organisational image.

- Lack of confidence or perceived relevance decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers. Research findings showed that legislators have trust and belief in research evidence by professional associations, policy study centres and Civil Society Organisations (community) because they provide the most consistent and relatively stable evidence, that can be used for legislation; however, they have limited trust in research evidence provided by academic institutions and product developers. More so, legislators trust and prefer to work with their personal aides and ask them to independently verify research provided from other sources. Online sources and databases (journal articles) and textbooks are preferred among other information materials. For legislators to have trust and confidence and to perceive relevance in research evidence, it should be published by professional associations, policy study centres and Civil Society Organisations (community), but verified by their aides with technical guidance from administrative staffers. This research recommends increased networking, collaborations and interactions that involve not only the legislators but also their aides and administrative staffers with policy research organisations. Furthermore, as earlier indicated, academic institutions should promote their research findings as an organisation to have their research accepted by legislators. However, it would take a lot of time and effort for individual researchers to build their personal profiles before the legislators.
- Use of jargon decreased the prospects for research use by policymakers. Research findings showed that while the style and language used in the policy briefs were professional and easy to understand, font size, layout, title and headings, sub-sections, use of graphs and length never met the recommended standards. Due to the inconsistency and disparity in the arrangement of the policy briefs' format, it became problematic for the policymakers to be able to use these as evidence. A policy brief should have the following elements – Title, Executive summary, Context and importance of the problem, Critique of policy options, Policy recommendations, Appendices and Sources consulted or recommended – and these should be organised, formatted and laid out (styled) with a readable font-size; styled formatting; descriptive, punchy and relevant title; and highlighted headings and sub-sections; and use graphs to illustrate figures. Further details on the recommended format and structure are discussed in Section 5.1.2 Policy Brief Format.
- Lack of support by the management and front-line staff with influence in the area where change is required decreases the prospects for research use. As indicated earlier, Uganda's law-making process has a lot of constraints, starting from the failure to provide white papers to legislators following the introduction of a bill in the parliament. The white paper – a policy document containing the specific policy issues and the detailed law proposal that the government intends to make – contains all the relevant evidence and references, and is labelled as classified information. Doing so by the sponsoring ministry limits support towards legislators who will be required to make fresh investigation that would be time-consuming and laborious. This research recommends that both the white paper and the bills should be public documents and used by legislators as starting points for their assessment and evaluation of evidence both provided and missing from the policy documents. Currently legislators receive lots of support from their aides and parliament administrative staffers, but receive limited support from ministries and government who sponsor most of these bills.

- Policymakers' negative attitudes towards research evidence decrease their prospects to use research. Research findings showed that policymakers do have a positive attitude towards research evidence, but have a negative attitude towards the source of the evidence, and the individual information materials in which the research evidence is published. For example, legislators indicated that they would avoid using newspapers and magazines as sources of evidence because they believe that online sources and databases (journal articles) and their personal aides provide the best evidence for legislation. Moreover, research evidence provided by higher-education institutions, consumer advocacy groups and donors would be avoided. This research recommends that more awareness is required to help policymakers understand the relevance of all research evidence as opposed to selectively using evidence. This can be achieved by involving their aides and administrative staffers. Surprisingly, while they could select and easily use textbooks, they do not believe that textbooks provide good evidence. This could explain why legislators never use the library because they think that the library has textbooks or anything that is in print is a textbook.
- Competing factors negatively affect the actual abilities of policymakers to use research evidence. Research findings have shown that research evidence provided and its source, political pressure/stakeholder power, cultural and sociological factors, personal values, influence from political organisation, economic pressure, donor funding and influence from colleagues – in that order – are the most influential factors that affect policymakers' decisions during legislation. This research recommends that through upholding the spirit of goodwill and working within the evidence-based standards (described in the following text), policymakers will be able to fight competing factors. In spite of the competing factors, the possible actions to combat competing factors include that policymakers should:
  - be capable of defining a policy problem and developing criteria for selecting the best studies that address the problem;
  - know how evidence is organised and be capable of identifying sources;
  - be capable of appraising and selecting high-quality research evidence relevant to the question;
  - be capable of using the best available evidence for a policy problem at hand;
  - be capable of excluding competing information; and
  - be capable of translating evidence into policy.

### 6.1.3 *Researchers/GSUs*

- Interactions between researchers and policymakers increase the prospects for research use by policymakers and such interactions should be initiated at institutional level. For example, many legislators indicated that they have personal contact with researchers and such contact is lost in case of no re-election. However, research institutions strive to establish institutional collaborations, as opposed to personal, which might not work well with the legislators because individual legislators might have negative attitudes towards an institution as a whole – as is the case with academic institutions. The level of experience in doing research for policymaking, academic and other trainings and expertise determine the level of interaction for researchers. For example, highly experienced

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researchers initiate and maintain personal contacts for personal consultancies, while young inexperienced researchers remain unknown and their research unpopular. Research findings indicated that, on average, participants had 2.5 years of experience in their current positions – doing research for policymaking – while their overall average policy research experience was 8.2 years, which contributed a great deal to their ability to attract attention from policymakers and government.

- Timing and timeliness increase (and poor timing or lack of timeliness decreases) the prospects for research use by policymakers. For researchers, timing and timeliness are affected by their inability to predict what research would be appropriate when, because government priorities shift. Researchers indicated that the most motivating factors to pick a research problem include policymaker's needs, community needs, government services and their employer's needs, while the least motivating factors are products makers and donors/grant providers. However, this finding may need further investigation through a more detailed interview so that researchers give more explanation on their views.
- Lack of confidence or perceived relevance decreases the prospects for research use by policymakers. Researchers believe that while their employers/parent organisations have already invested a lot in disseminating their research findings, little has been showed that such evidence is used in policymaking. This research recommends that researchers' efforts shouldn't end at disseminating research findings, but should work with policymakers to ensure that policy is evidence-based. This can be achieved through continuous dialogue and preparing policy briefs that meet the standards set in this research.
- All the points discussed under 5.1.4 Legislators earlier apply to research but in the following order. Publishing only for a scholarly audience decreases the prospects for research use; lack of skills and expertise decreases the prospects for research use; policy networks increase the prospects for research use; and a relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process increases the prospects for research use.

*6.1.4 Policy brief format.* The format, style and section/element order of the policy brief are major determinants to either use or shun a policy brief. Given their tight schedules and limited time, legislators require spot-on evidence, or they will avoid it. In a focus discussion, five staff from the Legal and Legislative Services office and two legislators were asked to evaluate common structural elements and content of five policy briefs. The researcher evaluated and measured their ability to easily identify the different sections in the documents and their ability to make sense and meaning from the documents. As earlier mentioned in the methodology, the documents represented systematic reviews, research synthesis, measurement performances and economical analyses and surveys:

- Policy briefs should be formatted, styled and ordered in sections including Title, Executive summary, Introduction/Context and Importance of the problem, Critique of policy options, Policy recommendations, Appendices and Sources consulted or recommended. Each of these sections should be kept brief and structured in a way that is easy to read considering font size of 12, styled and

formatted titles, headings and sub-sections and illustrated. This research recommends that each element of the policy briefs should be descriptive as follows:

- *Title*: Should be descriptive and stated in form of a question, punchy and brief to the point and relevant.
- *Executive summary*: Should describe the problem addressed, have a statement on why the current approach/policy option needs to be changed/introduced, state recommendations for action and state the target audience, with a total number of words not more than 250.
- *Introduction*: Context and importance of the problem clearly stated – should indicate a clear statement of the problem or issue/s in focus, have a short overview of the root causes of the problem and a clear statement of the policy implications of the problem which clearly establishes the current importance and policy relevance of the issue. Should state what influenced the policymaking process and outcome.
- *The Critique of policy options*: Should detail shortcomings of the current approach or options being implemented. In the Executive Summary, there must be a short overview of the policy option(s) in focus. Then in the body under this heading, explicitly stating an argument illustrating why and how the current or proposed approach is failing.
- *Policy recommendations*: Should include a breakdown of the specific practical steps or measures that need to be implemented. There should be a closing paragraph re-emphasising the importance of action.
- *Sources consulted or recommended*: The references should contain one to two descriptions and evaluation, and split and organised as further readings and recommended readings.
- *Author Short Biography*: Should be brief and punchy, and show the author's affiliation to the sponsoring organisation.
- *Appendices*: These are notes detailing or emphasising practical steps or measures stated in the policy recommendation.

## 7. Conclusion

The research findings showed that the factors that increase or decrease the prospect of using research evidence are dependent on the stakeholders within the policymaking process. The potential to use research evidence for both researchers and policymakers is affected by the lack of skills and expertise to produce and assess research evidence, the presence or absence of policy networks and a relationship with or involvement of policymakers and other administrative staffers in the research process. Other factors that independently affect legislators include interactions between researchers and policymakers, timing and timeliness (poor timing or lack of timeliness), lack of confidence or perceived relevance and publishing only for a scholarly audience.

For researchers, on the other hand, the factors include trust in the researchers, interactions between researchers and policymakers, timing and timeliness (and poor timing or lack of timeliness), publishing only for a scholarly audience, lack of confidence

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or perceived relevance, use of jargon and lack of support by the management and front-line staff who had influence in the area where change is required. The research further indicates that the actual ability of policymakers to use research evidence is affected by competing factors. The negative effect brought about by the competing factors might be an important factor in explaining the continued inability of the policymakers to use research evidence. However, continued emphasis on training and awareness programmes that target legislators, as well as their aides and administrative staff, would help to promote the spirit of goodwill while upholding the standards for research-based legislation.

### 7.1 *Suggestions for future research*

The research has identified the following as areas needing further research:

- Legislators and their staff are busy people and getting them into research is problematic and time-consuming. Data collected in this research may not well represent the views of all the respondents. Future studies using ethnomethodology or ethnographic research methods carried out for a period between 12 and 24 months would help to understand constraints in the legislation process, hence making more informed recommendations.
- First Parliamentary Counsel – Attorney General’s Office, legal and legislative staff and legislator’s aides play a significant role in policymaking. Additionally, these administrative staffers have built strong work relations with legislators so that they are trusted and relied on as experts. Future training and awareness programmes on evidence-based legislation should include staffers and research for sustainability and prosperity. However, prior to such training, more research needs to be done to establish the relationship between legislators and First Parliamentary Counsel and legal and legislative staff to understand at what level in the legislation process these groups have greater impacts.
- Identified in this research are incentives and motivations for research-based legislation; however, the presence of competing factors limit legislators’ actual abilities to use research evidence. In spite of the other factors, I have recommended six evidence-based standards; however, these cannot operate in a vacuum, but would require continuous awareness in all training offered to policymakers as a reminder on their role. Therefore, research is needed to understand in more detail the disparity in the information-seeking behaviours and competences of the policymakers.
- Inconsistency in the policy brief structural elements and formats creates problems for the policymakers to use them. This research recommends a structural format for a policy brief that researchers should follow to ease use of evidence. More ethnographic studies will involve legislators, their aides, researchers and parliamentary staff on what should constitute the policy briefs, and the order and format of the documents. Thereafter, awareness campaigns and continued training should be based on the recommendations from this research.

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