

Essay

The role of monitoring, evaluation, and research units in an increasingly turbulent world

O papel das unidades de monitoramento, avaliação e pesquisa em um mundo cada vez mais turbulento

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HOW TO CITE: Pabari, Mine, & Goldman, Ian. (2023). The role of monitoring, evaluation, and research units in an increasingly turbulent world. *Revista Brasileira de Avaliação*, 12(1), e120523. <https://doi.org/10.4322/rbaval202312005>

Abstract

This paper explores the role of knowledge brokers in facilitating the use of evidence in an increasingly uncertain and crisis-ridden world. It is based on case study research in 5 countries of Africa and the ECOWAS region of West Africa, where successful efforts to use evidence emerged. These case studies were based on an analytical framework developed on evidence use, building on the work of Michie et al., (2011), Buk-Berge et al., (2011), and Langer et al., (2016). This analytical framework draws out the mechanisms which trigger use, and the interventions applied to facilitate use. A key issue that emerged is that those commissioning or undertaking evidence generation, need to understand the context, the wider system and become adept at acting as knowledge brokers, roles often underestimated and under-resourced, and three knowledge broker roles are suggested of facilitators and linkage agents, capacity builders and knowledge managers. What this shows is that at least in South Africa some of these roles are recognised, but that the analytical skills to analyse and use evidence is missing, as well as the softer skills to facilitate dialogue and build relationships, key for policy makers to trust and have the motivation to use evidence.

Keywords: Evaluation. Evidence use. Monitoring. Evaluation use.

Resumo

Este artigo explora o papel dos intermediários de conhecimento em facilitar o uso de evidências em mundo cada vez mais incerto e cheio de crises. Baseia-se em estudos de caso em 5 países da África e na região da CEDEAO na África Ocidental, onde surgiram esforços bem-sucedidos para usar evidências. Esses estudos de caso foram baseados em uma estrutura analítica desenvolvida no uso de evidências, com base no trabalho de Michie et al., (2011), Buk-Berge et al., (2011) e Langer et al., (2016). Este quadro analítico destaca os mecanismos que desencadeiam e favorecem o uso de evidências. Uma questão-chave é que aqueles que contratam ou realizam a geração de evidências precisam entender o contexto, o sistema mais amplo e tornar-se hábeis em atuar como intermediários de conhecimento, papéis frequentemente subestimados e com poucos recursos. Três papéis de intermediários de conhecimento são sugeridos: facilitadores e agentes de ligação, construtores de capacidade e gestores de conhecimento. O que isso mostra é que, pelo menos na África do Sul, alguns desses papéis são reconhecidos, mas ainda faltam habilidades analíticas para analisar e usar as evidências, bem como as habilidades para facilitar o diálogo e construir relacionamentos, essenciais para que os formuladores de políticas confiem e queiram usar evidências.

Palavras-chave: Avaliações. Uso de evidências. Monitoramento. Uso das avaliações.

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Received: December 12, 2022

Accepted: March 29, 2023

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The world is no longer just complicated, it's also very complex

Our world has faced one shock after the other in recent times: the 2008 global financial crises, the Arab Spring, the COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine and climate related natural disasters that have struck many countries across the world. Decision making is harder than perhaps ever before. Managing disasters and shocks are increasingly becoming a core part of the policy maker and manager's job description.

Today, we recognise that the challenges we face are interconnected across multiple spheres and far too complex for the conventional models and tools that we are familiar with (Abreu Saurin, 2021; OECD, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all aspects of society, bringing to the surface weaknesses in multiple systems, including health, economy, welfare, natural resources, and environmental management. The war in Ukraine questions the effectiveness of multilateral institutions for global security and further amplifies the vulnerabilities of the existing economic and food systems.

Evidence-informed policy and practice is even more important if we are to navigate our way through a world that is increasingly dynamic and turbulent and be able to anticipate the changes that are coming. To do so, requires intentionally engaging with complexity and complex adaptive systems. This involves understanding using evidence as a journey and in the design of this journey being intentional about use and the knowledge brokering processes which facilitate supply and demand. As much as this is about methods and tools, it is equally about people processes - navigating power, building trusted relationships, and enabling dialogue with multiple stakeholders (Amisi et al., 2021).

A complex adaptive system is a system with multiple individual parts which are interconnected and constantly shifting in response to one another. With every external response or action, the system changes and adapts, making it almost impossible to predict what will happen because of that action. This is different from a complicated system, in which we can master the individual parts and assemble them to work together in a manner that is relatively consistent. For example, as complicated as a jet engine may be, it is a great deal more straightforward to predict, fix and alter than a traffic jam in the city of Nairobi, Kenya, or a children's birthday party (Meadows & Wright, 2008)!

Strengthening the use of evidence in policy and practice in the world today requires increased capabilities to understand complex adaptive systems and integrate systems approaches in the design of evidence journeys. Doing so would entail:

- Recognising that interactions are an essential part of an evidence journey and intentionally designing for constructive exchange between the different individuals, households, communities, and organisations within the system. Creating spaces to understand different perspectives and allow for dialogue and negotiation around trade-offs and synergistic solutions. (Amisi et al., 2021)
- Navigating the unpredictability of complex adaptive systems by institutionalising and integrating evidence use and learning as an integral part of operational processes. Strengthening capabilities and processes for understanding and learning from feedback loops, changes and responses within the system and creating the right levels of flexibility to adjust and adapt accordingly. In other words, 'architect to discovery rather than architect to delivery' (Snowden, 2018).
- Deliberately design to harness the strength of diversity and reduce boundaries between disciplines, sectors, and stakeholders. Designing an evidence journey as a process that draws on multiple expertise and types of knowledge to solve challenges and realise shared goals.
- Expand horizons to cater for delays, uncertainties, and unknowns. Utilising futures thinking and foresight tools and approaches, such as scenario analysis to facilitate evidence informed multi-stakeholder processes to consider and be better prepared for different possible futures (Woodhill, 2022)
- Increase the agility and timeliness of evidence generation for specific questions and challenges. Integrate and institutionalise evidence use in all stages on programme and policy cycles and



intentionally build capacities, align structures and processes as well as organisational cultures towards learning and adaptation (Goldman & Pabari, 2020).

This paper draws on the research carried out for the book, *Using Evidence in Policy and Practice: Lessons from Africa* (Goldman & Pabari, 2020). It reflects on the research findings using a complexity and systems lens, drawing lessons for the role of monitoring, evaluation, and research units in these changing times. The paper argues that for evaluation and research to continue to be relevant in these changing times, evaluators and researchers need to be able to better facilitate collaborative sensemaking, learning and negotiated decision making processes across a diversity of perspectives, types of knowledge, and values. We can no longer afford to simply focus on methodological rigour in generating evidence but also need to invest in processes to ensure use. As Professor Cairney wrote in the forward to the book: “[...] knowledge production and use is a highly social and political process that varies according to context, rather than a technical process that can be reduced to a small number of ‘universal’ rules for high-quality research”. (Goldman & Pabari, 2020, p. XVII).

Using evidence in policy and practice – lessons from Africa: overview of the research

The research on evidence use in Africa was carried out using a case study approach. Case studies were drawn from countries supported by the Twende Mbele programme, a programme that supports partnerships between countries to develop and implement M&E systems to improve government performance and impact¹. Eight case studies were carried out from across five countries plus the ECOWAS region (the Economic Community of West African States). The countries were Benin, South Africa, and Uganda, which had already established a national evaluation system and were using evaluations in decision making processes; and Kenya² and Ghana which had draft monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policies in place. The five countries have universities, think tanks and national statistical organisations actively conducting research in response to policy needs and challenges. The case studies cut across different sectors, types, and uses of evidence, including evaluations, research and citizen engagement and included the following.

- Using evaluations to inform policy and practice in a government department: The Case of the Department of Basic Education in South Africa.
- Use of evidence in a complex social programme: an evaluation of the state’s response to violence against women and children in South Africa.
- The influence of local ownership and politics of the use of evaluations in policy making: The case of the public procurement evaluation in Uganda.
- Rapidly responding to policy queries with evidence: Learning from Rapid Response Services in Uganda.
- The challenges and potential of evaluations to positively inform reforms: working with producers in the Benin Agricultural Sector.
- Parliament and public participation in Kenya: The case of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013.
- The contribution of civil society generated evidence to the improvement of sanitation services in Ghana.
- Using evidence for tobacco control in West Africa.

The case studies were intentionally carried out from a policy makers (demand) perspective rather than a supply driven perspective – emphasising use by decision makers (state and non-state) rather than a research driven agenda. We refer to each of these cases as evidence journeys, akin to learning journeys, a process where evidence was used in a policy process, to inform

¹ Twende Mbele (2022).

² Kenya’s National M&E policy has since been approved (August 2022)



policy and practice, a story of intention and accident, participation of some stakeholders and exclusion of others, and different ways evidence was applied, intentionally and unintentionally.

Research methodology and process

The case study research was guided by a shared analytical framework (Figure 1) designed to be used as 'a versatile analytical device that can be adapted and used as an iterative lens to support the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of evidence use interventions' (Langer & Weyrauch, 2021, p. 34). The design of the framework was informed by two existing conceptual tools: the Science of Using Science framework (Langer et al., 2016) and the Context Matters framework (Langer & Weyrauch, 2021).

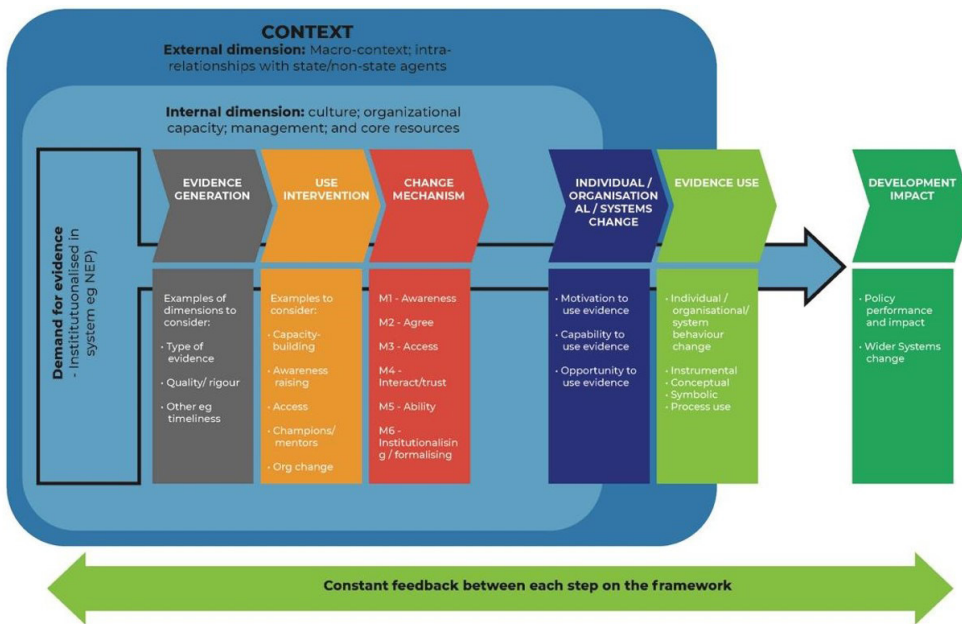


Figure 1. Evidence use in Africa analytical framework (Langer et al., 2020).

At the centre of the framework is the evidence journey. The journey starts from the demand for evidence and ends with different types of evidence use which is assumed to then contribute to wider developmental impact. While evidence generation through research evaluation etc is well understood, what the framework brings out is the centrality of interventions to promote use (use interventions) and the change mechanisms these trigger – the strategies and actions that can (and should) be intentionally designed and implemented to build individual and organisational motivation, capability, and opportunity to use evidence. On the outer frames of the framework are the internal and external contextual factors that influence the evidence journey (either positively or negatively).

Six change mechanisms were identified as being important in supporting the use of evidence in policy practice (Langer et al., 2016), drawing on the COM-B framework developed by Susan Michie (Michie et al., 2011). These can be triggered using strategies or activities such as capacity building, facilitating dialogue and debate, or identifying and working with champions to build support for the evidence journey. The six mechanisms are outlined in Table 1 (Langer, 2021).

Findings and lessons from the research

Context matters

Evidence use does not take place in a vacuum. There are constantly a multitude of positive and negative influencing factors, some within and others beyond the control of the evidence journey. Of importance is understanding the wider context and how it might have an impact on the evidence



journey. For example, this might involve assessing whether leadership and the organisational culture enables or hinders evidence use or being cognisant of the potential impacts of the broader political and socio-cultural environment (for example, the extent to which public participation and citizen engagement is encouraged and enabled). Table 2 below provides some examples of these wider contextual influencers that were common across the case studies.

Table 1. Evidence use mechanisms.

Mechanism	Description	Example of linked activity
Awareness (M1)	Building awareness of, and positive attitudes towards, EIDM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social marketing of the norm to use evidence • Awareness-raising campaigns
Agree (M2)	Building mutual understanding and agreement on policy-relevant questions and the kind of evidence needed to answer them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-production approaches between researchers and government staff • Steering committees
Access (M3)	Providing communication of, and convenient access to, evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge repositories • Communication campaigns and strategies
Interact (M4)	Interaction between decision makers and researchers to build trusted relationships, collaborate, and gain exposure to a different type of social influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge brokers • Networks and communities of practice
Ability (M5)	Supporting decision makers in developing skills in accessing and making sense of evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building (e.g. workshops and formal training courses) • Mentoring programmes
Institutionalising / formalising (M6)	Influencing decision-making structures and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondments • Embedded support (e.g. knowledge brokers)

Table 2. Examples of contextual influencers of evidence use (Pabari & Goldman, 2020).

Category	Dimension of context	Contextual influencers in the cases	Examples from case studies
External	Macro-context	Perceived significance of the policy challenge/question	Commitments made to international or regional agreements
			High levels of financial investment
			Legal requirement for legislative review
		Broader political and socio-cultural environment	Timing, for example, proximity to election period
			Space for public participation and civil society engagement
			Level of interest and engagement of stakeholders
	Intra and inter institutional linkages	Catalysts of change	Crises
Internal	Culture Organisational capacity Management & processes Other resources	Institutional environment	Leadership
			Evidence champions
			Systems and processes
			Mandates and positioning
			Reputation
			Ability to access and utilise evidence for decision making
			Culture for learning and accountability
			Organisational linkages and relationships



To maximise the benefits of evidence, value, and plan for different types of use

Evidence can be used in different ways, for example (Johnson et al., 2009): (a) instrumental use results in an action or decision; (b) conceptual use occurs when a deeper understanding of a particular issue occurs because of evidence; (c) symbolic use is when evidence is used to legitimise and reinforce pre-existing views and ideas (negative symbolic use), or when it raises the profile of a problem or intervention (positive symbolic use).

Evidence use occurs both when findings are shared as well as during the evidence journey. The latter is referred to as process use, the 'individual changes in thinking and behaviour and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process' (Patton, 1998, p.225).

In several of the case studies, it emerged that conceptual use of evidence occurring during the evidence journey was key to enabling positive and lasting change. To enable conceptual use, it is helpful to integrate strategies and actions to trigger the change mechanisms described earlier (Table 1). For example, in the case of the Kenya case study, the Parliamentary Committee convened dialogue and debate between stakeholders (particularly those with polarized views) and convened breakfast fora to bring together parliamentarians, scientists and practitioners. These actions resulted in strengthening awareness of the realities of the wider context and build mutual understanding between different individuals and groups (Pabari et al., 2020).

Evidence use requires deliberate design and cultivation

To realistically strengthen the use of evidence, it is important to invest in building a culture that promotes the use of evidence or an "M&E culture" – *'a shared set of ideas, values, beliefs and practices as an organisational level about M&E's role, functions and practice, and use of the knowledge generated for managing, reporting, learning and accountability and to improve performance'* (Goldma et al., 2021a). Research carried out on performance monitoring and evaluation culture in Benin, Uganda, and South Africa (Ibid) provided some insights on how this might be realised. For example:

- Institutionalising and standardising M&E systems, including the use of good strategic planning processes, linking plans to unit and individual performance, routinely monitoring and reflecting on pathways to outcomes and impacts (as opposed to focusing only on the delivery of activities and outputs), and establishing an annual evaluation plan that is aimed at anticipating policy needs (as opposed to reacting to them);
- Shifting negative compliance behaviour, by building awareness, understanding and trust that evaluation is not punitive but is aimed at supporting continuous improvement and providing incentives for the use of evidence (for example, recognising and rewarding the use of evaluations for learning and improvement).

Decision making, evidence use and complexity

We need to take decisions within this context of emerging changes and unfolding climate and ecosystems breakdown, and an unknown future. As discussed above policymakers must make decisions within this complex emerging future. One way of doing this is to bring in different viewpoints from a range of stakeholders and promoting dialogue around desired outcomes and how they can be achieved, progress that is being made, and changes needed.

Engaging stakeholders for balanced decision making

As Harari, (2018) pointed out; *"It is a mistake, however, to put so much trust in the rational individual"*. As humans, we tend to make decisions based on the information we have at hand. While these decisions may be rational, they are limited by the time and capacities we have available to us to find all the information we would need to weigh and make judgements against all possibilities and options. This is referred to as *bounded rationality*. We are also further limited by our *cognitive bias* – the ways in which we interpret the information we can access.



As well as these limitations on our rational thinking, making decisions in complex and turbulent times requires us to become better able to understand systems holistically and to find better ways to navigate the diversity of needs, opinions, and perceptions amongst the multitude of actors within a system. It is an impossibility for any one individual or discipline to be able to do this. We therefore need to develop skills, tools, and technical know-how to facilitate multistakeholder processes – creating spaces, relationships and trust and incentives for groups and individuals to come together across multiple backgrounds to jointly solve problems, drawing from their multiple perspectives and experiences.

This requires involving those people having to navigate this complexity as they try and assure their livelihoods (e.g. farmers); government (hopefully) aiming to create a conducive policy environment for change and providing services; evidence generators including universities, think tanks and government; non-government organisations conducting advocacy or providing services; and the private sector providing products and services, which may be deliberately impeding change³ (e.g. fossil fuel companies), or engaged in responding to the change.

Understanding the wider system and implications for the evidence journey [lan]

It has become clearer that if we wish to address the complexity of the challenges facing us, a key element is understanding systems - the wider system, and how different elements link, as well as how the power and interests of stakeholders differ and need to be managed to promote meaningful dialogue (Amisi et al., 2021).

The Context Matters framework incorporated in the framework (Figure 1) looks at different elements of the wider system. The summary of key contextual influencers provides guidance for how elements of the context affect the potential to use evidence – for example at differing stages in the electoral cycle, or in moments of crisis such as the energy crisis of late 2022. As part of this process, it is important to understand where power lies and how it is applied, the political economy underlying the issues around which designs need to be made, and how evidence can best inform what is often a political process.

A useful paradigm is political economy analysis (PEA) which draws particular attention to politics, understood in terms of contestation and bargaining between interest groups with competing claims over rights and resources and the economic processes that generate wealth, and that influence how political choices are made. These processes are closely inter-related and part of a unified set of dynamics which influence development outcomes. PEA helps understand what drives political behaviour, how this shapes policies and programmes, who are the main “winners” and “losers”, and what the implications are for development strategies and programmes. Specifically, it is concerned with understanding:

- The interests and incentives facing different groups in society (and particularly political elites), and how these generate policy outcomes that may encourage or hinder development.
- The role that formal institutions (e.g., rule of law, elections) and informal social, political, and cultural norms play in shaping human interaction and political and economic competition.
- The impact of values and ideas, including political ideologies, religion and cultural beliefs, on political behaviour and public policy.’ (DFID, 2009)

Some of the most challenging issues facing the planet, such as climate and ecosystems breakdown, result from the resources used from the Earth, and waste returned to land and oceans being treated as externalities, rather than part of a system within which society and the economy fall. The political economy is favouring wealth accumulation by powerful commercial interests, but at a cost to the planet. This points to us needing to integrate this wider view of systems, seeing how the interventions we plan, implement, track, and evaluate contribute to the broader picture, with intended as well as unintended outcomes. There are initiatives underway to ensure that these systemic issues are addressed in evaluation. For example, South Africa has decided the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence,

³ Tomori (2021) shows examples of how science gets hijacked by vested interests



effectiveness, efficient, impact and sustainability⁴, are inadequate in addressing these systemic crises, and two additional criteria have been developed on climate and ecosystems health, and transformative equity, so that all government evaluations address these two criteria⁵.

The role of knowledge brokers

In reflecting on the implications of the research on which this article is based, a key issue that emerged is that those commissioning or undertaking evidence generation, need to understand the context, the wider system and become adept at acting as knowledge brokers, roles often underestimated and under-resourced. Goldman et al. (2021b) explore the knowledge broker roles of facilitators and linkage agents, capacity builders and knowledge managers. They relate these roles to addressing context, promoting demand for evidence, managing the evidence generation process, and in follow-up and learning. They conclude that 'effective knowledge brokers understood the internal and external contexts. They harnessed opportunities and mitigated risks and barriers. They built strong relationships. They understood policy needs and promoted demand for evidence. They facilitated effective multistakeholder processes. They analysed and synthesised information and communicated it in the appropriate form at the appropriate time. They strengthened institutional capacity – systems and processes – to use evidence.' (Ibid, p:2). The skills and competences that emerged are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Skills and competences needed of knowledge brokers (ibid, p:6).

AS FACILITATORS AND LINKAGE AGENTS
• Professional experience in the sector/thematic area (for example procurement, or wildlife management) is essential, to be credible and for trust building.
• In-depth knowledge of the external and internal context – including key stakeholders in the sector, power dynamics, relationships, cultures, values, the wider political and socio-cultural environment, the policy development cycle, and processes.
• The ability to facilitate what may be a 2–3-year multistakeholder process.
• The capacity to establish and nurture relationships – humility and the ability to listen, facilitate, negotiate, build consensus, and promote effective dialogue.
CAPACITY BUILDERS
• Knowledge of organisational change processes.
• Understanding of policy processes and cycles.
• Training and coaching skills.
KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS
• Experience in using tools such as stakeholder and situation analysis to design and support knowledge management processes, including the identification of evidence needs and agendas and using to inform facilitation and linkage processes.
• The ability to generate or collate evidence: the capacity to conduct rapid evaluations and rapid synthesis of existing studies, and to analyse or collate existing data to generate and present new evidence.
• Research skills, including the ability to advise on research methodology, undertake evidence generation if needed.
• Critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills – the ability to reflect critically, understand the problem and facilitate decision making in complex and challenging circumstances.
• Communication – the ability to write effective reports, critique reports, translate research and evaluation reports into policy-relevant messages, write simple, jargon-free briefs, and the ability to present to a range of stakeholders in a powerful way.
Effective knowledge brokers need the following key competencies:
• Credibility and trusted relationships and networks amongst stakeholders in the evidence ecosystem.
• Political savviness, humility, and the ability to understand and relate to individuals from across a diversity of ethnicities and professional backgrounds.

Implications for M&E & Parliamentary research units

The intermediaries that potentially play knowledge broker roles in government and Parliament include monitoring and evaluation (M&E) units, research units, sometimes planning units and policy analysts. However, the roles of M&E units are all too often focused on compliance roles, completing endless reports which are not used, sometimes commissioning evaluations, but rarely undertaking them themselves. Similarly, research units may collate evidence, but rarely undertake empirical research. They are usually selected for technical skills (e.g., knowledge

⁴ Which refers to durability of the intervention rather than its contribution to wider sustainability

⁵ The guidelines are available in SAMEA (2022).



of research, qualification in M&E, rather than the facilitation skills key to the knowledge brokering role.

Table 4 includes an edited job description for a senior manager in a monitoring role in the Department of Planning, M&E in South Africa. As can be seen many of the knowledge broker elements are present but what is lacking is a clear picture of their ability to generate, analyse and use evidence, as well as to facilitate processes which encourage the use of M&E evidence. Table 4 suggests how the roles could be adjusted to make clear the knowledge brokering roles. Annex A contains a similar table for an evaluation role, an assistant evaluation specialist.

Table 4. Job description for Chief Director: Frontline Monitoring and Support, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa.⁶

Elements in the job description (those particularly relevant to knowledge broker roles in <i>italics</i>)	Possible ways the knowledge broker role could be enhanced
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS : An appropriate .. qualification in A minimum of 8 years' appropriate experience in the area of Community Development, Monitoring and Evaluation or Policy Development & Implementation at a sector level of which 5 years must be at Senior Management Services (SMS) level.	
Competencies/Skills: Management skills including people management and <i>empowerment</i> . Programme/project management skills and financial management skills. Ability to manage, facilitate, coordinate and drive service delivery improvement and support on National, Provincial and Local government level. Ability to provide operational and strategic direction and leadership. Ability to manage multiple projects. <i>Excellent interpersonal & communication skills (written & verbal). Problem solving and analysis and knowledge management skills.</i> Good computer literacy skills.	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to analyse and use evidence • the ability to anticipate monitoring demand to respond to policy needs, and supply and package appropriate monitoring evidence • Facilitation skills to support the supply and demand of evidence in policy processes
Personal Attributes: The incumbent must be assertive and self-driven, innovative and creative, <i>client orientated and customer focused</i> , solution orientated and able to work under stressful situations and have the ability to maintain high levels of confidentiality.	Client oriented and customer focused are buzz words and rarely tested in practice. This could be explored in interviews for example, in understanding how a problem where monitoring is relevant was analysed, how a suitable response to policy makers was devised, and how they were encouraged to use the evidence
DUTIES : Reporting to the Deputy Director-General, the successful incumbent will be responsible to manage, facilitate, coordinate and drive service delivery improvement and support on national, provincial and local government level. Develop, manage and implement monitoring systems, which are <i>responsive to priorities at policy and service delivery level. Provide executive support to political principals</i> Provide professional management and leadership in respect of the provision of the core functions and services assigned to the Chief Directorate... Effective and efficient supervision.. of all resources allocated to the unit. ...Development and implementation of policies, projects, programmes and practices that facilitate effective and efficient performance by the unit. Coordinate capacity development programmes to ensure effective development and application of PM&E policies, tools, systems and guidelines in government.	<i>Use monitoring evidence to drive service delivery improvement and support on national, provincial and local government level.</i> Monitoring systems which are responsive to priorities at policy and service delivery level provides a good opening – what roles are there in relation to facilitation of demand, helping policy makers see where monitoring or other sources of evidence could contribute. The capacity development could include building of knowledge broker skills.

While the job description sounds like it covers many elements required, in practice the process elements are inadequate, and happening in an intuitive rather than planned way. As a further development of this work, training has been developed for the Twende Mbele programme, run for Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya, and for the South African M&E Association. This type of training will need to be applied more widely, to help build the recognition of knowledge broker roles, and the capacity to implement them. These roles also need embedding in the job descriptions, which need the involvement of human resource structures in departments.

Conclusion

The research undertaken in the five countries and West African region showed that influential evaluations and research could be linked with M&E/evaluation/research units playing

⁶ The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. (2022).



important knowledge broker roles, negotiating the supply of evaluations or research, facilitating processes with multiple stakeholders, ensuring the evidence is accessible and seen by key stakeholders etc. Doing so will require formally integrating and institutionalising these roles and functions as well as skills and competencies of M&E and research teams (as described in Table 4). In light of the growing complexities that policy makers and managers are having to navigate, this is becoming increasingly important.

Financial support

None.

Conflict of interest

None.

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Annex A. Job description for Assistant Evaluation Specialist, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa⁷.

Elements in the job description (those particularly relevant to knowledge broker roles in <i>italics</i>)	Possible ways the knowledge broker role could be enhanced
<p>REQUIREMENTS: An appropriate qualification ... in Social/Economic Sciences/ Research/Evaluation or equivalent with at least 5 years' relevant experience of which 3 years' experience must be in evaluation/research and 2 years' experience must be at supervisory level. ...</p>	
<p>Knowledge and skills: The successful candidate should have good knowledge of qualitative & quantitative research methodologies supported by strong evaluation/research background. <i>Be able to operate successfully with high-level staff in government. Should be credible in the academic research environment.</i> Possess good understanding of government across the three spheres (National, Provincial and Local). Possess practical experience of undertaking several evaluations. Should have Project / Programme Management and financial management skills. Good interpersonal relations, planning & organising and written & verbal communication skills. ...</p>	<p>This applies quite well but the issue is interpretation of what is here.</p> <p>What could be strengthened is the facilitation role for example</p> <p><i>Be able to operate successfully with high-level staff in government, facilitating the supply and demand for evaluations and dialogue amongst government and other stakeholders.</i></p>
<p>Personal attributes: The incumbent must be assertive and self-driven, innovative and creative, client orientated and customer focused, solution orientated and able to work under stressful situations and the possess the ability to maintain high levels of confidentiality. Ability to control financial resources and manage/ supervise staff.</p>	<p>Again could bring out that the incumbent needs to be able to build relationships and trust</p>
<p>DUTIES: The successful incumbent will be responsible to support evaluations and the development of the evaluation system. This entails supporting Evaluation Directors through project management of specific evaluation assignments and <i>undertaking research or analytical activities for evaluations, reviewing evaluation documents and monitoring improvement plans.</i> Initiating and undertaking development work towards technical elements of the evaluation system. Presenting evaluation results and recommendations to provinces and reviewing evaluation concept notes. ...</p>	<p>This could include support for processes and developing communication materials around evaluations for different audiences, e.g. policy briefs.</p> <p>For example: <i>undertaking research or analytical activities for evaluations, supporting effective evaluation processes which build trust in the evidence, reviewing and summarising evaluation documents and monitoring improvement plans</i></p>

⁷ The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (2021).