

## ***Bridging the research-policy divide to spur development in the SDGs era***

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*The developing world, particularly sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), presents very deep pockets of economic development challenges. The least developed countries (LDCs), which are home to some 1.1 billion people, mightily struggle with development. The LDC group now consists of 46 countries, up from 25 at its inception in 1971, 52 at its peak in 1991, and 25 in 1971. Only six nations have succeeded in exiting the category. According to Paul Akiwumi, head of UNCTAD for Africa and least developed countries, the vulnerabilities of LDCs have changed since the UN defined the category five decades ago, but they still face significant barriers that obstruct their sustainable development. These include rising debt, diminished exports, energy poverty, and climatic vulnerability. The foregoing is exacerbated by global shocks such as global financial crises and, lately, COVID-19. Given the ubiquitous challenge of resource scarcity, endeavours to bring about economic development must be solidly grounded in science to ensure all manner of economic efficiency: allocative, productive, technical, dynamic, social welfare and x-efficiency. That is, public decision-making must follow science. Simply put, research must precede public decision-making, hence, the need for researchers to have policy impact in their research endeavours. Similarly, public decisionmakers must place research at the forefront of public decision-making. In an ideal world, the researcher and public decisionmaker must be in synch because they are serving the same customer; the citizen who is in quest of economic development. This is critical in the developing world which presents very pockets of development challenges. However, in real life, there is a chasmic divide between research and policymaking. A "broken bridge" metaphor is used to describe the chasmic divide. Largely, there is poor communication between the two, leading to ineffectual economic developmental outcomes. The utilization of empirical evidence by policymakers is also hampered by interaction without sufficient preparation for policy engagement (i.e., training and assistance). Thus, policy training is key to promote evidence-based policymaking. This will maximize public policy impact. Amongst others, research centres must lead the envisaged reset and rethink agenda. In addition, researchers must be incorporated into policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Given the importance of SGDS in ushering in sustainable economic development on the back of the "broken bridge" in Africa, a specific research initiative within the SDGs architecture is imperative.*

**Keywords:** Research, Policy; Divide; Economic Development; Developing World, SSA; SDGs.

## 1. Introduction

All economic agents, be there the government, firm, household and individuals, have to make decisions on the back of the ever-present problem of resource scarcity. Scarcity is an economics concept rooted in one of the most basic facts of life: we live in a world of limited resources that requires choices about how they are allocated (THE INVESTOPEDIA TEAM, 2023). Due to the finite resources needed to meet human demands (such as labor, money, and time for production or food for consumption), every reasonable person is forced to put efficiency concerns first (i.e., how to make the best use of resources at hand) (Isler, 2021). This suggests that the economic value of an item, as indicated by its market price, rises with its degree of scarcity (Isler, 2021). This paper models the government as a rational, utility-maximizing economic agent (*homo economicus*) in accordance with conventional economic theory. The following are the underlying presumptions: the capacity to (i) always maximize economic self-interest and (ii) evaluate the economic costs and advantages of various and competing alternative decision-making options. So, *ceteris paribus* (everything else being equal), it prefers more to less of a particular commodity or service. For instance, it should choose the former over the latter, all else being equal, if given the choice between commodities and/or services valued US\$ 100 billion and US\$ 50 billion. The government uses economic decision-making because of the *homo economicus* assumption. It largely involves the gathering and processing of information and is the equivalent of rational decision-making (Day, 1971). The rational model of decision-making, which is the antithesis of intuitive decision-making, calls for people to make decisions based on knowledge and facts, analysis, and a step-by-step process (Uzonwanne, 2016). A more sophisticated sort of decision-making model is the rational model. The PACED decision-making guide is one way, among others, to make rational decisions. The PACED steps are as follows: State the Problem, List Alternatives, Identify Criteria, Evaluate Alternatives, and Make a Decision. The rational model of decision-making model is obviously in contrast to other models, including the bureaucratic model, the collegial model, and organized anarchy.

Three fundamental presumptions form the basis of the PACED model: (i) the availability of time; (ii) the availability of data; and (iii) the presence of enough cognitive capacity for data processing. Behaviorists, especially Simon (1955; 1979), have attacked the PACED model since these factors are not always present. Despite the critique, the rational man [economic man] model aids in simulating the actions of economic actors, such as governments, when they make rational decisions. A very old idea associated with the practice of effective

statecraft and efficient government in early modern Europe is the broad assumption that trustworthy knowledge is a valuable tool for counseling decision-makers and for achieving political success (Head, 2010). Researchers and policymakers agree that science contributes to the process of formulating policies (Ruggeri *et al.*, 2020). In fact, Ruggeri *et al.*, (2020:1) put it concretely by saying that “benefits from applying scientific evidence to policy have long been recognized by experts on both ends of the science-policy interface”. Therefore, evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) is important in forming public policy (e.g., see Parkhurst, 2017). EBDM is a method for leveraging the available data to make the best judgments feasible (Heathfield, 2021). This model, according to Heathfield (2021:1), “avoids decision making that is based on gut feeling, intuition, or instinct and instead relies on data and facts”. Heathfield (2021:1) further argues that “setting out to obtain information deliberately and making your decisions using data can lead to better outcomes”.

Based on the foregoing, and *a priori*, there seems to be a general agreement that science (or research) is one the most necessary, but certainly not sufficient in and of itself, elements in the public policy-making process. That is, for governments to maximize public policy impact, there is a need to streamline science (or research) into the public policy making process. In an ideal world, the researcher and public decision maker must be in synch because they are serving the same customer; the citizen and resident who are in quest of economic development. This is critical in the developing world which presents deep pockets of development challenges. However, in real life, there is a chasmic divide between research and policymaking. A "broken bridge" metaphor is used to describe the chasmic divide. Largely, there is poor communication between the two, leading to ineffectual economic developmental outcomes. The utilization of empirical evidence by policymakers is also hampered by interaction without sufficient preparation for policy engagement (i.e., training and assistance). In order to encourage evidence-based policymaking, policy training is crucial. The policy training will favorably circumstance the policymakers and researchers to understand what research is, what it may be, and what is required to develop trustworthy research-based evidence that will inform public policies. By so doing, they will create policy research communities (see Strydom *et al.*, 2010).

The structure of the paper is as follows. The 1<sup>st</sup> section is the introduction which introduces the subject of the paper. The 2<sup>nd</sup> is a short treatise on evidence-based decision public policymaking; the 3<sup>rd</sup> discusses *The 'Broken Bridge'*; the 4<sup>th</sup> discusses Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) and the delivery of the SDGs; and the 5<sup>th</sup> suggests ways of Fixing the 'Broken Bridge' between science and public policymaking. Finally, the 6<sup>th</sup> concludes the paper.

## 2. *A short treatise on evidence-based decision public policymaking*

Key ideas, such as public policy and evidence, must be defined to give expository clarity and to delineate the discourse's domain. Public policy, according to Dye (1972:2), is "anything a government chooses to do or not to do." This definition has received the most citations in the social science literature. In order to articulate and match actors' goals and means, policymaking entails both a technical and political process (Howlett and Cashore 2014). As a noun, evidence means "something which shows that something else exists or is true" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023). With the two key terms defined, it is appropriate to explore the nexus between the two. Why is it important that they two co-exist in the public policymaking space through the concept of evidence-based public policymaking? An idea known as evidence-based public policymaking calls for the use of thoroughly established, impartial evidence to inform or inform public policymaking decisions. Evidence-based public policymaking has roots in antiquity, for instance, Aristotle (350 BC) counselled that decisions should be informed by knowledge. However, the use of term is of recent origin. That is, while evidence-based public policymaking has been practised for many millennia, the word came into usage in the last 30 or so years.

Modern evidence-based policymaking has a strong foundation in the broader evidence-based practice movement. The 1980s saw the beginning of evidence-based medicine, which greatly affected this shift. But it took until the 1990s for the phrase "evidence-based policy" to catch on in the medical community. The phrase was not used in social policy circles until the early 2000s. The Blair Administration [he was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007], which was elected on the promise that "what matters is what works," is credited with most recently popularizing the phrase "evidence-based policy making." Blair emphasized the need to stop making decisions based on ideologies and to "question inherited ways of doing things" (Blair and Cunningham, 1999). What is *evidence-based public policymaking*?

Banks (2009:7) argues that

In that realpolitik, evidence and analysis that is robust and publicly available can serve as an important counterweight to the influence of sectional interests, enabling the wider community to be better informed about what is at stake in interest groups' proposals, and enfranchising those who would bear the costs of implementing them.

In this regard, public policymaking decisions that are based on ideology, common sense, anecdotes, personal intuitions, gut feelings etc stand in stark contrast to this idea.

Evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) helps policymakers and providers of services make better decisions, and achieve better outcomes, by drawing upon the best available evidence from research and evaluation and other sources (University of Cape Town, 2014). Evidence-based policymaking helps policy actors to answer some of these questions:

- a. The nature, scope, and dynamics of the issue at hand potential policy choices for resolving the issue.
- b. Problem-solving approaches that work and don't work.
- c. The potential advantages and disadvantages of the suggested policy alternative.
- d. The suggested policy option's intended and unexpected effects.
- e. Effective and ineffective delivery and implementation methods.
- f. The length of time the policy will take to produce results; the resources needed to implement the policy.
- g. the costs and benefits of the proposed policy and who will bear these costs and benefits; and
- h. The policy's viability from an economic, social, and environmental standpoint (University of Cape Town, 2014).

Considering the world's knowledge glut and the complex political system, it has become extremely difficult to ensure good demand for pertinent evidence (OECD, 2019). In addition to the overwhelming and increasingly complicated amount of information that policymakers must take into account, biases can limit and skew an individual's or an organization's ability to process information (OECD, 2019). Banks (2009:7) argues that there must be essential ingredients that attach to the policymaking process saying that "for evidence to discharge these various functions, however, it needs to be the right evidence; it needs to occur at the right time and be seen by the right people" and "that may sound obvious, but it is actually very demanding". Banks (p. 9-10) further proposes ideal conditions for the implementation of evidence-based policymaking:

*Methodology matters* First, methodology. It's important that, whatever analytical approach is chosen, it allows for a proper consideration of the nature of the issue or problem, and of different options for policy action. Half the battle is understanding the problem. Failure to do this properly is one of the most common causes of policy failure and poor regulation. Sometimes this is an understandable consequence of complex forces, but sometimes it seems to have more to do with a wish for government to take action regardless...

*Good data is a pre-requisite* A second essential ingredient, of course, is data...

*Real evidence is open to scrutiny* ...Transparency ideally means 'opening the books' in terms of data, assumptions and methodologies, such that the analysis could be replicated. The wider the impacts of a policy proposal, the wider the consultation should be. Not just with experts, but also with the people who are likely to be affected by the policy, whose reactions and feedback provide insights into the likely impacts and help avoid unintended consequences. Such feedback in itself constitutes a useful form of evidence...

*Evidence-building takes time* Transparency can have its downsides. In particular, it ‘complicates’ and slows down the decision-making process — transparency involves time and effort. That is what appears to have militated against draft reports in a number of the recent policy review exercises. This has been a shame, especially for the major industry policy reviews last year, which contained recommendations with important ramifications for the community and economy...

*Good evidence requires good people* The fifth area of importance is capability and expertise. You can’t have good evidence, you can’t have good research, without good people. People skilled in quantitative methods and other analysis are especially valuable...

*Independence can be crucial* Evidence is never absolute; never ‘revealed truth’. Given unavoidable need for judgement in evaluation, evidence is more likely to be robust and seen to be so if it is not subjected to influence or barrow-pushing by those involved. Good research is not just about skilled people, it is also about whether they face incentives to deliver a robust product in the public interest.

*A ‘receptive’ policy-making environment is fundamental* Even the best evidence is of little value if it’s ignored or not available when it is needed. An evidence-based approach requires a policy-making process that is receptive to evidence; a process that begins with a question rather than an answer, and that has institutions to support such inquiry...

In a like-minded manner, the Urban Institute (2016) proposes Principles of Evidence-Based Policymaking. These principles represent a consensus among experts from all ideological backgrounds and serve as recommendations for policymaking at all levels of government (Urban Institute, 2016). They develop a set of fundamental concepts that a variety of stakeholders can support to advance evidence-based policymaking (Urban Institute, 2016). Additionally, they lay the groundwork for the activities of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Collaborative. These Principles are:

1. Build and compile rigorous evidence about what works, including costs and benefits.
2. Monitor program delivery and use impact evaluation to measure program effectiveness.
3. Use rigorous evidence to improve programs, scale what works, and redirect funds away from consistently ineffective programs; and
4. Encourage innovation and test new approaches.

It is adducible from the short survey of the literature that there is immense profit in engaging in evidence-based public policymaking. However, this is not to say the process is the fabled silver bullet because some of the founding conditions as advocated by, amongst others the Urban Institute (2016) and Banks (2009), are deficient in both the developed and developing worlds (particularly, in sub-Saharan Africa), with the latter disproportionately presenting such deficiencies on the back of data deficits (e.g., see Bédécarrats *et al.*, 2016; Kinyondo and Pelizzo, 2018). Thus, public policymaking reforms to enhance evidence-based public policymaking are key in sub-Saharan Africa. Data are key to evidence-based public policymaking, thus, data deficits will militate against the successful chase of the holy grail of evidence-based public policymaking in development-needy sub-Saharan Africa.

### 3. The 'Broken Bridge' between science and public policymaking

Despite all the advantages that can, under the right conditions, result from an evidence-based public policymaking regime as recommended by others such as Banks (2009) and the Urban Institute (2016), the literature is replete with works on the "Broken Bridge" between science and public policymaking. Some of the works are Cassola *et al.* (2022), Choi *et al.* (2016), SBU (2022) etc. Thus, science and policy have a complicated relationship and numerous experts have discussed the issues connected to this gap between science and policy. It must, however, be clearly stated from the get-go that the responsibilities of policymakers and researchers are absolutely unrelated to one another. However, there is a widespread agreement that if society is to succeed, the gap between them must be closed (SBU, 2022) and so doing will ensure that society maximally benefits from the efforts of scientists/researchers and public policymakers.

Cassola *et al.* (2022), writing from the public policy perspective, lament that there are still conflicts between the need to balance competing goals, interests, and evidence sources in representative democracies and the objective of basing choices on the best available scientific evidence, despite long-standing attempts to improve evidence-informed decision-making in public health policy. In response, they argue that a number of tactics have been put forth to both democratize the generation and evaluation of evidence as well as to successfully incorporate evidence into representative democracy institutions' decision-making processes. A 2022 study by SBU (2022) outlines some of these challenges:

- 1, The super-specialization and fragmentation of science and policymaking, while many issues continue to be interwoven, pose a first obstacle. More factors influence human health and welfare than merely healthcare and social service policies. Other elements including education, employment, income, the home and work environment, transportation, and interpersonal connections also play a role. Although the relevant issues are connected, rarely are the duties, budgets, and planning. Lack of monitoring, turf wars, and silo mentalities might have disastrous effects in both politics and academics.

- 2, It's possible that policymakers and the people who create the policies don't know about pertinent study results. They might not be knowledgeable enough to judge the validity and appropriateness of the results. There are instances when there are no reliable scientific solutions to pressing policy issues, such as when it is difficult or impossible to test them experimentally. Many research projects concentrate on specific issues without taking into account the knowledge gaps that would most benefit from a better decision-making framework...

- 3, It is not a given that all decision-makers are engaged in policy issues or that all academics care about study findings. After all, they have distinct goals. In severe situations, they either directly disassociate themselves from each other's work, a practice called as "fact resistance" or "contempt for politicians," or they cherry-pick data points to suit their own goals and worldviews.

Sienkiewicz and Mair's (2020)'s *Against the Science–Policy Binary Separation: Science for Policy 1.0* is one illuminating work that discusses the need for a change from Science for Policy 1.0, which consisted of detached scientific advice given to policymakers on an as-needed or even uninvited basis, to Science for Policy 2.0, a system of integrated collaboration between scientists and policymakers as well as stakeholders and citizens. It examines some of the challenges involved in integrating science into policy and conducting evidence-based policymaking (Sienkiewicz and Mair, 2020). It offers arguments for why facts should be taken into consideration when formulating policies, viewing evidence-based decision-making as a crucial element and a core tenet of liberal democracy. It explains why not all scientific findings automatically qualify as evidence that can be used to inform policy decisions and sketches the main causes of how a larger societal, political, and institutional context exacerbates the differences between the "two communities," or the cultures of scientists and policymakers. It ends by calling for greater systemic co-creation and cooperation between science and policy, an idea that is developed and made concrete in the following chapters (*ibid*).

Brining it from the general to specific given that the survey of the literature adopted a funnel shape approach (moving from the general to the specific and the specific being sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup> and down to a minute level being Botswana), our search of the literature does not generate sufficient returns on the 'Broken Bridge' between science and public policymaking in sub-Saharan Africa. A few works are cited. Strydom *et al.* (2010)'s *Evidence-based policymaking: a review* gives an insight into the causes of the issues and parallels can be made with the sub-Saharan African case. Dalberg (2023), in collaboration with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, updated its Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) grant-making strategy. Dalberg undertook a thorough landscape scan as part of the strategy refresh process to identify trends from the previous seven years in the area of evidence-informed policymaking, especially in East and West Africa. While the study concluded that there has been uptake of EIP, it, nonetheless points out to the 'Broken Bridge' issues. In Botswana, no work exists on 'Broken Bridge' issues save a forthcoming work by Botlhale (2023). The work discusses the role of the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA) in the public policy space in Botswana. It demonstrates how BIDPA was able to have an impact on the public policy landscape thanks to a legislative and institutional framework. The relationship between research and policy is still shaky, and policy research does not convert into relevance for policy.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is based in sub-Saharan Africa (Botswana, to be specific) and, thus, has contextual knowledge of the sub region and specific knowledge about Botswana regarding the 'Broken Bridge' issues.



#### **4. Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) and the delivery of the SDGs**

There is no doubt that the African Continent is rich in mineral resources and 30% of the world's natural resources, including gold, diamonds, iron ore, uranium, and cobalt, are found there (Irrum, 2023). There are also sizable oil and gas deposits spread across the continent. 40% of the world's gold is found on the African Continent, which also boasts enormous quantities of chromium and platinum (Irrum, 2023). In addition, the continent has enormous potential for geothermal, solar, and hydroelectric energy and it also ranks among the most productive continents for agriculture (Irrum, 2023). Unfortunately, this is where the good story ends because, Africa, has paradoxically earned the moniker; '*World's Richest yet Poorest Continent*'. Several publications, including World Bank and IMF papers, Africa Progress reports and McKinsey Global Institute Reports, among others, lend credibility to this label. While this is not a story on '*World's Richest yet Poorest Continent*', Africa had pre-COVID 19 structural problems that disproportionately exposed it to the harsh effects of the pandemic.

In terms of growth prospects, which growth is fundamental to development, *The African Economic Outlook 2023* provides very useful insights. The reports is being released while African nations struggle with a number of shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences, the disruption of global supply lines brought on by Russia's protracted invasion of Ukraine, and a tightening of financial conditions worldwide (African Development Bank, 2023). The real GDP growth of the continent has been lowered by these shocks from 4.8 percent in 2021 to 3.8 percent in 2022 and the average growth rate in Africa is anticipated to steady at 4.1 percent in 2023–2024, demonstrating the continent's strong economies (African Development Bank, 2023). The growth outlook is subject to significant downside risks, such as i) slow global growth weighing on Africa's exports, ii) significant losses and damages due to frequent extreme weather events escalating fiscal pressures, and iii) persistently tight global financial conditions exacerbating debt servicing costs (African Development Bank, 2023). It is notable that, amongst others, the World Bank and IMF share the foregoing view. While there is optimism that Africa will overcome the stagnation brought on by COVID-19, this will not be a simple task. Nevertheless, with a few notable exceptions, Africa as a whole has not performed well in delivering SGDs (in the same way that it did not perform well in delivering the MDGs). In this regard, on 9 December 2022, a joint report by the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was released at the African Economic Conference 2022 in Mauritius. It was titled "*Building Back*

*Better from the Coronavirus Disease, While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*". It, among others, stated that;

The Coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change have all hampered Africa's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Halfway towards 2030, most African countries are struggling to meet most SDG targets. Without deliberate policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty and at least 350 million people by 2050.

It went on to state that;

Africa can no longer wait on the margins, and the time is now for the continent to rechart its development path and own its development agenda", noted Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, UNDP (African Development Bank, 2022).

In addition, reports by the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A), an international organization that supports governments, civil society, businesses and academic institutions to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa, provide invaluable insights into the status of SDGs delivery in Africa. SDGC/A's (2019)'s *AFRICA 2030; SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THREE-YEAR REALITY CHECK* provides for sobering reading on the achievement of SDGs in Africa. It states that: 1, Only 40% of the indicators in the Global SDG data framework are accompanied by data in Africa; 2, 2/3 of African countries are in the "low human development" category and they continue to struggle with education and healthcare; 3, There is a continued lack of clarity on accountability and enforcement mechanisms for SDGs; and 4, The SDG financing gap for Africa is estimated at between US\$ 500 billion - 1.2 trillion annually. The foregoing statistics do not provide for pleasant reading for a continent that serious growth and development challenges pre-COVID 19. As a result, policy activities need to be refocused to assist Africa and the rest of the developing world in playing catch with SDGs. Regarding the SDGs, it should not happen again that Africa misses the ship like what happened with the MDGs.

Admittedly, playing the SDGs catch up in Africa is not an easy feat but, amongst others, Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) is critical. Current efforts at delivering the SDGs are not bearing the desired and sought-after fruit. Primarily, this calls for the building of research communities by researchers and public policymakers but not forgetting the nationals and residents of African countries. In other words, a new covenant is needed that will lay to waste 'Broken Bridge' between science and public policymaking in sub-Saharan Africa.

## 5. Fixing the 'Broken Bridge' between science and public policymaking

It is trite that bridge' between science and public policymaking has as fallen, and even if it hasn't yet, it will eventually; the question is simply when, not if. This paper does not have to reinvent the wheel, so, it will borrow from Urban Institute (2016), Cassola *et al.* (2022), Choi *et al.* (2016), SBU (2022) and Strydom *et al.* (2010) to fix the bridge to deliver the SDGs in Africa. Beyond the said borrowing, the paper emphasises the following cardinal points:

- (i) *Scarcity is a fact of life*; resources will be everlastingly scarce on Planet Earth, therefore, necessitating that there be a proper allocation of resources to ensure all manner of economic efficiency: allocative, productive, technical, dynamic, social welfare and x-efficiency. Therefore, a well-functioning EIP matrix must be in place.
- (ii) *EIP legal and institutional framework*; there is a need for a robust and strong EIP legal and institutional framework that will support the EIP project in Africa. It must permeate the whole MDA (Ministry, Department and Agency) architecture of the government.
- (iii) *Results-based EIP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*; Management guru Peter Drucker is often quoted as saying, "you can't manage what you can't measure", therefore, measurement is key. Therefore, there is a need for a results-based EIP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in the mould of World Bank models, complete with M&E indicators. These M&E reports must not be a tick-box exercise but a genuine attempt to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the EIP project.
- (iv) *Mindset Change*; understanding the reasons for change, seeing that all resistance to change is illogical, articulating and motivating the case for change, and inspiring others to help secure a new vision for the future are all characteristics of a change mentality. Therefore, the envisaged EIP project is a total departure from the 'business-as-usual' way of doing policy research and policymaking. Hence, there is an imperative need to change the national psyche around the EIP project.
- (v) *Change management*; related to (iv) is the idea of change management. A methodical strategy to dealing with the transition or transformation of an organization's objectives, procedures, or technologies is called commonly called 'change management'. Implementing ways for bringing about change, managing change, and assisting individuals in adapting to change is the goal of change management champion and agent. Specific to public policy, the actors who are used to doing things the old, tried and tested traditional way cannot be expected to change overnight. This is a process that needs to make sure that all stakeholders have a buy-in into the EIP project.

- (vi) *EIP project to be grafted onto public sector reforms*; public sector reforms are about reforming the structures and procedures of public sector organizations. Every African country is undergoing reforms that should accommodate the EIP project. For example, Botswana has the Reset Agenda, thus, the EIP project must be grafted onto the same.

## 6. Conclusion

Simply stated, public policy must be based on science. Simply put, research must come before public decision-making; for this reason, researchers must consider how their research may affect policy. In a similar vein, policymakers must prioritize research when making decisions. Since they are both working to serve the same client—the citizen and resident seeking economic development—researchers and public decision-makers should, in an ideal world, coordinate their efforts as policy collaborators. This is crucial in the developing world since they over present development difficulties. But in practice, there is a vacuum between research and decision-making. The metaphor of the "broken bridge" is used to describe the chasm. Most of the time, there is insufficient communication between the two, which results in unsuccessful economic progress. The utilization of empirical evidence by policymakers is also hampered by interaction without sufficient preparation for policy engagement (i.e., training and assistance). Thus, policy training is key to promoting evidence-based policymaking. The policy training will very favourably circumstance the policymakers and researchers to be aware of what research is, what it may be, and what is necessary to produce reliable research-based evidence that will feed into public policymaking. *Ceteris paribus*, this will maximize public policy impact. Amongst others, research centres must lead the envisaged reset and rethink agenda. In addition, researchers must be incorporated into policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Given the importance of EIP in ushering in SDGs on the back of a "broken bridge", a specific research initiative within the SDGs architecture is imperative. Even though the role of the policy researchers is being disproportionately underscored, this is not to exceptionalize them because they need policy collaborators, chiefly the politicians, to deliver the EIP project.

### **Disclosure statement**

No conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### **Disclosure availability statement**

No dataset was used in the paper.

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