

A Note on Evidence-based policy-making: Contribution to the Research Colloquium on Post-School Education and Training convened by the Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa on the 4 November 2014.

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Introduction

Evidence based policy-making has a relatively recent history as an academic and policy discourse although it can be assumed that a great deal of policy making over the latter part 20th century in particular must have had recourse to some or other evidentiary basis for policy development. Now however the idea of evidence-based policy-making (EBP) seems *de rigueur* as governments, multi-lateral agencies, donors, research organizations and consultants rely on it to a greater or lesser extent. Despite this, the rigorousness with which 'evidence-based policy' is developed and used varies considerably from country to country. It has a longer track record of usage especially in the more 'developed' economic systems of Europe, in Australia and the US and appears to be less developed in the 'peripheral' and under-developed economies of the globe - raising questions about the efficacy of its value as a global template.

A brief review of the origins of EBP suggests that it has historical antecedents from as far back as the 14th century but it has come into its own especially since the Blair government in the United Kingdom and through its developments in Australia. For the Blair government the ostensible value of evidence based policy-making was the necessity to remove the influence of 'ideological led-based decision making for policy

making',¹ echoing the UK government's White Paper of 1999 ("Modernising Government") which expressed the sentiment that Government "must produce policies that really deal with problems, that are forward-looking and shaped by evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures; that tackle causes not symptoms".²

The development of EBP was further impelled by the address to the Royal Statistical Society by its President, [Adrian Smith](#) who raised questions about extant policy making processes, urging a more "evidence-based approach".³ This advice was taken up by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the creation of the Evidence Network in 1999 following on the precedents of earlier collaborations exemplified by the Campbell and Cochrane Collaborations.⁴

The requirement of 'objective information' on which to base the premises of policy is thus very much in vogue at the end of the 20th century. It requires the use of 'reasoned' information that is widely available to governments for the purposes of policy making. Yet, Freiberg and Carson caution against interpreting the current popularity of evidence-based policy as 'the long awaited triumph of social science', preferring instead to locate developments, at least in the United Kingdom, within what they see as a 'shift in the nature of politics, (and as a) retreat

1. Banks, Gary (2009). [Evidence-based policy making: What is it? How do we get it?](#) Australian Government, Productivity Commission. Retrieved 4 June 2010

². [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) (21 September 2006). ["Evidence-based policy making"](#), Retrieved 17th September 2014

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence-based_policy

⁴ In the United States, experiments in education during the Progressive Era and the so called 'golden age' of evaluation between the mid-1960s and the 1980s saw public policy initiatives made subject to systematic evaluation (Oakley 2000) culminating in the growth of the Cochrane (established 1993) and Campbell (established 1999) Collaborations. Freiberg and Carson [page 153].....

from ideology, the dissolution of class-based party politics and the empowerment of consumers.’⁵

Defining evidence-based policy

The use of the term ‘evidence-based policy’ is itself derived from the field of medicine as it relates to clinical decisions based on the gathering of randomized controlled trials (RCTs), used to compare one group on treatment with a placebo group.⁶ One definition of EBP is that it is

an approach which tries to specify the way in which professionals or other decision-makers should make decisions by identifying such evidence that there may be for a practice, and rating it according to how scientifically sound it may be. Its goal is to eliminate unsound or excessively risky practices in favour of those that have better outcomes.⁷

Several other approaches to the definition of EBP can be found in a brief review of the literature on this matter. For Sutcliffe and Court it is

a discourse or set of methods which informs the policy process, rather than aiming to directly affect the eventual goals of the policy. It advocates a more rational, rigorous and systematic approach. The pursuit of EBP is based on the

⁵ Arie Freiberg and W.G. Carson: page 154 The reference is to Solesbury, in his seminal if provocatively entitled paper *The Ascendancy of Evidence*, (Solesbury 2003:96)

⁶ See Marston and Watts *infra*. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which compare a treatment group with a placebo group to measure results. In 1993, the Cochrane Collaboration was established, and works to keep all RCTs up-to-date and provides “Cochrane reviews” which provides primary research in human health and health policy.

⁷ Arie Freiberg, W.G. Carson, (2010) *The Limits to Evidence-Based Policy: Evidence, Emotion and Criminal Justice* The Australian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 152–164, at page 152 drawing on (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence-based-practice>)

premise that policy decisions should be better informed by available evidence and should include rational analysis. This is because policy which is based on systematic evidence is seen to produce better outcomes. The approach has also come to incorporate evidence-based practices.⁸

For Brian Head EBP has the primary objective of improving the reliability of advice concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of policy settings and possible alternatives. This is attractive to pragmatic decision makers, who want to know what works under what conditions, and also to those professionals concerned with improving information bases and improving the techniques for analysis and evaluation.⁹

Elsewhere EBP is referred to as 'public policy informed by rigorously established objective evidence' often associated with the use of 'scientifically rigorous studies such as randomized controlled trials to identify programs and practices capable of improving policy-relevant outcomes'.¹⁰ In this regard a caveat is sounded about the inadequacy of areas of knowledge that are

not well served by quantitative research, leading to debate about the methods and instruments that are considered critical for the collection of relevant evidence. Good data, analytical skills and political support, as such, are seen as the important elements.¹¹

⁸ Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court November 2005 Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries? Overseas Development Institute [page iii] See their paper also for specific tools used by UK government.

⁹ Head, Brian. "Evidence-based policy: principles and requirements." *Strengthening evidence-based policy in the Australian federation* 1 (2010): 13-26. (page 13)

¹⁰ Head, Brian. (2009). *Evidence-based policy: principles and requirements*. University of Queensland. Retrieved 17 September 2014

¹¹ Marston and Watts supra: page 144

According to Marston and Watts these definitional approaches are themselves based on assumptions about *how* policy is development and about the evidential *attributes* of social science itself.

Approaches to EBP and its uses

There are several approaches and methods used for producing EBP. These are intended to test both the efficacy of particular policies as well as its likelihood of success and also for assessing what would have happened had the policy in question not been enacted and implemented. They are intended to assess both the direct and indirect effects of policy as also to distinguish between the impact of particular policies and other externalities on the issue which is the subject of policy in an attempt to reduce its uncertainties. The assumption often made in the methodologies of EBP is that its approaches could be replicated for their authenticity. Particular methods appear to be favoured because of the question of the costs associated with policy development through research relative to the potential benefits of particular policies. This can constitute a barrier to the production of EBP since, as we will show, such methods are also likely to sacrifice the potential range of factors influencing the impact of policies.

For Sutcliffe and Court three issues are critical elements in any consideration of the use of EBP. What is required is a broad range of evidence as opposed to 'hard research' alone together with the 'quality, credibility, relevance and the cost of the policy'. Secondly the way in which evidence is used in the various stages of policy development - agenda setting to implementation - has impacts on each stage of the process. Thirdly, that evidence is not the only factor which influences policymaking since a variety of factors influence how policy is

developed including the experience of policy-makers and their proclivities, institutional capacity and their constraints. They argue in effect that 'policymaking is neither objective nor neutral; it is an inherently political process'¹².

They also argue that the efficient use of EBP was dependent on a clearer understanding of the value of evidence since that was now possible given its increasing availability. It required the willingness of governments to know how to access such evidence and to examine it critically. They stress the need for better communication between the worlds of policy making and research which can be enhanced for mutually useful purposes through workshops, colloquia and dedicated training in the methods and purposes of EBP.

A particular method that has achieved some currency is that developed by the Overseas Development Institute through its Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA), which is intended to support the evaluative requirements of donor agencies seeking to support the transformation of research into policy.¹³

It is useful to examine - briefly, the main propositions of the ROMA method which we are told focuses on the following issues having been field tested in workshops and training courses 'worldwide.' ROMA is 'an eight-step approach for each of which the ODI has developed resources and policy tools to ensure each step is comprehensively addressed.' Its intention is to:

'Define a clear, overarching policy objective.

¹² Sutcliffe and Court: supra: Page 4

¹³ Young, John and Mendizabal, Enrique (2009) [Helping researchers become policy entrepreneurs: How to develop engagement strategies for evidence-based policy-making](#). London: [Overseas Development Institute](#)

Map the policy context around that issue and identify the key factors that may influence the policy process. The RAPID framework provides a useful checklist of questions.

Identify the key influential stakeholders. RAPID's Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM) can be used to map actors along three dimensions: the degree of alignment (i.e. agreement) with the proposed policy, their level of interest in the issue, and their ability to exert influence on the policy process.

Develop a theory of change - identify the changes needed among them if they are to support the desired policy outcome.

Develop a strategy to achieve the milestone changes in the process - Force Field Analysis is a flexible tool that can be used to further understand the forces supporting and opposing the desired policy change and suggest concrete responses.

Ensure the engagement team has the competencies required to operationalise the strategy.

Establish an action plan for meeting the desired policy objective - useful tools include the RAPID Information matrix, DFID's log frame and IDRC's Outcome Mapping Strategy Map among them.

Develop a monitoring and learning system, not only to track progress, make any necessary adjustments and assess the

effectiveness of the approach, but also to learn lessons for the future.’¹⁴

Sutcliffe and Court argue that the tools of EBP are not easily applicable in all cases because of the distinctiveness of particular attributes and approaches to ‘development’. Contextual issues are pre-eminent amongst the challenges of development in any country so that the methods that may be applied in one context are not always amenable to others even if some of the methods applied have similarities. Adaptation for contextual purposes is always necessary.¹⁵

Some important caveats about the nature and uses of EBP

There are a number of critical warnings about the use of EBP even though the need for policy based on the best available evidence is self evident. As Tilley and Laycock aver ‘it has all the appeal of motherhood and apple pie. The rhetoric is cheap and easy’.¹⁶

In criticizing the way in which some EBP is produced, Marston and Watts point to the wide range of data that can be properly taken into account as evidence ‘based on a premise about the irreducible richness and complexity of social reality’ and they ‘highlight the importance of being thoughtful about the assumptions that shape policy research questions and ‘warrant’ the conceptual connections that constitute knowledge claims.’¹⁷

There is also a great deal of disquiet about the use of evidence that is suggestive of a simple linear and uncomplicated

¹⁴ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence-based_practice) retrieved 19 September 2014 [page 3]

¹⁵ Sutcliffe and Court: page 5

¹⁶ Tilley and Laycock referred to in Marston and Watts [page 144]

¹⁷ Marston G and Watts R, (2003) Tampering with the evidence: A critical appraisal of Evidence-based policy-making, The Drawing Board, An Australian Review of Public Affairs, Volume 3 Number 3, School of Economics and Political Science, University of Sydney.[pages 143 – 163]

relationship between such evidence and the formulation and development of policy. For example Young and Mendizabal

the relationship between research, policy and practice is complex, multi-factoral, non-linear, and highly context specific. What works in one situation may not work in another. Developing effective strategies in complex environments is not straightforward. Simple tools such as cost-benefit analysis, logical frameworks, traditional project management tools and others may not work on their own, as they fail to take into account the existing complexity.¹⁸

Several other caveats about the efficacy of EBP are to be found in Freiberg and Carson's analysis, who argue on the basis of their research in criminal policy, that there are limits to the usefulness of EBP.¹⁹ Their critique relates to the use of evidence based policy which has little or no reference to the subjective and psychological needs of the publics that are implicated in any policy. In particular they are critical of its failure to engage with its affected communities through 'evidence based' dialogic processes which require approaches different from those that are used conventionally in the EBP.

While 'evidence-based' or 'rationalist' approaches to criminal policy may appeal to technocrats, bureaucrats and a number of academics, they often fail to compete successfully with the affective approaches to law and order policies which resonate with the public and which appear to

¹⁸ Young, John and Mendizabal, Enrique (2009) *Helping researchers become policy entrepreneurs: How to develop engagement strategies for evidence-based policy-making*. London: [Overseas Development Institute](#).

¹⁹ Freiberg A, and W.G. Carson, (2010) *The Limits to Evidence-Based Policy: Evidence, Emotion and Criminal Justice* The Australian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 152–164

meet deep-seated psychological needs. ... Further, successful reform must take into account changes in public 'mood' or emotions over time and be sensitive to different political and social cultures. criminal justice policies are more likely to be adopted if, in addition to the gathering and presentation of evidence, they recognise and deal with the roles of emotions, symbols, faith, belief and religion in the criminal justice system (since) *evidence alone is unlikely to be the major determinant of policy outcomes and that the creation and successful implementation of policy also requires extensive engagement and evidence-based dialogue with interested and affected parties.* This necessitates a different kind of modelling for evidence-based policy processes. (my italics)

The caveats sounded by these authors have a great deal of relevance to all policy making and not only to the field of criminal policy, since they raise fundamental issues concerning how EBP must transcend the limits of quantitative data and be enriched by qualitative engagements with the constituencies and stakeholders and end-users who most affected by the precepts of such policy. These caveats have implications for the methods of evidence gathering and indeed for questions about how some EBP privileges the perspectives of some groups and social classes, genders and geographic locations -urban relative to rural - and their interests relative to others. In effect the legitimacy of the evidence is no less a condition of whose ideas and evidence is made available and whose not. Too much of social policy and the evidence on which it relies, it seems, is based largely on the assumptions and conceptualizations of 'external' interests - often in the shape of multi-lateral 'donor' agencies, foreign

governments and their representatives and even more pervasively, the interests of the most organized and powerful interests in society – often those of the corporate sector to the exclusion of all others.

In their illuminating article on this issue, Freiberg and Carson raise a number of other important questions reflecting on the nature and uses of EBP. For instance, they are critical of approaches to EBP which see an 'idealized and naïve linear' relationship between policy making and evidence. Such a view, they argue, is based on the assumption that 'rationality' is necessary to counter the influence of ideology, prejudice, folklore, personal experience, faith, opinion and other such factors which imperil the possibilities for 'scientific judgement'. Yet these factors are inextricable from the process of policy-making and continue to abound despite the criticisms against their allegedly 'unscientific' nature. As the authors argue

Although the linear/rational model of scientific policy-making is rarely stated in the naive form offered above, it is surprising that its ghost so frequently haunts the corridors of parliaments, bureaucracies and academe. In this sense it is indeed an 'imaginary'; unattained and unattainable, but still practically consequential in that it so powerfully guides the attitudes adopted by those who crucially influence the development of policy.²⁰

According to them three factors impede the value of the 'linear/rational model' in describing the policy process.²¹

²⁰ Ibid: page 155

²¹ Ibid: 156

First, it is constrained in its practical operations and thus loses its theoretical integrity; second, the assumptions on which it is based that 'decisions are purposive choices made by informed, disinterested, and calculating actors working with a clear set of individual or organisational goals', remain unconvincing because of the limits of the knowledge and experience of decision-makers who rarely 'have clear or simple sets of purposes.' For them, 'choices are often collective rather than individual and decisions may be as much symbolic as they are instrumental'²². They argue that

Moreover, as Bohme, drawing on the work of Habermas (1966) on rationalism and technocracy, observes: 'we should keep in mind that rationality is relative, as it is highly related to values, interests, knowledge and power', thereby accounting for the highly contested history of the debate over the nature and role of evidence in policy-making.²³

Thirdly, they refer to factors relating to 'emotion and affect' (which they deal with in some detail) and their impact on policy making in the 'hotly-contested market place of public policy-making'.²⁴ They argue further that the need to include 'emotion' is not intended to exclude evidence but to take account of 'emotion' in the development of policy and its implementation and thus to enhance the remit of policy processes.

These factors must together be taken into account for a deeper understanding of policy processes and the evidence that is

²² Ibid: 156

²³ Ibid: page 156 Referring to Bohme 2002:100.

²⁴ See pages 156 et seq. for a discussion about the role of 'emotion' in policy making in which they argue for pushing 'evidence into the broader arena of affect, even possibly countenancing the unfamiliar, if by no means illogical, notion of 'emotion-led evidence'. [page 161]

brought into reckoning. Following their critique of the 'linear rational model' they suggest a closer examination of the approaches to EBP based on the work of Ken Young and his co-workers at the United Kingdom Centre for Evidence Based Policy and Practice. In this regard they refer to a five-fold typology of EBP which captures a range of possible approaches as follows:

- *the knowledge-driven model*, which contains aspects of a 'top down' approach and in its 'extreme form' cedes political choice to science - a case of science leading policy.
- *the problem-solving model*. Here research follows policy which shapes priorities and research is intended specifically to aid the development of policy and implementation;
- *the interactive model* in which research is but one factor affecting the complex relationship between it and decision-making
- *the political/tactical model* in which policy is informed by political process and drives research instrumentally for those political purposes.
- *the enlightenment model* which research informs the framing of issues.

Young et al²⁵ point to the uncritical use of evidence, arguing that evidence itself has less weight than a number of competing and complex issues largely related to context, stressing especially the role of 'discourse'. From their perspective only the

²⁵ Young, K., D. Ashby, A. Boaz and L. Grayson. 2002. 'Social Science and the Evidence-Based Policy Movement.' *Social Policy and Society* 1(3):215-224

(E)nlightenment model, suitably expanded, can embrace these intrinsic features of the evidence/policy domain in a constructive fashion. That is because this model would involve researchers and collectors of evidence in becoming, not so much the drivers of a comprehensive, problem-solving, scientific enterprise, but contributors to an informed discourse; a discourse in which 'policy research can be more effective as an instrument of the democratic process than of the decision making process.'²⁶

A vision of policy has to be based on an 'enlightenment model' in which the role of an informed discourse as part of a democratic process is critical. What is envisaged by them is an 'evidence-based society in which debate is reasoned and takes due account of (contested) evidence which is available to the many, not the few.'²⁷ In this regard Freiberg and Carson suggest that

It also posits a *centrifugal* process of evidence diffusion rather than a narrower *centripetal* process of instrumental evidence collection, albeit with condign consultation, for purposes of policy formulation. Evidence circulates back into the policy-making process through a communicative, discursive or dialogic approach that seeks to democratise knowledge and its use; to inject values and emotions deliberately into the decision-making process; and to avoid the depoliticisation and managerialisation of knowledge production and its utilization.²⁸

²⁶ Young, K., D. Ashby, A. Boaz and L. Grayson. 2002. 'Social Science and the Evidence-Based Policy Movement.' *Social Policy and Society* 1(3):215–224: 218.

²⁷ Young et al. 2002:219

²⁸ Freiberg and Carson: 161

Indeed a number of other weaknesses in evidence based policy have also been remarked upon including the fact that information about particular issues is sometimes not available because of the requirements of confidentiality and secrecy, matters of political expedience, the urgency with which 'advice' is sought, etc. This not refute the fact that some evidence based research can have profoundly beneficial effects if done with a proper understanding of the many contextual and other factors weighing on the development and implementation of policy. Even then the ability to influence policy is not a given since it too is dependent on a number of factors not the least of which is the ability to interpret the political climate, the coherence of one's presentation to policy-makers, the networks of influence cultivated for the purpose, the regard in which particular research organizations are held and the ability to engage with stakeholders - a skill not given to many academics. Moreover 'entrepreneurs' of policy need not only be able to promote policy through an engagement with policy communities but also forego their academic interests in favour of multidisciplinary approaches based on teamwork, the ability to communicate their ideas and produce a wider diversity of outputs than is customary for academics. As Brian Head has argued, the requirements of methodology, good data, analytical skills and political nous notwithstanding,

The politics of decision making inherently involves a mixing of science, value preferences, and practical judgments about feasibility and legitimacy. Outside the scientific community, the realm of knowledge and evidence is even more diverse and contested. Competing sets of evidence and testimony inform and influence policy....The

professional crafts of policy and program development require 'weaving' these strands of information and values.²⁹

Conclusion: What implications?

It is clear that there can be no single or linear approach to the development of policy through research not can research alone resolve all the complex issues which policy must reckon with. It may be that in some cases the prerogatives of policy-making require a narrower approach to research, leaving out its wider dimensions in favour of more instrumentalist approaches but these would have to be justified in the first place.

Perhaps the most important attribute of EBP for a society intent on pursuing the objective of a democratic transition remains the requirement of openness about what is regarded as efficacious as evidence. And this is inseparable from a democratic discourse about policy in which the idea and practice of public participation has a central role in the evolution of policy. We need hardly be reminded that there are no facile solutions to the complex problems of development in societies such as South Africa. This demands that proper recognition be given to the complexities of EBP and especially its uses in supporting collaborative processes for policy making and implementation.

As regards the process of openness, Sen and others have persuasively argued the case for 'public reasoning.' Public reasoning itself is premised no less on a process of dialogic engagement, discussion and debate as intrinsic to policy scholarship. The idea of reasoned dialogue, discussion and debate is of course not new since the idea of dialogic reasoning is at least as old as the Bhagavad Gita, contemporary of the

²⁹ Head, Brian. "Evidence-based policy: principles and requirements." *Strengthening evidence-based policy in the Australian federation* 1 (2010): 13-26.: 13

famed Socratic tradition. And it is writ large in any description of the subsequent Age of Enlightenment during which an emerging intellectual class in 18th century Europe attempted to establish the primacy of reasoning as necessary to social change and the advancement of knowledge - against the abuses of state and Church - producing some of the most renowned philosophers in Western thought - Spinoza, Locke, Newton and Francis Bacon amongst them.

In the context of South African history the testimony of Madiba himself refers to the importance of his own learning from the traditions and practices of local village meetings which he had observed in his youth and which developed in him the faculty of reason through argumentation and debate. He talks of it (even if tangentially) as follows

Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer ... The foundation of self government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens.'³⁰

For Amartya Sen 'public reasoning' is intrinsic to any conception of democracy. As he has argued, 'democracy is intimately connected with public discussion and interactive reasoning',³¹ and, as he has stated elsewhere, it is 'government by discussion.' Nor should we be constrained by the post-modern discourses about the limits of reason whose arguments are

³⁰ Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom 1994, Little Brown and Company, Boston. Page 21

³¹ Amartya Sen, 2005. The Argumentative Indian, Penguin Books, New Delhi. Page 14, and Sen A, 2010, The Idea of Justice, Penguin Books, London.

largely a reaction to the development of modernity and the disdain for modernity's 'instrumental rationality, the alienating idea of perpetual linear progress and elitist notions of culture.'³²

We should recognize too that against the necessity of public discourse and reasoned dialogue stand the power, reach and impact of consultancy 'expert' driven approaches to policy development. We have not it seems come to grips with this issue since little critical analysis has been done about the meaning and impact of consultancy driven approaches to policy development - even where such advice is ostensibly based on evidentiary data. Most troublesome for the pursuit of the democratizing objectives of policy must be the question of whose interests are pursued and who's negated in such modes of policy development.

We need especially to examine in particular the effects of particular approaches to EBP on the exclusion of those communities that are less articulate or able to mobilize their policy interests, since what is regarded as evidence can also be no more than a set of political preferences and choices based on the overweening power of dominant conceptions of what constitutes the 'best' social interests.³³ In such cases, 'models' of policy are often no more than rationalizations of particular social interests to the exclusion of others under the guise of privileging science and 'rationality' which ignore 'lay' forms of rational thinking based on the direct experience of the impact on policy on communities.

³² Ziauddin Sardar, 1998, *Postmodernism and the other* , Pluto Press, London
Page 6

³³ As some of the more recent outputs on the privatization of education are wont to suggest.

Regrettably these approaches to policy development have remained largely un-problematized in South Africa especially in relation to their impact on formal hierarchies - advisors, high level bureaucrats, policy insiders and elites - some of whom may be less sympathetic to 'public' and 'non-expert' knowledge. The impact of these approaches is, moreover, compounded by the limited knowledge of university based researchers about policy priorities, the thinking of senior level policy staff, ministerial representatives and advisors and the influence of past debates on policy. Nor are academics generally au fait the demands of the policy process, and its rigors, time frames and management.

For this reason alone policy critique has an essential role since without it the development of policy - especially policy which has transformative goals, is likely to be truncated. As we have developed the premises of such critique elsewhere we do not delve into that issue here save to re-assert the proposition that

Policy critique is also important because although there is a strong association between policy research and the work of government, it is wrong to infer from this that all policy related research must, in the first instance, serve the needs of government alone. It is a false premise that only government is implicated in policy related research even though a great deal of policy related research could be directed at informing and supporting the development of policy. It could reach analytical conclusions that do so - but that is not its explicit purpose. The concerns of government are no less the concerns of communities and social movements - why else would there be such serious

ideological and organizational conflict over these issues? There is also an equally untested (and probably false) premise that government has no need for proper theorization and scholarly critique, despite the proclivities of some high-level bureaucrats. The purpose of doing research could hardly be to produce work which lacks theorization and scholarship and no serious and responsible (or democratic) government or social movement can ignore the importance of critical enquiry, nor should it rely on anything less than that³⁴.

These realities require a much closer relationship - even a structured and organized one - between researchers and policy-makers. And these relationships should be based on a strong set of covenants about the many issues that are mutually relevant to their mandates both about the production of useful policy and about the premises of engaged scholarship through collaborations with policy-makers and the communities they serve.

³⁴ Enver Motala: Engaged social policy research: Some reflections on the nature of its scholarship. Paper Prepared for EPC Conference: March 2007 emotala@lantic.net, NMI, Fort Hare University.