

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Development Effectiveness

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjde20

# Integrating research into policy sphere: evidence from Tanzania

Goodluck Charles

**To cite this article:** Goodluck Charles (2021): Integrating research into policy sphere: evidence from Tanzania, Journal of Development Effectiveness, DOI: 10.1080/19439342.2021.1971738

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/19439342.2021.1971738

Published online: 09 Sep 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjde20

JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS
https://doi.org/10.1080/19439342.2021.1971738

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

# Integrating research into policy sphere: evidence from Tanzania

Goodluck Charles

Department of Marketing, University of Dar Es Salaam Business, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

**ABSTRACT**

This article explores lessons on integrating research evidence into policy through public-private dialogue for the purpose of enhancing evidence-based policy making. Based on a qualitative analysis of the engagement of researchers and policy actors in Tanzania, it is evident that collaborative arrangements of researchers, the private sector, media and policy makers promote the use of research findings in the policy-making process. Accordingly, we suggest a multi-disciplinary network of academia and policy actors as a tool to bring about effective utilisation of research findings in policy decisions.

**ARTICLE HISTORY**
Received 27 June 2018
Accepted 10 August 2021

**KEYWORDS**
Policy; public-private dialogue; policy networks; advocacy coalition

## Introduction

Several scholars suggest that policy makers achieve better results by making evidence-based policy decisions (Davies 2015; Head 2010; Lomas 1993). Accordingly, researchers in the fields of public health, sociology, economics and business studies have long worked with governments to facilitate policy makers and practitioners to use research findings when making social and economic policy decisions (Charles 2019, 2016). However, gaps exist between the producers and users of research due to a wide range of interconnected and complex cultural, structural and individual factors, which act as barriers to more effective utilisation of research (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2003; Charles 2016). The most critical gap in this case relates to how knowledge is acquired by policy makers and utilised, given that policy makers are highly constrained and do not appreciate the research findings (Davies 2004; Hoppers 1997). While the knowledge relevant to the policy-making process includes political knowledge, rigorous scientific knowledge, professional-managerial knowledge and stakeholder knowledge (Head 2010), policy makers tend to largely base their judgements on their established beliefs, emotions and familiarity (Cairney and Oliver 2017).

Consequently, there is scant evidence showing how knowledge suppliers (researchers and analysts) and research users (policy/decision makers) adapt their activities to utilise the evidence when making a policy. Yet, considering the view that a policy is the sum total of government action, made routinely through cooperation between elected and unelected policy actors with no formal role in the process (Charles 2016), policy-related research results need to be disseminated, debated and channelled to decision makers through platforms such as public-private dialogue (PPD) (Charles 2016). PPD is an institutional arrangement that brings together a group of public and policy actors (ibid), with the potential to provide a bridge between theory and practice, between public service management and academia, and between political and civil structures of society (Hoppers 1997). Despite the potential of PPD to inform policy, there is limited evidence on how PPDs are utilised to facilitate evidence-based decisions.

**CONTACT** Goodluck Charles goodluck@udbs.udsm.ac.tz; goodluckael@yahoo.com Department of Marketing, University of Dar Es Salaam Business, P.O.Box 35046, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This article explores lessons drawn from the initiative to integrate research evidence into policy for the purpose of enhancing evidence-based policy making in Tanzania. It demonstrates how various policy actors integrated their activities to facilitate the dissemination and utilisation of evidence to guide policy making. Given that PPD can help researchers to have a substantive influence on policy (Jackson 2007), we propose a framework showing how policy actors interact with researchers through PPD platforms to influence policy. The article draws on the experience of six Tanzanian universities participating in policy dialogue in collaboration with the private sector, media and non-state actors. These universities[1] cooperate through the Higher-Learning Institution Network (Hi-LINE).

From the policy network and advocacy coalition perspective, the article demonstrates the interconnectedness of universities and policy makers. The policy network connotes 'a cluster of actors, each of which has an interest or "stake" in a given policy sector and the capacity to help determine the success or failure of the policy (Atkinson and Coleman 1992). The advocacy coalition combines the roles of knowledge and interest in the policy-making process, as policy actors come together due to their common beliefs, often based on their shared knowledge of a public problem and their common interest in pursuing certain solutions to it (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). Therefore, the policy networks and advocacy coalitions link their members through the PPD forums, ranging from highly formal and structured to more informal and ad hoc initiatives (Charles 2016).

## Theoretical and empirical literature

Several models propose ways of getting research put into policy and practice. One is the passive decision model, which assumes that publishing research findings leads to the use of evidence to inform policy, because policy makers seek out research evidence in order to make rational decisions (Lomas 1993; Davies 2015). In view of this, academics and policy analysts are preoccupied with conducting research and then publishing their findings, which sometimes include policy recommendations (Cairney and Oliver 2017). The 'passive' forms of knowledge management include, for example, reliance on Google search engine or organisational librarians. Nevertheless, this approach addresses the utilisation of evidence in policy making from a more traditional perspective, which (explicitly or implicitly) regards research results as an 'accumulable product' restricting application of research endeavours where they are needed (Almeida and Báscolo 2006). Indeed, policy makers make decisions in the face of uncertainty, based on limited information, ambiguity, the fact that there are many ways to understand a policy problem and competition between actors to interpret information and draw conclusions (Charles 2016). Accordingly, the motivation and capacity of policy makers to seek and use evidence varies according to their educational background and access to research findings (Davies 2015). This points to the importance of engagement between decision makers and researchers, and the need for research to be clearly and accessibly presented.

Contrary to the passive-diffusion view, the active dissemination model assumes that research evidence requires to be synthesised, made available to policy makers and actively disseminated by researchers (Lomas 1993). This is in line with the advocacy model, which suggests that researchers develop policy solutions and attempt to convince policy makers to adopt those solutions (Stewart and Smith 2015). In this case, PPD can help researchers to actively engage with policy makers and influence their decisions (Jackson 2007). However, these views are supply-driven as they assume that research is the only source of evidence for decision making while in practice there are many other sources of evidence, including the media, political parties, pressure groups and non-state actors (NSAs) (Davies 2015). In recognition of actors who facilitate the supply and utilisation of evidence by policy makers, studies propose more collaborative models. For instance, (Lomas 1993; Davies 2015) found that evidence needs to be actively managed using the networks and intermediaries that have access to decision makers. Uzochukwu et al. (2016) established that policy makers seek evidence from researchers through the engagement between decision makers and researchers to find the best

way of using the research findings to influence policy making. The findings subscribe to the collaboration of research in order to facilitate the smooth integration of research into policy (Cairney and Oliver 2017).

Relatedly, the policy network approach assumes that it is through decentralised, and more or less regularised and coordinated, interactions between state and societal actors that policy making unfolds (Charles et al. 2016). This implies that researchers need to establish and maintain contact with the relevant intermediaries that have access to decision makers and the necessary skills to manage and use evidence from a variety of sources (Davies 2015). It suggests that there is an opportunity to improve inclusiveness and participation in the policy cycle[2] by engaging with a wide range of state and NSAs through policy networks (Charles 2016). In connection with this, van der Arend (2014) found a relationship between employing a variety of linkage mechanisms and research utilisation. Linkages serve multiple functions in supporting research utilisation, including highlighting particular research evidence and researchers from a vast backdrop of information 'noise', addressing the questions of values and credibility, supporting 'learning' by tailoring new knowledge to existing knowledge bases and perspectives on policy issues, and building capacity for future relationships. Likewise, Newman et al. (2011) found that the success of the most research projects was due to the coming together of researchers and policy actors who had good social and communication skills, respect for what each other could contribute to the project and the willingness to see benefits in 'cultural diversity'. Such linkages and exchange facilitate the 'development of a positive relationship between researchers and decision makers, whereby knowledge brokers act as intermediaries, using inter-personal contacts to stimulate knowledge exchange, the development of new research and the application of solutions' (Ward, House, and Hamer 2009).

Furthermore, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) proposed the advocacy coalition framework, which assumes that a change in policy happens through coordinated activity by individuals and organisations outside the government with the same core policy beliefs. The advocacy coalition is a local advocacy network, which consists of actors who share a set of normative and causative beliefs and who take coordinated action concerning a specific policy sub-system over time (ibid). These actors may include administrative agencies, legislators, interest groups, researchers and journalists. The framework hypothesises that: i) because scientific information plays an important role in modifying the beliefs of policy participants, researchers are among the central players in the policy process; and ii) policy participants will seek allies with people who hold similar core policy beliefs from among researchers, legislators, interest group leaders and intellectuals from multiple levels of government. Related to this, Rossow, Ugland, and Baklien (2015) showed that advocacy coalitions use research quite extensively in public debate and the formal decision-making process, and Lenihan (2015) found that transferability of research, timing, stakeholder involvement and resonance with policy makers, and communication of that research in terms of presentation and translation for policy makers promoted the uptake of research findings by policy makers. Schneider (2013) established that countries with more experience of public-private collaboration tend to have more pragmatic governments based on alternative avenues for business politicking, especially through networks and the media. This provides common ground for researchers and policy actors who have similar goals (Newman 2014).

Overall, the literature shows that transferring evidence to the policy sphere is very much a social process, with relationships and interactions being key factors in determining how evidence is communicated and applied. Relationships enable the 'cultural barriers' between the research producers and end users to be overcome, in order to enhance the flow of research. Given that the policy-making process is a long series of prolonged interactions between and within competing interests (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999), access to knowledge through trusted relationships with the research community can help to increase research uptake (Holzmann 2013). However, the literature often fails to discuss the practical difficulties of accommodating evidence from numerous sources and using it in the policy-making process (Court and Young 2003). Because the core literature has concentrated primarily on the public

health sector (e.g. Schneider 2013; Charles 2016; Uzochukwu et al. 2016), little attention has been paid to the uptake of research in other policy areas. Given the limited empirical investigation carried out on key aspects of knowledge-brokering activities in the African context and Tanzania in particular, little evidence exists regarding the configuration of organisations that are most likely to ensure that policy-making decisions are informed by the best available evidence. Therefore, this article addresses the gaps by producing a model that could be used to inform a debate on integrating research into economic and social policy decisions.

## Methodology

This article is based on the analysis of the engagement of researchers and policy actors through multi-actor integration (MAI) and Hi-LINE. These networks were actively involved in PPDs for more than five years with the support of the Business Environment Strengthening for Tanzania (BEST-Dialogue), a programme that promotes policy reforms in the country. Hi-LINE comprises six universities cutting across a range of relevant academic disciplines to ensure a steady influx of researchers into the PPD arena and the incorporation of policy research into university curricula. MAI is a network of private sector organisations (PSOs), radio stations, academics, NSAs, and local government authorities (LGAs) integrating their activities to inform policy makers on how to improve the local business environment. The study covered the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, where the two networks were active.

The study adopted the qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem and to generate findings that would inform future studies. The explorative research design provides insights into the research problem and assists in developing a research proposition for further analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). It gives the context and provides a richer understanding of the 'how' and 'why' questions pertaining to the problem at hand. The research process therefore entailed a critical review of the literature, observations of the various network activities, in-depth interviews and the monitoring of policy actions emanating from the interactions between researchers, the private sector, public officials and other key policy actors. At least 44 in-depth interviews were conducted with various respondents, 12 of whom were members of Hi-LINE, 14 were members of MAI, 5 were owner-managers of radio stations, 10 were public officials and 13 were journalists. The majority of the respondents were involved in the activities of Hi-LINE and MAI as leaders of their organisation and/or active members of the network. In addition, we conducted 10 focus group discussions with senior local government officials and representatives of the organisations involved in the networks. These officials were end users of the research findings and some were in a position to influence policy. They included senior public officials from LGAs, particularly the District Executive Directors and Heads of Departments.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face using an interview guide based on the study's core themes in relation to the use of evidence in policy making. The length of the interviews varied from 45 minutes to an hour. Before meeting the respondents for in-depth interviews they were asked to respond to the questions provided to them in advance. The questions asked them to describe the connection of their activities to network activities, indicate what they had already done in connection with integrating research into policy, present their success stories in getting research into policy and identify the challenges of integrating research into policy. These questions enabled us to understand the collaborative arrangements between researchers and other participants in the policy process. Information was also collected on respondents' involvement in generating research issues, participating in the research process and disseminating the findings.

During the data collection process, we participated in 5 PPD forums and observed how the researchers communicated their evidence to inform the policy discussion. The reaction of policy makers and the resolutions made on the basis of the research findings were also observed. The policy recommendations were noted, after which they were followed up through reading the policy documents, by-laws and local government budgets as well as conducting interviews with

public officials. The main goal of following up was to trace the extent to which government decisions and actions were informed by research and evidence generated through policy forums. Therefore, the public officials were requested to indicate how often they had: i) adapted the research results to provide useful information for decision makers and ii) made an effort to promote the adoption of research evidence by policy makers. Further evidence was established by monitoring the various policy decisions and establishing the extent to which the government took into account the recommendations made through PPD forums organised by Hi-LINE and MAI (see Exhibit 1).

After recording the data and notes from various sources, they were reviewed and edited to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data and information included in the findings. Conventional manual content analysis (inductive) was used to identify common responses emerging from the respondents. This involved a process of generating a provisional list of codes/themes based on the study objectives, after which common views and evidence from different sources were combined to produce the findings presented in this article.

## Participation of researchers in policy dialogue in Tanzania

Interviews with PSO representatives and government officials indicated that, in most cases, public institutions dialogue with PSOs through a hierarchical structure, from the national to local government level, while private sector institutions are organised via the national level (apex organisations), regional and local PSOs. We identified existing formal dialogue platforms including the Tanzania National Business Council, Regional and District Coordinating Committees, the local and national government budget cycle, governance structures for business environment reform programmes and sector PPD forums. A common dialogue practice is that PSOs identify the issues affecting the private sector, undertake studies and prepare position papers before they embark on policy dialogue. However, due to the limited capacity of PSOs to do research on policy issues, the majority of them contract researchers/consultants from universities and consulting institutions to conduct policy studies and support them to participate in dialogue forums. However, the main challenge is the inclination of most researchers to conduct pure and supply-led research rather than demand-driven policy studies.

To ensure that policy decisions are adequately informed by research, the BEST-Dialogue programme, which started in 2014 as the successor of the Business Environment Strengthening for Tanzania-Advocacy Component (BEST-AC[3]), builds the capacity of PSOs and universities to conduct policy studies and integrate research findings into policy dialogue. The programme brings together different actors to integrate their actions to intensify the process of change in PPD to create a more enabling business environment at the national and local level. This has expanded the participation of change agents in the policy process, strategically tailoring communication and using the media to overcome the hesitation to actively engage in the process of change. With growing support for PPD at local government level, the network of various policy actors has begun to grow, whereby PSOs have become active in addressing issues of a more local nature in the business environment. In line with this, Hi-LINE builds the capacity of researchers in the domains of policy advocacy and PPDs for the member Universities with the aim of providing such knowledge and information to practitioners and policy makers.

In 2014, MAI was established as a policy network to bring in more actors from the Southern Highlands of Tanzania seeking the enhancement and gradual integration of the PPD initiatives supported by BEST-D. MAI has expanded to the north-western part of the country (Lake Zone) with the admission of more PSOs and NSAs. These are major local economic zones with great potential for enhancing agri-business, tourism and manufacturing. MAI is a fairly loose network of individual entities committed to integrating their activities to improve the local business environment. In this arrangement, universities are part of larger-scale policy actors (PSOs, the media, NSAs and LGAs) facilitating dialogue and an improvement in the business environment in the country.

Universities are key partners as they do research and facilitate utilisation of the research in PPD forums organised through MAI and/or other platforms. Consequently, four key actors in policy cycle are identified namely researchers (Hi-LINE & MAI), policy actors (MAI, PSOs, LGAs and NSAs) as well as policy makers (LGAs and central government) (Figure 1).

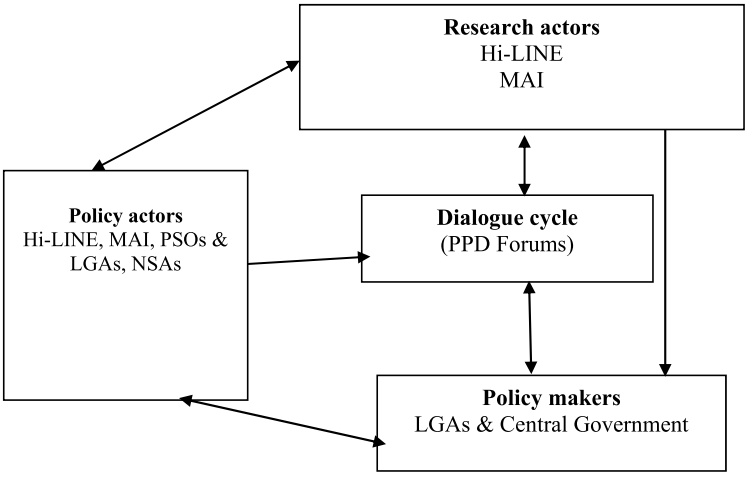



**Figure 1.** Key actors in dialogue cycle.

## Efforts to integrate research into policy

As one of the key partners of MAI, Hi-LINE members conduct policy research, facilitate dialogue and build the capacity of PSOs and policy makers to effectively engage in a constructive dialogue. Through MAI, universities get feedback from policy makers, disseminate their research findings to a wide audience, and participate in following up implementation of the decisions made in policy forums. Although most studies are done by Hi-LINE members in collaboration with PSOs, the media works closely with responsible PSOs and Hi-LINE to disseminate the findings. Interviews with the Universities involved in the network showed that at least 20 policy studies have been completed by Hi-LINE members, all of which led to the production of policy briefs. Studies identified from 12 respondents focused on: i) cost of fire and rescue; ii) controlling counterfeit agricultural inputs; iii) voluntary formalisation of enterprises; iv) addressing land conflicts; v) reducing crop cess; vi) improving the regulations governing food processing; vii) improving PPDs on tourism; viii) adopting the electronic fiscal device; ix) improving state-business relations; x) sustainability of cooperatives; xi) reducing the cost of signboards charged by LGAs; xii) formal and informal cross-border trade practices; xiii) transparency in issuing timber permits; xiv) compliance with the Weights and Measures Act; xv) reducing loading and unloading fees; xvi) smuggling of coffee; xvii) the multiplicity of fees and charges in the tourist industry; xviii) revisiting the imposition of value added tax on sisal processors; xix) subsidies to cashew farmers, and xx) taxes on local sisal farmers.

The Universities and PSOs used a five-step approach to conducting studies, being: i) PSOs identifying a policy issue; ii) researching the issue in collaboration with universities; iii) preparing a research report/policy brief; iv) influencing policy through dialogue; and v) following up the policy decisions. The uniqueness of the studies is as follows. First, the entire process was participatory from the beginning whereby the research issue was identified by the PSOs as representatives of the business community and the problem was defined jointly with the researchers. Second, the studies were mostly of an applied nature, with the main goal of producing pragmatic policy

recommendations. Third, the research findings were used to inform and influence the policy makers. Fourth, through collaboration with MAI, the findings were translated into simplified language and disseminated to decision makers and the target audience. Fifth, the process entailed following up the decisions made to ensure that the recommended actions were implemented.

The respondents from PSOs, the media and Hi-LINE partners reported that the adopted research process entailed a lot of learning amongst partners. For instance, universities learned how to customise their studies to meet the needs of practitioners, particularly policy makers. Most importantly, universities reported that they had improved their research approach to become more demand driven based on practitioners' needs. They said that they had been trained in how to engage with the policy makers, and most of them had participated in policy research and facilitation of the dialogue. By participating in MAI, universities have become more connected with actors advocating for an improved business environment (PSOs, the media, LGAs and NSAs). More recently, the network has developed a rapid approach to assessing the local economy by way of scoping studies. This approach involves quickly mapping the policy issues at district level to identify PPD practice, looking for policy gaps and seeking how to encourage or improve this practice. The primary objective was to ensure that the context and information to be discussed was highly localised as well as to emphasise the importance of holding such informed PPDs on a regular basis. The assumption is that both the dialogue and policy-making process are fed by the information generated from various sources, research being one of them.

In addition, universities in the Hi-LINE community built the capacity of PSOs and media on advocacy and institutional competencies, media relations, membership recruitment and research skills. The training offered included: basic advocacy skills; advanced advocacy training; membership recruitment and retention; leadership and governance of PSOs; research for advocacy; communication and use of media; and local economic development. Through the skills gained from the training offered, it was noted that PSOs consulted with editors of local newspapers on having balanced dedicated media space, both in print and in broadcasting. PSOs were also consulted concerning the production of ready-made radio content for engaging up-country stakeholders in the business environment dialogue. At least 35 community radio stations have been engaged by PSOs to report on PPD progress for a more enabling business environment. The use of district-based (local) radio stations as a more cost-effective and possibly innovative and interactive way to reach wider rural and peri-urban audiences was observed.

In 2016, five chambers of commerce in the Southern Highlands signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly undertake capacity building, advocacy and dialogue activities. They work with Hi-LINE to conduct scoping studies in the economic centres in support of the dialogue brought about by the network of local chambers to ensure that the dialogue is well-informed and held on the basis of a body of evidence. The apex associations involved in the network, e.g. the Agricultural Council of Tanzania (ACT) and ANSAF, went beyond their tradition of working on national level issues to collaborating with district PSOs to address local issues and to escalate those that could not be resolved to national level platforms. In 2018, for instance, 14 scoping studies were ongoing in various districts under the coordination of ACT and Hi-LINE, from which radio stations were expected to make relevant radio programmes to create awareness of the policy issues studied. Staff from the university network facilitated and moderated ten dialogues at the local level, which were organised by PSOs (7 by chambers of commerce and 3 by ACT). These included dialogues on timber permits, cross-border trade, the tomato value chain, service levy, signboard charges and land conflicts, etc. In addition, four workshops on policy research methodology, and the advocacy and dialogue process were provided for 48 young researchers from universities. Feedback shows that 95 percent of the young researchers were satisfied that the course met learning objectives.

Participation of universities in Hi-LINE and MAI stimulated mainstreaming of advocacy and dialogue programmes in higher leaning institutions' research and training programmes. Relatedly, it was observed that two universities had started implementing programmes which were relevant to MAI and Hi-LINE. For example, St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) had introduced a training

programme on investigative business environment reporting (IBER) for young media professionals engaged in business environment reporting. The programme was delivered jointly by PSOs, Hi-LINE members and media experts. A total of 49 journalists from community radio stations and print media completed the IBER course between 2014 and 2017. An interesting development was the mainstreaming of the course into the mass communication degree offered by the university from 2017. Further, in 2017, at least 131 business environment radio features, with a particular emphasis on business environment issues, were produced by SAUT trainees and aired on various radio stations. Interviews held with four radio station managers revealed that the stations had benefited from the IBER programme. '*The IBER trainees have become more proactive and now make interesting programmes which attract a lot of listeners'*, noted one of the respondents. '*We are now airing agribusiness-related programmes, most of which attract sponsors'*, he added. Testimonials from the journalists indicated that the skills acquired from IBER programmes had been very useful for preparing investigative business stories and for their careers. *After the training, graduates were able to make better documentaries and sponsored programmes, and about 5 percent of them had been appointed to managerial level*. Given the excitement generated by the IBER programme and the urge of journalists to engage with the university, in 2017, SAUT launched the Centre for Investigative Business Journalism, whose impact remains a subject for future investigation.

It was further noted that as an academic partner promoting research and the training and coaching of PSOs, the University of Dar es Salaam Business School established the Centre for Policy Research and Advocacy (CPRA) in 2014. The Centre trained at least 172 young researchers, 40 of whom were actively involved in research, whereby 20 research projects were accomplished and 12 policy forums organised. At least 11 training of trainer courses were conducted for young researchers and associated consultants. The Centre attracted at least 10 researchers to study issues relating to the business environment, advocacy and dialogue. Interestingly, academic interest has been developing in policy research and, in the last four years, relevant journal articles have been produced by the scholars involved in the project. The publications focused on: i) the regulatory framework of the food-processing sub-sector in Africa; ii) state-business relations in Tanzania; iii) PPD frameworks in Tanzania; v) financial inclusion; vi) tax compliance; and vi) informality. For the purpose of disseminating research findings to policy makers, there existed a team at CPRA working with the private sector to develop the digital information base (DIB), which was expected to enhance research information exchange and knowledge management on issues pertaining to the business environment in the country. In 2017, for instance, online business environment documents collected by universities reached over 4000 uploads. Besides a steadily growing collection of research reports and policy documents, DIB features information on specific value chains and a large collection of business environment-related print media clippings that illustrate political discourse on the Tanzanian investment climate over the years.

## Has research influenced policy?

In terms of how research influences policy, we made two important observations that are worth sharing. First, it appeared that for research to inform policy, research institutions, and universities in particular, needed to link with the policy actors who could facilitate the generation and dissemination of research findings and feed them into the policy process. Second, it was evident that the collaboration of universities and researchers with other policy makers facilitated the integration of research into policy. Some cases on how research informed policy decisions are presented in exhibit 1.

## Discussion of the findings

The findings presented in this article show that research and policy networks can be utilised to ensure that more research findings are translated into policy. It is evident that the research community collaborated with policy actors (the private sector, media and NSAs) and public sector officials to

facilitate the utilisation of evidence in policy making. This is in line with previous scholars who argued for the integration of the producers and users of research findings (e.g. Head 2010; Charles 2016). However, we support the view that policy makers obtain evidence from several sources (Stewart and Smith 2015) and their decisions are influenced by research evidence as well as the information generated from those accessing policy makers (Cairney and Oliver 2017). Because public officials are advised by different policy actors before they make policy decisions, the coordinated role of the media, universities, PSOs and other NSAs in advising the government seems to be an important condition for increasing research uptake. Basically, this is in line with the propositions of the integrated approach to increasing research utilisation, as suggested by policy networks and advocacy coalition models.

In order to increase research uptake by policy makers, researchers need to involve practitioners in their research and participate in the dissemination of research findings through the dialogue cycle. The 5-step approach used by PSOs and research institutions to identify a research problem, conduct a study and influence policy makers demonstrates this. While it has been argued previously that researchers are disappointed by the low adoption of research findings by policy makers (Davies 2015), our findings indicate that the process has to be more participatory to ensure that research is more demand driven. Contrary to a large body of literature that argues that few research findings are utilised when policy decisions are made, it is evident that if key policy actors are involved from the beginning of the research process to influence policy makers, and this is followed up, research findings are likely to be taken on board by policy makers. In this case, we corroborate Uzochukwu et al.'s (2016) findings that involving stakeholders in designing research objectives and throughout the research process increases utilisation of research evidence by policy makers. The evidence provided by the initiation of the Tanzanian Government Blueprint and several decisions made by the government as a result of research findings generated by Hi-LINE, and debated through MAI, supports this argument.

In contrast to the literature that assumes that researchers are the key source of knowledge for decision making (e.g. Lomas 1993), our findings indicate that scientific researchers need to learn how to customise their studies to the needs of policy makers so as to make their research more demand driven and the findings relevant. Actually, Hi-LINE members reported that they had to transform their approach to ensure that they made more pragmatic recommendations for concrete policy actions from their studies. More interestingly, all players of MAI acknowledged that they had learnt not only about the needs of each partner, but also their way of doing things. Consequently, the researchers had to simplify and translate their research findings though policy briefs to make them relevant. While the role of researchers in doing various studies was key, the work of influencing the government was largely done by PSOs with the support of the media and researchers. This suggests that researchers in a similar context need to integrate their traditional way of disseminating their research findings such as publishing research articles and attending conferences/academic forums with the use of PPD forums, combined with the media to bring policy makers and other actors closer.

Compared to previous literature that puts a lot of emphasis on policy makers adopting the evidence of research, our study shows that building the capacity of actors to facilitate research uptake is important. We demonstrate the efforts that have been made to develop the capacity of young researchers, the business community, media and PSOs. This suggests that research utilisation should not be considered in isolation from other important interventions that would facilitate each actor to understand the process and access relevant information. In addition, some universities have already established training programmes (e.g. IBER) and specific units to link them with policy actors (e.g. CPRA). Indeed, this has the great potential to transform university programmes and research initiatives into being more relevant. It was also interesting to observe customised university research agenda, more publications on the business environment and a modified research dissemination strategy (e.g. DIB), all of which were influenced by the engagement of researchers with practitioners and policy makers.

**Exhibit 1**. Bringing research into policy.

***Hi-LINE research informs the government blueprint:***

In May 2018, the Cabinet approved the Blueprint for the Business Regulatory Licencing Reforms adopted by government as a road map for addressing regulatory challenges raised by the private sector. The Blueprint was based on the analytical work done by the private sector, universities and research institutions. The document summarises policy actions to improve the business environment in the country drawn from various studies. A review of the document showed that at least 30 percent of the studies which informed the government were done by Hi-LINE members and/or universities supported by BEST-D. Some of the recommended actions have already been implemented. For instance, the government lowered more than 20 levies and taxes imposed on agriculture, introduced the online business licencing application process, reduced the import duty on capital goods and abolished inspection fees charged by the Tanzania Bureau of Standards on fertiliser and cash crops as recommended by the Blueprint. In the national budget for 2019/20, the government reviewed at least 54 nuisance fees and levies most of which had been recommended in various dialogue forums held among the private sector, Hi-LINE and government.

***The government reduces crop cess:***

High crop cess often arbitrarily charged by LGAs, coupled with the harassment of tax collection agents, are obstacles to the development of farmers and crop dealers. Between 2013 and 2017, ACT, chambers of commerce, Hi-LINE and media partners did a study on this issue and dialogued with the government to harmonise the crop cess charges at regional level. Through the Finance Act 2017, the government reduced the crop cess across the country from 5 percent for cash and food crops, to 3 and 2 percent, respectively, while exempting volumes of less than one ton. The role of the private sector and research institutions in advising the government was acknowledged by the Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs in the 2017/18 budget speech.

***Fire and rescue fees are reviewed and submitted for approval:***

Over the years, the business community has been advocating for improved requirements for compliance with the Fire and Rescue Force Amendment Regulations of 2012/2014. The amended Regulations significantly raised enterprises' annual contributions, inspection fees and training costs by an average of 800%. The Chamber of Commerce engaged researchers from Hi-LINE to study the challenges of the fire and rescue regulations. After completing the study in 2015, the Chamber, in collaboration with Hi-LINE, organised dialogue sessions with the Fire and Rescue Force. Consequently, the Fire and Rescue Force formed a task force of eleven (11) people (5 from the fire brigade and 4 from the private sector, 2 being Hi-LINE researchers) to review the study findings and propose a revised fee structure. After in-depth consultations, the task force proposed amendments to the Fire and Rescue Force Regulations, 2017. The new regulations will reduce the fees for some enterprises by 50 percent. The regulations were submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs, and were at the final stage of approval and adoption.

***Weights and measures act amended:***

In 2012, the Chamber of Commerce engaged two Hi-LINE members to conduct a study on challenges of non-compliance with the Weights and Measures Act, 1982 and Weights and Measures Regulations, 2008. The study proposed amendments to the Weights and Measures Act and an improvement in enforcing the Act. After a long period of dialogue involving central government and LGA officials, the private sector, media and Hi-LINE, a bill was passed by Parliament to amend section 340 and it was gazetted on 18 November 2016. Based on the recommendations made by the study, fines charged to traders using non-standard measures of crops were amended from $50 to $500 for the first offence, and from $500 to $25,000 for a repeat offence. Feedback from the PSOs showed that the degree of compliance with the standard measure had improved significantly.

***Participatory formalisation shows impressive progress:***

In 2015, Hi-LINE members were commissioned to do research on *participatory formalisation*, which looked into the business environment of a huge number of informal micro-enterprises. The study recommended participatory formalisation in a phased approach through which clusters of micro-enterprises gradually enter the formal economy. The study also suggested the introduction of identity cards for informal traders and the establishment of a specific government unit promoting the growth and graduation of informal enterprises. The recommended actions were shared in several government dialogue meetings. Consequently, thirteen LGAs expressed interest in piloting the proposed participatory formalisation model, and three of them have already started implementing the recommended approach. The recommendations were shared at the National Business Council where the government issued a directive to adopt the proposed model. The Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs announced the adoption of the model in the budget speech 2017/18 and at the time of this study two consultants had been engaged to support the government to adopt the model.

***Processing of timber permits is simplified:***

The Chamber of Commerce engaged researchers from universities to study the challenges of producing and transporting timber in the southern part of Tanzania. One of the biggest challenges identified was the high application fee for the permit to do business involving timber. At least four dialogue sessions were organised under MAI, and several media campaigns were held to disseminate the findings. The dialogue brought on board the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and other private and public sector actors. In July 2017, the government introduced new guidelines in line with the recommendations on the issuance of timber permits and effectively waived application fees for permit applicants.

## Conclusion and implications

Besides the traditional research outlets, such as conferences and academic journals, there exist platforms for disseminating research findings and getting research into policy, for instance, PPDs. However, as policy makers are informed by several sources, policy decisions are not only based on research information, but also on evidence from other sources, as well as the beliefs and knowledge of the decision makers. This implies that universities and research institutions should engage with other actors (the media, PSOs, policy makers, policy participants, legislators, officials from multiple levels of government, etc.) in their research process and in disseminating research findings. Therefore, academics need time to adjust from using the more traditional approach to research and publishing the findings to engaging in PPDs and being applicable to policy making. Building the capacity of researchers, policy actors and decisions makers to enable them to customise their activities to each other and effectively participate in both research and policy making is crucial for getting research into policy. Mainstreaming advocacy and dialogue programmes in higher leaning institutions' research and training programmes, and building the capacity of researchers and PSOs to do policy research, are instrumental for getting more research findings taken up by policy makers. Indeed, young academics trained and mentored acquired knowledge, confidence and skills to engage stakeholders in collaboratively improving the relevance, methods and quality of mainstreaming teaching in their respective universities.

The article proposes a multi-disciplinary network of academia, policy actors and policy makers, showing how collaborative research and dialogue facilitate the integration of research into policy (Figure 2). The framework demonstrates that the policy dialogue gathers information from research and non-research sources, including public opinion, government actions, and policy makers' beliefs and knowledge. It indicates that policy actors interact directly with researchers (university scientists, policy analysts and consultants) through a dialogue cycle. In line with the active decision model, policy networks and advocacy coalition, this framework proposes more active dissemination of research findings and the collaborative engagement of

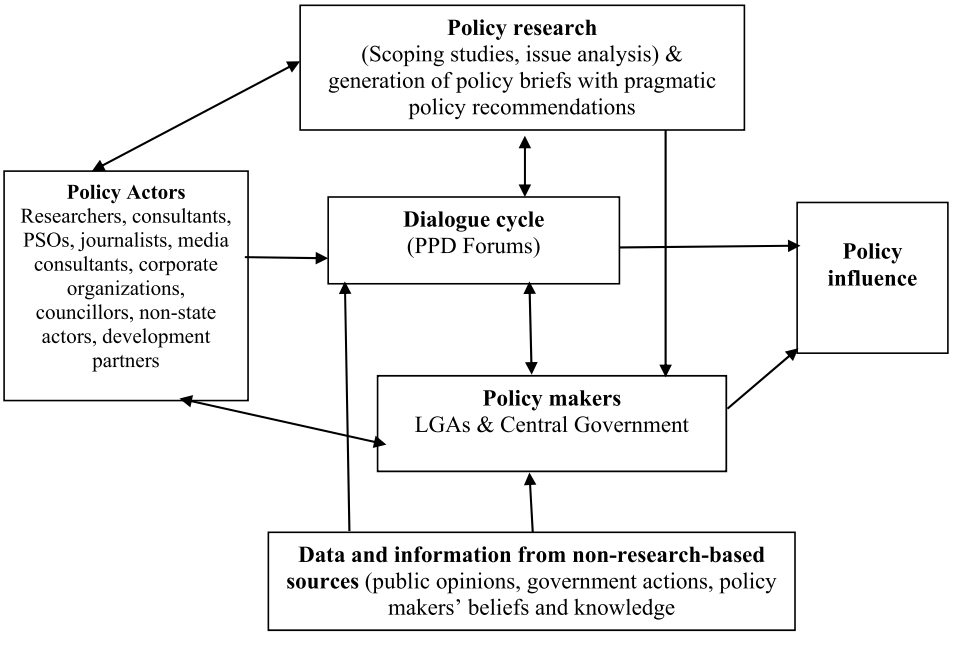



Figure 2. A proposed framework for integrating research into policy.

the policy actors. By extending the existing research dissemination models, our article shows that getting research into policy is a two-way process. This means that while research informs policies, the research process is also influenced by policy actors, the dialogue cycle and policy makers. Therefore, for universities and research institutions to generate relevant research findings and inform policy, they have to be effectively connected with and be informed by the policy actors and policy makers. Networks like MAI and Hi-LINE demonstrate how researchers can connect with and learn from the policy-making process to influence policy change.

Given that this article is based on a qualitative analysis, there is a need to test the proposed model in future studies and generate more generalisable findings. Several propositions can be drawn from the model to test the extent to which policy actors outside the government system influence policy change, policy makers influence PPD processes and decisions, policy makers' beliefs and attitude influence research and the extent to which policy makers combine research findings with their own beliefs and knowledge. More analysis of the policy process in the context of a developing economy may be an interesting research area. The mechanisms used to facilitate policy actors with different beliefs and interests to coordinate their efforts through dialogue cycles require further analysis. This may also entail investigating the challenges of promoting the positive engagement of such diversified actors to advise policy makers and influence policy change.

## Notes

1. The Universities that have subscribed to the network are Mzumbe University (MU), University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Moshi Cooperative University (MoCU), the University of Iringa (UoI) and St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT).
2. The policy cycle entails agenda setting, policy formulation, legitimation, implementation, evaluation and policy maintenance, succession or termination (Cairney 2012).
3. BEST-AC started operations in 2004 with the mandate to build the capacity of Tanzania's private sector in advocacy and dialogue to influence the government to introduce policy and legislative reforms that will improve the business environment.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This study was funded by BEST-Dialogue through the Centre for Policy Research and Advocacy, University of Dar es Salaam.

## Notes on contributor

***Charles Goodluck*** is an Associate Professor at University of Dar es Salaam. His current research interests include entrepreneurship and private sector development, public-private dialogue, family business and microfinancing. His publications appear in Journal of African Business, International Journal of Public Sector Management, Forum for Development Studies, Business Management Review, African Journal of Economic and Business Studies, Journal of Education and Training, and International Journal of Development Issues. He is a member of editorial board of Journal of Education and Training and Family Business Review.

## References

Almeida, C., and E. Báscolo. 2006. "Use of Research Results in Policy Decision-making, Formulation, and Implementation: A Review of the Literature." *Cad. Saúde Pública, Rio De Janeiro* 22 (suppl): S7–S33. doi:10.1590/S0102-311X2006001300002.

Atkinson, M. M., and W. D. Coleman. 1992. "Policy Networks, Policy Communities and the Problems of Governance." *International Journal of Policy and Administration* 5 (2): 154–180. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0491.1992.tb00034.x.

Cairney, P. 2012. *Understanding Public Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Cairney, P., and K. Oliver. 2017. "Evidence-based Policymaking Is Not like Evidence-based Medicine, so How Far Should You Go to Bridge the Divide between Evidence and Policy?" *Health Research Policy and Systems* 15 (1): 1–11. doi:10.1186/s12961-017-0192-x.

Charles, G. 2016. "Public-Private Dialogue and Policy Reforms: Lessons from Tanzania." In *The Sage Handbook of International Corporate and Public Affairs*, edited by P. Harris and C. S. Fleisher, 650–668. London: Sage.

Charles, G. 2019. "Coordinating Regulatory Agencies for Improved Tourism Policy in Tanzania." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* 2 (1): 2–17. doi:10.1108/JHTI-08-2018-0049.

Charles, G., J. Soeren, K. Paul, and K. Peter. 2016. "Firm-level Perspectives on State–Business Relations in Africa: The Food-processing Sector in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia." *Forum for Development Studies* 1–23. doi:10.1080/08039410.2016.1252425.

Court, J., and J. Young. 2003. *Bridging Research and Policy: Insights from 50 Case Studies: Working 213*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Davies, P. T. 2004. "Is Evidence-Based Government Possible?" In *Jerry Lee Lecture to the 4th Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium*. Vol. 19. Washington DC. February.

Davies, P. T. 2015. "Getting Research into Policy and Practice." *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 7 (4): 393–401.

Hammersley, M., and P. Atkinson. 2007. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Head, W. B. 2010. "Reconsidering Evidence-based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges." *Policy and Society* 29 (2): 77–94. doi:10.1016/j.polsoc.2010.03.001.

Holzmann, V. 2013. "A Meta-analysis of Brokering Knowledge in Project Management." *International Journal of Project Management* 31 (1): 2–13. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2012.05.002.

Hoppers, C. A. (1997). "Public Policy Dialogue: Its Role in the Policy Process. Occasional Paper No.2", Centre for Education Policy Development, South Africa

Jackson, P. M. 2007. "Making Sense of Policy Advice." *Public Money and Management* 27 (4): 257–264. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9302.2007.00592.x.

Lenihan, A. T. 2015. "Institutionalizing Evidence-based Policy: International Insights into Knowledge Brokerage." *Contemporary Social Science* 10 (2): 114–125. doi:10.1080/21582041.2015.1055297.

Lomas, J. 1993. "Retailing Research: Increasing the Role of Evidence in Clinical Services for Childbirth." *The Milbank Quarterly* 71 (3): 439–475. doi:10.2307/3350410.

Newman, J. 2014. "Revisiting the "Two Communities" Metaphor of Research Utilization." *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 27 (7): 614–627. doi:10.1108/IJPSM-04-2014-0056.

Newman, L., K. Biedrzycki, J. Patterson, and F. Baum. 2011. "Partnership in Knowledge Creation: Lessons Learned from a Researcher Policy Actor Partnership to Co-produce a Rapid Appraisal Case Study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative." *Evidence and Policy* 7 (1): 77–96. doi:10.1332/174426411X553025.

Nutley, S., I. Walter, and H. Davies. 2003. "From Knowing to Doing: A Framework for Understanding the Evidence-into-practice Agenda." *Evaluation* 9 (2): 125–148. doi:10.1177/1356389003009002002.

Rossow, I., T. Ugland, and B. Baklien. 2015. "Use of Research in Local Alcohol Policy-making." *Drugs and Alcohol Today* 15 (4): 92–202. doi:10.1108/DAT-05-2015-0022.

Sabatier, P. A., and H. Jenkins-Smith. 1999. "The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Assessment." In *Theories of the Policy Process*, edited by P. A. Sabatier, 117–166. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Schneider, B. R. (2013). "Institutions for Effective Business-Government Collaboration: Micro-Mechanisms and Macro Politics in Latin America",*IDB Working Paper series IDB-WP-418*

Stewart, E., and K. E. Smith. 2015. "Black Magic and Gold Dust." *Evidence Policy* 11 (3): 415–437. doi:10.1332/174426415X14381786400158.

Uzochukwu, B., O. Onwujekwe, C. Mbachu, C. Okwuosa, E. Etiaba, M. E. Nyström, M.E, and L. Gilson. 2016. "The Challenge of Bridging the Gap between Researchers and Policy Makers: Experiences of a Health Policy Research Group in Engaging Policy Makers to Support Evidence Informed Policy Making in Nigeria." *Globalization and Health* 12 (67). doi:10.1186/s12992-016-0209-1.

van der Arend, J. 2014. "Bridging the Research/policy Gap: Policy Officials' Perspective on the Barriers and Facilitators to Effective Links between Academic and Policy Worlds." *Policy Studies* 35 (6): 611–630. doi:10.1080/01442872.2014.971731.

Ward, V., A. House, and S. Hamer. 2009. "Knowledge Brokering: The Missing Link in the Evidence to Action Chain?" *Evidence and Policy* 5 (3): 267–279. doi:10.1332/174426409X463811.