Guide on Measuring Decent Jobs for Youth

Monitoring, evaluation and learning in labour market programmes
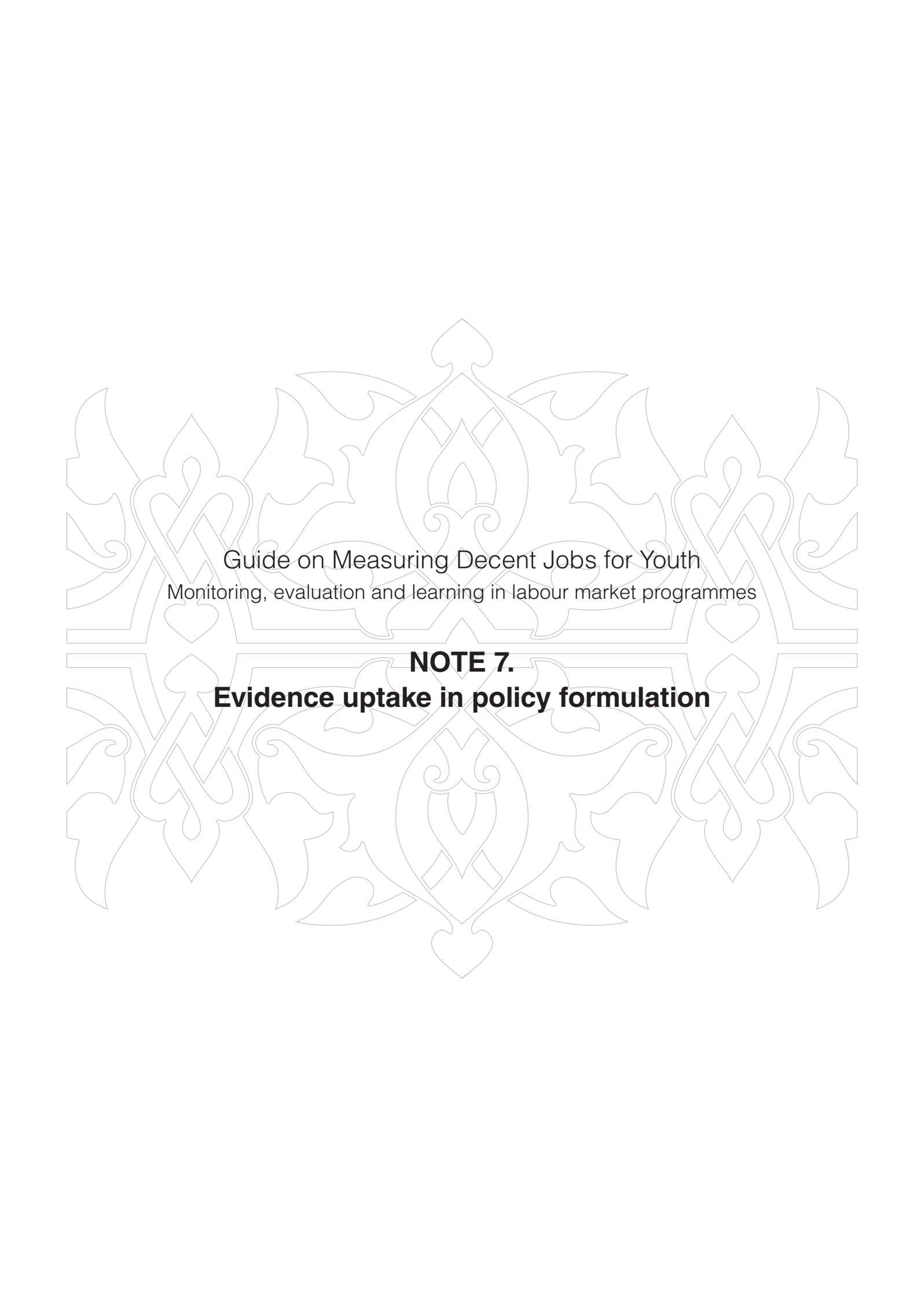
Note **7** **Evidence uptake in policy formulation**

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NOTE 7.
Evidence uptake in policy formulation

Contents

Evidence uptake in policy formulation

Prerequisites:

This chapter requires no prior knowledge. It introduces readers to tools to maximize the likelihood that evidence-based research will be used to inform the development and implementation of youth employment policies.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this note, readers will be able to:

▶ understand the different types of evidence-based research: diagnostic, descriptive and causal

▶ appreciate the complexity of the system shaping evidence uptake, including supply-side and demand-side factors, as well as the politics and incentives driving evidence generation and use

▶ use key tools to communicate and disseminate evidence to policy-makers and synthesize and repackage research for different audiences.

Keywords:

Communications, context analysis, evidence supply, influence mapping, knowledge management, policy briefs, evidence uptake plan, rigour, stakeholder engagement, synthesizing research, working papers.

International development aid donors spend billions on development-related research with the goal of diagnosing, monitoring and evaluating their programming efforts. Yet, how much evidence-based research plays a role in decision-making and policy formulation processes is often questioned. This situation also pertains to the case of youth employment, where policy formulation processes are complex, involve a variety of stakeholders and interest groups, and can become highly politicized.

Evidence is therefore only one piece, albeit an important one, in the policy formulation puzzle. Direct effects of evidence-based research on the policy formulation process are difficult to measure. However, some believe that research affects policy, not so much through immediate and direct impact on the design of public policies, but rather mainly through a process of "gradual sedimentation" of insights, theories, concepts and ways of looking at the world (Weiss, 1977).

The formulation of evidence-informed policies on youth employment is constrained because of the small, albeit growing, base of evidence on "what works". A recent systematic review, which assessed the breadth and depth of impact evaluations, focused on active labour market programmes (ALMPs) for young people and identified 113 impact evaluation studies on the topic globally. Of these, nearly half were published after 2010, with 21 studies published in 2014 alone (Kluve et al., 2017). As investment in research is becoming increasingly concentrated on improving the evidence base for effective labour market programmes and policies for youth, this note aims to provide guidance for evaluators and researchers to ensure that findings and recommendations are integrated into employment-related policy frameworks, national strategies and other policy formulation processes involving young people.

Types of evidence-based research

The development and delivery of evidence-based research and analysis is an important function of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its partners for shaping thinking on employment globally and influencing policy-making. Over the past years, the ILO has initiated several major research initiatives aimed at filling knowledge gaps and providing evidence essential for informed policy-making at the country level. Of particular note are a series of reports providing new quantitative estimates of youth employment, child labour, forced labour, domestic workers and migrant workers. These efforts were instrumental in the successful inclusion of decent work objectives into the Sustainable Development Goals, many of which will be monitored and assessed by the ILO going forward.

The ILO's work in evidence-based research can be described in three overarching categories:

Diagnostic research: Understanding barriers and opportunities for programming and policy-making. Examples include:
- ▶ employment diagnostic analysis
- ▶ value chain analysis
- ▶ skills forecasting.

Descriptive research: Normative and observational in nature, whose main goal is to monitor outputs and outcomes of programmes. Examples include:
- ▶ performance evaluations
- ▶ observational analysis, qualitative focus.

Causal research: Evaluations that establish causality between interventions and their impact. Examples include:
- ▶ randomized controlled trials (RCTs)
- ▶ quasi-experimental evaluations.

DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH

As seen in Note 1, employment diagnostic analyses provide a means to comprehensively analyse the labour market and employment situations of youth. An employment diagnostic is usually the first step in supporting the development of national employment policies and strategies, serving as a basis for policy dialogue and often leading to policy design.

Recent examples of employment diagnostics informing the formulation of national employment policies include the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) in Somoa (see box 7.1) and the employment diagnostic of Bangladesh (see box 7.2).

Similar examples of the SWTSs contributing to national youth employment policy development

can be observed in Uganda (Ministry of Labour and Training Authorities' National Action Plan for Youth Employment) and in Ukraine (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and the Institute for Demography and Social Research's new law on "Employment of the Population").[1]

DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH

Descriptive research on the results of individual programmes and projects is generated through monitoring and analysis, as well as programme performance assessments. In many organizations, the performance assessment of projects and policy is the function of an evaluation unit, which is responsible for reporting on results and effectiveness of investments. While the structure of such approaches does not allow researchers to definitively determine the causal linkages between programmes and outcomes, these reviews ensure that programmes are achieving their goals, and in cases where outcomes are not positive, allow readjustment of programme implementation.

Many of the findings of these evaluations and performance monitoring have been made public. The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) Standard for Results Measurement requires programmes to publish their monitoring data in the form of an annual report. In the case of the ILO, performance evaluation summaries are made public through the i-Track database (see box 7.3). Over the past decade, this database shows 89 evaluations concentrated on youth employment, an example of a systematic and user-friendly approach to access information about what works in youth employment.

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[1]   For more information, see Klein, 2016.

Box 7.1: School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) in Samoa

The Samoan SWTS, implemented in 2012, was a joint project of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour and the ILO. The results of the study, published in 2014, reveal a high youth unemployment rate of 16.7 per cent, as well as a high youth labour underutilization rate, which is a measure of the skills mismatch in the labour market, of 52.2 per cent.

Dialogue and knowledge transfer between the ILO and the Samoan Government has had a direct link to policy development on youth employment. The SWTS coincided with a government plan to implement a national youth action plan, the Samoan National Action Plan on Youth Employment (SNAP). SNAP utilized the original country report as well as supporting a re-analysis of the SWTS information to inform the development of the action plan. Subsequently, the SNAP approach was incorporated into the Samoa One United Nations Youth Employment Programme, which is currently being implemented.

CAUSAL RESEARCH

As set out in Note 5, impact evaluations are the major method for generating cause-and-effect knowledge; that is, for determining whether observed changes in the economic or social well-being of beneficiaries can be attributed to a particular intervention, project or programme.

Box 7.2: Employment diagnostic in Bangladesh

In the Bangladesh national employment policy formulation example, particular attention was paid to the specific population of young people. In addition to youth unemployment, the level of labour underutilization is very high among the youth in Bangladesh. Nearly 38 per cent of the country's youth are neither in the labour force nor in education or training. A further 20 per cent are in irregular employment, while 4.6 per cent were unemployed (ILO, 2014). A revision to the Bangladesh Labour Act was approved in 2013 in the wake of a number of major industrial incidents in the ready-made garment sector. Policy improvements were made in the areas of freedom of association, collective bargaining and safety in the workplace, all areas where young women in factory settings were disproportionately affected.

Despite these improvements, the Government of Bangladesh sought a deeper understanding of the economic situation facing youth. Therefore, at the request of the Ministry of Labour in Bangladesh, the ILO and the Asian Development Bank completed an Employment Diagnostic Analysis in 2015. Of particular importance for the Government of Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh economy as a whole, is the issue of migrant and overseas employment, a major source of employment for the young and growing labour force and an important source of foreign exchange earnings. The diagnostic analysis called for better coordination mechanisms to manage migratory flows, focusing on reducing exploitation of migrant workers and closer collaboration with recruitment agencies. In 2015, the Government of Bangladesh passed the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act, enacting many of the recommendations generated by the employment diagnostic analysis.

Box 7.3: i Track database and i-eval Discovery

All evaluation reports produced by the ILO are systematically scheduled and stored in the i Track database. This includes mandated independent or internal evaluations, as well as joint, external, impact and high-level evaluations that cover the ILO's work. The knowledge generated from these evaluations in terms of lessons learned, emerging good practices and recommendations is also stored in the i Track database and made available through i-eval Discovery. This information is meant to support organizational learning and can be used to inform the design and implementation of ILO programmes and projects.

The purpose of i-eval Discovery is to encourage the use of evaluations. The application visually displays all of the ILO's evaluations, recommendations, lessons learned and good practices through a user-friendly mapping feature. Information can be tailored to meet specific criteria by applying various filters, such as by year, country/region, theme, evaluation type, timing and nature (see http://www.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery).

An impact evaluation can take place at different levels, either at the level of an individual intervention, a specific policy area, such as youth employment, or a whole policy regime or system. An impact evaluation can also cut across all three levels, as in the example of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in Mexico and Brazil (see box 7.4).

While impact evaluations are often criticized for being too academic in nature, there has been a push in recent years for impact evaluation experts to engage in policy debates and processes more directly, changing their roles from "doing research for development" to "doing research as development". However, given the technical nature of causal research, it is often difficult for researchers to communicate their findings effectively to policy-makers.

Impact evaluation is a particularly important aspect of policy-oriented research because the nature of its design provides for an

Box 7.4: Impact evaluation of conditional cash transfers (CCT) programmes

Conditional cash transfer programmes have spread rapidly over the past decade in the developing world. CCT programmes provide cash transfers to poor families, which are contingent on children's educational and health investments, typically school attendance and regular medical check-ups, with the goal of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. As of 2010, all but two countries in Latin America and over 15 countries in Asia and Africa had a CCT programme as part of their social protection systems.

Impact evaluation has long been an integral part of the design of CCT programmes. Much of the popularity of CCT programmes can be attributed to the results of the evaluation, in terms of the culture of policy evaluation, the delivery of social protection and how it affected government regimes directly.

The first generation of CCT programmes and associated impact evaluation studies produced considerable evidence suggesting that these programmes demonstrably helped to lift many families out of poverty and have improved short-term educational, nutritional and health outcomes of millions of children worldwide.

The Nicaraguan CCT programme reduced the fraction of participating households below the poverty line (i.e. the poverty rate) by 5 percentage points after two years, and the Colombian CCT programme reduced the poverty rate by 3 percentage points over four years. The evidence from programmes in Mexico and Honduras, however, suggests no discernible impact on the poverty rate among programme participants.

More recent evidence from a wider array of CCT programmes in Latin America indicates that CCTs may contribute to reducing poverty rates at the national level.

Evidence using household data from 13 Latin American countries suggests that, relative to an internationally comparable poverty line of US$2.5 per day in 2005 purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, national poverty rates would be 1 to 2 percentage points higher (approximately 13 per cent higher relative to average baseline rates) in the absence of CCTs.

Source: Saavedra and García, 2012; Saavedra, 2016.

accurate assessment or estimation of causality in the context of evaluating a programme or project. Impact evaluations are structured around the careful identification of a counterfactual, a means of estimating what outcomes for beneficiaries would have been, had the programme or project not been available to them.

However, given their ability to attribute causality, or at least provide a targeted estimate of a programme or policy's direct impact on beneficiaries, impact evaluation can be particularly useful in bringing order and rationality to the making of policy. While it is recognized that no single piece of research will result in any particular policy change, impact evaluation's ability to determine results and attribute changes to public interventions is unique in (a) helping governments decide whether to continue or terminate particular policy initiatives; (b) expanding and institutionalizing successful programmes and policies and cutting back unsuccessful ones; and (c) determining which programmes to modify and which components of the programme were in need of modification (Weiss, 1999).

Table 7.1 identifies additional types of policy measures that can be achieved through impact evaluation and other types of causal research.

Table 7.1: Types of policy impact objectives to be achieved through impact evaluation	
Levels	**Dimensions**
• Project, programme or policy • Policy area • Policy regime or system	• Attitudinal change • Discursive commitments • Procedural change • Policy content • Behavioral change
Outcome dependent on geography (where?) and timing (when?)	

Source: Adapted from Jones and Villar (2008).
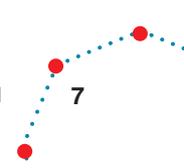
The system shaping evidence uptake

While both researchers and policy-makers aim to improve the delivery of programmes and the effectiveness of policy, they are operating on different "sides" of the evidence system. On the supply-side, researchers generate knowledge, and on the demand-side, policy-makers use evidence.

Unfortunately, supply-side and demand-side actors often work without a full understanding of the context in which the other operates. There is often a lack of awareness of the technical nature of research work, on the one hand, and the complexities of policy development and implementation, including the budget cycle, on the other hand. This can often lead to misunderstandings.

Here, we outline the major factors shaping evidence uptake on the two sides of the system. Improving evidence consumption depends on both the supply (by the researcher) and demand (from the policy-maker) coming together in the policy process, as depicted in figure 7.1. We also therefore look at the important function of "exchange" – which determines how well supply-and-demand factors interact.

If constraints to evidence uptake lie mainly in supply or exchange, then approaches to improve research communication and dissemination can be adopted that will help to facilitate the communication of knowledge and enable learning on the policy side. If the problem is on the demand side, then strategies can focus on improving awareness and absorption of research inside government, expanding research management expertise and developing a culture of "policy learning" (Stone, 2009, pp. 303–315).

Many of these strategies focus on higher-level policy development; however, evaluation teams focused on smaller, non-government programmes should also be engaged in efforts to effectively disseminate findings from their programmes. At the same time, policy-makers should seek out lessons from such programmes, as much of the innovation in youth programming and policy is found therein, and initial learning in such programmes can provide important guidance in the context of scaling up similar interventions on a national level.

THE SUPPLY SIDE: PROVIDERS OF EVIDENCE

Suppliers of evidence may include government-oriented evaluation units, although they more often comprise policy-oriented international institutions, such as the ILO, economic development-oriented think tanks, academic institutions and private research firms.

Evidence-based research can also be conducted by individual researchers. Despite the new expectations that urge researchers and evaluators to engage more deeply in knowledge transfer, many still accord it a low priority (Jacobsen et al., 2004).

There are several determinants governing the level and quality of supply of evidence-based research (Taylor, 2016), including the following:

▶ **Skills available to generate evidence**: This includes the technical capacity of the institution's research team, the institution's involvement in policy processes and debates, and its political weight within the local context. Here, local research institutions may be better positioned to engage

in effective dissemination within the local policy community than external actors. At the same time, impact evaluation requires a high level of specialized skills in econometrics and evaluation design – skills that local research institutions or developing country researchers may not possess. In either case, strategic partnerships can help to balance the need for technical expertise and local engagement.

FIGURE 7.1: SUPPLY-AND-DEMAND FACTORS THAT GENERATE EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY
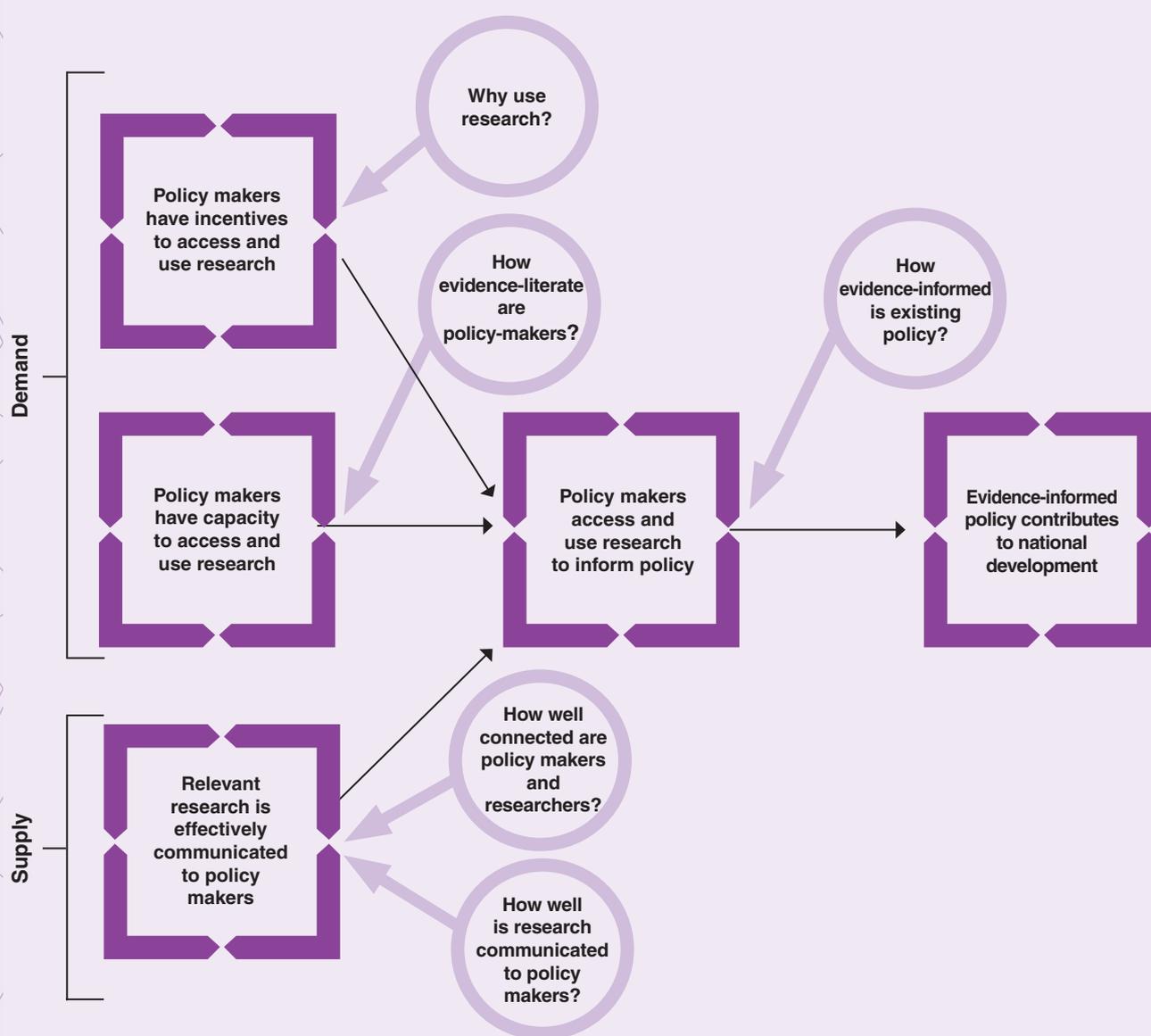
Source: Newman et al., 2013.

▶ **Finance available to generate evidence**: Are institutions able and willing to pay what it costs to generate the amount of evidence required? (Taylor, 2016). As outlined in Note 5, causal research can often be expensive, requiring significant resources over a number of years. However, low-cost methods for generating causal, descriptive and diagnostic evidence are available (see Notes 2, 5 and 6), meaning that access to funds is often less of a constraint than people perceive.

▶ **Information available to generate evidence**: In developing economies, programmes frequently operate in data-constrained environments. As set out in Note 3, the quality of programme monitoring systems – and quantity of information collected about programme performance – is often a key determinant of whether a quality evaluation can take place. Impact evaluations are sometimes commissioned when success is predicted, since funders are more likely to make money available when they think there is a good chance for positive evaluation results. The supply of evidence is therefore highly constrained by selection bias (Taylor, 2016).

▶ **The enabling environment for research:** All countries and the national research associations that operate within their borders, have rules to govern data collection and other research activities. These rules are in place to ensure confidentiality and protect identities of research respondents. These rules will directly or indirectly affect the quality and amount of evidence and data produced.

TIP

Increase evidence uptake: The proximity evaluators have to decision making structures is an important element, which may affect uptake. The location of researchers within a government agency, such as a ministry of labour or ministry of planning, or embedded in a workers' group or employers' association, may help to ensure that evaluation efforts are embedded within operations and that researchers are involved in all levels of programme design and implementation. However, if researchers are not sufficiently independent, it may affect the credibility of findings.

A key supply-side norm is what is considered "acceptable" evidence by those financing its production, rather than those demanding the evidence for use (Taylor, 2016). Heated debates are ongoing between researchers about what constitutes an acceptable level of "rigour" in evidence generation. Yet rigour – the quality of being extremely thorough and careful – is not a binary concept or the domain of one particular methodology alone.

In the youth employment setting, evidence-based research and impact evaluation are relatively new research approaches that have yet to secure much traction in the policy sphere. This is especially the case for RCT impact evaluation methods. As described in Note 5, the RCT approach provides researchers with a unique capacity to deliver a carefully constructed counterfactual to programme participation, which allows for an accurate estimate of causality. Yet, RCT is only one type of evaluation among many trying to establish causality.

THE EXCHANGE FUNCTION: COMMUNICATING RESEARCH

Evidence is only useful where it is usable, and to be usable it has to be communicated in a way that can be understood (Taylor, 2016).

Problems with communicating evidence are sometimes attributed to the "ivory tower" complex, which sees the academic community as operating aloof from the practical, real-world considerations of policy-makers and using a language that is considered unintelligible to the general public. Researchers focus, first and foremost, on delivering comprehensive assessments, and, as such, prioritize investments that ensure the implementation of methods and data collection instruments that maximize their ability to capture results. More broadly, evaluators and evaluation studies themselves are generally assessed on the quality of the study, rather than the dissemination of its results. In particular, academics engaged in impact evaluations are incentivized to undertake research that is publishable in academic journals, which may not align with the information needs of policy-makers or the effective dissemination of learning to a wider audience.

In order to bridge the worlds of evidence suppliers and users more effectively, a number of steps can be taken:

▶ **Develop a communication strategy:** Effective learning requires effective communication with stakeholders, based within a communication strategy carefully developed as an integral part of the project's initial evaluation plan. The effectiveness of the institution's communications policies and products is key, as are its staff's communicational skills. Reinforcing the need for local presence, the institution's networks and ongoing relationships with policy-makers and other stakeholders can also facilitate a greater degree of policy influence.

▶ **Align research with policy processes and evidence gaps:** In considering policy influence, researchers need to have a thorough understanding of the policy-making priorities, structures and frameworks in place and how research questions can respond to these. This includes opportunities to answer policy-makers' questions on "what works" in youth employment. The more closely evaluations are aligned with policy-makers' needs, the more likely they are to be used in policy-making processes.

▶ **Build coalitions:** Researchers and research institutions will be rewarded if they make the effort to better understand the standard processes for programme investment and policy reform within a country at the government level. This includes taking time to identify the key actors (ministers and support staff) and their roles, as well as external actors who can help in forging links with these actors. It also means being aware of the budget cycle and the timetable for its development. Being ready with the right information when ministries are beginning to prepare next year's budget can guarantee a receptive audience looking for policy and programme solutions. Collaboratively developed research agendas, such as the impact research agenda on youth employment developed by the Taqeem Evaluation Council (see box 7.5), can be used by researchers to guide future evaluations towards the most pressing policy questions.

▶ **Get the timing right:** There is a fundamental tension between the time required for substantive research, particularly impact evaluations, and the information needs associated with efficient programme delivery. Striking the right balance in evaluation design – one that allows for a comprehensive assessment of outcomes while ensuring timely inputs for programme rollout or continuation – is difficult but essential.

Box 7.5: Taqeem Evaluation Council: What Works in Youth Employment

The Taqeem (meaning "evaluation" in Arabic) Initiative is a programme of the ILO, supported by Silatech and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose goal is to increase the effectiveness of youth employment and enterprise interventions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through improved results measurement and evaluation practices within the community of youth-serving organizations. The Taqeem Initiative has sought to secure this goal through the provision of targeted training opportunities, technical support and small grants to facilitate the implementation of results frameworks by participating organizations.

In 2014, the ILO established the Taqeem Evaluation Council to play a strategic role in the Taqeem Initiative. The Council has a central role in the initiative's aim of developing capacity to produce and use sound monitoring and evaluation (M&E), impact research and evaluation evidence in the MENA region. This is achieved by involving local and international evaluation institutions and youth employment experts as members in the Council and by creating knowledge-sharing modalities through online, virtual and face-to-face platforms.

The Taqeem Council includes the following institutions: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), American University in Cairo (AUC), American University of Sharjah (AUS), Centre de Recherche en Économie et Statistique (CREST), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (RWI), Silatech, Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) and the World Bank.

Source: See http://www.ilo.org/taqeem.

Box 7.6: Impact evaluation and youth employment in Tunisia

Tunisia's National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications (ONEQ), under the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE), demonstrates a strong commitment to impact evaluation principles. Two major impact evaluations on youth employment have been championed by the Ministry. The first is a quasi-experimental approach assessing the impact of employment subsidies: "Tackling graduate unemployment through employment subsidies: An assessment of the SIVP programme in Tunisia".

The second is an RCT focused on entrepreneurship, "Entrepreneurship and self-employment among university graduates: Evidence from a randomized trial in Tunis". The positive experiences and opportunities for evidence creation developed under the two evaluations led MFPE to sign a memorandum of understanding with the International Initiative on Impact Evaluation.

For more information, see Broecke, 2012 and Premand et al., 2012.

THE DEMAND SIDE: THE USERS OF EVIDENCE

Demand for evidence is not limited to government policy-makers. Users may include other ILO constituents (workers' groups and employers' groups), as well as parastatal organizations, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth associations and private sector firms. In some country contexts where data and research is constrained, officials tend to depend heavily on the evidence put forward by multilateral and bilateral donors to inform national policy processes.

Demand for evidence is shaped by a complex array of economic, cultural, political and historical factors. Policy-makers tend to be heavily influenced by their own values, experience, expertise and judgement, the influence of lobbyists and pressure groups, and pragmatism based on the amount of resources they have available. The most important determinants for the level of demand for evidence based research are listed below and then further elaborated in figure 7.2:

► **The institutional setting:** Governmental systems should have effective processes and rules of operation to ensure that evaluation evidence is part of the policy-making process. This requires ministries, agencies and public employees to be held to account for ensuring that programmes and intervention investments are aligned with documented evidence. To achieve this end, effective evidence-based programming is, more often than not, correlated with democratic governance: the more democratic the system of government, the more open it will be to rigorous assessment, learning from mistakes and evidence of effectiveness. On the basis of its accountability to citizen interests and taxpayers, a democratic system creates space for unbiased, independent research. For non-democratic governments, ensuring this accountability is more difficult and depends largely on signalling from the top regarding the importance of evidence-based programming and policy development and the transparency of its implementation.

► **Cultural norms:** There are fundamental differences in the policy-making process between different countries, borne out by cultural and historical factors. Some prefer arguments based solely on theory and do not place much value on empirical evidence, while others are more data-driven. Even in countries that have invested heavily in evidence-based policy, such as the United Kingdom (see box 7.8), demand is far from homogenous among either ministries or policy-makers. A former chief economist for the UK Department for International Development, for example, says that their policy decisions are made on the basis of a compelling case based primarily on theory, since any evidence base, no matter how rigorous, will always be incomplete (quoted in ILO, 2015).

▶ **Knowledge management:** One important area for facilitating learning across an organization is having well-functioning processes for "externalizing" the tacit knowledge generated in the process of working, collecting emerging insights and turning them into something explicit and easy to share (see an example in box 7.8). This includes having systems in place (usually digital in nature) that are designed to store this and other policy-relevant knowledge so that staff around the government or policy organizations can access the knowledge and use it as and when needed.

▶ **Skills required to utilize evidence:** It is essential that policy-makers and support staff have the capacity to read, interpret and apply evidence in policy-making. In terms of youth employment, this includes a prior knowledge of and specialization in youth employment topics and a familiarity with impact evaluation. At the individual level, individuals need to have a broad range of capacities including: knowledge

Box 7.7: UK's Department for Work and Pensions

The United Kingdom's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is a leader in evaluating national active and passive labour market policies and committing to evidence-based policy making. This is illustrated by its historic investment in externally commissioned research, its internal teams of analysts, its commitment to publishing all evaluation results, and its active use of research and evaluation findings to inform policy development and review.

Recently, the UK's public expenditure environment has constrained resources for policy delivery and evaluation, meaning that the DWP must ensure its investments provide best value for money. These financial pressures place an increased emphasis on evaluating what works, and at what cost, and ensuring that investments in evaluation answer the key questions they were designed to address.

The vast majority of the DWP's evaluation activities are delivered by external contractors, and the Department commits a high level of funding and staff time to supporting its commitment to evaluation. A wide range of methodologies are employed in DWP evaluations, ranging from qualitative interviews to the use of more sophisticated quasi-experimental methods and randomized control trials to identify gross and net impacts.

In all cases, policy implications of evaluation reports are summarized for the minister, as well as for steering meetings and project and programme management boards attended by key decision-makers. All evaluations are made available to the public, including those with negative results.

A good example of this is the "Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot", a programme which initiated interventions with individuals on sick leave for between six and 26 weeks to support the return to work, with a view to rolling out the approach nationally if proven to be effective. Initial take-up was slow, although it picked up later in the piloting period, and the evaluation, which featured a randomized control trial, showed that the pilot was having no impact and so was not continued.

about what research is and how it can be used; skills in searching for and evaluating research information; critical thinking skills to absorb, critique and amalgamate information; and a positive attitude towards research evidence.

FIGURE 7.2: EXAMPLES OF FACTORS WHICH DETERMINE LEVEL OF DEMAND FOR RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Capacity ←————————————————————————→ Motivation

Evidence search skills

Ability to evaluate information

Attitude towards research

Personal belief system

Perverse incentives

Access to internet

Procedures for use of evidence

Rent seeking

Party politics
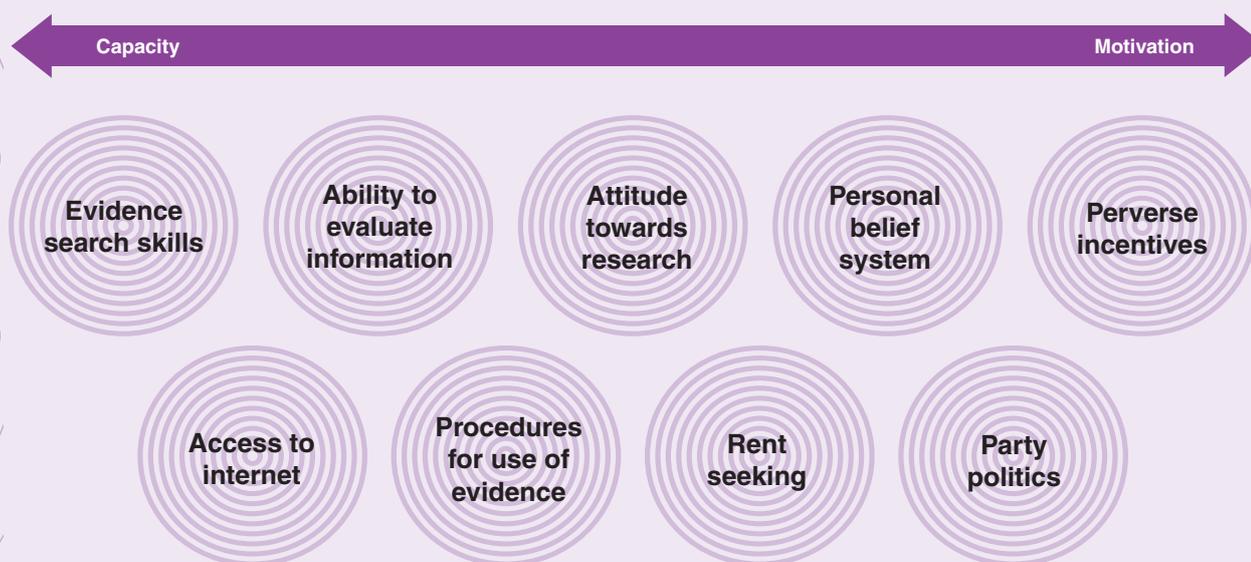
Box 7.8: Global Public–Private Knowledge Sharing Platform on Skills for Employment

The Global Public–Private Knowledge Sharing Platform on Skills for Employment (Global KSP) aims to help strengthen the links between education and training to boost the creation of productive and decent work by sharing evidence, evaluation, approaches, knowledge and experiences that governments, employers, workers and international organizations have found effective in addressing these issues of common concern across the world.

The Global KSP uses the G20 Training Strategy as its foundation and builds on it by providing evidence on how training and skills strategies, and policies and systems work, with their related requirements for resources and engagement by stakeholders and in combination with other policies and institutions. The Platform enables the exchange of ideas and experiences among policy-makers, the private sector, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, academic institutions, bilateral agencies and other international organizations that produce evidence on skills development to improve employability and productivity.

Source: See http://www.skillsforemployment.org

Box 7.9: Evidence-based policy-making in Rwanda

Rwanda is making tremendous strides in terms of resolving long-standing issues of poverty, health and employment. In the context of post-conflict reconstruction and redevelopment, the Rwandan Government's efforts to improve development outcomes for the country's people have garnered the support of international agencies, including the UN and the World Bank, for its efforts to increase access to housing, healthcare and work, particularly for women, and for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals laid out by the country.

Part and parcel of this success has been a commitment to evidence-based policy-making. In contrast to many low-income countries, Rwanda has taken steps to ensure that major investments in development programmes are built on solid evidence and studies that ensure learning. In 2011, Rwanda signed a programme of support with the UN, which allocated nearly US$2 million to strengthening monitoring and building local M&E capacities. In 2015, the United Nations Population Fund highlighted the role that evidence-based data has played in facilitating development, social planning and the allocation of resources.

Rwanda's commitment to impact evaluation is particularly noteworthy. Working with international donors, NGOs and research institutions, Rwanda has supported a large number of experimental and quasi-experimental studies in recent years. Examples are listed below:

- **Young people, jobs and agricultural cooperatives:** Using a quasi-experimental design, the ILO evaluated the effects of an intervention to enhance cooperative managers' business skills, cooperatives' overall competitiveness and cooperative members' income and employment conditions, as well as to improve food security in Rwanda. The research explored the short-term impact of the intervention on the employment, organizational, marketing and financial outcomes of agriculture cooperatives (ILO, 2017a).
- **Literacy boost in Rwanda:** This two-year RCT finalized in 2016, was a partnership between the Rwanda Education Board, Save the Children and Stanford University, assessed the impact of Literacy Boost's community-based learning against school-based learning in raising literacy rates among children (Friedlander et al, 2016).
- **Life skills and work readiness:** Over the period 2013–2014, Education Development Center, Inc. undertook an RCT of the Akazi Kanoze programme, which provides youth in Rwanda with job-relevant life skills and work-readiness training, as well as links to employment and self-employment opportunities. Despite an initial decline in employment in both the treatment and control group, a higher percentage of youth in the treatment group were employed after the end of the Akazi Kanoze programme (Alcid, 2014).
- **Promoting agricultural technology adoption:** J-PAL and TechnoServe, an agri-business NGO, evaluated the impact of agricultural business and technology training in coffee-growing regions in Rwanda using an RCT. The study compared villages that received no training with villages that received low-, medium- and high-density training. Preliminary data suggests that the training helped farmers to improve their growing practices, but that the farmers are more likely to adopt those technologies and practices that require the least effort to apply (Pamuk et al, 2014).
- **Promoting father's education:** Promundo and the Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) launched an RCT in 2015, in collaboration with the Rwandan Ministry of Health, to evaluate the impact of fathers' group education. The study will assess the impact of fathers' group education on family planning, maternal and child health, gender attitudes, violence, risky behaviours and men's health (Doyle et al, 2014).
- **Teacher training and entrepreneurship education:** J-PAL is undertaking an RCT of curriculum reform to promote entrepreneurship education in Rwanda. This study examines the effect of a teacher-training programme on student academic, economic and labour market outcomes, on the understanding that entrepreneurship training will only be successful if teachers deliver the material effectively (forthcoming).

Where demand for evidence is deemed to be low, there are a number of strategies that can be deployed to boost prospects for uptake (adapted from Dhaliwal and Tulloch, 2012 in table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Strategies to increase demand for evidence	
Problem	**Potential solution**
Political considerations override evidence-generated data	Target policy-makers who are open to evidence, so they use it as an input along with other factors, like political agenda, budget constraints and administrative capacity
Low policy-maker capacity to utilize, generate or institutionalize evidence	Train staff at implementing organizations, establish M&E divisions, recruit competent people and motivate them via formal linkages with academics
Short-term horizon of policy-makers	Combine short-term outcome measures with long-term outcomes and encourage phased roll-outs to offer the opportunity to evaluate programmes before major scale-up
Risk-aversion and failure-avoidance inclinations on the part of policy-makers	Set up institutions that allow innovation, space for "safe to fail" programmes and encourage a higher level of risk tolerance
Lack of pressure from civil society or legislature to conduct evaluations	Convince these institutions to demand evaluations via participation in civil society debate

Box 7.10: Evaluation clinics and communities of practice

The ILO provides technical assistance and training to partners with the objective of creating a critical mass of evaluation expertise among the social partners and country counterparts. Evaluation clinics are workshops on M&E and impact evaluation, designed to share evaluation tools and techniques, to help youth employment practitioners understand, interpret and translate evaluation evidence. The ILO offers both basic and advanced evaluation training.

Evaluation clinics are held over three to four days and cover the basics of M&E, impact evaluation methods and data collection tools. During the clinics, selected youth employment project teams serve as live case studies, whose options for stronger M&E or impact evaluation are discussed and outlined during group work sessions.

Executive evaluation courses are advanced five-day evaluation training courses which provide academics, evaluators, implementers and researchers with a thorough understanding of rigorous impact evaluation techniques in order to strengthen their capacity to understand, interpret and conduct impact evaluations.

The ILO offers technical assistance through a community-of-practice approach. The community of practice in youth employment is a collaborative approach to building capacity on M&E and impact evaluation and to foster learning and cooperation among youth-serving organizations.

Tools to boost evidence uptake in youth employment

In order to ensure that the evidence base continues to grow and is used effectively, researchers and policy-makers must proactively plan ways to improve research uptake. A number of tools are available to support this.

CONDUCT A CONTEXT ANALYSIS

To facilitate the use of evidence based research for promoting a youth employment-focused policy or practice, the first step is often to map the policy context surrounding that issue and identify the key factors that may influence the policy process. The RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework was developed by the Overseas Development Institute as a conceptual framework to help researchers and policy entrepreneurs understand the role that evidence-based research plays, among other issues, in influencing policy (see figure 7.3). The four components of the framework can provide valuable, in-depth information regarding

FIGURE 7.3: THE RAPID FRAMEWORK

The **context**
political structures/processes,
institutional pressures,
prevailing concepts, policy
streams and windows

Links
between
policy-
makers and
other stakeholders,
relationships, voice,
trust, networks, the
media and other
intermediaries

The
evidence,
credibility,
methods,
relevance, use
how the message is
packaged and
communicated
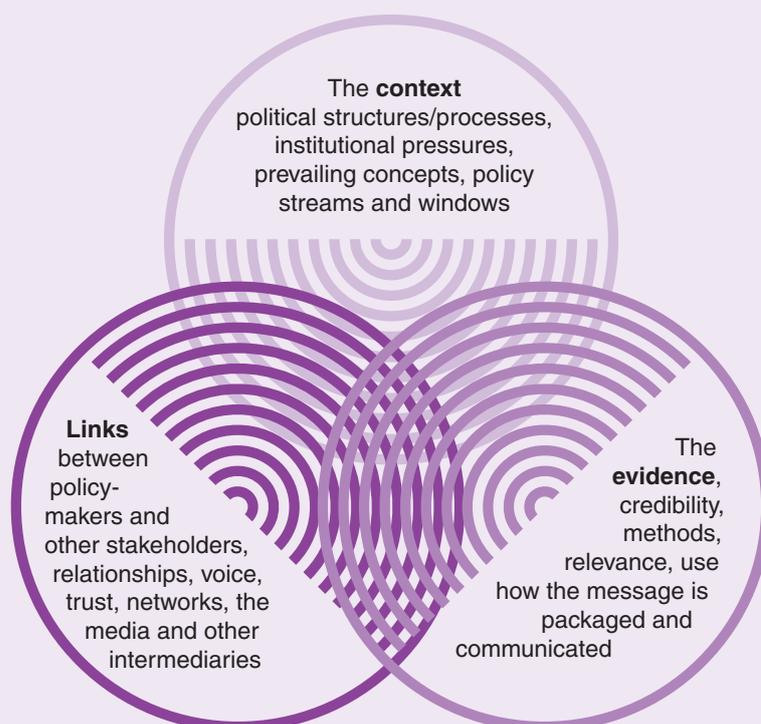
policy windows, key policy actors and networks, gaps in the existing evidence, alternative means of communication, and trends and changes in the external environment.

RAPID has developed a simple checklist of questions to accomplish this, including questions about the key external agents, the political context itself, available research-based evidence and the identification of other stakeholders who can help. This can also help you to identify where knowledge and evidence gaps exist and the strategic entry points for policy change.

Within the RAPID framework, the political economy context for evidence production is an important determinant of whether or not the evidence is likely to be taken up and used. Usually, the main driver is the political context, which includes the political system – individual actors and institutions – and the power dynamics both among and within the institutions and actors. This includes, for example, whether the society under review is a relatively open and democratic or a closed and autocratic one, or if it is a fragile and conflict-affected society where political institutions are weak or even non-functioning. These aspects are likely to affect how knowledge circulates and how decisions are taken.

It is also important to consider which elements of knowledge, debate and decision-making are public and how many are not public. Do local communities have access to and any influence over formal power, and if so, how? As part of this analysis, one must examine the context for decision-making within social and political structures, including the role of actors within local communities, and how those determinants are likely to influence ownership, involvement and uptake, and the use of study findings in policy development.

While the political economy context of labour market interventions has always had an important influence on their development, formal context analyses are increasingly being used in youth employment as a key tool to contribute to the advancement of national employment policy and strategies. This is exemplified by the recent deployment of a context analysis in Egypt (see box 7.11).

Box 7.11: Towards evidence-based active labour market programmes in Egypt: Challenges and way forward

In Egypt, the ILO, the Population Council, the American University of Cairo, the Government of Egypt and development partners engaged in a context analysis process to advocate for evidence-based active labour market programmes (ALMPs) for young people. The objective of the exercise was to analyse the youth employment policy framework and engage key stakeholders, as well as to synthesize global evidence from impact evaluations on the effectiveness of youth employment programmes and compare the result to the situation in Egypt. The process and findings are documented in an ILO impact report presented to the Minister of Manpower and Migration and are expected to contribute to the development of a modern set of ALMPs for young people.

Source: ILO, 2017.

BUILD A PLAN FOR EVIDENCE UPTAKE

A youth employment evidence uptake plan outlines the steps for effective policy influence through the envisioned roadmap of actions, products and activities. These elements are structured in a way that leads to the ultimate goal of informing decision-making in the youth employment field. A youth employment evidence uptake plan will help practitioners to think through strategies to encourage youth employment evidence ownership by key stakeholders from the outset, strengthen the demand for information about progress and results, and help to increase the likelihood that findings will be known, understood and used to improve policy and programming.

Objectives

In setting objectives for supporting the uptake of evidence in youth employment policy formulation, it is important to be realistic about the extent of expected achievements. A good evidence uptake objective should be clear about why the changes being proposed are important, who they will affect, what needs to be done to secure these changes, and where the influencer stands in relation to others who are also trying to bring about change. Main objectives for evidence uptake should be determined in light of evidence that evaluators expect to produce and the context in which these results will be communicated. Once objectives have been set, it is sensible to focus on the more immediate objectives and intermediate outcomes that are produced by the strategies and interventions chosen. For the sake of clarity and focus, the number of objectives should be limited to not more than three.

Stakeholder engagement

At an early stage of the research, it is important to map out who the relevant stakeholders are likely to be. Stakeholders are those with a clear interest in the outcomes of the programme or project being studied: as such, they may include policy-makers, civil society organizations, the private sector, other researchers and potential beneficiaries. It is important to recognize that employers' and workers' organizations represent formal partners in any efforts to promote better labour market outcomes, although these organizations' input is often overlooked in strategies that focus on engaging government actors. Importantly, the stakeholders to be engaged may be direct users of the research or those who can support your organization as you plan for uptake. Such "evidence intermediaries" can play an important role in communicating results upwards.

Once you have identified the relevant stakeholders, one should consider an appropriate strategy for the engagement of each. This strategy should be developed on the basis of considering what their (potential) interest is in the intervention at hand and the extent and type of engagement needed to support uptake. Each stakeholder will have different interests and perspectives, informational needs and process for dissemination of results based on those perspectives and needs. Taking time to carefully plan methods of targeting specific stakeholders will ensure the effectiveness of later outreach efforts.

If you intend to target policy-makers, you need to understand the policy-making context and norms in the country or countries in which you are working. This includes having a clear understanding of the basics of the local political system and policy-making structures. For example, one should understand the specific roles of members of parliament versus ministries and members of the government, and in this context how laws are made and programmes developed. Within government,

actors in the civil service may play different roles in programme development for the ministers. Naturally, such considerations vary widely within different governments around the globe. Beyond this, understanding the budget calendar and various steps within the formulation of the budget will help to define entry points for those seeking to provide policy-makers with evidence that can be effectively translated to action.

Once you have a basic understanding of the policy process, it is important to find out how policy on your topic of interest is made in your particular country and what relevant policy processes are ongoing. For example, you may find that there is a team within a particular ministry responsible for youth employment or that there is a parastatal organization which deals with this aspect of policy development or that responsibility for your topic is devolved to local government bodies.

At the same time, when considering specific stakeholders, one should not focus solely on the politicians themselves. Technical advisors and staff (e.g. parliamentary staff or civil servants) play an important role in guiding policy decisions and can be a good source of information about both formal and informal policy-making processes.
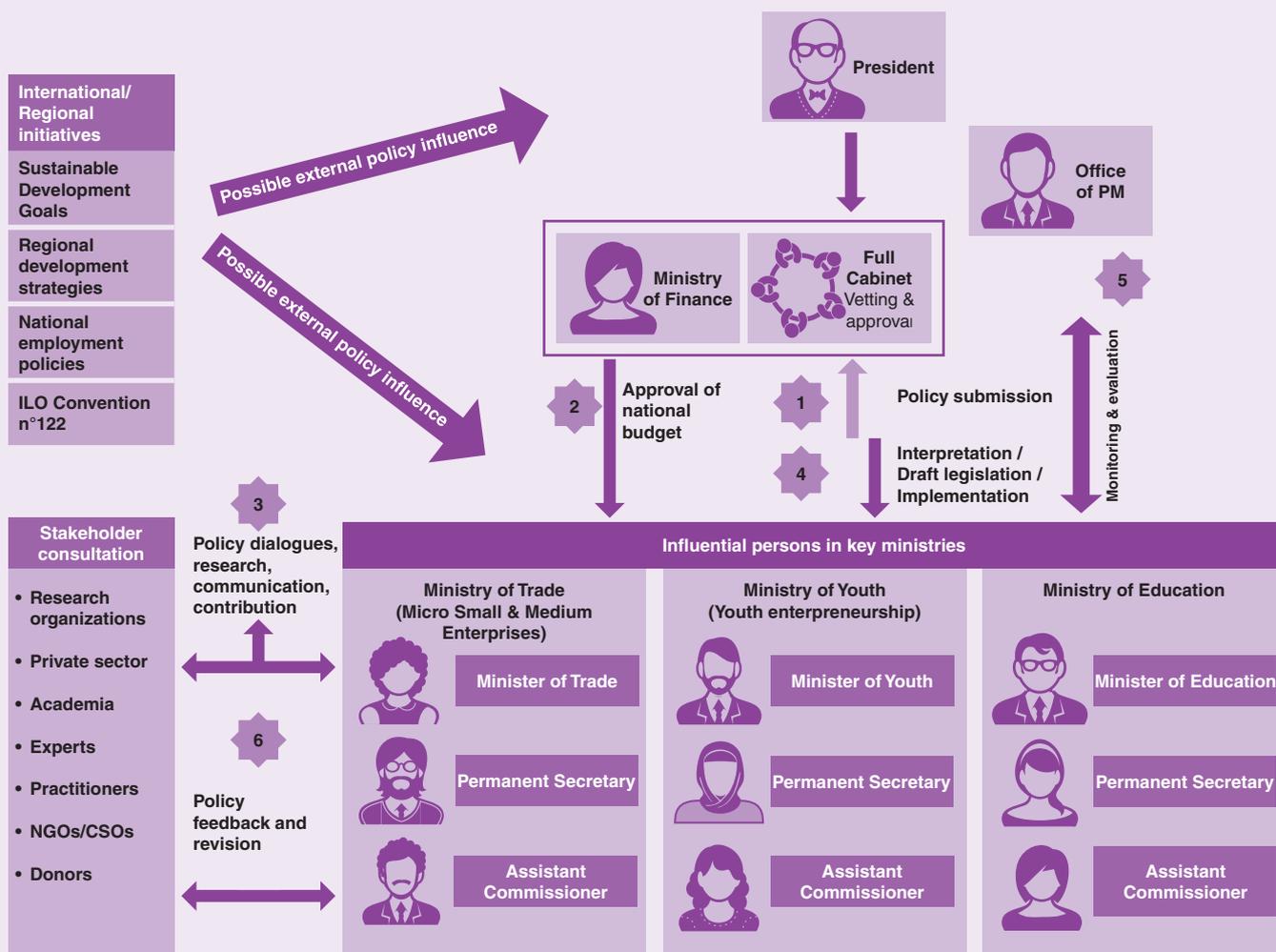
Influence mapping

Influence mapping identifies the individuals and groups with the power to affect key decisions relevant to a particular programme or policy approach (see figure 7.4). Beyond the initial stakeholder listing, influence mapping further investigates the position and motives of each player and the best channels through which to communicate with them. The approach is also known as stakeholder influence mapping, power mapping or the arena of influence.

Continued engagement

Once research work has begun, it can be easy to forget about stakeholders, beyond those directly affiliated with the specific project or programme under consideration, until researchers are ready to communicate findings to them. Ideally, one should maintain engagement with stakeholders throughout the programme implementation and the research study. This allows them to continue to advise the research team on research implementation and keeps the research in their minds, making them more likely to pay attention to the final results. If the findings are challenging (e.g. concerning policy ineffectiveness), having existing relationships with decision-makers is likely to enable more effective discussion about the findings and, in turn, policy learning. One way of keeping decision-makers involved is to invite some of them to sit on a steering committee that meets occasionally to provide guidance on emerging issues.

Once results start to emerge, it is important that you find ways to facilitate not just results dissemination but discussion and feedback. This can be done online (using email lists or discussion fora); however, face-to-face discussions are generally more effective. It is important to go to the decision-makers rather than expecting them to come to you. If you are thinking of holding a meeting to present results, consider whether you might get a higher attendance level by holding the meeting in their "space". For example, you could consider offering to visit a government body and give a briefing to key officials or to visit parliament to talk to members of a relevant parliamentary committee.

FIGURE 7.4: EXAMPLE OF STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

International/Regional initiatives

Sustainable Development Goals

Regional development strategies

National employment policies

ILO Convention n°122

Possible external policy influence

Possible external policy influence

President

Office of PM

Ministry of Finance

Full Cabinet Vetting & approval

5

2 **Approval of national budget**

1 **Policy submission**

4 **Interpretation / Draft legislation / Implementation**

Monitoring & evaluation

3 **Policy dialogues, research, communication, contribution**

Stakeholder consultation

- **Research organizations**
- **Private sector**
- **Academia**
- **Experts**
- **Practitioners**
- **NGOs/CSOs**
- **Donors**

6 **Policy feedback and revision**

Influential persons in key ministries

Ministry of Trade (Micro Small & Medium Enterprises)
- Minister of Trade
- Permanent Secretary
- Assistant Commissioner

Ministry of Youth (Youth enterpreneurship)
- Minister of Youth
- Permanent Secretary
- Assistant Commissioner

Ministry of Education
- Minister of Education
- Permanent Secretary
- Assistant Commissioner

SYNTHESIZE AND REPACKAGE RESEARCH

Research results should be published in formats that are accessible to non-experts and in a style that may be more appropriate for decision-makers than peer-reviewed journal articles. This may include producing research summaries or other written outputs, such as factsheets or writing about the findings in a blog. In the past, there has been a tendency to think that research communication is all about policy briefs. These are not always appropriate for the research in question. It is important to remember that written communications, particularly for your primary stakeholders, are not an end in themselves and should be used alongside other influencing and engagement activities.

Research programmes may choose to share their findings via oral presentations at conferences and meetings. For direct policy dialogue, engagement in short, face-to-face meetings with policy-makers and stakeholders may be most effective. However, as noted above, the effort to influence policy is often a longer-term endeavour to gradually shape perspectives on policy. In this regard, active participation in conferences provides a way to tap into a wider set of stakeholders and

TIP

Writing effective briefs
• Ensure that your research findings are given in the context of the available evidence on the subject.
• Make sure you clearly outline why the research you are presenting is of relevance to policy and what the implications of your findings are.
• Make the brief attractive: policy-makers are more likely to read something visually appealing.
• Summarize the key points and put them on the first page as a clear bulleted list.
• Keep it short – ideally two to four pages.
• Spell out any acronyms and avoid technical jargon (or clearly explain it).

influence policy take-up by a less direct route. In the youth employment space, there are a number of regular conferences that bring together a diverse group of stakeholders and focus on evidence and lessons learned in this space.

Using the media

The media, including television, traditional print media and new media, offer a means not only to engage with policy-makers and

Box 7.12: Policy briefs and working papers

Policy briefs: Policy briefs help to communicate results to internal and external stakeholders. A policy brief presents the core findings of the evaluation in a plainly written format that includes visual material (e.g. graphs and charts) and that makes programmatic and policy recommendations.

Working papers: Researchers can work with the programme team to write working papers and articles for publication in academic journals and to present research findings at universities and research institutions. Working papers can then be published and disseminated through the academic associations to which the investigators belong. Being cited in academic papers is a useful way to increase the visibility of the programme and to create interest among donors.

Look out for these regularly held conferences that share youth employment evidence:

- 3ie's Annual Evidence Week
- IZA Institute of Labour Economics Conference and Seminars
- Economic Research Forum Annual Conference
- Making Cents Youth Economic Opportunities Conference
- ILO Evidence Symposium on Youth Employment

Synthesizing research

The most rigorous approach to synthesizing evidence is a systematic review. However, these can take a long time to produce and are not always the most appropriate synthesis method. TIt is important to select a synthesis method which is appropriate to your specific research. In particular, it is vital to:

- be clear about the methodology you use to search for and select literature for inclusion. This may include mentioning the databases you searched, along with the search string(s) used. You may also choose to carry out hand searching, "snowballing" (i.e. searching the citation lists of other references), applying personal knowledge and/or expert recommendations. For a systematic review the search approach needs to be agreed at the outset
- be explicit about how you will appraise research and make sure you discuss not only the quantity but also the quality of the research evidence
- ensure that you write a clear overview of the synthesis, drawing out the key messages for policy-makers and practitioners.

key stakeholders, but to shift popular perceptions on issues relating to youth employment. However, by and large, researchers and policy-oriented research institutions make little use of the media in their efforts to effect policy change. Journalists are keen to develop stories of interest to viewers and readers, and youth employment is an obvious issue to cover in this regard. The challenge for researchers is to make journalists aware of their work and to present it in a way that provides the journalist with a clear vision of how he or she might report on it in an interesting and intriguing manner. The checklist below is useful when reflecting on how to be camera ready (or newspaper ready) and how to build up a rapid response team within your organization which can respond to relevant media opportunities.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The requisite internal capacity for research uptake includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to access, use, create and communicate research information. Policy-makers and their support teams may lack the full range of knowledge and skills needed to assess research findings and move them towards effective implementation on a policy level. In developing nations, the capacity constraints are particularly noteworthy, given the resource constraints faced by governments in these countries. Making an effective move from practice to policy that builds on this evidence often requires significant investment to support the building of capacity among key decision-makers and their staff. In developing a policy-influence strategy, it is therefore essential to have a capacity-building strategy founded on clear identification of gaps in capacity.

TIP

Becoming a resource for journalists

• Be available. Give reporters, especially those at news services where they work odd hours, your home and mobile numbers and tell them that you are always available.
• Seek out journalists at meetings and public events and give them your business card.
• Be ready to be quoted. Forcing a reporter to call back for authorization to use a quote will reduce the chances of the quote being used. This may necessitate loosening institutional rules regarding media engagement.
• Know the issues. Read and comment intelligently on developments relating to your cause.
• Do not always assume that journalists have received the same information that you have about topical events or relevant news releases.
• Avoid rhetoric and ideological arguments; most journalists have heard all this before.
• Know your facts; never pass on information unless you know it is true.
• Know where to find information or contacts fast and therefore gain a reputation as a good source.

TIP

Making a report or press release more newsworthy

• Develop a short (3–10-page) executive summary.
• Put the summary on your website and include the link in any press release.
• In a press release, cover just a few main facts or statistics, most news stories are succinct.
• Use clear graphs and tables, and provide short, simply written paragraphs.
• Connect the report to a news hook to secure journalist interest.
• If possible, show a change in data from the previous year.
• Create quirky, interesting titles for trends of findings.
• If affiliated with an academic institution, issue releases with their letterhead and use their media office for press contacts.
• Make numbers more meaningful by drawing comparisons or breaking them down into familiar units.
• Inquire into publishing a short summary of the report as a guest opinion editorial for a newspaper.

For the ILO, capacity development is geared towards promoting the institutional capacity of member States, as well as representative organizations of employers and workers, to facilitate meaningful and coherent employment policy and sustainable development. The International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy plays a significant role in providing training for capacity development. The ILO is engaged in capacity development for governments in developing, implementing and evaluating national employment and labour policies targeting youth, but also in developing national skills and training schemes, employment services, labour market information and statistical services, and social security systems.

Capacity development activities in support of employers' organizations on evidence-based research into youth employment have been limited. Building the capacity of employers' organizations in this area is essential to strengthen their policy influence, lobbying efforts and advocacy for particular approaches. Especially relevant is the growing evidence base for "what works" in youth entrepreneurship, on-the-job training and skills development.
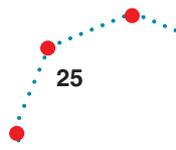
The need is the same for workers' organizations. Workers' organizations represent the interest of employees, following a rights-based approach focusing on the sectoral and workplace level. As democratic organizations, accountable to their membership base, effective monitoring and evaluation is a priority for capacity building, but it largely lies outside traditional perceptions of their remit. To enable workers' organizations to participate more effectively in policy formulation processes on youth employment we need to (i) increase the level of knowledge within workers' organizations on the evidence base for effective youth employment strategies (ii) provide more readily available and accurate labour market information and diagnostics and (iii) facilitate assessment of existing youth skills and knowledge.

Some key areas for capacity development in evidence-based research include:
▶ information literacy
▶ basic to intermediate familiarity with research methodologies (see Note 5)
▶ internal communications
▶ internal knowledge management
▶ academic writing and summarizing skills
▶ skills in finding and appraising evidence-based research on youth employment
▶ thematic topic knowledge: skills development, public employment services, wage subsidies
▶ incentives (or disincentives) to consider evidence.

Substantial improvement in the use of research-based evidence in development policy and practice also requires effort at the partner level. The aim is to improve constituent structures, processes, resources, management and governance. At the system level, efforts should be made to improve national and regional innovation environments.

There are many approaches to achieve this improvement, including:
▶ establishing research partnerships between Northern and Southern research institutions/universities, as well as fostering cooperation between research institutions within different developing regions (South–South cooperation)
▶ providing institutional support for universities in developing countries (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa)
▶ providing support for national research councils
▶ arranging funding for developing country institutions to access the research and technical services of developing country partners
▶ supporting communities of practice among researchers and policy-makers working on a specific development problem or sector
▶ supporting policy-makers in efforts to become more aware of research-based evidence and more discerning consumers of it
▶ sponsoring collaborative regional master's and PhD programmes.

Naturally, for smaller research organizations and for organizations running evaluation studies, the capacity-building support needed to effectively engage policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders can be restricted by resources. With this in mind, such organizations are encouraged to tailor their communications efforts with policy-makers, describing results, methodological approaches and policy implications in clear, simple terms and making staff available to answer any technical questions that policy-makers may have. Moreover, such organizations are encouraged to reach out to larger organizations, particularly international organizations, such as the ILO and the World Bank, as partners in capacity-building efforts to support evidence-based policy engagement.

CONCLUSION

This note encourages researchers and policy specialists to diagnose, plan for and build capacity on evidence-based research on youth employment and resultant learning and knowledge development. The strategies described include employment context analyses, evidence uptake plans, communication strategies and training, with a focus on providing actors on both sides of the relationship with practical advice on effectively engaging with the other and ensuring that all research generated has positive policy implications.

Finally, researchers are advised to use synthesis products, such as systematic reviews and rigorous literature reviews, to understand how their research fits into the existing knowledge base on youth employment. Synthesis products enable programmes to identify research questions which have not yet been answered adequately. This synthesis will help researchers not only to shape research in a way that productively fills knowledge gaps but to communicate more effectively with policy-makers and practitioners in the context of the wider body of evidence and demonstrate how the work currently being undertaken can improve their ability to shape effective youth employment policy and programmes.

KEY POINTS

1. **The evidence base supporting the design, development and implementation of effective labour market policies for young people is growing** and is likely to continue to expand in the future. Better research and better understanding "what works" in getting young people into jobs can come about by combining the following three types of evidence. Diagnostic research understands barriers to and opportunities for programming and policy-making. Descriptive research observes programme outputs and outcomes, while causal research allows to identify causal links between interventions and their impact.

2. **Improving evidence consumption depends on both the evidence supplied by researchers and evidence demand on the part of policy-makers.** Both supply and demand factors need to come together to inform the policy process. Critical factors determining the quality and quantity of supply include the skills, finance and information required to generate evidence, as well as views on what is considered "acceptable" evidence. Demand is influenced by the institutional environment, cultural norms and systems for knowledge management. The exchange of evidence is about how effectively research is communicated to bridge the two "worlds".

3. If constraints to evidence uptake lie mainly on the supply side, then approaches to improve research communication and dissemination can be adopted to help facilitate the communication of knowledge and enable learning on the policy side. If the problem is on the demand side, then strategies can focus on improving awareness and absorption of research amongst policy-makers, expanding research management expertise and developing a culture of "policy learning".

4. **In order to ensure that the evidence base continues to grow and is used effectively, researchers and policy-makers must deploy proactive strategies,** such as conducting a context analysis, developing an evidence uptake plan and synthesizing, packaging and presenting research findings and continuing to develop capacities.
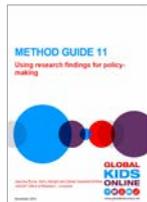
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Case study

UPTAKE OF EVIDENCE ON THE EFFECTS OF SKILLS TRAINING ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S FINANCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND EMPLOYABILITY IN MOROCCO

Learning objectives

By the end of this case study, readers will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

▶ deploy a strategic mix of tools to communicate evaluation findings with maximum impact

▶ use appropriate strategies to boost the demand for evaluations and match demand with evidence supply.

Introduction and case study context

As of 2015, young people aged 15 to 29 years old made up 27 per cent of Morocco's total population. An increasing number of these youth are facing severe challenges in their attempts to secure gainful employment as they transition from school to work. Youth unemployment remains high and almost 90 per cent of young women and about 40 per cent of young men who are not in school are either unemployed or out of the labour force.

Beyond the widely reported obstacles they confront in the employment sphere, Moroccan youth face a broader challenge of economic exclusion. They struggle to establish a sound financial foundation and obtain financial services that would empower them more broadly as economic actors, including savings or loans to leverage future earnings. According to the World Bank, adult Moroccans under the age of 35 have the lowest level of awareness of financial providers and their services. Another World Bank report found that 81.4 per cent of surveyed youth in Morocco identify access to finance as the key obstacle to establishing and running their own business.

The Government and NGOs have increasingly turned to youth-targeted, supply-side interventions to equip Moroccan young people with the skills and knowledge they need as economic actors and to enter the world of work.

This case study focuses on one of these interventions, called 100 Hours to Success, which targeted youth between the ages of 15 and 25 living in Morocco's Oriental Region.[2] Its curriculum consisted of three main modules: financial inclusion, life skills and entrepreneurship. An evaluation was commissioned to assess the impact of 100 Hours to Success on a range of outcomes related to financial inclusion, employability and human capital acquisition. The evaluation included 1,815 youth who expressed an interest in participating in training. Using a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, two groups were created – a treatment group of 915 youth and a control group of 900 youth – that, on average, shared identical characteristics and only differed with respect to programme exposure. A baseline and follow-up survey were carried out three years apart.

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[2] The 100 Hours to Success course was a primary component of the larger YouthInvest project, implemented by the Mennonite Economic Development Associates with funding from the MasterCard Foundation.

Part I: Communicating evaluation results

Evaluation findings

100 Hours to Success had a strong positive and highly significant impact of 27 percentage points on participants' likelihood to maintain a savings account, measured more than two years after the end of intervention. This effect was consistent across gender and age groups and household asset levels. The effect on maintaining a savings account was stronger among women (32 percentage points) than men (21 percentage points). This suggests that women without exposure to the training are less inclined to maintain an independent savings account (due to cultural norms).

Older individuals also seemed to benefit more from the financial knowledge and awareness training, showing a pronounced and significant impact of 0.6 standard deviations on the financial literacy index. There is weak evidence that this was also true, to a smaller extent, for men and youth from more affluent households.

There is no evidence that the effects on maintaining a savings account and financial literacy translate into impacts on actual savings, nor is there any statistically significant increase in self-reported use of a budget in maintaining personal finances.

There is evidence that participants from more affluent households were more likely to have borrowed since the start of the training, perhaps encouraged to see borrowing as a viable option to leverage future earnings and attain financial goals. And although participating may have encouraged youth from less affluent households to seek out loans, a lack of collateral or reputational credit might have constrained higher rates of borrowing.

The study finds no evidence of long-term effects on participants' self-efficacy and self-reported capacities for leadership, teamwork, problem solving and willingness to take risks. The timing of the follow-up survey (a year later than initially planned) is likely to be relevant: three years after the baseline survey, any effect is likely to have faded or been overcome by other factors of influence, including the struggle to secure employment or to achieve other long-term goals.

There were mixed effects on labour market participation and educational choice, with male participants, older participants and those from more affluent households significantly more inclined to stay in education while at the same time remaining outside the labour force. For all three subgroups, the results are driven by two trends: participants tended to remain longer in education and, if they were in education, were less likely to look for a job or to work. This behaviour seems to be consistent with youth investing more in education, both through longer attendance and by devoting less time to labour market activities. There is some rationale for considering that the subgroups' exposure to the training led some of their members to consider that investing in education would help them meet their long-term goals more readily than entering a difficult labour market.

There is no evidence that participating in the training systematically affected long-term labour market outcomes or choices related to educational attainment for women, younger and less affluent training participants.

A high level of attrition in the follow-up survey, which essentially halved the sample size compared with the baseline survey, reduced the study's statistical power. This factor severely limited options to disaggregate findings by relevant socio-economic, demographic and geographical categories.

Discussion topics

1. The Government counterpart for 100 Hours to Success was the Ministry of Interior, and particularly their National Human Development Initiative (INDH). The head of the INDH wants a three-line summary on the impact evaluation findings and their implications for Moroccan youth. What would you write?

2. The INDH team want to know which tools they should use to increase uptake of the evaluation evidence. Can you map out a step-by-step process for them?

Part II: Building demand

Soon after the evaluation was completed, the Head of the INDH read an article in a popular development newsletter which said:

"Experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies require a 'dosing' intervention model, where a standard one-size-fits all output – like a training course – is delivered to all participants, regardless of their individual situation. It is like giving out an identical pill to all patients who are thought to have a particular disease. This requires a plausible counterfactual (finding a group large enough to represent a case similar to those receiving the intervention). On these terms, it is easier for some sorts of programmes to demonstrate beneficial impact, and harder for others. It suits, for example, the provision of vaccines and school dinners, or cash transfers and training.

Work in other areas is less amenable to such approaches. This includes communication and advocacy, where many complex, interacting factors produce change (rather than any single intervention), and sector-wide approaches, where it is impossible to identify a plausible comparison group to represent what would have happened without the intervention. In a climate where policy decisions are made based on 'evidence' alone, these types of complex areas may come under unwarranted pressure, or lose funding, as they cannot be so easily evaluated. This bias is not only unjustified, it could generate incentives that go against key practices and hard-learned lessons about aid effectiveness, accountability and learning, and how sustainable change happens. Evidence-based approaches to impact therefore endanger learning for development interventions."[4]

The newsletter was widely distributed in the INDH. INDH staff are now worried that the experimental evaluation, while showing interesting results, could lead to biased policy-making.

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[4] Adapted from Jones, 2009.

Discussion topics

1. What would you do to build demand within the INDH for the evaluation evidence?

2. Do you agree with the article? Is there a risk of this type of policy-making bias?