

The KENYA INSTITUTE for PUBLIC  
POLICY RESEARCH and ANALYSIS

# Strengthening the Link Between Policy Research and Implementation

*Kang'ethe Wamaitha Gitu*



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# **Strengthening the Link Between Policy Research and Implementation**

**Kang'ethe Wamaita Gitu**

**Kenya Institute for Public Policy  
Research and Analysis**

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## **KIPPRA in Brief**

The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) is an autonomous institute whose primary mission is to conduct public policy research leading to policy advice. KIPPRA's mission is to produce consistently high-quality analysis of key issues of public policy and to contribute to the achievement of national long-term development objectives by positively influencing the decision-making process. These goals are met through effective dissemination of recommendations resulting from analysis and by training policy analysts in the public sector. KIPPRA therefore produces a body of well-researched and documented information on public policy, and in the process assists in formulating long-term strategic perspectives. KIPPRA serves as a centralized source from which the Government and the private sector may obtain information and advice on public policy issues.

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## Foreword

The subject matter of this paper, strengthening the link between policy research and implementation is at the heart of many of us charged with giving advice to policy-makers based on objective research. While many of the researchers working in research institutions such as the Kenya Institute for public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPAR), universities and the African Centre for Economic Growth (ACEG) and Tegemeo are trained in undertaking rigorous analysis of policy issues, most are not equipped to market the results of their analysis to policy-makers. It is also true that various bottlenecks within the policy making process weaken the link between policy research and implementation. In Kenya, much good research work that is documented in numerous books and papers has not found its way to the ultimate consumers – the policy-makers. Thus, researchers are primarily involved in producing work that does not contribute to policy making.

Because most policy researchers have a background as university lecturers, they are more often than not well equipped to write technical papers that appeal to academic journals. Competency in a university setting is often judged by the ability to publish journal articles and books that have rigorous standards and the use of innovative technical tools. Tenure and promotion are not based on how one's writings influence policy but rather on the quantity and quality of publications in peer refereed journals and books. Academic research also tends to be largely disjointed from the 'real world'. As such, policy-makers find their output to be of little use to them. Academic research also fails to take into account various constraints facing the policy-makers. At other times, their policy recommendations do not take into account either economic or political costs, or even the human capacity within government. Thus, it is evident that one of the reasons that many policy researchers are not able to influence policy is because their work is considered academic and often not relevant to the issues facing the policy-makers.

How then do we strengthen the link between policy research and implementation? Clearly, good research is necessary to formulate good policy. This means that policy researchers should research pertinent issues and should be able to communicate the results in a clear, concise way. As Dr. Gitu has mentioned, a document that contains terms such as 'elasticity' that all economists use casually, may be unclear to policy-makers. While rigorous research is necessary to provide answers to many of the fundamental policy questions, policy researchers must communicate effectively with those who are meant to consume the research.

As an institute whose primary mandate is to produce objective advice to government, KIPPRA is keen not only to conduct objective research but also to effectively communicate the results to policy-makers. I am therefore pleased that Dr. Gitu has prepared a paper that deals with important issues that policy researchers need to take into account if they want to be more effective into influencing policy. Dr. Gitu clearly understands the issues, given that he has a background similar to that of many of us. But he has the advantage of having also been a ‘policy maker’ in the capacity as a Director of Planning and as a Permanent Secretary in the government of Kenya. I trust that the paper will be valuable not only to our researchers here at KIPPRA but to those in other institutions.

On behalf of KIPPRA and Dr. Gitu, I wish to acknowledge with thanks valuable comments by KIPPRA researchers, Dr. Andrew Mullei (ACEG), Professor Peter Kimuyu (IPAR) and Mr. Harris Mule (TIMS). The paper has also benefited from previous work by Professor T.C.I. Ryan, Mr. J. B. Wyckoff, Mr L. Ngutter and Mr. Mark H. McCormach. In his comments, Mr. Mule notes that a still unanswered question has to do with explaining weak implementation and he recommends that Dr. Gitu conducts a study focusing on policy-making and implementation within the Kenyan context. I have requested Dr. Gitu to embark on this study and we hope to produce a follow-up paper on this topic soon. This paper is part of the Institute’s institutional capacity building initiatives funded by the African Capacity Building Foundation.

*Mwangi S. Kimenyi*

**Executive Director, KIPPRA**

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## Introduction

The specific purpose of this paper is to identify issues that can strengthen the link between policy research and implementation. This subject matter is the mind of many Africans, and especially in the minds of decision-makers and researchers. Many argue that African policy analysts have produced 'good' policy papers but they have been poorly implemented. For example, the Kenya policy process has for long lacked a strong link joining policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

This paper is presented in 12 sections<sup>1</sup>: section 1 presents the concept of the policy process including definitions of policy, research, policy analyst and researcher, policy maker and decision maker. Section 2 depicts the process of formulating policy. Section 3 presents problems in the policy process and section 4 the optimal process. The next seven sections present issues of policy failure or success that concern 5) marketing; 6) adequacy, accuracy and timely information in the policy process; 7) participation, control and consensus; 8) trust, cooperation commitment and acceptance; 9) proactive policy analysis and funding; 10) policy implementation dilemma, and 11) criteria for evaluation and monitoring policy. Section 12 is the summary and conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 1 - 3 have been influenced by the thinking of Andrew Mullei, Larry Nutter and J.B. Wyckoff (Wyckoff and Nutter, 1985). The latter two were my colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development between 1984 and 1989, where I served as a policy adviser with a team of Harvard policy specialists.



## **1. Concepts of the Policy-making Process**

Before I dwell on how to strengthen the link between policy research and implementation, I wish to first define what policy is, because it is by understanding this concept that we can better understand how we can influence its implementation. A dictionary definition of *policy* is ‘a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions’<sup>1</sup>. This can be paraphrased as ‘the rules of game’, implying an agreement upon some definition of participants and resources involved, and the desired outcome(s).

A recent paper by Professor Ryan (2001) raises questions on whether policy is ‘what is articulated, whether in written or by word of mouth? Or is it what is done, whether it has been stated before or not, or is it whether only such actions that are sustained.’ The point being raised here by Professor Ryan is important because many times policies are pronounced even when they have not been articulated in writing or are enacted without being written. What should be understood here is that policies are powerful statements, written or spoken, aimed at solving a particular problem or problems. They are meant to advice rulers and to promote good governance. The aim is to achieve some stated objective(s).

The most fundamental function of economic policy in a democracy must be to keep opportunities open to all to prevent excessive concentration of wealth and economic power and its counterpart, mass poverty and insecurity. A great variety of policies are designed to equalize opportunities for individuals regardless of their income and social environment and to ameliorate at least partially the effects of inequality of wealth and bargaining power against individuals’ chances to develop to their best and contribute their most to society’s progress.

The second definition is that of research. *Research* means many things to many people. To some, the word conjures up an image of an elderly white-coated scientist toiling over his test tubes searching for the cure to some widespread debilitating disease. However, a quick look at the literature dealing with research discloses a verifiable smorgasbord of definitions. No author seems to be satisfied with existing interpretations of research and feels obligated to develop his or her own definitions (Kress, 1974). Although no one specific interpretation is widely accepted, a similar thread weaves through most of these definitions. However, the point of agreement is that research involves a detailed and sympathetic attempt, often prolonged, to discover or confirm through objective investigations the

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts, G&C Merriam Co., 1980).

facts pertaining to a special field problem or problems and laws and principles in control. Hence, research may be defined as a systematic investigation carried out to discover new information and relationships as well as expand and verify existing knowledge.

Assuming that we are in agreement with the above definition, policy research should aim at assisting and advising policy-makers on how to make better policy choices. The informed discussion of policy that becomes possible as research results are integrated into policy process improves the public's understanding of policy choices confronting society. Policy research not only assists policy-makers discover new areas of emphasis, it also enables them to assess the success with which earlier policy targets and objectives have or have not been met and the potential impact of policy options.

It should be understood from the outset, however, that research findings, no matter how relevant will be non-productive if they are not effectively passed on to the ultimate consumer, the policy-maker. The findings will also be non-productive if they do not promote policy dialogue or lead to new and improved policy prescriptions being adopted. We should also accept that a policy prescription is a commodity that commands a price. It calls for the existence of an effective demand.

Dr Andrew K. Mullei notes<sup>2</sup>:

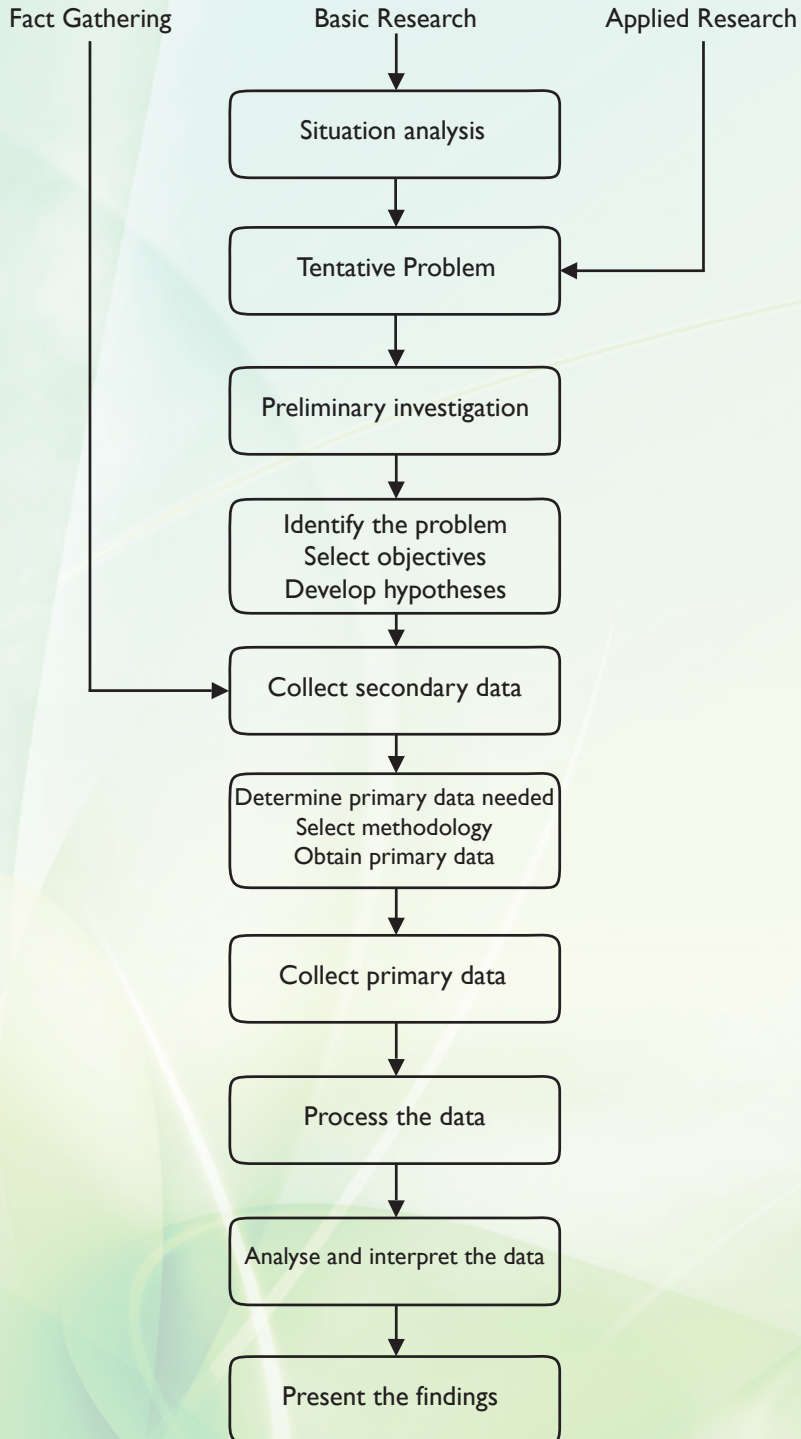
A point to add here, however, is that demand must be that of the policy maker. This implies that the policy researcher must be aware of and correctly interpret the decision needs of high priority ranking. Unless the policy researcher addresses the top-most priority area of the decision-maker, the resultant policy research results will have little use. The extent to which the policy researcher correctly understands and interprets the agenda of the policy maker is critical in ensuring that policy research results are utilized in policy-making and implementation. The researcher should not conduct policy research on what he thinks the policy-maker ought to be doing, but what the policy-maker wants to decide upon. Of course, the results of policy research must always be sensitive to various variables, key among them, political realities that are likely to be central preoccupation and consideration of the policy-maker.

That is, someone or some group must demand it.

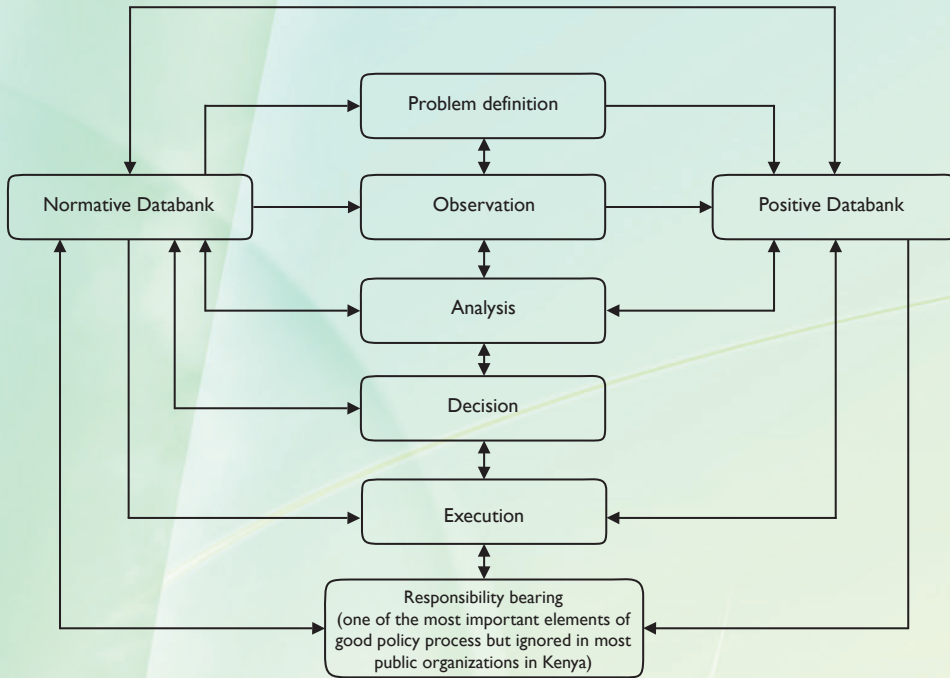
Thus to maximize returns from research, the researcher must be an astute policy salesperson who is fully integrated into the policy process.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Mullei's comments were on an earlier draft of this paper.



**Figure 1: Standard research process model**



**Figure 2: An alternative research process model**

Figure 1 and 2 depict the simple standard research process<sup>3</sup>. As indicated earlier, just as research may mean many things to many people, the presentation of the research process varies, as it is evident in figure 2. However, what is clear to the two figures is that a definite policy process must be followed, starting with identifying the problem and ending with bearing responsibility for implementing the solution. My opinion is that figure 2 provides a better approach to the policy process.

Four other concepts warrant defining: policy analyst, ‘policy’ researcher, ‘policy-maker’ and ‘decision-maker’<sup>4</sup>. A policy analyst is a person who analyses or who is skilled in policy analysis - a derivative of policy sciences (Friedman, 1956). In this paper, no distinction is made between a policy analyst and a researcher, nor is distinction made between policy analysis and policy research. An important argument in policy debate is whether there is a difference between a policy analyst and a policy researcher. To some, a policy analyst need not be a policy researcher. Some argue that an analyst can analyze a stated policy to find out whether it has been effective. While the argument may seem valid, we must be careful because in

<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 is adapted from George Kress (1974) and figure 2 from Glenn L. Johnson (1976). Neither process indicates whether a monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment should be undertaken.

<sup>4</sup> In this document, ‘policy’ implies either economic policy or agricultural policy while ‘analyst’ implies either an economic policy analyst or an agricultural policy analyst. This bias reflects my background. It has become habit that most of us who undertake policy research assume these ‘simple’ concepts are understood. My opinion is that we do not take adequate time to articulate the meaning of these useful concepts.

the real world, an analysis is part of the policy process and that is why we are not able to separate research and analysis or researcher and analyst. This is evident in figures 1 and 2.

Another argument is whether we should distinguish between the role of a policy analyst and that of a policy advocate. A frequently asked question is whether the role of a policy analyst should end with the presentation of well-reasoned objective recommendations? Again as noted earlier, to maximize returns from research, the researcher must be an astute policy salesperson who is fully integrated into the policy process.

Professor Idachaba (2000) notes that the policy analyst has an important role in advocating recommended policy varieties. The policy analyst can contribute to the policy process as a participant in the decision-making process and as a researcher. The analyst when helping solve a problem operates in a different arena when doing research. The objective is to help prescribe a solution, thus interaction is required with decision-makers. Petit (1977) notes that the claim that the social scientist can be fully objective, meaning here that social scientists are neutral with respect to phenomena that they analyze, cannot be supported.

The last concept to be defined is policy making. *Policy making* is the elaboration of policy. But who makes policy? Policies are made by policy-makers, the person bestowed with power, either by the society or a group of people in the society, to make decisions. In other words, there is no difference between policy-makers and decision-makers. Johnson (1977) defines decision as the prescription of what ought to be done to solve a problem and as such, it is a function of both positive and normative knowledge, the functional relation being a decision rule on strategy.

He notes:

Decisions are reached on the basis of multidisciplinary conceptualizations of problematic domains. Such conceptualizations are difficult to verify and validate. The credibility of a prescription can be determined by the four tests of coherence, correspondence, clarity and workability.

Thus, a policy analyst should be prepared to use these tests in problem-solving exercise.

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## 2. The Policy Formulation Process

Policies are usually formulated to solve identified problems. These are derived from a 'felt need' by someone or some group. Thus it is essential to determine: what is the problem? Why is it a problem? To whom is it a problem? Problems are defined in both positive and normative information, the latter being both monetary and non-monetary. Kress (1974) defines a problem as an unsettled condition or situation requiring a solution or decision. The existence of the problem is the reason the research is needed. The existence of a meaningful problem implies some possibility that a decision rule can process relevant positive and normative information into a prescription, which will materially improve the existing problematic situation.

As noted by Johnson (1977), whether a specific problem is macro or micro, public or private and so on, the efficiency of a decision-making unit depends on its ability to: 1) define the problem and judge what information is required to solve it; 2) understand the statistical, technical and human aspect of the process of acquiring, assembling and storing information; 3) convert normative and positive knowledge into problem solving prescription; 4) execute decisions and monitor; and 5) bear responsibility for decisions made and executed. Decisions that cannot be executed are of little value.

It is important to understand that the affected individuals or groups may perceive the problem differently. For example, failure to develop range water may be perceived by ranchers and pastoralists as preventing optimum use of available forage. Government may perceive it as limiting increase in livestock production and offtake, and thus being detrimental to the national goal of food self-sufficiency or of generating foreign exchange via increased surplus for export. Ecologists may view development of range water as 'the problem', serving as a destroyer of fragile natural environments.

Once the three groups interested in the problem of developing range water have been identified, the key is to determine which individual within each group are actively concerned. Ranchers with adequate range water already developed and pastoralists on group ranches with access to pipeline water could care less. However, pastoralists in arid areas such as North Eastern Province may be intensely interested. Similarly, despite general government concern, Members of Parliament representing urban constituencies such as Nairobi and Mombasa may be quite ambivalent. Those representing constituencies in the arid North Eastern Province will be actively concerned.

Ecologies may be vehemently opposed to developing range water, considering such development a destructive force, while a government range ecologist working with the Turkana in drought-stricken areas may express concern a bit differently. Thus, formulating public policy is of concern to those directly affected, to those who legislate the policy and to the economists, among other stakeholders, who must analyze available options.

After having established what, why or for whom a particular situation is a problem, we must deal with a further set of questions: what specific objectives are to be pursued in confronting this problem? What are the alternative courses of action? How do we predict the consequences and what techniques can we use to predict them? If the output is uncertain, what is the estimated likelihood of each possibility? We should be aware that the situation in which probabilities associated with a potential outcome is not known calls for making decisions under uncertainty, whose future is assumed to be unknown. Putting a value of the outcome is another aspect of policy formulation. By what criterion or criteria should we measure the success in pursuing each policy objective? Be recognizing that some alternative will inevitably be superior with respect to certain objectives and inferior with respect to others. How should different combinations of value objectives be compared with one another? When we draw all aspects of policy analysis together, what is the preferred course of action? This means making a choice. Suffice is to say that the process of identifying and defining a problem is complex and consumes time and resources. Yet it is absolutely essential as a precondition for formulating policy competence.

Even if the 'best' policy is identified, politics may prevent it from being adopted. Further, it must be recognized that in policy-making, '... the ends of politics are ... a tool either to increase their slice of the economic pie or prevent others from decreasing it' (Gardner, 1981). Yet in a parliamentary democracy such as Kenya, politicians must always have their constituency in mind because the 'smaller the discrepancy between people's expectations of government and government's actual achievement, the greater the level of support' (Wendzel, 1977).

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### 3. Problems in the Policy Process

The problem with formulating any policy is that there are always alternatives. Not everyone is likely to support the policy option proposed or be satisfied with the policy adopted. As illustrated in the example of developing range water, the perception and attitudes of different interested or affected parties may not coincide. These factions may present different sets of 'facts' to support their alternatives. These sets of facts may confuse policy-makers, who may opt to support the status quo.

All policies inherently possess certain characteristics. All, for example, have associated benefits of cost. As such, they have different impacts on different persons or groups. Examples abound in policies designed to increase farmer welfare by increasing consumer food prices. Further, objectives of policies may conflict, such as policies that turn the terms of trade in favour of the urban sector rather than those designed to promote food self-sufficiency. Policies are necessarily fragmented, such as for urban water development, rural water development, irrigation development, and municipal and industrial waste disposal and thus lack coordination. And policies are the product of bits of decisions emerging and interacting continuously over time. To quote, 'population is half of the equation that relates food to people' (Johnson, 1980). This implies that the policy process is indeed incremental.

The ultimate point that should be considered is, what would the situation look like without a government policy? Gardner (1981) points out that there is no reason to expect that the social costs of (government) intervention will be smaller in general under uncertainty than the adjustments that would occur without intervention. He points out that just as with market failure, 'government failure arises from the failure not of individuals but of institutional arrangements', thus he concludes that it is difficult to observe the political scene in any detail without becoming skeptical about complex economic justification of government intervention.

An important problem in policy process is to define clearly the policy beneficiaries. It is important that we articulate the difference between intended and unintended beneficiaries of policy as an issue. Professor Idachaba (2000) explains clearly:

Quite often, policy-makers make public pronouncements that small-scale farmers are the intended beneficiaries of agricultural policy. In practice, however, policies often produce unintended beneficiaries. The latter are usually cliques of powerful interests in society that end up cornering the benefits of agricultural policies. The smaller the farmer, who is the *raison d'être* for these, policies is often forgotten. Typically in Africa, the policy beneficiary is not the beneficiary who is publicly declared but someone well connected with friends in the government.



## **4. Optimal Policy Process**

A pertinent question that one should ask is what constitutes optimal policy process and do optimal policies indeed exist? The policy formulation process is said to be optimal if it meets a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. The necessary conditions include the existence of a policy analysis process; a system for evaluating and monitoring the policy; availability of adequate, accurate and timely information; a policy marketing system; the capability of actors to understand the policy; resources to implement the policy; stakeholder participation, consensus, cooperation, commitment and ownership; acceptance of policy prescriptions by most policy actors; and whether policy alternatives were considered. An important necessary condition for an optimal process of formulating policy is that the process must be demand driven.

Sufficient conditions for optimal policy formulation process include political feasibility, absence of policy instability, absence of policy distortions, and existence of good governance. Examples of policy distortions include financial mismanagement, political instability and social tension, symbolic budgets that are unconnected to identified priorities and the funds actually available to address them and instability in policy implementing institutions and policy actors. Unless both necessary and sufficient conditions are maximized, the policy formulation process will not be optimal. In the next several sections, we shall focus our discussion on both the necessary and the sufficient conditions for formulating policy.

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## 5. Policy Failure through Lack of Marketing

Selling policy prescriptions is not what we learn in most of our universities and colleges<sup>1</sup>. The institutions provide technical training to solve complex economic problems. For example, we learn how to derive equations for complex systems of demand and supply. But the institutions overlook the fact that parameters derived from such systems are products that must be marketed to policy-makers. How can we maximize the marketability of policy prescriptions? If we were to maximize the saleability of policy prescriptions, we must understand that effective policy marketing is directly tied to timing, patience, persistence and to sensitivity of the situation and the person or persons with whom we are dealing. Idachaba (2000) notes:

A policy analyst must exercise great patience in dealing with policy-maker and public bureaucrat. The analyst must be able to accommodate the slow motion of public bureaucracy or be frustrated out of the policy scene, and the policy process scene, and the policy process will glide on with or without the analyst.

The marketability of policy prescriptions may also be reduced if the policy analyst does not fully understand the prescription. If the policy analyst is not familiar with the existing policies or does not know or believe in his or her prescriptions, policy-makers will resent efforts to market it. If the analyst does not believe in the prescriptions put forward, no amount of personality and techniques will cover that fact. If the analyst cannot sell with enthusiasm, the lack of it will be infectious. Everyone should understand that nothing turns off policy-makers quicker than analyst's lack of familiarity with the policy prescription. This is because knowing the prescription implies understanding the idea behind it, its purpose, its utility and how policy-makers perceive it. How will it affect the policy maker? What is its promise?

It is also important that the analyst be familiar with existing government policies; part of knowing a prescription is knowing and anticipating reasons policy-makers might not want to accept it. The policy analyst must anticipate these reasons and have tentative answers ready to respond to each of them. An important issue that most policy analysts fail to understand is that a good portion of almost any policy marketing is spent overcoming objections from policy-makers. Thus, a policy analyst should not try to convince policy-makers that their objections are not valid. Instead, the analyst must help policy-makers see a different frame of

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<sup>1</sup> This section was influenced by the work of Mark H. McCormach (1984).

reference by altering their perceptions.

An important aspect of good policy marketing is that the analyst should always accept that policy-makers have the right to say no and that their intelligence is to be respected. The analyst as a sales person should minimize unnecessary arguments with policy-makers. They are customers and as the saying goes, 'the customer is always right' hence, policy persuasion is of utmost importance. Johnson (1977), referring to agricultural economists notes that analysts lose credibility with policy-makers if in their published work, they ignore or overlook factors which the policy-maker has attached great weight.

Fear is another issue that affects the selling of a policy. It is the single biggest marketing problem analysts have. The analyst, fearing rejection and failure, must realize that accepting rejection does not imply liking it. Fear or failure is a great positive motivation in selling policy. If an analyst is not afraid of failing, then he or she probably does not care deeply about the policy's success.

Timing is another important issue in policy marketing. Many policy ideas fail not because they are bad ideas, not even because they are poorly executed but because the timing is not correct. Sometimes the prescription may come too late. Professor Ryan (2001) notes:

Because much of government works under time constraints, researchers must be aware that the perfect solution that is late is just so much wasted effort. Often what is required is an adequate level of accuracy in time to be digested as support to whatever vehicle is chosen to launch the reform process

As a policy salesperson, the analyst must control timing. Like any commodity at the marketplace, without the patience of the seller to wait and the persistence to go back again to the policy-maker, any other insight into timing is not worth much. It should therefore be understood that being persistent is a basic marketing commandment for any commodity; others are knowing the product, believing in the product and selling the product with enthusiasm.

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## 10. Adequacy, Accuracy and Timely Information

Adequate, accurate and timely information is important in making policy choices. How are the citizens to form opinions about complex policy issues if they do not have relevant information? How are citizens to effectively monitor and control policy-makers without adequate information? And what influences the rate at which information is disseminated among the various key policy actors? One of the most important aspects of policy-relevant information is the pattern and the speed of its dispersion among policy-makers and policy implementers (Pierce and Lovrich, 1982).

A number of generally ignored factors will determine the degree to which policy information is disseminated: the difficulty of disseminating it, the relevance of the information to the information seeker or policy-maker, and the relationship of the information to questions of public policy currently being considered. The policy analyst should understand that easily understood information will be relatively more widely disseminated than difficult information. For example, analysts have a tendency to use complex terminology such as 'elasticity' to explain a relative simple concept of change. Therefore selecting simple or understandable terminology is an important aspect of disseminating policy information.

Policy analysts should always remember that 'simple' does not mean 'easy'. Capstick (1977) notes:

The impact of studies by agricultural economists in the policy field is enhanced when reports are drafted with the non-specialist reader in mind, a dictum of which agricultural economists are fully aware ... There is a place for descriptions of the technical side of the analysis but as large material is largely for economists to examine, it is best separated from the main messages which the economist wishes to transmit. Although obvious is the worth stressing that the more succinct the report, the greater the chance it will be read at the higher levels in the policy-making hierarchy.

He notes that senior policy-makers are inundated with briefs and reports directly calling for comment and little time is left to consider material not requiring their immediate attention.

The language of communicating policy must therefore be directly understandable for policy-makers. Kress (1974) notes that it is essential that research findings be organized and presented in a manner appropriate for the potential users. The audience is often a mixed one, comprising extremely busy executives such as cabinet ministers and permanent secretaries as well as their technically oriented

subordinates. Reports should be presented in a form and language useful to both groups. They should include a brief summary of the findings and recommendations — for fast perusal — plus a more detailed explanation of the procedures, findings, summary and conclusions.

This argument is supported by Professor Ryan (2001) who states:

Research is meant to provide appropriate, easily usable information. It might be as ammunition in a debate or as timely advice, but in all for it to be useful for policy return; it must be packaged in a way that it will be acceptable to the small coterie of policy-makers . . . policy-makers very seldom have the time to read argued reports. . . . A document should definitely contain all that is necessary to support the argument that is embodied in the executive summary, but it is that summary which will determine whether the policy reform proposal will go any further forward.

The policy analyst should always understand that information is most likely to be taken in and held by people to whom it is relevant — that is, if it is relevant to their goals or to their ability to achieve those goals. Also, information will be more widely disseminated among policy actors when it is relevant to pending policy proposals and alternatives. Again individuals or groups in the society formulate policies to solve identified problems.

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## 7. Participation, Ownership Control and Consensus

Policy process must be participatory. As commonly said, ‘if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem’. All stakeholders in the policy arena must participate. This is based on the premise of building partnership as well as philosophy of good governance: transparency and accountability. To undertake participatory policy process, we must identify the stakeholders who are also the beneficiaries of the policy. Participatory approach fully involves participation of all citizens of the nation or region in the policy process. It calls for all citizens, particularly those at the grassroot to own the problems and find their own home-grown solutions. This is because they know best their aspirations, goals, resource base, needs, limitations and how best to plan to meet those policy challenges and to exploit opportunities.

The participatory policy process engenders a feeling of common purpose and the spirit of togetherness among members of the community. It also implies domesticating the policy process. Kenya, for example, must Kenyanize its policy process, implying that the process must be internally determined or demand driven. One of the most dangerous elements of a poor process for setting national policy is when a nation relies too much on supply-driven policy determinants. Its policy process will lack continuity and will in general be supported by neither the implementers nor the beneficiaries, who will usually view the policy as harbouring a hidden agenda.

The danger here is that when a policy is parachuted from without, those whom it was intended to benefit are not allowed adequate time to debate it. Idachaba (2000) notes in reference to determinants of agricultural policy in sub-Saharan Africa:

The usual practice is to concentrate on supply side determinants of agricultural policy with respect to content and process. Determinants include policy-makers, policy advisors civil servant and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The World Trade Organization and the policy of trading partners often influence national agricultural policies of equal importance, but typically neglected are the determinants on the demand side. These include farmers, agro-industrialist processors, transporters, non-governmental organizations, the general public and association of farmers and related interests.

An important issue that Professor Idachaba (2000) raises is that nations should strive to get beneficiaries of policies to influence the policies. He notes that the influence the demand side wields is insignificant in national agricultural policies.

The weaker the stakeholders in the policy process, the more likely policies will either be badly formulated or poorly implemented. It is important to accept that strengthening stakeholder participation in the process will prevent policy-makers from influencing the policy process negatively. He notes that the absence of stakeholder influence will allow changes in key policy actors to result in policy instability, and notes that policies are frequently changed not on merit but from changes in key actors, who introduce different agenda. Therefore, he concludes that the key to making good policies, implementing them efficiently and ensuring their stability is to develop and build stakeholder capacity.

Participatory policy process demands that the role and capacity of each stakeholder be identified. Policy analysts should not assume that stakeholders are capable of understanding the policy process. All stakeholders must have the skills or tools needed to enable them participate. Participatory process also calls for information and an established time frame. Effective participation is possible only when time allowed in the decision making process is sufficient for consultation with relevant stakeholders. While it is usually urgent to get things done as quickly as possible, it is also absolutely important that adequate time is slowed for consultation.

For effective participation, all stakeholders must have access to relevant information so that they are able to not only make decisions based on sound, up to-date information but also to monitor implementation. In the participatory policy process, the roles of control and power in implementing and executing policy are important from the standpoint of efficiency. However, if the power to make decisions is highly concentrated in the hands of decision makers and implementers while the affected persons or the beneficiaries are powerless, meaningful feedback from them is inhibited. The policy process is deprived of an important interactive source of information. This occurs in authoritarian governments, which are deprived of needed feedback because affected persons do not own the right to send messages. The ability to send messages depends on the right to participate in the policy process and to receive and disseminate knowledge through open communication media and education systems.

Consensus or any particular policy prescription is an issue generally ignored in the policy process. If there is no consensus, the probability is high that it will fail to succeed. Consensus built by participation in the policy process, is needed to build policy confidence. In authoritarian societies, consensus is thwarted because stakeholders are not allowed to participate.

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## 8. Trust, Cooperation, Commitment and Acceptance

To increase the rate at which policy prescriptions are adopted, mutual trust among the beneficiaries of policy, policy analysts, policy-makers and policy implementers must be nurtured. An atmosphere of trust among stakeholders helps ensure that all participants are able to take part in the policy debate and that all contributions are respected and valued. In a democracy, cooperation is one of the most important levers for assuring that policy is successfully formulated and implemented. Policy process requires unstinting cooperation. The process must be above party politics, but at the same time it should have the approval of all political parties involved. In other words, a policy becomes a national policy when most policy actors have approved it. For without their support, no policy can be a success

Commitment is another important element of the policy process that analysts tend to ignore. The process requires commitment among the general public, the private sectors and most stakeholders. They underpin the capacity to search for and share new ideas, increasing the aversion to cheating and increasing trust, creating a virtuous circle that acts as a self-reinforcing mechanism. But trust and commitment require full accountability and transparency. Idachaba (2000) notes:

Policy implementation of varieties involves their acceptance by the political leadership and the bureaucracy of implementation. Successful implementation requires sincerity of purpose on the part of the key actors in the policy process on the supply side, sustained political will and commitment, and a bureaucracy committed to common good. It is bad when poor policy varieties are promoted.



## **9. Proactive Policy Analysis and Funding**

An important aspect of policy process is to create policy institutions mandated to undertake research and analysis within the government and link them to private sector policy research institutions and university research systems. This will promote proactive rather than reactive policy analysis. A proactive process guarantees policy consistency, stability and predictability. It also reduces the possibility of policy reversal, which has characterized most of Africa's policy process. Professor Ryan (2000), however, in referring to the Kenyan policy reform process notes that 'failure to undertake policy action, in fact represents a policy decision. The same can be said for policy reversals or backtracking.'

He goes further to state:

Policy reversal arises from unrealistic expectations regarding the way in which the economy would react to reform. In many cases, the expectation was that reform would give rise to benefits sufficiently quickly to create an effective lobby for them to be sustained. Research results that were used in the preparation of the policy change very seldom provide inadequate sense of how quickly benefits can be expected to appear. Hence if they do not materialize, lobbies of those who are using privilege are able to indicate that reform is failing and therefore political agenda for reversal gets a sympathetic ear.

To guarantee a sustainable proactive policy analysis, financial resources are necessary to support policy adoption. Efforts at disseminating research and information in Africa, as noted by Idachaba (2000), have been thwarted by funding stress, which comprises inadequate funding, unstable funding and delays in disbursing the funds necessary to support adopt and implement policy varieties. Important as a determinant of a proactive policy process is being able to supply high skilled analysts to generate demand for their services by assuring that their products are of high quality and demonstrable significance.

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## 10. The Real Policy Implementation Dilemma

In reading government policy documents throughout Africa, you quickly realize that you are dealing with government leaders who seem to know and understand the destinies of their nations. They lead governments that have the welfare of their people at heart and governments that understand the underlying social economic and political problems of their nations. You also note policy memoranda outlining carefully the nature and causes of African problems and possible policy solutions.

When you listen to policy analysts in seminars and workshops, you cannot but admire their ability to articulate with clarity of mind how to deal with Africa policy problems. They develop well-thought-out policy papers, providing optimal policy solutions to African problems. When you listen to policy-makers in large international conferences where presidents and prime ministers converge to echo their will and propensity to manage change, their willingness to adopt policies to trigger economic growth and thus reduce poverty and employment, you cannot fail to commend them.

But alas, why has Africa, Kenya included not been able to solve its perennial problem of lack of policy implementation and hence lack of growth?

The first part of this paper discusses issues that constitute the conditions necessary for formulating and implementing policy optimally. The element of sufficient conditions arises because apart from good policy analysis, policy marketing, dissemination, timely information, control, consensus, ownership, trust, and commitment and so on, other issues can influence policy implementation negatively. I wish to turn now to what I see as the sufficient condition for strengthening the link between policy research and implementation.

Poor policy implementation can be caused by policy distortions and the absence of good governance. For example, in Africa, the post-independence policy arena was characterized by policy distortions in agriculture, trade and industry, finance and public governance. We have witnessed policy distortions in producer prices, overvalued currency and exchange rates, negative real interest rates, high tariff barriers aimed at protecting inefficient state-run enterprises, symbolic budgets unconnected to actual funds available and identified priorities, bureaucratic inhibitions, ethnocentric priorities in projects, lack of political will, deliberate sabotage of projects by political rivals and lack of meritocracy in selecting policy implementers.

We have witnessed financial mismanagement practices including those in accounting and auditing. In human resource management, we have seen pay and performance problems as well as lack of fit between the skilled workforce

recruited and the needs of public agencies. We have seen political instability and social tensions, which have had serious consequences because they discourage investment, promote capital flight, encourage brain drain, destroy social, economic and physical infrastructure, displace people and bring on collapse of the civil society.

We have witnessed corruption, which is associated with lower investment and higher production costs. It induces over-regulation and diverts resources from vital development projects. It undermines government ability to enforce legitimate regulations and collect public revenue for further investment in either research or other economic and social infrastructure.

Ayittey (1999) notes that African problems have continued to be intractable not because of a lack of solutions but rather because of the flawed approaches its leaders have taken to solve the African crises. He notes that effective resolution of a problem requires five basic steps: 1) expose the problem, 2) diagnose the problem, 3) predict the solution, 4) implement the solution; and 5) monitor to see if it is working. If not, the dosage may be increased or an entirely new remedy tried. He goes on to state:

Regrettably, in most African countries, the process of crisis resolution rarely went beyond stage two [the diagnosis stage]. If step two was reached, a faulty diagnosis was invariably performed, leading to the prescription of the wrong solution. Worse, the solution was itself implemented poorly or not at all in many cases.

This problem we have no doubt witnessed in Kenya.

An important observation in Africa's policy process is the presence of policy instability and changes in institutional leadership. As already noted, most African countries have experienced political instability. Professor Idachaba (2000) notes:

Policy becomes unstable when a country undergoes frequent changes, revision, modifications or complete reversal of policy. In such situations policies are not allowed to take root before they are changed or reversed. Policy reversal introduces uncertainty as to the future of policy direction and send mixed and confusing signals to key actors, the intended beneficiaries become skeptical about the sincerity of the policy-makers and their initiatives. The end result of unstable policy process is the fact that the beneficiaries fail to identify with future rounds of policy prescriptions that the changing actors recommend and adopt.

Policy instability has many causes. Professor Idachaba gave four important reasons including frequent changes in government, impatience, changes in key policy actors and pressure from donors.

While the Kenyan policy process has not been affected by frequent changes in government, it is characterized by frequent changes in key policy institutions and actors. For example, between 1992 and 2001, in implementing micro and small enterprise programmes and projects, 6 ministers 11 permanent secretaries and 6 directors of applied technology were involved. We also witnessed these programmes being moved from one ministry to another, thus interrupting their day-to-day operations. I believe that unless programmes are managed with some level of autonomy, and unless the policy implementers and other institutions of policy are stable, implementation will continue to be suboptimal. This applies to all government projects and programmes.<sup>1</sup>

Lack of political consensus and continuity in governance affects policy implementation. Professor Idachaba (2000) calls for ‘the social-political consensus on the philosophy, belief and values underlying national agricultural policy’. He noted that lack of consensus across various interest groups on a minimal set of values underlying policy allows a new regime to run away with new policies based on personal whims, preferences and caprices. He therefore calls on all sub-Saharan African countries to ‘build social-political consensus that will reduce the vulnerability of policy varieties to changing political regimes and actors’.

Lack of platform to market policies negatively affects policy implementation. Analysts need to be able to present their findings to special committees of Parliament or the Cabinet. This will improve the marketability of policies. For example, KIPPRA should be accorded the opportunity to present its policy recommendations to select committees of Parliament, like labour, industry, agriculture. The saleability of research findings could be optimized if KIPPRA were to annually present its research findings to Parliament. This would allow members of political parties represented in Parliament to contribute. It would also increase the level of policy participation and consensus, which would increase the probability of maximizing policy implementation.

Upon determining what the problem is, why it is a problem, to whom it is a problem, what is to be achieved, why it is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved and when it is to be achieved, the important issues to consider include who bears responsibility and what are the necessary resources (both human and financial) required. Another issue worth noting is that policy process usually is multidisciplinary and multisectoral. Therefore, all disciplines and sectors involved must be identified and a way to coordinate them put in place. It is my belief that most of the necessary and sufficient conditions for optimal policy formulation process can be met, we can strengthen the link between policy research and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood and Mosher (1980) note that ‘the easiest changes to make in a bureaucracy are shifts of leadership: getting a new Permanent Secretary who accepts the desired development goals, backing him when he encounters resistance and keeping him in an office long enough to carry out his policies. Usually, a strong leader in command of an organization can select lieutenants who share his views: countless testimonials can be cited to document the drastic changes introduced by merely getting the “right man at the top” and keeping him there. But sometimes the “right man” is helpless when pitted against the system. Leadership changes that merely rotate civil servants among suitable positions seldom achieve any significant reorientation in the system. Neither does the assignment of new titles to an existing bureaucracy.’

## **11. Criteria for Policy Evaluation and Monitoring**

The policy process imposes serious demands on information and reporting systems to determine the extent to which established targets and objectives are being met and whether the aspirations of the people in terms of their welfare are being adequately addressed. Therefore, we must establish a monitoring and evaluation system in responsible institutions that is capable of identifying policy performance targets and monitoring indicators and modalities. In evaluating policy performance, the following questions must be answered: What was to be achieved? Why, how and when it was to be achieved?

Generally, policy evaluation has to be conducted in relation to the rationale given by the interested party of parties. Once the analyst knows what the interested party's goals are, they can ask whether a particular policy has achieved its intended goal. A number of criteria are available to measure the policy impact: efficiency, welfare, sustainability and political feasibility. These criteria rely on measures of income, or the welfare effect on household groups. While efficiency measures are straight-forward, it is more difficult to specify measures of welfare and political feasibility. All should understand that a policy that does not pass the test of political feasibility is a utopian proposition and even if introduced, it will be challenged and will not be sustainable (Sadoulet and de Janvry, 1995).

For this reason, an important criterion when evaluating policy is the assessment of political feasibility of a policy based on the real income effects it has on the groups that have political weight. In that sense, political feasibility is quite distinct from efficiency and welfare. In general, it acts as a constraint and any policy considered should first satisfy the constraints of political feasibility. Once we have verified that it does that, the efficiency and welfare implications of the policy can be assessed meaningfully.

If the effect of a policy is that nobody is made worse off while some are made better off, the policy can be thought politically feasible.

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## 12. Summary and Conclusion

This paper identifies issues that can strengthen the link between policy research and implementation, because it has long been argued that Kenya policy process has lacked a strong link between policy formulation, planning and implementation. To discuss policy, all must understand what it is. Policies are formulated to solve identified problems, derived from a felt need of someone or some group. Determining what the problem is, why it is a problem and to whom it is a problem is a necessary condition for effectively formulating policy.

Always there are alternative policies that can achieve a given end. But every alternative is not likely to be equally acceptable to all interested parties. Politics is generally present in policy making and it must be understood that the ends of politics are the ends of individuals. Since all policies have associated costs and benefits, objectives often conflict and lack coordination because they are increments of decision that emerge and interact over time, and the policy process of necessity involves controversy.

Policy prescriptions are the product of policy research, and they must be sold to policy-makers. They must be marketed at the marketplace using the same techniques as for any product. Timings, patience, persistence familiarity with policy prescription and sales enthusiasm are important ingredients of a policy sales effort. To maximize the effort, the analyst must learn how to overcome objections from policy-makers and should not fear to fail. Analysts must accept that fear of failure is a strong positive motivation towards selling a policy.

The policy process must be participatory, involving all stakeholders including the public, analysts and policy-makers. This assertion is based on the premise of building partnership and the philosophy of good governance. To participate, all stakeholders must have access to relevant information and have the necessary skills and tools.

To increase the rate of adoption of research results, the policy process needs to be relevant to local conditions. It must be driven by local demand. Risk analysis must identify what things may go wrong and affect the policy from achieving its purpose. To increase the rate of policy adoption, mutual trust between the analyst and the policy-maker must be nurtured.

A proactive rather than reactive policy process needs to be promoted by establishing special institutions mandated to undertake independent research and analysis within the government and linking them with the private sector and the university research system. To guarantee sustainable proactive policy analysis, financial and human resources must be made available. The supply of highly skilled analysts

needs to be increased, and the high quality and demonstrable significance of their products will generate a demand for their services.

Even when we have undertaken good policy analysis, issues beyond the control of the analyst may affect implementation. These are policy distortions caused by poor governance and by economic, political and social instability. Enhancing good governance is essential in strengthening democracy, promoting effective policy implementation, reducing rent-seeking tendencies and strengthening social cohesion.

A core governance issue is corruption. Corruption brings on over-regulation; it diverts resources from vital development projects; it undermines government ability to enforce legitimate regulations and collect public revenue for further investment. Frequent changes in government, impatience, changes in key policy actors and pressure from donors may affect policy implementation. It may also be caused by policy-makers failure to progress through the accepted policy process, which implies going from identifying the problem to bearing responsibility for implementing and executing the policy. A platform is needed on which analysts can present their research findings to both Parliament and the Cabinet, and particularly to various parliamentary committees.

Finally, once we determine what the problem is, and why and to whom it is a problem. We need to determine what is to be achieved, and why, how and when it is to be achieved. An important issue to consider is to identify who is to bear responsibility for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the policy and assessing its impact. Since policy process in most cases is multidisciplinary and multisectoral, the disciplines and the sectors involved must be identified and a mechanism to coordinate them put in place. If most of the necessary and sufficient conditions for optimal policy formulation process are met, the probability is high that the link between policy research and implementation will be strengthened.

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