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A systems approach towards a framework for utilising evaluative knowledge in the national policy system

by

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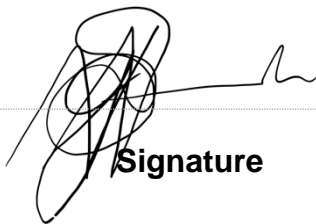
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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my mum and dad, who instilled in me a love of learning.

To my siblings, thank you for always believing in me.

To my nieces and sister-in-law, thank you for all the support.

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ABSTRACT

Despite commitments to establishing a developmental state, evidence indicates that the array of policies implemented since 1994 has not adequately addressed the needs of South Africans, 30 years after the end of apartheid. Significant deprivations persist, highlighting the need to re-evaluate current policy configurations. Evidence can be used to understand the causes of implementation failures and how they can be mitigated by identifying factors that enhance the effective use of evidence in policy formulation. However, despite the production of evidence, persistent barriers appear to hinder its use and subsequently impede its impact on policy formulation and implementation, with resultant poor policy outcomes that fuel citizen dissatisfaction and often fester into service delivery protests. Moreover, several gaps exist in the evidence use literature, motivating the current study and informing the development of a more comprehensive understanding of evidence-based practices. Several studies, particularly those that rely on literature reviews and syntheses of existing literature, lack empirical grounding. Although they identify contextual factors that influence evidence use, the absence of primary data limits insight into the lived experiences of those involved in the evidence use process, thus restricting the potential to generate new perspectives. Those that draw insights from officials provide only limited process-oriented perspectives, largely omitting an in-depth exploration of how evidence use unfolds in practice. Almost all reviewed studies offer a limited examination of the "how" and "why" of factors that influence evidence use. To address these gaps, this study investigated factors that influence the use of evidence within the South African National Policy System. The aim was to develop an evidence use framework to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in South Africa in general and the Social Cluster in particular. The ontological foundations of the study approach are rooted in the integrative philosophical traditions of pragmatism and interactionism, which recognise that knowing is created through ongoing reflective inquiry and action that takes place through experience and interaction within an organisation. The study's focus on utilising evidence in national policy is theoretically oriented towards the social accountability root of evaluation theory. It draws on an integrative theoretical framework that builds on two additional theories that explain how evidence is used within an organisational context. These are organisational learning theory (OLT) and the knowledge-to-action framework. The relevance of OLT for this study is its focus on how evidence is acquired, interpreted, and shared in ways that can influence collective decision-making processes. The study employed a grounded theory approach with a qualitative cross-sectional multiple-case study research design, that is, officials from four departments in the Social Cluster. The population for this study was all departments of the national government, as they were constituted in 2021 and as such excludes the provincial and local government levels. A further delimitation was to restrict the selection of the four cases to the Social Cluster. These two delimitations support the depth-over-breadth objective of qualitative research designs. By combining this research approach and a context-rich exploration of lived experiences

with the development of a grounded theory, this study examined both the "how" and the "why" of evidence use. This emphasis on process and experiential detail forms a key distinction between the present study and previous research. The findings of this study surfaced several key areas where improvements can be made in evaluation and evidence-based decision-making. Based on the analysis of the coding paradigm and the grounded theory narrative, the action-outcome framework of evidence use was developed that draws from 12 evidence-use themes. This comprehensive coverage allows a thorough understanding and systematic implementation of evidence-based practices at various stages of policy development and implementation. The emphasis on context in the evidence use framework recognises that politics, culture, and socioeconomics play a significant role in whether evidence is used. The framework ensures that policymakers know how evidence use factors influence decision-making in different contexts, thereby avoiding a one-size-fits-all solution to factors that might hinder evidence use. This makes its application more contextually relevant and impactful. The framework contributes to existing knowledge and theory in the field of evaluation and public policy by advancing the social accountability root of evaluation theory while providing practical guidelines for policymakers to improve the use of evidence in policymaking. Therefore, the action-outcomes evidence-use framework supports the development of more efficient and effective policies, ultimately contributing to the development of policies that can tackle South Africa's socioeconomic challenges.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Full Form
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
CE	Collaborative Evaluation
COF	Conditional Factor
CQF	Consequential Factor
CTF	Contextual Factor
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoEL	Department of Employment and Labour
DPWI	Department of Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
DSAC	Department of Sport, Arts and Culture
EBPC	Evidence-Based Policymaking Collaborative
EBDM	Evidence-informed Decision-Making
EBPM	Evidence-based Policymaking
EE	Enlightenment Evaluation
ECB	Evaluation Capacity Building
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
EUT	Evaluation Use Theory
EIPM	Evidence-informed Policymaking
ESIEID	Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment & Infrastructure Development
GSCID	Governance, State Capacity and Institutional Development
GT	Grounded Theory
GWMES	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
ICTS	International Cooperation, Trade and Security
JCPS	Justice, Crime Prevention and Security
KDE	Knowledge-Driven Evaluation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NER	National Evaluation Repository
NES	National Evaluation System
NPDF	National Policy Development Framework
NPS	National Policy System

Abbreviation	Full Form
PE	Participatory Evaluation
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PSPPD	Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development
SA	South Africa
SEIAS	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System
SPCHD	Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cluster
SOE	State Owned Entity
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STF	Strategic Factor
TDE	Theory-Driven Evaluation
UFE	Utilisation-Focused Evaluation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated factors that influence the use of evaluation evidence within the South African National Policy System (NPS) with the aim of developing an evidence-use framework. This was achieved through a grounded theory approach that examined how evidence is used in four national departments within the Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD) Cluster, also known as the Social Cluster. In contrast to previous studies (Kupiec *et al.* 2021; Haynes *et al.* 2020; Kupiec 2020; Tantivess *et al.* 2019; Goldman *et al.* 2019; Olejniczak 2013), which focused on the use of evidence in individual sectors, this study highlighted the importance of understanding the contextual factors influencing the use of evidence within an integrated NPS. By examining public officials' experiences, the research sought to gain deeper insights into the factors influencing their use of evidence. An essential contribution of this study is developing a grounded theory framework that aims to enhance the use of evaluation evidence within the Social Cluster, specifically and the broader NPS in general.

While numerous studies have investigated the use of evaluation evidence in policy processes, including those conducted by Kupiec *et al.* (2021); Haynes *et al.* (2020); Kupiec (2020); Goldman *et al.* (2019); Tantivess *et al.* (2019) and Olejniczak (2013), these studies often had limitations. Some focused on single subsystems, policy issues, or sectors, such as health or education (Haynes *et al.* 2020); Tantivess *et al.* 2019). Moreover, previous framework development studies differed from the proposed study's design and focus. For instance, Haynes *et al.* (2020) used Systems Theory to create a conceptual, hierarchical framework for the efficacious uptake of evaluation evidence in a single sector. In a similar vein, Olejniczak (2013) developed an evaluation framework that utilised a comprehensive systems approach to assess the utilisation of evidence at a national level. In contrast, this study examined the factors that influence the use of evaluation evidence across the entire policy system based on the grounded experiences of public officials.

For the purpose of this study, the terms '*evidence use*' and '*evaluation evidence*' will be used interchangeably to refer to three categories of *evaluative knowledge* discussed in Chapter 3. This recognises the value of diverse perspectives and information sources in decision-making. Thus, these terms will be used to represent the full spectrum of *evaluative knowledge* considered in the South African NPS. Furthermore, the National Policy System (NPS) will be characterised as the institutional framework, processes, and mechanisms that facilitate formulating, implementing, and evaluating public policies at the national level. The concept of NPS includes various aspects, such as the role of government, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector in the policymaking process, the interaction of these actors, and the distribution of power and resources among them (Howlett *et al.* 2020:132-176).

1.2 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

The significance of incorporating evidence-based approaches into the decision-making process is widely acknowledged in public policy (Görgens & Kusek 2009:36; Nutley *et al.* 2007:3). Evidence is crucial for formulating better policies, guiding planning and prioritisation, and designing efficient and effective interventions (Görgens & Kusek 2009:44; Lomas & Brown 2009:909). To create more effective policies and interventions, it is essential to understand which policies and programmes have been successful and which have not (Görgens & Kusek 2009:1; Buse *et al.* 2012:4). By using evidence, policymakers and implementers can evaluate the performance of past and current policies and interventions (Weiss 1988:45; Pawson 2006:13). This underscores the crucial role that evidence plays in the policy cycle, ensuring that policies are adequately revised, lessons from previous policy efforts are incorporated into the design of new interventions, and implementation failures are minimised (Görgens & Kusek 2009:35; Parkhurst 2016:82).

Furthermore, the public administrative need for informed decision-making in policy design underscores the necessity for a framework that enhances the use of evidence in this process (Patton 2017:101; Head 2010:78). Given the challenges posed by

limited resources in contrast to the vast scope of societal needs, it is crucial for governments to assess the effectiveness of various policies and programmes. This understanding is essential to ensure that resources are allocated as efficiently as possible (Görgens & Kusek 2009:35; Shaxson 2005:102).

In recent years, evidence-based policymaking has gained considerable traction as an approach that integrates evaluation evidence, scientific research, and other credible sources of information into the formulation of public policy (Head 2010:84; Davies 2004:4). This approach enables policymakers to make decisions that are more objective and transparent, ultimately leading to the creation of more effective policies and interventions (Cairney 2016:7). Given the current context of constrained government resources and rising societal demands, the development of a framework that promotes the utilisation of evidence in policy formulation and implementation has become increasingly essential (Görgens & Kusek 2009:35; Oliver *et al.* 2014:1). Such a framework would empower policymakers to make informed decisions grounded in credible evidence, resulting in better societal outcomes.

1.2.1 The rise of monitoring and evaluation systems

Governments recognise the significance of evidence in public policy and, therefore, often put Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in place to gauge the effectiveness of their policies and interventions (Lopez-Acevedo *et al.* 2012). The monitoring function encompasses collecting, analysing, and disseminating data on various programme and policy implementation aspects. Usually, M&E systems gather information on multiple fronts, including, but not limited to, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

In assessing government policies and interventions, the most relevant source of evidence is often derived from the evaluation function. This crucial and time-sensitive practice is designed to offer dependable and practical information that can assist in answering questions about how such policies and interventions are performing in relation to their intended objectives (Görgens & Kusek 2009:30). When conducting an evaluation, it is customary to focus on one or more aspects, such as assessing the relevance of an intervention to a specific need, how efficiently the intervention converts inputs into outputs, its effectiveness in terms of the results generated, the impact on

the intended targets, and the extent to which these impacts are sustained (Palfrey *et al.* 2012). Generally, it is assumed that once this evidence is available, it will be utilised by intervention personnel, line managers, and policymakers alike to shape their decision-making processes. Regrettably, this does not always happen, since policies and interventions are often conceived and executed without considering the evidence (Seddon 2010:48).

1.2.2 Evaluation systems and frameworks

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) was established in 2011 and revised in 2019 by the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) to formalise South Africa's evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation [DPME] 2011, 2019). The NEPF aimed to improve accountability and enhance policy formulation and decision-making. One of the critical elements of the NEPF is the National Evaluation Plan (NEP), which sets the minimum number of evaluations to be conducted annually across the government.

Since the ratification of the NEPF, cabinet approved the development of a public online national repository for all completed evaluations. These completed evaluation research reports contain the assessments and outcomes of the evaluations and are publicly available online. The repository is an essential source of information on outcomes related to implementing various government policies and programmes. This allows for a critical and systematic assessment of the state of implementation across government. This repository is a valuable tool for researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to assess the impact of government policy. It provides a record of the process and findings of the evaluations in the national evaluation plan, which can be used to make informed decisions for the formulation and decision-making of future policies. The framework developed in this study contributes to improving evidence use of evaluations in the repository.

In their 2019 study, Goldman *et al.* (2019) evaluated the effectiveness of the National Evaluation System (NES), which is a subsystem of the National Policy System (NPS), by analysing evaluations in the national repository. The study, which covered five years of implementation of the National Evaluation System, used Holvoet and Renard's six dimensions of an emerging NES as a basis for their assessment. The

study results revealed that the NES had spread rapidly, with five national and four provincial case studies used as evidence. While some instrumental and process uses of the NES were found, challenges associated with the comprehensive assessment of overall evidence utilisation were also noted. Specifically, the study found areas where the NES could be improved to enhance its use and effectiveness in the long run.

Goldman *et al.* (2019) highlighted that while the use of evidence is paramount in enhancing public policy, there is still a lack of context-sensitive use theories and frameworks for practitioners, as noted by Haynes *et al.* (2020:2). This presents a significant gap between theory and practice. Haynes *et al.* (2020:2) explored the mobilisation of public health evidence within the health system to bridge this gap. Their work focuses on generating robust and practical knowledge and the factors that facilitate its movement and utilisation in the system to areas where it can have the most significant impact. The authors highlight that the study centres on systems thinking, an approach that adds value to how the complexities of enhancing public health knowledge mobilisation strategies are dealt with. These complexities result from public health issues, "messy" policy and practice environments, and the dynamic nature of open systems (Haynes *et al.* 2020:3).

To address these issues, Haynes *et al.* (2020:4) developed a hierarchical framework that can be implemented at various levels to allow public health evidence to change complex systems. The framework identifies the changes that must be made at each level to ensure that public health evidence is used effectively. By doing so, the framework facilitates the implementation of context-sensitive evidence-based practices, thus improving public policy and practice. The study by Haynes *et al.* (2020) represents an essential step towards developing theories and frameworks that practitioners can implement across different fields, highlighting the potential of systems thinking to enhance knowledge mobilisation in complex systems.

While Haynes *et al.* (2020) used a systems approach to develop their framework, the study was only conceptual and focused solely on the use of evidence in the health system. Furthermore, it did not make a distinction regarding the source of health evidence. In contrast, this study built a framework grounded in the lived experiences of public officials in the Social Cluster. Taking into account the experiences of public

officials, this study was able to develop a framework that is more responsive to the needs of practitioners and closely aligned with the realities of public policy development and implementation.

1.2.3 Evidence-based policymaking and evidence-informed decision-making

Evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) and evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) are two terms often used interchangeably to describe the process of utilising evidence in policymaking (Head 2010:78; Davies 2004:3). EBPM involves systematically using evidence to inform policy formulation, implementation, and subsequent evaluation (Nutley *et al.* 2007:232). EBPM is instrumental in ensuring that policy decisions are based on objective evidence rather than anecdotes or political pressure, thereby enhancing the objectivity of the policymaking process (Parkhurst 2016:21). However, when it comes to decision-making in general, EIDM is often used. It refers to the broader use of evidence in all forms of decision-making, not just policy (Uneke *et al.* 2022:2; Lomas & Brown 2009:919).

With EBDM, decisions are made based on the best available evidence to improve the lives of citizens. Both EBPM and EIDM are powerful approaches for improving the effectiveness of public policies and achieving better developmental outcomes (Lomas & Brown 2009:919). This study maintains that for EBPM to fulfil this purpose, an evidence-utilisation framework will ensure that governments are making informed decisions that can lead to positive outcomes. Although EBPM will be used throughout the study, the framework's use will also extend to EIDM since both are critical aspects of contemporary public policy.

The importance of evidence-based policies has been increasingly recognised in the developing world over the past 15 years. Policymakers and development experts understand that evidence is crucial in achieving sustainable and effective socioeconomic outcomes. Implementing evidence-based policies has become a key focus for policymakers and development experts alike (Uneke *et al.* 2022). Integrating evidence into policy formulation processes has been shown to enhance the quality of policies and their implementation in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. This has led to the widespread adoption of evidence-based policies to improve public systems and promote socioeconomic development in developing countries. Evidence-

based policies are now considered a necessary component of public sector reform efforts in many developing countries. Given the positive impact of evidence use, the trend towards evidence-based policymaking will continue to grow in the years ahead, further justifying the need for an evidence-utilisation framework.

Although recent trends demonstrate progress, public policy still has ample room for improvement. Public policies often encompass a broad scope and reflect the political ideologies of the ruling party (Birkland 2014:23). The implementation of these policies is driven by various government entities that design programmes and interventions aimed at translating the incumbent party's general policy intentions into specific objectives (Cloete & Thornhill 2012:115; Howlett *et al.* 2020:210). Despite the comprehensive nature of government policies, research indicates that evidence is not consistently employed, even though doing so would be ideal (Head 2010:84; Nutley *et al.* 2007:14). This underscores the importance of this study, which explored factors influencing evidence utilisation in policymaking and implementation and the extent to which these factors contributed to the development of an evidence use framework.

The significance of examining the national policy system from a public administration perspective cannot be overstated (Peters 2018:12). The concept of evidence use serves as a means of ascertaining whether public policy decisions and operational dynamics are structured based on lessons learnt from evidence (Cloete & Thornhill 2012:115; Parkhurst 2016:21). By analysing these factors, it became possible to identify areas where evidence is not consistently used and devise strategies to enhance its uptake. This approach has substantial potential to improve policy outcomes and ensure efficient use of public resources (Cairney 2016:19). Moreover, by drawing insights from evidence gleaned from prior programme evaluations, policymakers can make more informed decisions and design more effective interventions (Weible *et al.* 2020:6). This, in turn, can lead to a more efficient and effective public sector better equipped to meet the needs of the country (Lomas & Brown 2009:919).

1.2.4 Factors that influence the use of evaluation evidence in the National Policy System

The availability of evidence is recognised as necessary to facilitate evidence-based policymaking. It provides a solid foundation for informed decision-making and helps ensure that policies are grounded in evidence rather than conjectures. However, simply having available evidence is insufficient to ensure it will be used. In addition to availability, several other factors are crucial for effectively using evidence (Haynes *et al.* 2020:3; Uneke *et al.* 2019:2).

One key factor is quality. Policymakers should be confident that the evidence they use is high-quality and reliable. Institutional capacity is also essential. Policymakers must have the skills and resources to analyse and interpret evidence effectively. Functioning evaluation governance systems are also critical, as they help ensure that evidence is used systematically and transparently. Another crucial factor is the timeliness of the evidence. Research has shown that even high-quality evidence can only be used if sequenced in the planning cycle. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that evidence is made available at the right time (Tantivess *et al.* 2019:5).

In addition to these factors, various other possible obstacles could hinder the utilisation of evidence (Tantivess *et al.* 2019:4). A significant obstacle is the issue of relevance. Policymakers must ensure that the evidence they use is relevant to current policy concerns. They also need to be confident about the reliability of the evidence. Finally, the format in which the evidence is presented can also serve as a barrier. Policymakers may be more likely to use evidence if it is presented in a clear and concise format that is easy to understand.

Addressing these issues can help ensure that evidence is more likely to be used in policymaking, leading to better policy outcomes. Policymakers can make more informed decisions by ensuring that evidence is high-quality, timely, and relevant. By adopting measures to enhance the quality of evidence, policymakers can elevate policymaking and promote evidence-based decision-making.

Although several studies have explored the use of evaluation knowledge in policy formulation and implementation (Kupiec *et al.* 2021; Haynes *et al.* 2020; Kupiec 2020;

Goldman *et al.* 2019; Tantivess *et al.* 2019; Olejniczak 2013), there are still gaps in the literature. Although these studies have contributed to our understanding of the subject, there is still much more to learn. One critical limitation of these studies is the lack of a grounded approach that would allow for the development of theories based on the lived experiences of public officials. Moreover, while some studies have developed a framework, they have been either conceptual or single-sector oriented, as in the case of Haynes *et al.* (2020). Others have focused on addressing issues regarding evaluation evidence in specific cases, such as accountability and institutional learning (Olejniczak 2013). To enhance future research, it would be beneficial to create comprehensive frameworks that can be applied across various sectors. This would allow for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the context in which evidence is used.

The following appraisal of Goldman *et al.* (2019) illustrates a fundamental shortcoming in most of these studies. They evaluated the performance of the South African NES, guided by a framework that emphasised evidence use as its central key performance indicator. The study used a deductive framework developed by Holvoet and Renard on the characteristics of an NES Goldman *et al.* (2019:2). The study's categories were established beforehand, and the research questions were aligned with the main themes of the Holvoet and Renard framework. Subsequent data were collected and analysed within the predefined properties and dimensions of the framework's categories (Goldman *et al.* 2019:3). No attempt was made to identify the main category, as in grounded theory, and link it to the other components of the framework by articulating and describing the nature of the linkages. As such, while the study set out to identify causal mechanisms and dependencies, it never indeed achieved this objective within the context of the deductive framework used. Therefore, the study's key findings, which identified factors to strengthen the NES, such as legislation, resourcing, capacity development, communication, and use tracking, represent participant responses imposed onto the deductive categories. This means the findings were never grounded in the experience of officials outside the predefined categories of the deductive framework.

Like numerous other countries, South Africa encounters issues regarding utilising evidence within its National Policy System. Cronin and Sadan (2015:2) studied

evidence use in South Africa, based on an instrument adopted from a study conducted by Campbell *et al.* (2007) with public officials from the United Kingdom. Although largely qualitative, the instrument comprised a mix of open, semi-structured, and closed questions. The study results were presented as a combination of counts and quotes from the participants, with themes following the predetermined categories in the instrument. It is noteworthy, however, that the study did what it found to be a factor in the low utilisation of evidence, namely, using a borrowed instrument from a developed country without mentioning whether it had been validated for use in South Africa. Nonetheless, the observed lack of use of existing evidence is concerning and begs the question: Why is this the case?

One possible explanation could be the lack of resources available to policymakers to access and utilise the evidence. This could be because of limited funding or inadequate infrastructure. Another possible explanation is cultural or political barriers to incorporating evidence into policy development. For example, policymakers may not fully understand the value of evidence-based decision-making or may prioritise political expediency over evidence-based solutions.

Addressing these questions and exploring solutions to enhance the development of evidence-based policies in South Africa is essential. Establishing norms and standards for how evidence should be used to guide the policy-development process is vital. This would provide policymakers with a clear framework for incorporating evidence into their decision-making. Additionally, building a robust knowledge base of evidence on public policy is critical for effective policy development. By doing so, policymakers can make informed decisions that will ultimately benefit the country.

1.2.5 Evaluation as a subsystem of the broader National Policy System

The NES is regarded as a subset of the NPS in public administration. This belief is based on the idea that systems thinking aids in comprehending how public policy attains its objectives (Daneke 1990:383; Zalmanovitch 2014:15). By considering the different subsystems of the NPS, we can appreciate how flows from one system influence the other parts of the system. This understanding allows for a better conceptualisation of the synergies and potential bottlenecks that influence the extent to which public officials can meaningfully draw on evidence. Without knowledge of the

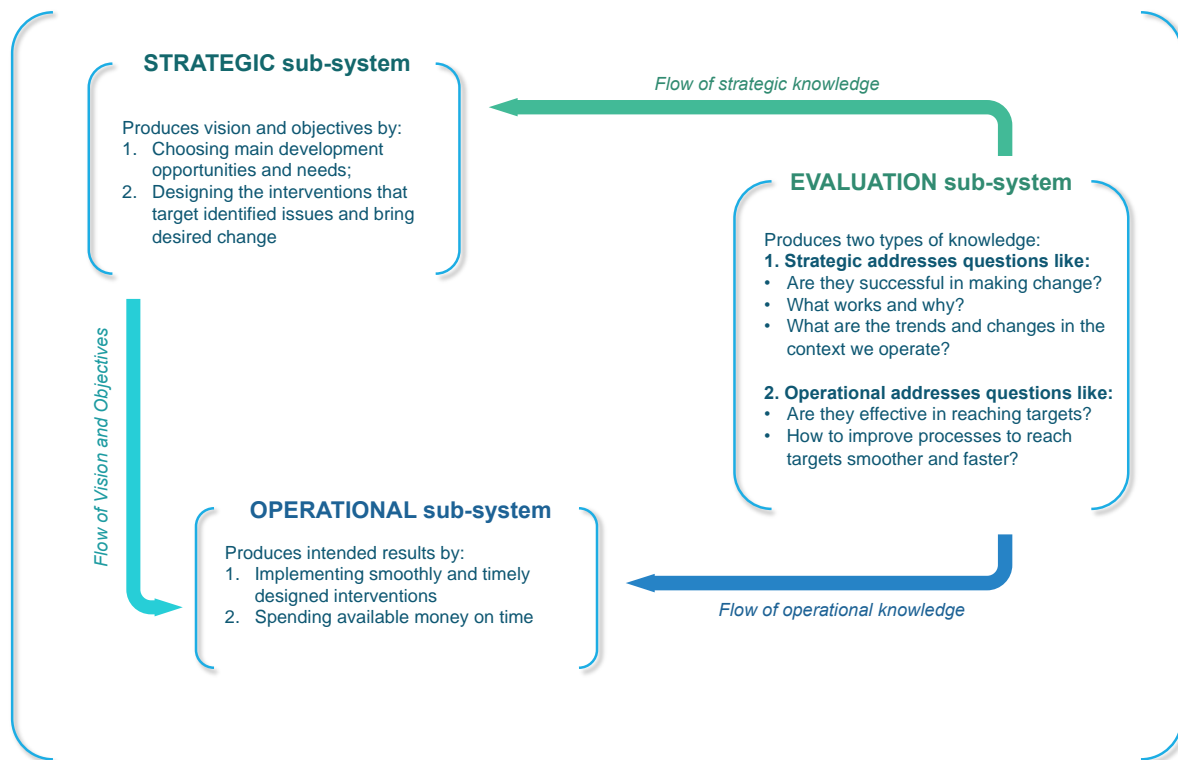
interlinkages between subsystems, the discipline will not be able to explain why, despite the availability of evaluation evidence, it might fail to have any bearing on the outcomes of the system.

Raadschelders (1999:298) suggests that to address the theory crisis in public administration, it is better to use approaches that consider the complex structure of the means, policies, and interventions designed to meet societal goals. This is important because some policy failures are due to the idea of control and prediction typical of closed systems. Mueller (2020:312) argues that the inability to account for complex open systems in formulating and implementing policy can explain public policy failures. In traditional policymaking concepts, complexity directly affects control and prediction, making them invalid and increasing the chances of public policy failure.

Cameron and Milne (2009:382) have pointed out that public administration has not done enough to enhance our comprehension of the complexities of public institutions. Consequently, the development of public policy theory has been stunted (Hargrove 1975; DeLeon 1999:314; Robichau & Lynn Jr. 2009:22). From a policy and systems thinking perspective, the evaluation subsystem is part of a broader national policy system with three components. Olejniczak's (2013) conceptualisation of the national policy system builds on the work of Anderson and Johnson (1997), Sterman (2000) and Ostrom (2005) in depicting the national policy system as a composition of three subsystems. These subsystems are the **strategic subsystem**, the **operational subsystem**, and the **reflective/evaluation subsystem**.

The **strategic subsystem** is responsible for creating policies and strategies on a national level. The **operational subsystem** is responsible for implementing these policies and strategies, while the **evaluation subsystem** generates evidence and feedback for the strategic and operational subsystems.

Figure 1.1 shows the three subsystems that make up the National Policy System.



Source: Olejniczak (2013)

Figure 1.1: Systems Theory: National Policy System

This study aimed to investigate the factors that impact the utilisation of the evidence generated by the **evaluation subsystem**. This served as the foundation for creating a practical framework that enhances the use of evidence. This study built on Olejniczak's (2013) conceptualisation of the NPS to manifest South Africa's National Policy System. To do this, it drew on Mechanism Theory (MT). (Craver & Tabery 2019) to depict the NPS as a phenomenon with an underlying mechanism comprised of three subsystems (strategic, evaluation, and operational), which together form an organised system aiming to achieve specific developmental outcomes.

Additionally, the success of the NPS in achieving its objective is stated to rely heavily on incorporating evidence from the evaluation subsystem into virtually all actions performed by its other two entities. This is crucial because a mechanistic understanding of how the NPS uses evidence can only be gleaned from the grounded experiences of public officials who participate in the different activities in the policy cycle spanning all three NPS subsystems.

Drawing on Adams *et al.* (2014) multidisciplinary axiomatic-driven systems theory, conceptualising the NPS as a *mechanistic system* is essential for understanding the factors that influence the use of evidence in the NPS. The use of New Mechanism and Systems Theories is ontological as it allows us to manifest the NPS as a phenomenon with three integrated subsystems, which reveal what will be referred to as sites of evidence use that would enable an investigation into the factors that influence knowledge flow into these locations. In addition, a *mechanistic systems approach* is consistent with the study's Grounded Theory approach since New Mechanism Theory places great emphasis on understanding how entities, their activities, and the subsequent interactions are responsible for the phenomenon and their end-products, which are the goal and purpose of the system (Craver & Tabery 2019; Adams *et al.* 2013:119).

This study utilised Mechanistic Systems Theory to enhance the social accountability aspect of evaluation theory. This approach prioritises utilising evaluation evidence in decision-making processes (Christie & Alkin 2012) and was chosen because a framework created through a grounded theory process is not only inherently mechanistic but also the most effective way to comprehend the processes and relationships involved in utilising evidence in the public sector.

1.2.6 Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations

This section outlines the philosophical and theoretical foundations that shaped the study and lays out its guiding ontological and epistemological stance, together with its theoretical orientation.

1.2.6.1 Ontological and Epistemological Stance

The research employed an inductive approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of how government officials use evidence in both policy formulation and implementation. This approach explored the experiences, perceptions, and meanings of the individuals involved, as outlined by Charmaz (2014). The objective, therefore, was to gain insight into the perspectives and interpretations of participants within the Social Cluster regarding the utilisation of evidence.

The ontological foundations of the study's approach are rooted in the integrative philosophical traditions of pragmatism and interactionism, which acknowledge that knowing is created through ongoing reflective inquiry and action that takes place through experience and interaction within an organisation (Corbin & Strauss 2014). There are elements of constructivism in this orientation, as public officials in their departments subjectively and socially construct knowledge through their interactions with evidence across policy and programme cycles (Charmaz 2014). This orientation aligns with the objectives of the study since interactionism focuses on how evidence use is interpreted and viewed within organisational social interactions.

This ontological approach allowed for detailed descriptions of participants' experiences and facilitated the exploration of the organisational and socio-cultural contexts that shaped these experiences. Participants' interpretations of evidence use both diverged and converged, and the study aimed to examine these varying perspectives in ways not possible with a quantitative design. By considering these diverse viewpoints, the study developed an in-depth understanding of the intricate nature of evidence use and its impact on public policymaking in the selected cases.

While the value of non-descriptive positivist approaches that produce evidence of cause-and-effect relationships is often considered important in promoting use, there is a view that these causal models are *"out of sync with systems thinking and complexity theory."* (Patton 2020:599). This perspective suggests that inductive interpretivist ontologies that draw on pragmatic and constructivist epistemologies, such as the approach used in this study, are better suited to exploring use in complex context-specific environments where public policymaking occurs. Suggesting future directions for research on utilisation, Patton (2020), one of the prominent contributors to evaluation use theory and practice, argued that linking use only to specific so-called rigorous approaches is *"a lingering manifestation of positivist research hubris"* and in the context of this study ill-equipped to deal with use as a key ingredient in policy formulation and implementation, especially in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. Patton (2020:599) that *"[e]valuation use theory, informed by and knitted together from more general social science theories and philosophical understandings, will offer all the explanatory and predictive power possible in complex dynamic systems"*.

1.2.6.2 *Theoretical framework*

This section provides the theoretical context for this study's focus within the domain of evaluation theory. Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of this study will help establish its credibility and relevance and serve as a foundation for determining its theoretical contribution.

Three distinct bodies of literature contribute to the field of evaluation theory, each of which has been referred to as the "*root*" of the evaluation tree. The three roots serve as the foundation for the M&E sub-domain of public administration with implications for public policy as it relates to EBPM (Christie & Alkin 2012:20). The *first root*, which focuses on **social accountability**, provides the primary motivation for evaluations in general, particularly those of government programmes and interventions. Theories and approaches in this root have centred on methods for improving government programmes and society, such as increasing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Evaluation use theory examines how decision-makers use evaluations to improve policies and programmes and is a subdiscipline of evaluation theory (Christie & Lemire 2019:94).

The *second root* of evaluation theory, known as **systematic social inquiry**, focuses on the development of evaluation models. Its relationship with the first *root* "*emanates from a concern for employing a methodical and justifiable set of procedures for determining accountability*" (Christie & Alkin 2012:21-22). This root underscores the importance of using rigorous and objective methods to assess the effectiveness of government programmes and policies, as well as to identify areas for improvement.

The third root of evaluation theory concerns the philosophical foundations of evaluation, including "*the nature and validity (or limitations) of knowledge*" (Christie & Alkin 2012:22). This **epistemological root** of evaluation examines fundamental questions about the nature of truth and the ways we acquire knowledge. It involves exploring epistemological arguments such as the legitimacy of value claims, the nature of universal claims, and the view that truth (or fact) is what we make it to be.

Evaluation theory is critical to public administration as it provides a comprehensive framework for assessing government programmes and policies. The three roots of

evaluation theory, *social accountability*, *systematic social inquiry*, and *epistemological inquiry*, offer different perspectives and approaches to evaluation. Integrating insights from these roots improves effective and efficient governance. Therefore, understanding these roots is crucial in evaluating policies and programmes that positively impact the citizens of a country.

Table 1.1, below, provides a comprehensive overview of the foundational roots of evaluation theory, the primary roles they serve, the key concerns they address, and notable contributors.

Table 1.1: Foundational roots of the evaluation theory tree

<i>Foundational Root</i>	<i>Primary role in evaluation</i>	<i>Main concern</i>	<i>Key contributors</i>	<i>Notable contributors</i>
Social accountability	Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation toward evaluation and decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stufflebeam • Patton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alkin • Fetterman • Preskill • King • Cousins • Chelimsky • Wholey
Social inquiry	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodologies of evaluation • How to obtain the most rigorous knowledge? • Techniques used in the conduct of evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbell • Rossi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyler • Boruch • Cool • Weiss • Cronbach • Chen • Henry • Mark
Epistemology	Valuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split into objectivists who argue that value judgements in evaluation should be based on "<i>public observable</i>" facts. • In contrast, subjectivists, focus on human action/behaviour's "<i>subjective meaningfulness</i>". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stake • Scriven • House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levin • Eisner • Greene • Mertens • Lincoln • Guba

Source: Constructed from Christie and Alkin (2012:21)

This study focused on utilising evidence in national policy and is theoretically oriented towards the **social accountability root** of evaluation theory. This root emphasises the importance of evaluation use and an orientation towards evaluation and decision-making, which are the main concerns of this study. By exploring the various

dimensions that impact the utilisation of evidence within national policy, particularly within the Social Cluster, this study aimed to contribute to advancing and growing the social accountability root of evaluation theory within an organisational setting.

The focus on the social accountability root acknowledges that the utilisation of evidence in policymaking is a complex, multifaceted process involving a diverse range of actors and stakeholders interacting within specific contexts. King and Alkin (2019), in their review of evaluation use theory, identified a gap in the social accountability root, emphasising the need for context-sensitive use theories. To address this gap, this study employed a Grounded Theory methodological approach, utilising qualitative data collection based on the experiences of public actors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the effective use of evidence in policymaking.

Focusing on the experiences of public officials further highlights the critical role of context in evidence use. In their review of the development of evaluation use theory, Shulha and Cousins (1997:197) observed that by the 1990s, the shift towards theory building, rather than merely categorising different types of use and identifying determining factors, was essential but insufficient to fully promote utilisation. They argued that the concept of "context" was pivotal in the evolution of evidence use. Recognising the importance of context is epistemological, highlighting how knowledge is shaped by the interactions within the environment in which it is generated. From a theoretical standpoint, the context of policymaking occurs within given institutional structures and processes that have a bearing on use.

The study, therefore, draws on an integrative theoretical framework that builds on two theories that explain how evidence is used within an organisational context. These are the organisational learning theory (OLT), proposed by Argyris and Schön (1978), and Graham *et al.*'s (2006) knowledge-to-action (KTA) framework. The relevance of OLT for this study is its focus on how evidence is acquired, interpreted, and shared in ways that can influence collective decision-making processes. KTA informs this study by emphasising how evidence creation within an organisation should be conducted in a manner that synthesises and tailors it for use and by highlighting the importance of actively seeking ways to implement the evidence in decision-making processes—

referred to as the framework's action cycle. It is crucial to emphasise the importance of developing context-sensitive use theories, as these can enhance our understanding of how evaluations are utilised and how policies can be refined to achieve their intended objectives. An evaluation use framework that considers the specific context in which it operates can lead to the development of more nuanced and compelling theories, which, in turn, have the potential to drive positive social change. The application of context-sensitive use theories can yield meaningful insights that facilitate significant policy improvements.

It is important to recognise that the outcomes of this study, while contributing to evaluation use theory, also have significant practical implications for decision-makers. By identifying the most influential factors that enhance the use of evidence in policymaking, this study has the potential to increase social accountability and ensure that policies are both evidence-based and effective. As a result, this research plays a critical role in strengthening the connection between evaluation theory and policymaking, ultimately contributing to the development of more efficient and effective policies.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite commitments to establishing a developmental state, evidence indicates that the array of policies implemented since 1994 has not sufficiently addressed the needs of South Africans, 30 years after the end of apartheid (Amusa & Fadiran 2024; Hamilton 2024; Phaahla 2024; Government of South Africa 2017; Seekings & Nattrass 2017:52). Significant deprivations continue to affect the historically disadvantaged black African population, highlighting the need to re-evaluate current policy configurations. This re-evaluation should be based on the latest evidence and an analysis of the extent to which implementation failures can be mitigated by identifying the factors that enhance the effective use of evidence in policy formulation (Hamilton 2024:79; Phaahla 2024; Government of South Africa 2017).

Several critical issues have been identified, including the insufficient availability of quality education and training programmes (Mlambo *et al.* 2024:12; Boughey & McKenna 2021:9; Spaull 2013:14). Despite efforts such as the implementation of free

primary education, a significant gap persists in access to higher education and vocational training for historically disadvantaged populations. This gap contributes to a persistent skills shortage amidst relatively high levels of graduate unemployment and elevated levels of unemployment among these groups (Dadam & Viegi 2024:17; Buthelezi *et al.* 2024:36; Adams & Yu 2024:544-545; Bhorat *et al.* 2014:8). Another ongoing challenge in South Africa is spatial inequality. Many historically disadvantaged communities continue to live in areas with inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, healthcare, water, and sanitation (Chiwarawara 2024:1-2; Amusa & Fadiran 2024:183-184; Turok 2013:6). As a result, these communities receive low levels of service delivery and experience poor health outcomes, further exacerbating the cycle of poverty and inequality (Hamilton 2024:79; Government of South Africa 2017:32).

To examine the state of poor policy outcomes, in 2017, the government of South Africa published a high-level report analysing problems with important policies and the factors that might accelerate significant policy reform. This report produced findings across five broad themes, *"Poverty, unemployment, and the equitable distribution of wealth; Land reform restitution, redistribution, and security of tenure; Spatial inequality; Social cohesion and nation-building; and Implementation, governance, and oversight"* (Government of South Africa 2017).

The findings of the High-Level Panel Report were accompanied by over 79 recommendations aimed at identifying policy actions that could accelerate change (Government of South Africa 2017:32). However, several years after these recommendations were presented, the Agriculture Portfolio Committee in Parliament observed that *"many promises had been made that needed to be fulfilled by government"* and expressed concern that *"years after the reports, nothing had been seen"* (Portfolio Committee on Agriculture 2022). This lack of progress in implementing the recommendations of the report only creates a South African context where poor perceptions of democracy's effectiveness in alleviating deprivations experienced under apartheid perseverate (Hamilton 2024:79; Phaahla 2024:172-173). The following quotation from the Report encapsulates these perceptions of unmet needs:

"People appearing before the panel were particularly exercised by failures in the delivery of RDP housing, affordable public transport, quality health and

education services. ... A common complaint related to the costs imposed on households, including poor households, for the use of essential goods and services such as water and electricity" (Government of South Africa 2017:92).

The approval of the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) in 2011, which was revised in 2019, led to the establishment of the National Evaluation Repository (NER), which has curated over 141 evaluations across all government clusters, thereby accumulating a substantial body of evidence (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation [DPME] 2011; 2019). However, the findings of the High-Level Panel Report indicate that significant deprivations persist, suggesting ongoing deficits in effectively utilising this accumulated evidence to design impactful policies and interventions, as well as to identify implementation gaps (Government of South Africa 2017). Addressing both persistent and emerging societal needs remains a challenge for public policy, as these needs are continuous and demand ongoing policy reform. Effective reform requires the use of evidence to understand what works and what does not and to apply lessons learned throughout the reform process and at each site of evidence utilisation within the National Policy System (NPS). To avoid repeating these unsatisfactory outcomes, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that can improve the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation. This underscores the need for a more robust evidence-use framework that provides timely and accurate feedback on policy and programme implementation, highlighting areas in need of reform (Hamilton 2024:79; Bussow & Kinyondo 2018).

A review of the NES in 2017 revealed several challenges with respect to the implementation of the 2011 NEPF. Notably, it revealed evidence suggesting that while *"great progress has been made in entrenching evaluations in government, there have been missed opportunities for using evaluations strategically to support planning, policymaking, and budgeting processes"* (DPME 2019). This finding was one of the key factors in the revision of the NEPF in 2019. This study, therefore, asserts that despite the production of evidence, persistent barriers continue to hinder its use, subsequently impeding its impact on policy formulation and implementation. These obstacles contribute to poor policy outcomes, which can fuel citizen dissatisfaction, as highlighted in the 2017 High-Level Panel Report. As discussed earlier in Section 1.2.4, these issues may stem from the adoption of deductive methodological approaches

that rely on non-local and non-context-specific frameworks (Goldman *et al.* 2019:3). Such frameworks impose external conceptual categories on data, leading to findings that align with the predetermined categories' implicit meaning. Consequently, frameworks lacking contextual grounding may prevent the accurate identification of factors that influence the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation, thereby undermining their effectiveness towards realising the Bill of Rights.

To address the gaps in evidence use within national policy, this study employed a Grounded Theory approach within a multi-case study design to explore the factors influencing evidence utilisation. The research specifically focused on the experiences of public officials in national departments within the Social Cluster. From this analysis, an inductive context-sensitive South African evidence use framework was developed, providing a foundation for enhancing the use of evidence in policy development and implementation. The overarching objective is to facilitate evidence based policymaking and implementation that delivers the Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution and addresses the unmet developmental needs of South African citizens.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this research was to determine the factors that influence the use of evidence within the National Policy System. The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess theories underpinning evidence use in policy formulation and implementation.
2. To examine South Africa's National Evaluation System (NES) and its influence on evidence use.
3. To examine the factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence in the Social Cluster in South Africa.
4. To generate an evidence use framework for strengthening evidence-based policymaking in South Africa in general and the Social Cluster in particular.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To accomplish these research objectives, the study addressed the following research questions.

1. What theories underpin evidence use in policy formulation and implementation?
2. How does South Africa's National Evaluation System influence the use of evidence?
3. What factors influence the use of evidence by officials in the Social Cluster in South Africa?
4. What is the ideal framework for strengthening the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation in the national policy system in general and the Social Cluster in particular?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, we will explore the methodology utilised for this study. This will entail discussing the study's approach and design, outlining the procedures used for collecting data, describing the population and how cases were selected for this study, and culminating in the data analysis strategy.

1.6.1 Research approach

In line with its philosophical stance the research employed an inductive qualitative research approach to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how government officials in national departments use evidence in both policy formulation and implementation, specifically, the study employed a Grounded Theory (GT) approach. While GT was originally conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the study followed the approach outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2014). Corbin and Strauss' framework was determined to be the best option for the study's central objective of developing a framework for evidence use. This framework involves a step often omitted in several GT studies, namely, the development of *the paradigm or coding paradigm*, which serves as a systematic and structured way of analysing the causal relationships in the data. An important role played by the coding paradigm was describing the *conditions* that create actions-interactions (i.e. strategies) and

consequences associated with evidence use that results from specific *strategies* by public officials as they execute functions related to policy formulation and implementation in the sites of evidence use (Corbin & Strauss 2014:163). The proposed framework for this study was therefore developed using a coding paradigm.

Figure 1.2 depicts the methodological process of the GT approach that guided this study. The illustration provides a helpful visual representation of the different stages involved in Grounded Theory.

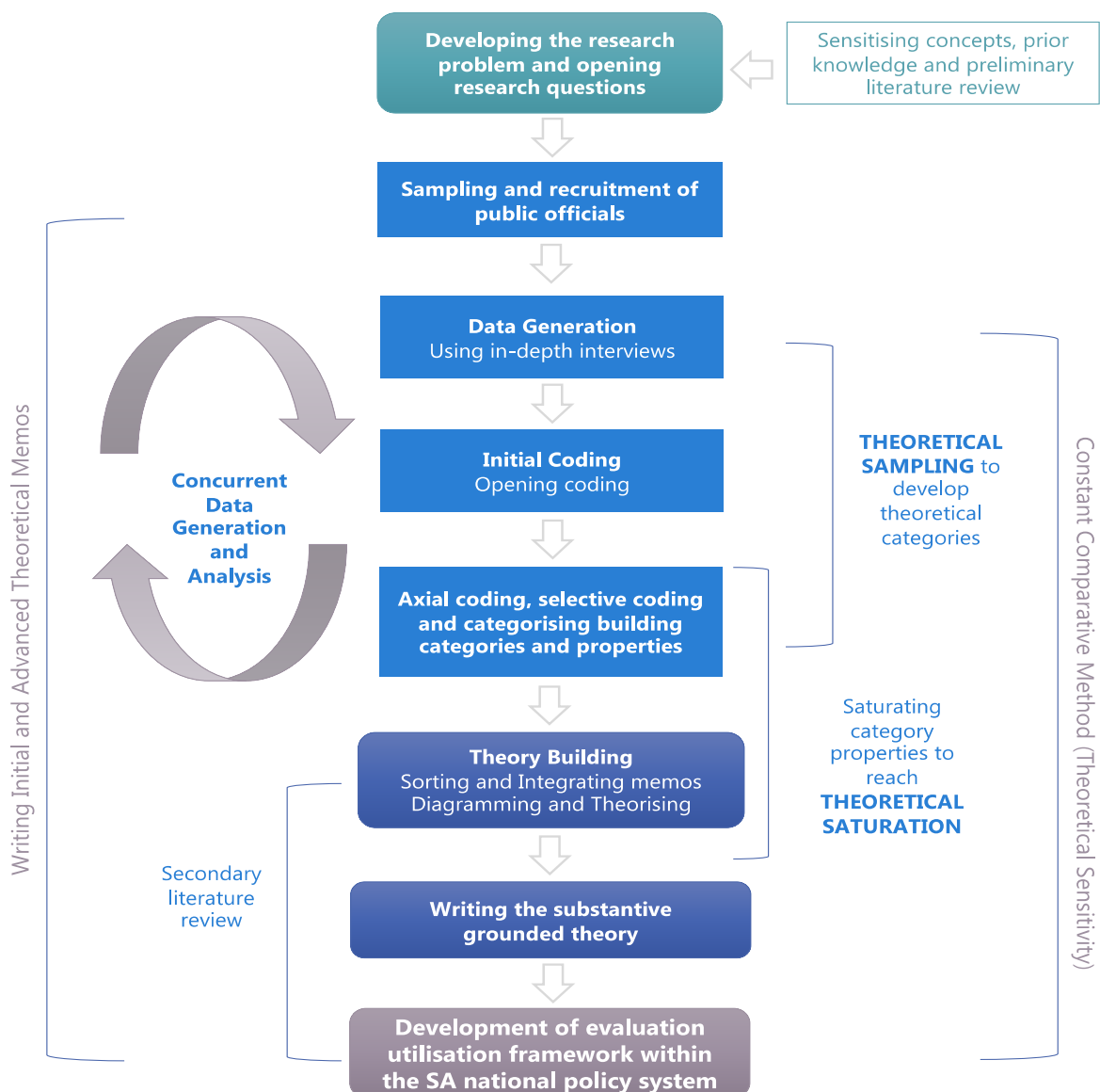


Figure 1.2: Grounded theory approach and overall design that guided this study

Source: Adapted from Giles et al. (2016:33)

The approach is depicted as a systematic and iterative qualitative research method that aims to develop theories based on the collected data. Starting from the top of the illustration, the GT process began with the identified problem and research questions, and then moved on to sampling and recruiting participants who could provide relevant information on evidence use in policymaking. The theory-building and framework-development phases were important steps in the Grounded Theory approach, where the collected data was analysed to identify patterns, themes, and categories. The figure then illustrates that the findings were used to develop a theoretical framework explaining factors that enhance the utilisation of evidence in the Social Cluster.

One of the key features of the Grounded Theory approach is the concurrent generation and analysis of data, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. This means that data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, allowing for the constant refinement of research questions and sampling strategies based on insights emerging from the data. The iterative nature of Grounded Theory is also highlighted in the Figure, emphasising that data collection and analysis occurred in cycles. This iterative process enabled the continuous refinement of the theory and framework as more data was collected and a deeper understanding of evidence use was gained.

In the process of GT analysis, data was compared to identify similarities and differences. This was a crucial step in the process, based on the constant comparison method. Similar data in the form of open codes was grouped under relevant categories. When the core category emerged, it became the central theme of theory building and framework building, and along with other subcategories, it defined the structural components of the theory (Corbin & Strauss 2014:29).

It is important to highlight that GT's inductive approach emphasises the use of conceptual, analytical processes in the construction of theories in a given social context, in this case, where policy formulation and implementation occur (Glaser & Strauss 1967:45). During data collection, *theoretical sampling* was an essential element in generating the Grounded Theory based on systematic data processes (Glaser & Strauss 1967:45). According to Corbin and Strauss (2014:147), sampling in GT differs from conventional sampling in that it is centred around *sampling concepts*, not participants. The identification of data continued until the study reached *theoretical*

saturation, which was determined by the level of development, variation, and integration of the 12 categories that were identified. Overall, the Grounded Theory approach provided a rigorous and systematic way of conducting qualitative research.

1.6.2 Research design

A qualitative cross-sectional multiple-case study research design was conducted among government officials in the Social Cluster. The rationale for selecting this cluster is discussed further below. This design was chosen to strengthen the study's results by avoiding the limitations of focusing solely on a single case, which could be an atypical case whose circumstances are so unique that they offer limited insights that are applicable to other departments. The study utilised four cases in accordance with Yin's (2014) criteria, which involved selecting cases to achieve replication logic. Multi-case variation is important not only for replication but also for theory development, as cases from diverse contexts help balance similarities and differences, thereby enhancing the robustness of the theoretical conclusions (Yin 2014:57; Hunziker & Blankenagel 2021).

Specifically, the selection included cases with both high and low numbers of evaluations in the national repository, a potential indicator of the level of evaluation institutionalisation and, hence, a potential 'proxy' for evidence use. According to Yin, selecting cases with the goal of achieving replication logic supports theoretical sampling, where the addition of new cases does not yield new insights but rather reinforces the emerging grounded theory (Yin 2014:57-58). Given the focus on theory development, this design was considered more suitable for the study compared to other designs that rely on descriptive correlational analysis or mixed methods (Creswell 2014).

1.6.3 Study population

The population for this study is all national government departments, as they were constituted in 2021. While evidence use happens across all spheres of government, this study is only concerned with evidence use practices in the national sphere, which excludes the provincial and local government levels. A further delimitation is to restrict

the selection of the four cases to the Social Cluster. These two delimitations support the depth-over-breadth objective of qualitative research designs.

The five Clusters within the South African government can be categorised into the following broad thematic areas: Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment & Infrastructure Development; Social Protection, Community and Human Development; Governance, State Capacity and Institutional Development; Justice, Crime Prevention and Security; and International Cooperation, Trade and Security (Government of South Africa 2022). Table 1.2, below, lists the full names of the Clusters along with their commonly used abbreviations and abbreviated names. Essentially, a government Cluster is a grouping of departments with overlapping policy interventions.

Table 1.2: Full and abbreviated names of South Africa's ministerial Clusters

#	Full name of cluster	Abbrev.	Abbreviated Name
1.	Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment & Infrastructure Development	ESIEID	Economic Cluster
2.	Social Protection, Community and Human Development	SPCHD	Social Cluster
3.	Governance, State Capacity and Institutional Development	GSCID	Governance Cluster
4.	Justice, Crime Prevention and Security	JCPS	Justice Cluster
5.	International Cooperation, Trade and Security	ICTS	International Cluster

Source: Author from <https://www.gov.za> Government of South Africa (2022)

The primary objective of establishing the Cluster system was to create an integrated strategic approach to governance and intergovernmental coordination in policy formation and implementation. This approach aims to improve planning processes and enhance the quality of decision-making to ensure the effective delivery of government services. The goal of the Clusters is to ensure that all government interventions are appropriately coordinated across the two spheres of government—provincial and national (Government of South Africa 2022).

This study focused on four cases of the 16 departments within the **Social Protection, Community, and Human Development Cluster (SPCHD)**, commonly referred to as

the **Social Cluster**. This Cluster was chosen because of its significant contribution to socioeconomic development outcomes, as emphasised in the problem statement. Moreover, the departments within this cluster make up 55% of all national evaluations in the national public evaluation repository. The Social Cluster is also responsible for delivering many aspects of the Bill of Rights, and any shortcomings in policy or implementation can result in public dissatisfaction, which has been known to lead to public protests (Chiwarawara 2024:1-2). In this regard, social stability hinges on how well Social Cluster departments deliver essential social services and their ability to use evidence to address the delayed advancement towards the realisation of the hopes and aspirations of what democracy would deliver. An evidence-utilisation framework, rooted in the experiences of officials involved in policy formulation and execution, highlights the importance of evidence in guaranteeing successful policymaking and implementation.

The following list is of the national departments in the Social Cluster. These departments form the population of the study. The four national department cases were drawn from this list.

1. Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)
2. Basic Education (DBE)
3. Cooperative Governance (DCoG)
4. Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE)
5. Employment and Labour (DEL)
6. Health (DoH)
7. Higher Education and Training (DHET)
8. Human Settlements (DHS)
9. Correctional Services (DCS)
10. The Presidency
11. Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD)
12. Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI)
13. Small Business Development (DSBD)
14. Social Development (DSD)
15. Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC)
16. Transport (DOT)

1.6.4 Case selection

An important design decision in Grounded Theory was selecting an effective case selection strategy. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had a broad knowledge and experience base concerning the objectives of this study. As previously discussed, the study utilised a qualitative multiple-case study approach to go deeper into the topic of evidence utilisation. Unlike quantitative approaches, the aim was not to obtain cases that were representative. Instead, the aim was to purposefully select departments that yielded information-rich participants, diverse perspectives, and expert validation. The latter selection criteria were in line with the guidelines outlined by Patton (2014), Creswell and Creswell (2018), and Guest *et al.* (2006). Qualitative approaches frequently focus on choosing a purposive sampling strategy based on a specific research issue and the resources (money and time) available (Hesse-Biber & Nagy Leavy 2011:45). It was, therefore, appropriate in this study to use a non-probability sampling method, as we sought to gain deeper insights rather than extrapolate from a representative sample to the broader population.

With respect to selecting participants within cases, Morse and Clark (2019:148) identify three recruitment approaches. The first includes selecting participants' experiences according to pre-determined time intervals as they live through the experience under investigation. The second approach requires identifying predetermined landmarks within the experience and conducting cross-sectional sampling of diverse participants. Third, selecting people who have lived through the event and asking them to share their experiences retrospectively.

The first and second approaches were deemed to be too time-consuming, as they required participants to live through the experience at the time of the study, which was impossible in this investigation. This meant that the third approach was used. According to Morse and Clark (2019:149), this approach was appropriate for interviewing experts with broad knowledge and experience about evidence use in the public sector, as seen in Chapter 4.

1.6.4.1 The rationale of using the NER over the AfrED database

Critical to developing grounded theory is understanding the variability in evidence use across cases. Two potential databases can be used to make this assessment: the National Evaluation Repository (NER) and the African Evaluation Database (AfrED). Both repositories were extensively reviewed to evaluate their potential use. While the AfrED database had over 4,157 evaluation reports from 19 countries at the time of the study, only 291 of these were identified as being from South Africa.

Only four identifiers are visible on the AfrED website: *title*, *by*, *year of publication*, and *source*, making it difficult to quickly determine the type of evaluation or the government department for which it was conducted without downloading and opening the report. For example, one evaluation titled *Evaluation of the Stop Stock Out Project, South Africa* lists *ALNAP* as its source. It was unclear which department this evaluation was for, and, to make matters worse, there appears to be a duplicate entry titled *Evaluation of the Stop Stock Outs Project (SSP), South Africa*, with 'SSP' included and *MSF* indicated as the source. This duplication reduces the number of distinct South African evaluations in the AfrED database to 290 and raises concerns about the curators' quality control.

Despite the website indicating that the AfrED database has 14 identifiers, downloading the evaluation information using the website's export function reveals only five identifiers: *year*, *authors*, *title*, *source*, and *link*. While there is an author entry for evaluation articles and theses, it remains unpopulated for reports, just like the 'by' field. The missing and unpopulated identifiers raise concerns about AfrED's database design: why mention identifiers that appear redundant for all 290 evaluations?

More issues were identified with the AfrED database, including the fact that 87 evaluations were listed as originating from the DPME, while 77 had 'Government Website' as their source. Upon closer inspection, many of the 77 were also from DPME's NER. This includes all 87 that had DPME as the source, meaning a significant number of these 164 evaluations were originally sourced from the NER and merely linked to the AfrED database without the additional identifiers found on the NER. For example, the report *Labour Reform in South Africa: Measuring Regulation and a Synthesis of Policy Suggestions* on the AfrED database, listed as coming from a

'Government Website,' also appears in the NER. Subtracting 164 from the total of 290 leaves 126 evaluations, some of which are for provincial departments, such as *Review of the Expanded Public Works Programme in Gauteng, 2009–2014* and *Consolidated General Report on the Provincial Audit Outcomes 2009–2010*. These would need to be excluded given this study's focus on national departments. However, if the title did not clearly indicate that the evaluation was at a provincial level, one would have to download and open the report to determine this, which could be time-consuming.

The assessment shows that if the NER has 141 government evaluations, this figure does not differ substantially from the 165 in the AfrED database. Aside from quality concerns regarding data curation—and the fact that AfrED simply pulls many reports from the NER—the disadvantage of AfrED is that it does not include the relevant metadata needed to identify the type of evaluation and the department for which the intervention was evaluated. It also lacks information on the initiating department and whether the evaluation was assessed for quality, all of which is available on the NER. The NER metadata captures more identifiers appropriate for this study on evidence use, such as Evaluation Area, Evaluation Type, Evaluation Subject, and Geographic Scope. Moreover, it contains the full suite of reports produced during the evaluation, not just individual reports as on AfrED. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, AfrED is a suboptimal resource compared with the NER and will not be used.

It is also important to note that the NER is not being used as the sample frame. The population of the study includes all national government departments, further delimited to those in the Social Cluster. The NER is used to assess the extent to which departments regularly participate in evaluations. While it is understood that departments commission evaluations not included in the NER, the deficits associated with AfrED would necessitate approaching each department individually to solicit information on the evaluations they have conducted—an approach AfrED has attempted, but which only yielded 165 evaluations (the majority of them originating from the NER). Without an alternative database—and given the time-consuming nature of collating evaluations from each department—the NER was deemed suitable for assessing evidence-use practices, despite its shortcomings.

1.6.4.2 *Assessing the level of evidence use practice of departments in the social cluster*

The extent to which departments routinely used evidence was assessed using the NER. The NER was established within the national policy system to curate and provide public officials with evidence from various interventions, supporting policy design and implementation. From a systems perspective, this made the NER an essential source of evidence and formed the foundation for its use. To comprehensively assess the evaluations included in the NER, a database was compiled using the metadata of all 141 evaluations listed on the evaluation repository website. Understanding the context of each evaluation is crucial, particularly in light of its potential impact on evidence use. Without this dataset, it would have been difficult to appreciate the nuances of evaluation practices across the five clusters.

Of the 141 evaluations, Table 1.3 shows that 56% (79 evaluations) relate to the Social Cluster, while 28% (39 evaluations) focus on the Economic Cluster. Notably, the Social Cluster alone represents 67% of all national department evaluations in the NER. Given the substantial number of evaluations in this cluster, the findings suggest a more entrenched practice of evaluation there, although not in every department. This highlights the potential for more structured and consistent approaches to assessing programmes and initiatives. However, variation exists, with some departments producing more evaluations than others. This mix of frequently and rarely evaluated departments was maintained to provide sufficient variation for the Grounded Theory constant comparison approach to data analysis.

As noted in the previous section, the NER was used while recognising that some departments may have commissioned evaluations that are not included in the repository or the public domain. Addressing this gap would require significant time and resources to contact each department and determine how many evaluations they have commissioned—a task beyond the scope of this study.

Table 1.3: Number of evaluations in the NER by cluster and type of institution (n = 141)

Institution Type	National		Provincial		Public Non-SOE & SOE		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Economic	18	23%	14	40%	7	27%		0%	39	28%
Governance	5	6%	3	9%	10	38%		0%	18	13%
International	1	1%		0%		0%	1	50%	2	1%
Justice	2	3%		0%		0%	1	50%	3	2%
Social	52	67%	18	51%	9	35%		0%	79	56%
Total	78	100%	35	100%	26	100%	2	100%	141	100%
<i>Institution %</i>	55%		25%		18%		1%		100%	

Source: Author based on a dataset constructed from the National Evaluation Repository DPME

Table 1.4, below, sheds light on the uneven distribution of evaluations within the Social Cluster departments. This distribution potentially mirrored actual evaluation practices, paving the way to compare and contrast the influencing factors in evidence utilisation.

Table 1.4: Distribution of Social Cluster NER evaluations across departments (n = 52)

Social Cluster National Department	Number	%
Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development	4	8%
Department of Basic Education	13	25%
Department of Correctional Services	0	0%
Department of Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs	2	4%
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment	2	4%
Department of Health	3	6%
Department of Higher Education & Training	2	4%
Department of Human Settlements	6	12%
Department of Labour	4	8%
Department of National Treasury	1	2%
Department of Public Works	2	4%
Department of Rural Development & Land Reform	3	6%
Department of Social Development	8	15%
Department of Sport and Recreation	1	2%
Department of Small Business Development	1	2%
Department of Transport	0	0%
Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities	0	0%
Total	52	100%

Source: Author based on a dataset constructed from the National Evaluation Repository DPME

The Department of Basic Education leads with 25% of the evaluations, followed by the Department of Social Development and Human Settlements. It's essential to note that the absence of an evaluation in the NER does not denote a department's non-participation in evaluations. For instance, while the Department of Transport isn't in the NER, they were assessed by the Public Service Commission in 2003. The dataset also introduced an 'evaluation type' variable. Table 1.5, below categorises each Social Cluster department by evaluation type, underscoring the importance of understanding departments' diverse evaluation approaches to gauge the evidence type needed for specific interventions. The most common were implementation assessments (33%), diagnostic (27%), and impact evaluations (25%). The variation in evaluation types across departments is pivotal for theory construction, implying that the cases should encompass departments with varied evaluation experiences.

Table 1.5: Type of Social Cluster evaluations in the NER (n = 14 depts)

Department	Design	Diagnostic	Economic	Impact	Implementation	Synthesis	Formative	Total	No. of E Types
Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries				2	2			4	2
Basic Education		4		5	3		1	13	4
Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs		1			1			2	2
Environmental Affairs		1			1			2	2
Health		1			1	1		3	3
Higher Education & Training	1				1			2	2
Human Settlements	1		1	1	2	1		6	5
Labour		3		1				4	2
National Treasury				1				1	1
Public Works					1	1		2	2
Rural Development & Land Reform		1			2			3	2
Small Business Development				1				1	1
Social Development		3		1	3	1		8	4
Sport and Recreation				1				1	1
Total	2	14	1	13	17	4	1	52	2.4*
<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>100%</i>	

Source: Author based on a dataset constructed from the National Evaluation Repository DPME.

*Average number of types of evaluations conducted per department.

However, a pertinent observation arose from the data: despite numerous implementation evaluations in the Social Cluster, there is a reported slow pace of policy application. Two pressing questions emerge:

- Are implementation shortcomings coinciding with unutilised evidence, potentially resulting in suboptimal or inefficient enactment?
- If evidence isn't influencing ongoing processes, what barriers obstruct its utilisation?

Addressing and finding ways to overcome these factors could speed up the implementation process, leading to better policy outcomes.

1.6.4.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study

This study targeted only national government departments, with participants drawn from senior officials (deputy director-level and above) involved in policy formulation and implementation. The critical inclusion criteria were:

- The department must belong to the Social Cluster.
- Officials actively involved in policy formulation and implementation.
- Officials with more than two years of experience in their respective departments.

Chapter 4 will demonstrate that the officials from the four cases met all these criteria. In terms of experience, they had many years of service in the public sector and were well-versed in policymaking and evidence use. The original plan was to select two respondents from each department for a total of eight, focusing on those responsible for evidence generation and use. Chapter 4 will discuss the final number of participants interviewed.

The main exclusion criteria were departments from the other five clusters or cross-cutting departments such as The Presidency. See Table 1.6, below for the study's case selection rationale. The selection rationale was based on the premise that officials involved in evidence generation and use facilitated departmental evaluations and should, therefore, be familiar with how evaluation results influence intervention

formulation. This proved accurate, as four participants held positions in research coordination, monitoring, and evaluation.

According to the Grounded Theory approach, there was no need to determine officials' familiarity with the NER in advance. Their awareness was part of the research findings, reflecting how departments managed and used evaluation knowledge. Overemphasising those already familiar with evaluations could have skewed the results, sidelining other knowledge management factors that shape how evidence is incorporated into policy.

Furthermore, the Government-wide M&E System Policy Framework, DPME (2007:13), set out best practices for gathering evidence to enhance policy. These measures include developing accessible institutional repositories for M&E results and promoting evidence sharing through M&E forums and learning circles.

As mentioned, four departments were deemed unsuitable for this study, and reasons for their exclusion are outlined in Table 1.6. The remaining 11 departments were selected based on their potential to provide valuable insights on evidence use. Securing permission from each department was challenging, but all 11 were approached. Table 1.6 also indicates the number and type of evaluations each department has in the NER. Two officials from each department were selected to allow for a comprehensive analysis, resulting in eight participants across the four case studies.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the realised sample, highlighting its suitability as the foundation for developing a grounded theory. It also explains how this sample offered sufficient variation for theory building. Selecting four cases from a group of national departments represents a marked shift from the more common single-case study in public administration. The aim of choosing these four cases was to gain deeper insights into evidence-based practices, rather than to extrapolate findings to all national departments.

Table 1.6: Final case selection of Social Cluster departments

#	Full Name & Abbreviation	Considered	Case select rationale	No. of Evaluations in the NER	No. of Evaluation Types	Role of participant
1.	Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	4	2	Evidence generation and use. Policy Research and Analysis
2.	Basic Education (DBE)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	13	4	Evidence generation and use.
3.	Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs (DCoGTA)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	2	2	Evidence generation and use.
4.	Correctional Services (DCS)	Not Included	Key policies and programmes fall under the Justice Cluster, and no evaluation that falls under the Social Cluster in the NER to date	0	0	
5.	Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)	Not Included	Its two evaluations in the NER fall under the Economic and Infrastructure Cluster, and the other two fall under a programme coordinated by DPWI, which has been included in the case selection.	2	2	
6.	Health (DoH)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	3	3	Evidence generation and use.
7.	Higher Education and Training (DHET)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	2	2	Evidence generation and use. Planning, Policy and Strategy.
8.	Human Settlements (DHS)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	6	5	Evidence generation and use.

#	Full Name & Abbreviation	Considered	Case select rationale	No. of Evaluations in the NER	No. of Evaluation Types	Role of participant
9.	Employment and Labour (DEL)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	4	2	Evidence generation and use. Research coordination.
10.	Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI)	Yes	While having significant policies under the Economic & Infrastructure Cluster, the department coordinates the country's largest poverty alleviation programme (social).	2	2	Evidence generation and use. Expanded Public Works Programme.
11.	Small Business Development (DSBD)	Not Included	Key policies and programmes fall under the Economic & Infrastructure Cluster, and no evaluation in the NER	1	1	
12.	Social Development (DSD)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	8	4	Evidence generation and use.
13.	Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC)	Yes	Core Social Cluster department based on mandate and focus of functions	1	1	Evidence generation and use.
14.	The Presidency	Not Included	The Presidency is in every cluster. It chairs the Clusters and provides enhanced technical support.			
15.	Transport (DOT)	Not Included	Key policies and programmes fall under the Economic & Infrastructure Cluster & no evaluation in the NER	0	0	
16.	Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD)	Yes	Has the primary role of ensuring cross-cutting research assessments on implementing empowerment policy across all sectors, especially the social sector.	0	0	Evidence generation and use. Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Coordination

Source: Compiled by Author *The study targets four departments.

In addition, the chapter examines the concept of **analytic generalisation**, originally introduced by (Yin 2014:40), emphasising the difference between case selection in qualitative studies and the aim of quantitative research to achieve statistical generalisation. Analytic generalisation is often misunderstood, and Chapter 4 encourages careful consideration of this objective of qualitative case study designs when assessing the outcomes of the primary data collection of this study.

1.6.5 Data collection

For the study, in-depth interviews with an unstructured interview guide were conducted to gather insights from public officials regarding their experiences with using evidence. This research method aligned with the proposed Grounded Theory approach to data analysis. Employing GT, an inductive analysis method, patterns and themes in the data were identified. This allowed for a deeper comprehension of the factors that promote evidence utilisation throughout the national policy system. Unlike other data collection tools, such as survey instruments, it allowed respondents to give detailed accounts of their experiences using evidence within their respective departments (Charmaz 2014:87; Morse *et al.* 2021).

Grounded Theory utilises theoretical sampling, meaning that the number of interviews needed was determined when saturation was reached. However, the initial goal was to interview two officials from each of the four departments, resulting in eight initial interviews. Data was collected from senior officials at the Deputy Director level and above. This group was chosen to ensure that respondents had sufficient experience in policy formulation and implementation.

1.6.6 Data analysis strategy

In this study, the data analysis strategy followed the core GT data collection and analysis procedures; this involved the concurrent data generation and iterative analysis cycle, highlighted in detail in Figure 1.3. This process is central to how GT creates data-driven theories using qualitative data. As seen in the figure below, using ATLAS-ti, the analysis started with extracting concepts using open coding after acquiring the first set of primary data through key informant interviews. As part of the

study, data collection, analysis, and theory sampling were carried out in an iterative cycle, with emerging concepts guiding further case selection.

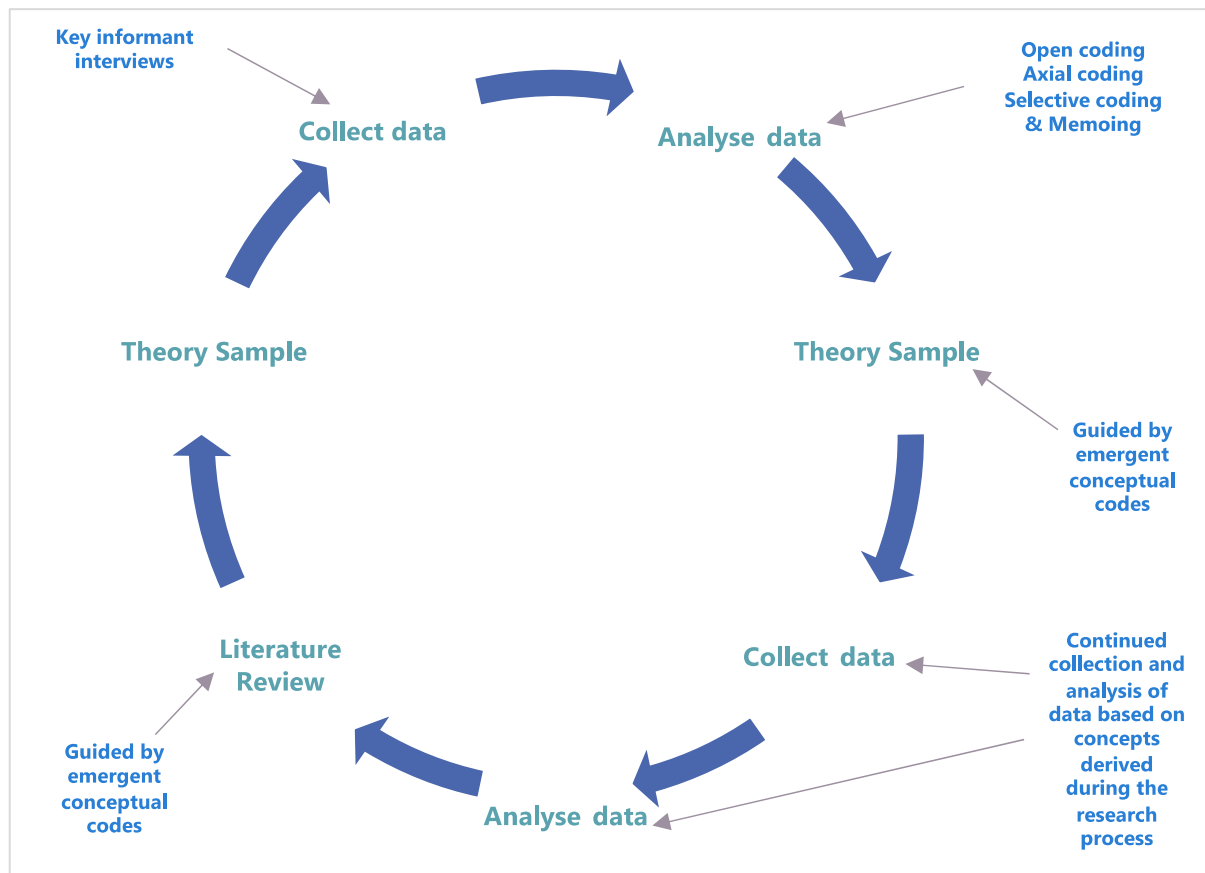


Figure 1.3: Iterative data collection, analysis, and sampling process in GT

Source: Adapted from Rader et al. (2014:200) and Corbin and Strauss (2014:30)

The transcripts of recorded interviews formed the primary data source for the Grounded Theory analysis of this study. The analysis aimed to gain insights into how individuals create meaning within a given organisational context, in this case, of using evidence in policy formulation and implementation.

1.7 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Although several national departments could potentially shed light on the factors that influence the flow of evidence within the national policy system, this study only focused on national departments within the Social Cluster (DPME 2011). This choice also meant that the study potentially excluded departments that could contribute to a deeper understanding of evidence use. As a result, the potential influence of context-

specific factors may limit the transferability of the study's findings to other policy sectors or geographical areas (Creswell & Poth 2017).

While generalising the study findings may be desirable, the qualitative approach prevents the extrapolation of results to the entire population (Bryman 2016). As will be argued in Chapter 4, '*analytic generalisation*' is still possible (Yin 2014). The study's reliance on the perceptions and experiences of a number of participants also poses a limitation, as it may not capture the full range of perspectives on evidence use within the policy system (Maxwell 2012).

Despite these limitations, the study's rigorous methodological approach, which included a Grounded Theory methodology, helped ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the findings (Charmaz 2014). By focusing on one Cluster, the study can provide an in-depth understanding of factors affecting evidence use within that specific context, which can inform future research and policy development efforts in other areas. Furthermore, acknowledging potential biases and limitations enhances the transparency and credibility of the study, allowing readers to understand the study's context and scope better (Morse 2015).

1.8 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study adhered to research ethics at all stages and followed the University of Pretoria's research quality assurance framework. This involved submitting the study to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, see ethics approval letter in the Appendix. Adhering to research ethics was essential, as studies involving humans have ethical implications for participants during data collection and after the study's publication (Pienaar 2010:178).

1.8.1 Handling of confidential information and confidentiality assurances

To guarantee confidentiality, identifying information about participants was substituted with pseudonymous identifiers (i.e., pseudonyms) through data pseudonymisation. This technique, commonly called 'masking', enabled the data to be linked to participants while maintaining its separation from the study report. Furthermore, as a component of the confidentiality agreement, a statement in the consent form outlines

which participant information will be utilised to ensure confidentiality. The study also adhered to the guidelines outlined in the university's Code of Ethics for Research and the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2018 (POPIA) guide for researchers (USAf 2020).

1.8.2 Obtaining informed consent from participants

The primary data collection for the research focused on senior officials in the public sector, a group generally associated with minimal risk. Nonetheless, all ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed. Potential risks included discomfort, inconvenience, breaches in confidentiality, and reputational damage arising from involvement in the research (Pienaar 2010:187; Kopelman 2004:352). To minimise these risks, informed consent was obtained, and participants were provided with the necessary information. The recruitment process involved collaboration with the contact who facilitated the acquisition of the study permission letter to access a list of potential participants, who were then contacted via phone or email. Participation was voluntary, with the contact information for two officials requested in case one declined.

1.8.3 Voluntary participation

The study allowed participants to decide whether to participate without any pressure or coercion. Individuals had the option to withdraw at any point without explaining, and there would not be any adverse effects. Participants could ask questions about the study, and gatekeepers would not exploit their power. The study did not provide direct benefits, but it has the potential to yield valuable insights for policymaking.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study explores Evaluation Use Theory in public administration and sheds light on the ongoing discourse surrounding its development. The research emphasised crucial factors that required careful consideration and adopted an interpretive ontology based on the experiences of public officials. As stated by Patton (2020:599), such an approach provided a suitable framework for analysing evaluation use in complex and context-specific environments commonly encountered in public policymaking.

Recent literature on evaluation use advocates for the creation of use theories grounded in social science and rooted in an interpretive philosophical orientation. As Patton (2020:599) asserts, context-sensitive use theories, as championed by King and Alkin (2019), are more likely to possess enhanced explanatory and predictive power, thus rendering them more suited for addressing policy formulation and implementation challenges in an intricate and unpredictable world.

The framework generated in this study aims to address the need for improved utilisation of evaluation evidence in South Africa's national policy system. By enhancing the utilisation of evaluation evidence, the study seeks to contribute to the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation. This study is particularly relevant in the current context of the public administration literature, where there is a growing emphasis on evidence-based policymaking. The study employed a context-sensitive methodology based on the experiences of public officials in the South African public sector. By emphasising the importance of evidence utilisation and context in decision-making, this study fills a significant gap in the social accountability aspect of evaluation use theory that will help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

In South Africa, research on the use of evidence often relies on international frameworks, which goes against the recommendation for context-sensitive frameworks (Goldman *et al.* 2019; Cronin & Sadan 2015:2). To fill this gap, the study sought to understand the officials' perspectives, which is crucial for grasping the significance of context in evidence use. The study contributes to the epistemological dimensions of evaluation use theory, emphasising the importance of interactions within the context in which knowledge is produced. Additionally, the study enriches the literature on evaluation systems by unravelling the factors that influence the use of evidence in the different components of the NPS, particularly concerning developmental outcomes (Craver & Tabery 2019; Adams *et al.* 2013:119).

1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The following is the outline of the thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter served as an introduction to the study and explains its research design. It discusses the study's orientation and the theoretical perspectives that inform its focus. The chapter also identifies gaps in knowledge that the study aims to address and explains why it is relevant to the field. This leads to the presentation of the problem statement and research objectives. The research methods section details the study's approach and design, highlighting any limitations. Next, the evaluations sampled from the national evaluation repository and the criteria used to select them were presented. Finally, the chapter discussed the significance of the study to the discipline of Public Administration, including its potential contributions and implications.

Chapter 2: Evaluation use theories and evidence use

This chapter will respond to the first objective of this study, which is to assess the theories that underpin evidence use in policy formulation and implementation. In so doing, it will answer the research question: What factors from evaluation use theories influence the use of evidence? The chapter will discuss the role of literature reviews in Grounded Theory (GT) research. It will explore evidence-use theories and identify theory-based factors that influence evidence use. It will also discuss the evolution of evidence use and the six types used. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of definitions of evidence-based policymaking and their implications for use, providing practical insight for policymakers and researchers.

Chapter 3: National evaluation systems and the use of evidence

This chapter examines the present literature on South Africa's National Evaluation System (NES). The focus will be on examining the NES characteristics, functions, and roles and how they influence the use of evaluation evidence. The assessment will include investigating the policies and legislation surrounding South Africa's NES. It will evaluate the frameworks in place to ensure that evaluation knowledge is utilised. Additionally, this chapter will present the NES as a mechanistic system where evidence is used across the three components of the policy process.

Chapter 4: Factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence in the South African National Policy System

This chapter will use Grounded Theory to analyse the collected data. The systematic examination and interpretation of the data using this approach will enable us to understand the participant's experiences and perspectives. A profile of the realised sample from the four cases will be presented, followed by a presentation of the open coding and a discussion of how axial coding and selective coding led to the categories that emerged from the data. The relationships between the evidence-use categories will be discussed, and a rationale will be given for choosing the core category that will form the basis for the grounded theory's development. The chapter will also evaluate the variation across cases to determine the extent to which the four case studies can serve as a basis for theory development. This will then be followed by the presentation of the coding paradigm and the evidence use theoretical narrative for the Grounded Theory. The objective is to construct a comprehensive theory of evidence utilisation within the Social Cluster. This theory will serve as the foundation for developing a framework for evidence use, with direct implications for formulation and implementation within South Africa's national policy system.

Chapter 5: An evidence use framework for strengthening evidence-based decision-making in public policy

This chapter will address the fourth objective of the study, which is to generate an evidence-based framework to strengthen EBPM in public policy. In fulfilling this objective, it will answer the guiding research question: What is the ideal framework for strengthening the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation in the national policy system in general and the Social Cluster in particular? The chapter will present the evidence-use framework and explain how it was constructed, followed by a discussion of its rationale. It will also revisit the review of evaluation use theories presented in Chapter 2 and identify how the proposed framework contributes to existing theory and the extent to which it addresses and enhances some of the limitations of the evidence-based use theories.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusion

Drawing insights from the analysis and application of the grounded theory framework, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive conclusion while offering valuable recommendations for both theory and practice.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the study, highlighting evidence's critical role in formulating better policies, guiding planning and prioritisation, and designing efficient and effective interventions. The motivation for an evidence-use framework was contextualised within the context of scarce resources and infinite societal needs, underscoring the necessity for efficacious policies informed by evaluations that captured successes and failures. The chapter also discussed how the demand for evidence-based decision-making has fuelled the rise in national evaluation systems. A review of the factors that influence the use of evaluation evidence was conducted to establish the study's orientation. This review discussed the study's theoretical orientation, grounded in the social accountability root of evaluation theory, which focuses on evaluation and decision-making. The proposed framework contributes to this theoretical foundation by providing policymakers with a tool that they can use to enhance the use of evidence in their decision-making processes. Achieving this would allow the study's outcome to impact the problem context discussed in this chapter. The problem statement highlighted the lacklustre performance, in terms of outcomes, of South Africa's post-apartheid policies, which, despite three decades of successive implementation, have failed to address developmental deficits fully. The study objectives and corresponding research questions were framed to guide the study toward its primary goal of determining the factors that influence the use of evidence within the national policy system as the foundation for creating a framework for evidence use. The chapter detailed the research approach and methodology, which is comprehensive and carefully considered, concerning the four-department case study design, the study population, and how the purposive sample was drawn. The data collection and analysis strategy were fleshed out—finally, the chapter concluded by discussing the study's limitations, ethical implications, and significance.

This chapter introduced the study by emphasising the critical role of evidence in formulating better policies, guiding planning and prioritisation, and designing efficient

and effective interventions. The need for an evidence-use framework was contextualised within the constraints of scarce resources and the vast societal needs, highlighting the importance of developing efficacious policies informed by evaluations that capture both successes and failures. The chapter also discussed how the growing demand for evidence-based decision-making has driven the rise of national evaluation systems.

A review of the factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence was conducted to establish the study's theoretical orientation. This review grounded the study in the social accountability root of evaluation theory, which emphasises the connection between evaluation and decision-making. The proposed framework contributes to this theoretical foundation by offering policymakers a tool to enhance evidence use in their decision-making processes. Achieving this would enable the study's outcomes to address the problem context discussed in this chapter.

The problem statement underscored the underwhelming performance of South Africa's post-apartheid policies, which, despite nearly three decades of implementation, have yet to fully address developmental deficits. The study's objectives and corresponding research questions were framed to guide the research towards its primary goal: determining the factors that influence the use of evidence within the national policy system as a basis for creating a framework for evidence use.

The chapter also outlined the research approach and methodology, detailing the comprehensive four-department case study design, the study population, and the process of drawing a purposive sample. The strategies for data collection and analysis were thoroughly described. Finally, the chapter concluded by discussing the study's limitations, ethical considerations, and overall significance.

CHAPTER 2

EVIDENCE USE AND EVALUATION USE THEORIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the orientation of the study and its problem context. These served as the basis for discussing the research objectives and questions. The chapter offered a detailed and in-depth examination of the grounded theory research methodology. It described the approach and research design while providing comprehensive insights into sample construction, data collection, and analysis strategy. The current chapter responds to the *first objective* of this study, which is to *assess theories underpinning evidence use in policy formulation and implementation*. In so doing, it answers the research question: *What theories underpin evidence use in policy formulation and implementation?* This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the role of literature reviews in Grounded Theory (GT) research in Section 2.2. Given the importance of evidence use in decision-making, Section 2.3 will discuss definitions of evidence-based policymaking and their implications for use, providing practical insight for policymakers and researchers. Section 2.4 will discuss the evolution of evidence use, emphasising how this has evolved from a narrow conceptualisation to a broader framing of use. A review of the evidence use literature is conducted in Section 2.5, followed by a review of evidence use frameworks (Section 2.6). Consistent with grounded theory, these two reviews were conducted after the iterative data analysis and the development of the grounded theory. This was done to avoid preconceptions that could bias the coding and category development process, which could prevent gaining new insights into evidence use practices. An exploration of six evidence use theories will follow in Section 2.7, and Section 2.8 will identify what will be referred to as **theory-based factors** that influence evidence use. The intention is to identify the theoretical factors that influence the use of evidence, particularly those relevant to South Africa. For completeness, Section 2.9 and 2.10 will discuss the six types of evidence use in evaluation and identify what will be called **use-based factors** of evidence use. Section 2.11 will employ GTs constant comparison analysis method and synthesise the emerging **theory-based** with the **use-based** evidence use themes

of factors that influence evidence utilisation. The goal is to identify unifying factors of use supported by both *theoretical* and *practical* aspects of evidence use.

2.2 THE ROLE OF LITERATURE REVIEWS IN GROUNDED THEORY STUDIES

When GT was in its infancy, the debate over whether literature reviews should be conducted at the beginning of a study revolved around the views of its co-founders. Glaser (1978) argued that *"the presupposition of an inductive approach, such as grounded theory, is that the researcher has as few preconceived ideas about the research phenomenon as possible, otherwise, there is a risk that interpretation of the data may be biased if one is too imbued with concepts from the literature"*. This view has been challenged by several GT theorists who cite several issues with approaching a GT study without a review of the relevant literature. According to these scholars, undertaking a study without a literature review can introduce a host of challenges (Silverman 2017; Ramalho *et al.* 2015; Charmaz 2014; Thornberg 2012; Tummers & Karsten 2011; Dunne 2011; Rosaline 2008; and Strübing 2007). Those who disagree with Glaser's viewpoint argue that paying attention to an initial literature review might cause a researcher to miss key details of the research context. Such an oversight could jeopardise their ability to identify relevant research questions (Ramalho *et al.* 2015:4; Thornberg 2012). Moreover, examining existing literature not only equips researchers with insights into existing gaps in methodology and theory but also serves as a guide for refining their research objectives. Insights gained from the review can facilitate a more rigorous advancement of GT investigations (Tummers & Karsten 2011).

Charmaz (2014) and Dunne (2011:118) argue that a literature review serves as a valuable instrument for fostering self-reflection during the research process. Engaging in a literature review necessitates researchers to critically examine their assumptions and preconceived notions, thereby augmenting the credibility and comprehensiveness of their GT study. By promoting transparency and cultivating an awareness of potential biases that could impact the interpretation of data, reflexivity plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the objectivity and rigour of research (Silverman 2017:508). As such, an integrative and reflexive approach to the literature review may be the most effective

way to balance the need for openness to emergent concepts with the requirement for rigorous and transparent research practices in GT studies.

Some scholars propose that commencing a GT study does not necessarily require an immediate literature review. Instead, they advocate for a more iterative or deferred approach (Rosaline 2008:3; Strübing 2007:2). This adaptable method enables researchers to remain receptive to emerging themes and categories throughout the study, leveraging existing literature to enrich and authenticate their findings (Rosaline 2008).

In the context of this study, exploring the relevant literature is an instrumental tool in identifying methodological and theoretical gaps in existing knowledge (Tummers & Karsten 2011:65). Tummers and Karsten (2011:65) discovered that it can pave the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. A study can identify unexplored aspects of evidence utilisation in South Africa's public sector by pinpointing these gaps. This is particularly significant in South Africa, where research on evidence utilisation in the public sector is still limited and fragmented.

A literature review will also allow for a better grasp of the various theoretical perspectives that have informed evidence utilisation (Rosaline 2008). This knowledge can inform the development of a robust and contextually sensitive GT that does not reinvent the wheel, promotes reflexivity, and the development of a contextually relevant study. By engaging with the relevant literature, this study can ensure that the emergent GT is rigorous, and transparent and contributes to advancing knowledge on evidence use in South Africa's public sector.

The rationale for incorporating a literature review in a GT study from the ongoing discussion can therefore be synthesised into the following arguments. Given that this study aims to contribute new theoretical insights into evidence use, the literature review will enhance the theoretical sensitivity crucial for the iterative process of theory-building. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's ability to recognise significant patterns in the data. Engaging with existing theories can sharpen this sensitivity by providing conceptual tools that assist in data interpretation, even when these theories are not directly applied or are ultimately challenged by the emerging grounded theory. Some of these conceptual tools include *analytical frameworks*, which offer structured

methods to categorise and interpret data. These frameworks introduce sensitising concepts that help in identifying categories for examining how ideas may influence the use of evidence in policy contexts. Additionally, the review will facilitate the creation of implicit *typologies or classification systems* as conceptual tools that will be used in theory and framework building, these will further aid in organising the data.

By exploring the "how" and "why" of evidence use as discussed in existing theories, this study will be better positioned to identify novel contributions that deepen our understanding of evidence use. Furthermore, the review will serve as a foundational backdrop, allowing the study to address gaps in the literature through the development of a new grounded theory. This review will provide a robust framework for comparing the emerging theory with existing theories, highlighting its similarities, differences, and unique contributions. Such a framework will also help prevent the redundancy of simply replicating existing theories with the new grounded theory.

This chapter will examine the literature on evidence use, adhering closely to Thornberg's (2012) guidelines for informed GT. Thornberg's guidelines specifically address the complexities and concerns encountered in GT research, particularly when initiating a study with a literature review.

2.3 DEFINITIONS OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR USE

The use of evidence in public policy has been the subject of extensive discussion among scholars and practitioners. This section aims to provide an overview of different definitions of evidence-based policymaking and to contrast them based on their similarities and differences. This exercise aims to extract the factors that can influence the use of evidence in policy formulation. The focus on EBPM in this section stems from the understanding that, within this study, EBPM represents the outcome that the investigation seeks to explain or influence. It is the aspect expected to be impacted by changes in the factors influencing evidence use. Therefore, EBPM is conceptualised as the dependent variable, while the factors influencing evidence use are identified as the independent variables.

EBPM has been variously defined, as shown in Table 2.1, below, which lists seven definitions of EBPM whilst highlighting their most salient points of emphasis. These seven definitions present distinct perspectives on the use of evidence in the policymaking process yet share common themes that emphasise the importance of utilising scientific evidence and rigorous methods to inform policy decisions.

Definitions 1, 3, 4, and 7 all emphasise the importance of using scientific evidence to inform policy decisions (Van Woensel 2021:2; DPME 2011b:1; Cartwright & Hardie 2012:14-15; Davies 2004:4). Definition 1 highlights the role of policymakers in combining scientific evidence with their understanding of societal needs and values (Van Woensel 2021:2). While Definition 3 focuses on using the best available evidence to help policymakers and service providers make better decisions and achieve better outcomes (DPME 2011b).

Definition 4 stresses the need for trustworthy evidence generated from reliable methods to predict policy effectiveness (Cartwright & Hardie 2012). In contrast, Definition 7 emphasises the importance of balancing current evidence with ongoing effectiveness evaluations (Davies 2000). In contrast, definitions 2, 5, and 6 highlight the practical aspects of EBPM, such as monitoring programme delivery, encouraging innovation, and ensuring the evidence is generated from credible institutions (EBPC 2016:3; Baba & HakemZadeh 2012:833; Cookson 2005:119). Within this practical aspect of EBPM, each definition has its own areas of emphasis.

Definition 2 focuses on using rigorous evidence, monitoring, impact evaluations, and testing new approaches to improve and scale programmes (EBPC 2016:3). While Definition 5 underlines the importance of generating evidence from credible institutions and using it to make informed decisions based on practice (Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012:833). Definition 6 directs attention towards the value of evidence-based thinking and scepticism in public policy decisions affecting groups of people (Cookson 2005:119).

Table 2.1: Definitions of Evidence-Based Policymaking

Source	Definition	Emphasis	Themes
Van Woensel (2021)	Definition 1: Evidence-based policy-making involves the use of scientific evidence to inform policy decisions, in a democratic context where policy-makers combine scientific evidence with their understanding of societal needs and values (Van Woensel 2021:2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scientific evidence</i> • <i>Policy-maker capacity</i> • <i>Values</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and relevance of evidence • Relationships between researchers & policy-makers • Public pressure & societal values
EBPC (2016)	Definition 2: Evidence-based policy-making involves using rigorous evidence of what works, monitoring programme delivery, and using impact evaluations to improve and scale programmes. It also encourages innovation and the testing of new approaches (EBPC 2016:3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Practical aspects of evidence</i> • <i>Rigour and testing</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political context
DPME (2011b)	Definition 3: Evidence-based policy-making is a process that assists policymakers to make better decisions and achieve better outcomes. It is concerned with using existing evidence more effectively, commissioning new research and evaluation to fill gaps in the evidence base, and assisting the integration of sound evidence with decision makers' knowledge, skills, experience, expertise and judgement (DPME 2011b:1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Best evidence</i> • <i>Effective use of evidence</i> • <i>Filling in gaps</i> • <i>Decision makers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional capacity • Holistic approach • Improved decision-making and outcomes
Cartwright & Hardie (2012)	Definition 4: Evidence-based policy-making involves using trustworthy evidence that covers all relevant facts, is well-grounded, and has defensible answers about its relevance. The evidence should be generated from reliable methods that meet requisite assumptions. The goal of evidence-based policy-making is to predict whether a policy will be effective (Cartwright & Hardie 2012:14-15).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scientific evidence</i> • <i>Prediction</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and relevance of evidence
Baba & Hakem-Zadeh (2012)	Definition 5: Evidence-based decision-making involves generating evidence from credible institutions and the subsequent use of that evidence in practice and making informed decisions based on those practices. (Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012:833).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Practical aspects of evidence</i> • <i>Credible institutions</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and accessibility of evidence • Institutional capacity
Cookson (2005)	Definition 6: The focus of evidence-based policy-making is on public policy decisions that affect groups of people. It values 'evidence-based' thinking and healthy scepticism towards the purported benefits of proposed interventions (Cookson 2005:119).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Practical aspects of evidence</i> • <i>Thinking and scepticism</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political context • Public pressure and societal values
Davies (2004)	Definition 7: Evidence-based policy-making involves using the results of systematic investigations to ensure that policy efforts are worthwhile. It also requires balancing current evidence with ongoing evaluations of effectiveness to ensure that the evidence being used is appropriate (Davies 2000:4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Systematic Inquiry</i> • <i>Continuous evaluation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and accessibility of evidence • Relationships between researchers and policy-makers

Source: Compiled by author

Even though the definitions vary in emphasis they all seem to converge on the central theme of utilising evidence and rigorous methods to inform policy decisions. In essence, the commonalities among these definitions suggest that EBPM is a multidimensional concept that aims to improve policy outcomes by leveraging the best available evidence, adopting reliable methodologies, and ensuring the credibility of the evidence sources

2.3.1 Towards a unified definition of EIPM

In today's rapidly evolving and complex world, there is a need for evidence-based decision-making to address a wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges. This has led to the emergence of evidence-based policymaking as a framework for decision-making informed by rigorous scientific research, evaluation, and analysis. However, the field of EBPM is characterised by definitions and perspectives that often vary significantly in terms of conceptualisation and operationalisation of key elements. While listing these definitions is illuminating, it is also helpful to have a unified definition that draws on the salient aspects of each definition. This more expansive definition will allow for a better understanding of the dimensions and properties of EBPM and thus facilitate the implementation of evidence-informed, context-sensitive, and socially accountable approaches. This section provides a comprehensive definition of EBPM that integrates various perspectives and approaches in the field while highlighting the critical features that enable its successful adoption and implementation in diverse settings.

EBPM can be defined as an approach that combines scientific evidence with an understanding of societal needs and values in a democratic context, using rigorous evidence from various sources, including research and evaluation (Van Woensel 2021:2; DPME 2011b:1). This approach involves monitoring programme delivery, conducting impact evaluations to improve and scale programmes, and encouraging innovation and testing of new approaches (EBPC 2016:3). It relies on trustworthy, well-grounded evidence generated from reliable methods to predict policy effectiveness, while also considering ongoing evaluations of effectiveness to ensure the appropriateness of the evidence used (Cartwright & Hardie 2012:14-15; Davies 2004:4). Furthermore, EBPM values evidence-based thinking and healthy scepticism

towards the claimed benefits of proposed interventions, focusing on public policy decisions that affect groups of people (Cookson 2005:119). It also involves generating evidence from credible institutions and using it in practice to make informed decisions (Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012:833).

2.3.2 Implications of EBPM on evidence use

Various factors affect the use of evidence by policymakers in South Africa, including the quality and availability of evidence, institutional factors, and the broader socio-political context. After assessing the salient aspects of the definitions above, six themes were constructed that identify potential factors that influence the use of evidence. References to each definition support how each theme was constituted.

1. **Quality and relevance of evidence:** The use of evidence in policymaking is influenced by the quality, trustworthiness, and relevance of the evidence generated (Cartwright & Hardie 2012:14-15). Policymakers are more likely to rely on evidence generated through rigorous methods and deemed reliable in addressing policy questions (Van Woensel 2021:2; DPME 2011b:1).
2. **Availability and accessibility of evidence:** The availability and accessibility of evidence can significantly impact the extent to which policymakers use it to inform their decisions (Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012:833). Ensuring relevant and up-to-date evidence is readily available and accessible to policymakers can facilitate its integration into the policymaking process (Davies 2004:4).
3. **Institutional capacity:** The capacity of institutions to generate, synthesise, and disseminate evidence can shape the degree to which evidence is incorporated into policymaking (Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012:833). Institutions with solid research and evaluation capabilities are better positioned to produce robust evidence that policymakers can use (DPME 2011b:1).
4. **Relationships between researchers and policymakers:** The collaboration and communication between researchers and policymakers are crucial in facilitating the use of evidence in policymaking (Davies 2004:4). Establishing trust and ongoing dialogue between these stakeholders can foster a better understanding of the evidence and its implications for policy decisions (Van Woensel 2021:2).

5. **Political context:** The broader political environment can influence the extent to which evidence is used in policymaking (Cookson 2005:119). Factors such as political ideology, competing interests, and power dynamics can shape the degree to which policy-makers value and incorporate evidence in their decisions (EBPC 2016:3).
6. **Public pressure and societal values:** Public opinion and societal values can impact the extent to which evidence is used in policymaking (Van Woensel 2021:2). Policymakers may need to balance scientific evidence with public opinion, cultural norms and ethical considerations when making decisions that affect various groups in society (Cookson 2005:119).

From these six thematic groups, it is apparent that policymakers' use of evidence in South Africa may be influenced by factors such as the quality, relevance, availability, and accessibility of evidence, institutional capacity, relationships between researchers and policymakers, the political context, and public pressure and societal values. Understanding these factors can facilitate the effective integration of evidence into the policymaking process (Van Woensel 2021; DPME 2014; Cartwright & Hardie 2012; Davies 2004; Baba & Hakem-Zadeh 2012; Cookson 2005; EBPC 2016).

2.4 THE EVOLUTION OF EVIDENCE USE: FROM A NARROW CONCEPTUALISATION OF USE TO A BROADER FRAMING

In his 2000 review, Kirkhart examined the historical context of evaluation and its association with the concept of influence. Kirkhart's study highlighted a growing concern over the past decades regarding the use of evidence, prompting a need to understand how and to what extent it was utilised. Discussions on influence have traditionally focused on various topics, such as the source of assessment, the role of the evaluator, ethical considerations, the vocational aspect of evaluation, and the application of evidence. However, due to the disjointed nature of these discussions, the notion of influence has become fragmented (Kirkhart 2000:5).

When conducting systematic reviews of evaluations, the initial focus was on the keyword's 'utilisation' and 'use' (Kirkhart 2000). However, it became clear that this perspective was too narrow and did not encompass all the different aspects of

influence (Kirkhart 2000). Thus, the concept of use was expanded to include various forms of influence that arise from the evaluation process, such as process use. This implies that the assessment process can have an impact not only on the evaluation itself but also on the individuals and entities being evaluated (Kirkhart 2000). This broader interpretation of use provides a more comprehensive understanding of the evaluation process and its effects, and it is the one that is adopted by this study.

Kirkhart (2000:6) puts forward a compelling argument highlighting the inadequacy of a result-based perspective in evaluating the influence of evidence. Simply focusing on the outcome of an assessment fails to capture the complexity of how the use of evidence evolves to create evidence uses that go beyond results-based forms (that is, instrumental, conceptual and symbolic uses) as depicted in Figure 2.1. A narrow focus prioritises the three immediate types of use, over the longer-term, more expansive types of use, which are situated at the periphery.

It is crucial to adopt a more nuanced approach that examines the influence of evidence from multiple viewpoints. By contextualising outcome-based use within a broader framework, we can get of better understand how evidence is utilised and integrated into established understandings. By consolidating the various fragmented discussions and theories on influence into a unified theory, Kirkhart significantly advanced the study of evaluation. Figure 2.1 reinforces Kirkhart's (2000:6) proposal that results-based uses are central to the issue and that other peripheral uses are also important. The significance of a comprehensive view of evaluation use lies in its ability to consider more subtle forms of use, such as knowledge creep and other political forms of use.

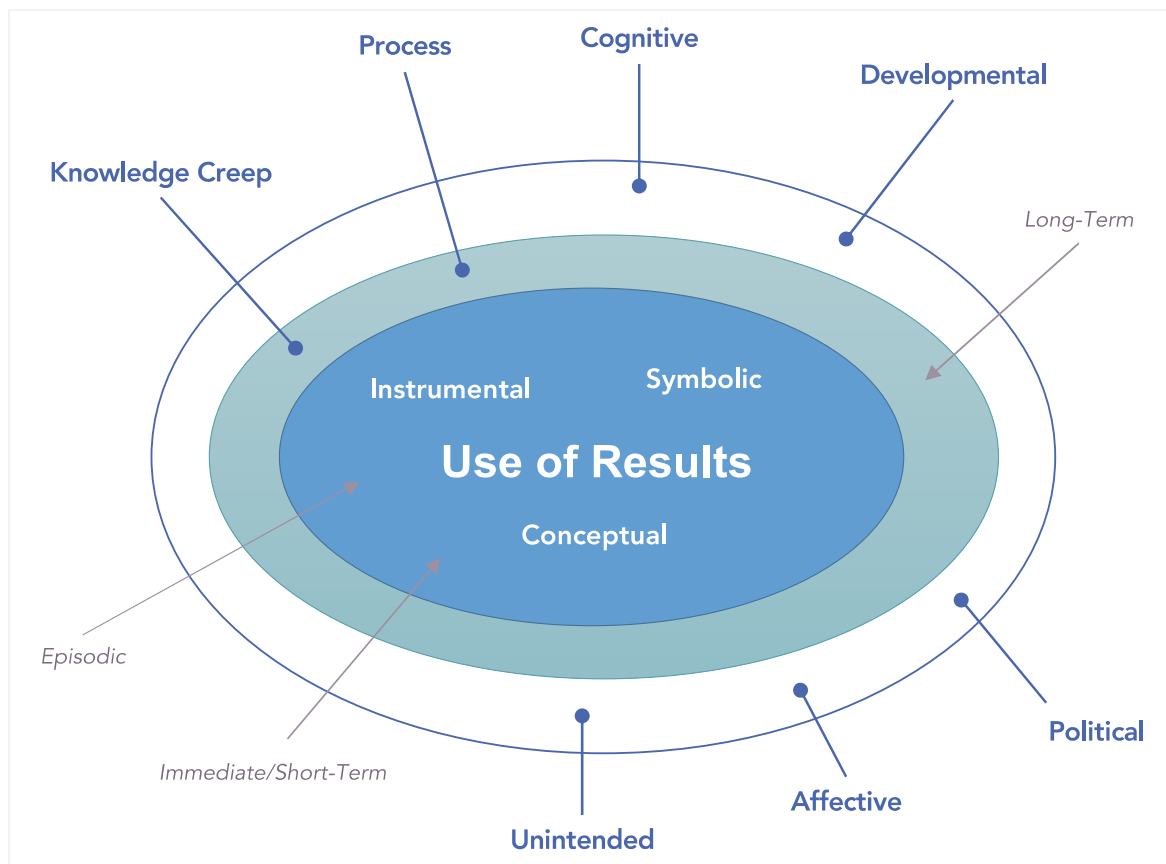


Figure 2.1: Expanded Understanding of Evaluation Use

Source: Kirkhart (2000:6)

The expanded view of use highlights that evidence use occurs over time, in small increments that gradually accumulate, exerting an indirect influence on policymakers and decision-making. This is in line with the assertions made by Weiss (1980:397) and Rich (1997:17), who argue that evidence use occurs gradually and indirectly, ultimately materialising in long-term uses such as 'process use'. Therefore, it is essential to consider a comprehensive perspective that also factors in other types of use.

2.5 EVIDENCE USE WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICA CONTEXT

This section focuses on evidence use studies in South Africa, with a summary of the relevant literature provided in Table 2.2. This body of work reflects a diverse set of goals and objectives focused on various aspects of evidence use in the country.

Table 2.2: Evidence use literature review: Studies with a focus on South Africa

#	Author	Aims and Objectives of study	Methodology and Participants	Data collection	Research Gaps	Factors Influencing Evidence Use
1.	<i>Ajam (2021)</i>	Synthesises themes from a volume on evidence systems in African parliaments; explores future directions for institutional capacity building.	Literature review synthesising themes from multiple chapters.	No primary data collection.	<i>Lacks empirical grounding; does not explore specific contexts or processes.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Culture, • Resource Availability, • Public Participation, • Leadership Commitment, & • External Actors.
2.	<i>Cronin & Sadan (2015)</i>	Explores attitudes and practices regarding evidence-based policymaking; highlights systemic barriers.	Descriptive and exploratory; interviews with 54 senior officials from 15 government entities.	Primary data collected using semi-structured instrument.	<i>Lacks granular examination of policy stages and deeper exploration of context as the study was conducted as a survey.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Constraints, • Mistrust, • Cultural Norms, • Politicisation & • Data Access Issues.
3.	<i>Goldman & Pabari (2021)</i>	Synthesises findings from eight African case studies; analyses evidence journeys and contextual factors.	Does not specify methods but synthesises case study findings from various countries.	Synthesis of case studies from various countries.	<i>Lacks lived experiences and processual insights from public officials.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Capacity, • Political Environment, • Stakeholder Engagement & • National Systems.
4.	<i>Goldman et al. (2013)</i>	Describes the NES in South Africa, analyses evaluative evidence use, and reflects on lessons learned.	Reflective account based on authors' experiences and official documents.	Synthesis of personal insights.	<i>Limited in-depth analysis of lived experiences and organisational culture.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Leadership, • Evaluation Mandates, • Resource Constraints & • Learning-Oriented Culture.
5.	<i>Goldman et al. (2019)</i>	Evaluates NES impact on policy and program changes, highlighting achievements and challenges.	Mixed-methods: benchmarking, case studies, interviews, surveys, cost-benefit analysis.	Mixed-methods	<i>Does not explore individual-level factors or informal networks influencing evidence use.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Support, • Resource Allocation, • Quality Assurance & • Communication Strategies.

#	Author	Aims and Objectives of study	Methodology and Participants	Data collection	Research Gaps	Factors Influencing Evidence Use
6.	<i>Langer et al. (2015)</i>	Advocates for evidence-informed development and presents UJ-BCURE program.	Conceptual analysis based on UJ-BCURE programme implementation in South Africa and Malawi.	No primary data collection per se.	<i>Limited exploration of contextual and lived experiences in South Africa.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymaker Capacity, • Demand For Evidence, • Relationships & • Organisational Culture.
7.	<i>Stewart et al. (2019)</i>	Maps South Africa's evidence ecosystem and highlights its resilience and institutional growth.	Auto-ethnographic analysis based on authors' experiences and ecosystem observations.	No primary data collection. Synthesis of personal insights.	<i>Lacks systematic primary data collection and analysis of individual perspectives.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Frameworks, • Institutional Structures, • Resource Investment & • External Influences.
8.	<i>Amisi et al. (2020)</i>	Identifies facilitators and barriers to evidence use in multi-sectoral complex interventions drawing on the Diagnostic Review of SA's response to VAWC as a case study.	Case study design with 14 KIIs of the VAWC sector with relevant policy and programme delivery knowledge.	Semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and participant observation.	<i>Participants focused on broad sectoral trends and not on those related to Diagnostic Review.</i> <i>Implies potential gap in depth of understanding due to limited exploration of "why" and lack of rich descriptions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal knowledge brokering • Forums for intersectoral dialogue • Co-production of evidence for dissemination • Use of NES guidelines • Researcher bias • Poor implementation of recommendations • Change in leadership in state institutions
9.	<i>Hitchens and Achebe (2020)</i>	Review EBPM in SA, definition, history, importance and application in the policy cycle. Highlight what increases use and institutional embedding.	Draws on existing literature and examples of EBPM in South Africa. Synthesis of knowledge rather than an empirical study.	Data is from existing literature.	<i>Literature review synthesis does not capture lived experiences in EBPM.</i> <i>Limited exploration of "how" use factors operate in practice and "why" they matter to different officials.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of diverse evidence, • Focus on instrumental use, • Evidence synthesis of depth in understanding, • Stakeholder capacity building, • Collaboration in frame evaluation focus, • Lack of resources

#	Author	Aims and Objectives of study	Methodology and Participants	Data collection	Research Gaps	Factors Influencing Evidence Use
10.	<i>Khumalo et al. (2023)</i>	Explores the political factors influencing the use of evaluations in policymaking in South Africa, seeks to understand the complexities within the evidence ecosystem and political incentives shaping policy and identifies challenges and mitigation strategies.	Uses a case study approach, focusing on six cases at different levels of government. Participants included evaluators, municipal employees, and senior government officials.	Data was collected through virtual open-ended and semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and workshop engagements.	<i>Challenges are identified but are not always unpacked to understand how these propagate evidence use outcomes or the range of strategies officials use to navigate them.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative frameworks and infrastructure, • Knowledge brokering, • Evidence use champions in leadership, • Divergent values and interests, • Working in siloes, • Lack of resources
11.	<i>Pophiwa et al. (2020)</i>	Examines the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) journey in using evaluations: Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme (FLBP) and the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).	A case study analysis focusing on the DBE. Participants included seven DBE officials, including senior policy makers and M&E officials from DBE and the DPME.	Data was collected through reviews of published and unpublished documents, and semi-structured interviews.	<i>Restricting the study to successes might highlight important insights but this creates positive bias. Exploration of failures is important for identifying moderators and mediators of evidence use which are important in designing evidence use interventions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will, • Knowledge brokering, • Evidence use champions in leadership, • Departmental leadership stability, • Buy-in from project managers, • Internal capacity to generate evidence
12.	<i>Strydom et al. (2010)</i>	Explores factors that influence the uptake of scientific evidence into policymaking. Make recommendations for improved science-policymaking interaction.	Literature review and synthesis.	Data is from existing literature.	<i>Literature review synthesis does not captured lived experiences in EBPM. Limited exploration of "how" use factors operate in practice and "why" they matter to different officials.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge brokering, • Effective dissemination of evidence, • Divergent values and interests, • Aligning evidence to political and institutional context, • Accessibility of scientific findings, • Organisational constraints, • Political, ideological, and economic context

Source: Compiled by author

It includes synthesising existing knowledge on evidence-based practices in South Africa and across the African continent (Ajam 2021; Goldman & Pabari 2021; Hitchens & Achebe 2020; Strydom *et al.* 2010). Ajam (2021) consolidated insights from parliamentary evidence systems to create a foundation for capacity-building approaches for parliamentarians in the use of evidence. Similarly, Goldman and Pabari (2021) synthesised findings from eight African countries, including South Africa, on evidence journeys. However, this study differs from those that synthesised existing knowledge by employing primary data derived from the lived experiences of public officials.

In addition, some of the literature has explored and evaluated specific South African programmes and systems, reflecting on lessons learnt (Goldman *et al.* 2013; Goldman *et al.* 2019). Pophiwa *et al.* (2020) examined the use of evidence by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in two of its programmes, the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme (FLBP) and the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), while Langer *et al.* (2015) advocated for evidence-based development based on the UJ-BCURE programme implemented in South Africa and Malawi. Cronin and Sadan (2015) explored issues related to attitudes towards evidence use, as well as relevant practices and systemic barriers. Other studies have focused on mapping the evidence ecosystem, highlighting its resilience and growth (Stewart *et al.* 2019). Amisi *et al.* (2020) discussed the use of evidence in complex, multi-sectoral interventions, identifying both facilitators and barriers to evidence use. Khumalo *et al.* (2023) further examined political factors influencing evidence use. In contrast to all of these studies, the overarching aim of this study is to develop a theory based on lived experiences.

The studies identify a wide range of factors that influence evidence, which are listed in column 7 of Table 2.2. These can be arranged into six themes: political and contextual, organisational and institutional, resource-related, evidence-related, individual & relational, and process-related; see Table 2.3. Of these six themes, political and contextual factors were the most frequently identified, followed by individual & relational and process-related factors. All the factors identified that influence evidence appear to be diverse and complex. This underscores the need for an approach that considers the interplay of these factors.

Table 2.3: Factors that influence evidence identified in the South African literature

#	Theme	Factors
1	Political and Contextual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Culture: Ajam (2021) and others • Political Environment: Goldman & Pabari (2021) • Political Will: Pophiwa <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Politicisation: Cronin & Sadan (2015) • Divergent Values and Interests: Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023) and Strydom <i>et al.</i> (2010) • Political Leadership: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023) • Legislative Support: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2019) and Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023) • Constitutional Frameworks: Stewart <i>et al.</i> (2019) and Ajam (2021) • External Influences: Ajam (2021) and Stewart <i>et al.</i> (2019)
2	Organisational and Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Capacity: Goldman & Pabari (2021) • Institutional Structures: Stewart <i>et al.</i> (2019) • Organisational Culture: Langer <i>et al.</i> (2015) • Learning-Oriented Culture: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2013) • Departmental Leadership Stability: Pophiwa <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Working in Siloes: Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023)
3	Resource Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Availability: Ajam (2021) • Resource Constraints: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023) • Resource Investment: Stewart <i>et al.</i> (2019) • Resource Allocation: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2019)
4	Evidence Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Access Issues: Cronin & Sadan (2015) • Use of Diverse Evidence: Hitchens and Achebe (2020) • Accessibility of Scientific Findings: Strydom <i>et al.</i> (2010) • Quality Assurance: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2019) • Effective Dissemination of Evidence: Strydom <i>et al.</i> (2010)
5	Individual and Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust: Cronin & Sadan (2015) • Relationships: Langer <i>et al.</i> (2015) • Knowledge Brokering: Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023), Pophiwa <i>et al.</i> (2020) and Strydom <i>et al.</i> (2010) • Evidence Use Champions in Leadership: Khumalo <i>et al.</i> (2023) and Pophiwa <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Policymaker Capacity: Langer <i>et al.</i> (2015) • Stakeholder Capacity Building: Hitchens and Achebe (2020) • Buy-in from Project Managers: Pophiwa <i>et al.</i> (2020)
6	Process Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Constraints: Cronin & Sadan (2015) • Communication Strategies: Goldman <i>et al.</i> (2019) • Internal knowledge brokering: Amisi <i>et al.</i> (2020)

#	Theme	Factors
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums for intersectoral dialogue: Amisi <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Co-production of evidence for dissemination: Amisi <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Use of NES guidelines: Amisi <i>et al.</i> (2020) • Poor implementation of recommendations: Amisi <i>et al.</i> (2020)

Source: Compiled by author

The goal of this study is to go beyond the existing literature and not only list and describe the factors that influence evidence use in the four cases that will be investigated for this study. It will do so by using a grounded theory framework that can show the interplay between factors regarding how the context in which evidence is used creates evidence-use conditions that propagate into evidence-use strategies and the subsequent consequences that arise from those strategies.

Several gaps emerge in the reviewed literature, motivating the current study and informing the development of a more comprehensive understanding of evidence-based practices (see Table 2.2 column 6 *Research Gaps*). A number of studies, particularly those relying on literature reviews and syntheses of existing literature, lack an empirical grounding (Ajam 2021; Hitchens & Achebe 2020; Strydom *et al.* 2010). Although these studies identify contextual factors, the absence of primary data limits insights into the lived experiences of those involved in the evidence use process, thereby restricting the potential to generate new perspectives.

While Cronin and Sadan (2015) draw on the insights of senior officials through a survey, their work remains at a high level. It does not fully capture the nuanced contextual complexities of evidence use. Indeed, many studies provide only limited process-oriented insights, largely omitting an in-depth exploration of how evidence use unfolds in practice. For instance, Amisi *et al.* (2020) focus on surfacing broad sectoral trends that impede evidence use, whereas Khumalo *et al.* (2023) highlight various challenges without unpacking the mechanisms that shape evidence use outcomes or how officials navigate them. Furthermore, studies employing reflective accounts and auto-ethnography risk potential bias that could skew data interpretation (Goldman *et al.* 2013; Stewart *et al.* 2019).

Almost all studies offer a limited examination of the *"how"* and *"why"* of factors that influence evidence use. In contrast, by combining a context-rich exploration of lived experiences with the development of a grounded theory, the current study aims to examine both the *"how"* and the *"why"* of evidence use. This emphasis on process and experiential detail forms a key distinction between the present study and previous research.

2.6 EVIDENCE USE FRAMEWORKS

This section discusses five evidence-use frameworks that focus broadly on South Africa and African contexts. The review of these frameworks is structured around the assessment dimensions summarised in Table 2.4. It briefly describes each framework and factors that influence evidence use, examines the methodology, and whether the study was developed using primary or secondary data. It also reviews the philosophical stances drawn on and the extent to which each framework is inductively or deductively derived. Furthermore, the review considers the degree to which the frameworks are explicitly causal in explaining how and why evidence use occurs. Assessing these evidence-use frameworks across these dimensions allows us to understand and appreciate the rationale for developing an evidence-use framework that contributes to this growing body of literature.

Table 2.4 shows that the frameworks have been developed for varied reasons and contexts to enhance evidence use. For example, Crawley (2017) proposes a Six-Sphere Framework to assess M&E system readiness around six hierarchical spheres, while Rabie and Ajam (2021) present an Analytical Framework for Evidence Use in Parliaments that considers factors across five dimensions at governance, organisational, committee, individual, and network levels. Their approach aims to build the "capacity of parliaments to use evidence systematically." Langer and Weyrauch (2021) offer an Integrated Analytical Framework that merges the 'Science of Using Science' and 'Context Matters' models, focusing on evidence demand, generation, interventions, and resulting changes. A key distinction in the present study is its emphasis on the contextual lived experiences of public officials in national departments in the social cluster.

Table 2.4: South African and African Evidence use frameworks

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Crawley (2017)</i>	<i>Rabie & Ajam (2021)</i>	<i>Masvaure et al. (2021)</i>	<i>Stewart et al. (2019)</i>	<i>Langer & Weyrauch (2021)</i>
Name of framework	<i>Six-Sphere Framework</i>	<i>Analytical Framework for Evidence Use in Parliaments</i>	<i>Systems Thinking Perspective</i>	<i>Integrated Model for Evidence Use</i>	<i>Integrated Analytical Framework</i>
Description of framework & factors that influence evidence	Assesses M&E system readiness through six hierarchical spheres: Technical, Logistical, Contextual, Relational, Political, and Ideological. Focuses on aligning core values, trust, collaboration, and political dynamics.	Considers factors across five dimensions at macro-governance, organisational, committee, individual, and network levels. Highlights systemic challenges and opportunities within parliamentary systems. Aims to build "capacity of parliaments to use evidence systematically." (Rabie & Ajam 2021:66)	Highlights interconnectedness of internal and external factors in evidence ecosystems, emphasising relationships and collaborative processes.	Emphasises building individual capacity as an entry point for evidence use, supported by organisational and contextual interventions. Considers the cyclical nature of evidence use, integrating awareness, capability, and utilisation.	Integrates "Science of Using Science" and "Context Matters" frameworks. Focuses on evidence demand, generation, interventions, and resulting changes. Includes mechanisms of change and six contextual dimensions.
Methodology / primary vs. secondary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No primary data collected, not grounded in lived experiences. • Conceptual framework informed by literature and organisational tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No primary data collected, not grounded in lived experiences. • Framework analysis based on secondary sources and theoretical models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No primary data collected, not grounded in lived experiences. • Literature review drawing on CLEAR-AA's work and secondary sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No primary data collected, grounded in authors personal experiences. • Reflective qualitative approach drawing on 20 years of experience and secondary data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No primary data collected, not grounded in lived experiences. • Conceptual framework developed through literature and collaboration with African researchers.
Philosophical stance	Not mentioned explicitly but implicit constructivist paradigm.	Not mentioned explicitly but implicit constructivist paradigm.	Not mentioned explicitly but implicit constructivist paradigm.	Not mentioned explicitly but implicit pragmatism paradigm.	Not mentioned explicitly but implicit constructivist paradigm.

Author(s)	<i>Crawley (2017)</i>	<i>Rabie & Ajam (2021)</i>	<i>Masvaure et al. (2021)</i>	<i>Stewart et al. (2019)</i>	<i>Langer & Weyrauch (2021)</i>
Inductive vs. deductive development of evaluation use framework	Deductive.	Deductive with a synthesis of insights from existing models and frameworks.	Unclear. Appears to be deductively derived from secondary analysis and systems thinking perspectives.	Inductive. Draws on the personal reflections and insights from UJ-BCURE programme implementation.	Deductive. Combines existing frameworks and adapts them for broader African contexts.
Framework developed for South Africa	Not specific to South Africa; developed for broader African contexts but adaptable to South Africa.	Focuses broadly on African parliaments, including South Africa.	Developed broadly for African contexts, adaptable to South Africa.	Specifically developed for Southern Africa, with substantial empirical input from South Africa and Malawi.	Not specifically developed for South Africa but applicable to the SA context. Used to analyse evidence use across African countries.
Extent to which the framework is explicitly causal in explaining how and why evidence use occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not explicitly causal. • The six hierarchical spheres influencing evidence use, serve a diagnostic purpose, no causal mechanisms are used to explain how or why evidence is used. • The hierarchical nature of the framework implies interaction between spheres however this is implied and not described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially causal. • Factors at multiple levels, acknowledges the importance of context and systemic influences. • Causal pathways are not fully articulated. • Identifies influencing factors and interactions without explaining why evidence use succeeds or fails in some contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally causal. • While linkages and systemic influences are the focal point, there is no articulation of how system elements causally drive evidence use. • Describes relationships within the system but does not give causal explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderately causal. • Pathways of change and contextual influences are factored into the model. • Explanation of suggested relationships does not surface the causal nature of the relationships and some pathways are implied and not explicitly defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly causal. • Mechanisms of change including contextual dimensions are used to explain how evidence use occurs. • Linkages between interventions, behaviours, and systemic changes are explicitly defined.

Source: Compiled by author

The methodology of this study also differs from that of the five frameworks. While no primary data were used in developing these frameworks, the current study will employ a grounded theory approach to collect data iteratively. This means the framework will be grounded in the participants' reality, rather than being solely derived from the literature or theoretical models.

Furthermore, none of these frameworks explicitly mention the philosophical stance used as a guiding lens, although most imply an implicit constructivist paradigm. As discussed in Chapter 1, this study adopts a constructivist pragmatic philosophical orientation consistent with the nature of evidence use in an organisational setting. By drawing insights from those who use evidence, this study will use an inductive approach to develop the framework. This contrasts with the more deductive approaches found in these frameworks, except for Stewart *et al.* (2019), which also uses an inductive method, albeit drawing on the author's personal reflections and insights. Taken together, these existing frameworks tend to offer limited contextual exploration, lack explicit consideration of lived experiences, and provide few processual insights. This constrains the articulation of causal dynamics among contextual, conditional, strategic, and consequential evidence-use factors.

Specifically, of the five frameworks, Crawley's (2017) model is not explicitly causal: although its hierarchical structure implies interactions between spheres, these are not described in detail. Rabie and Ajam's (2021) framework is partially causal, identifying factors at multiple levels and acknowledging the importance of context; however, it does not fully articulate causal pathways or explain why evidence use succeeds or fails in particular contexts. Masvaure *et al.* (2021) present a minimally causal framework: it highlights linkages and systemic influences, but does not clarify how system elements causally drive evidence use. Stewart *et al.* (2019) provide a moderately causal framework, incorporating pathways of change and contextual influences, yet it does not fully explain the relationships suggested, and some pathways remain implied rather than explicitly defined. Of all five frameworks, Langer and Weyrauch (2021) is the most explicitly causal, detailing mechanisms of change and contextual dimensions that help to explain how evidence use occurs; nonetheless, it is deductively constituted. As argued in Chapter 1, these gaps in the existing literature indicate that a framework derived from an explicitly causal grounded theory

of the factors influencing evidence use, one based on a four-case study design that incorporates the lived experiences of public officials, can make a meaningful contribution to this growing body of work.

2.7 EVALUATION THEORIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON EVIDENCE USE

The evaluation of programmes has become an essential element in the decision-making process of several public policy domains, including education, healthcare, and social services. The main objective of evaluation is to analyse the efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness of a given programme, policy, or intervention. Various evaluation theories have been put forward, and each has implications on how stakeholders utilise the evidence they generate. In this section, an assessment of six prominent evaluation theories is conducted, focusing on their implications on the use of the evidence they generate:

- Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE);
- Knowledge-Driven Evaluation (KDE);
- Enlightenment Evaluation (EE);
- Participatory Evaluation (PE);
- Collaborative Evaluation (CE); and
- Theory-Driven Evaluation (TDE).

A description of each theory is followed by a critique of its core features while highlighting the main factors that can influence the use of evidence. These factors will be categorised into thematic groups based on their similarities. Additionally, the section will assess the implications of these factors on evidence use in the South African National Policy System. The aim of this theoretical review is to contribute, at a conceptual level, to a more nuanced understanding of the role of evaluation in shaping use in policy and practice across diverse contexts in the public sector. Examining these evaluation theories and their potential impact on evidence use, is hoped to provide valuable insights that will form part of the data analysis of the GT process adopted in this study.

2.7.1 Utilisation-focused evaluation

Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE) is a unique approach to evaluations and evidence generation, first proposed by Patton in 1996 (Patton 1996:21). According to this model, evaluations should be specifically designed to cater to the information needs of intended users. These users are actively involved in all phases of the evaluation process, ensuring that the results are tailored to their specific requirements. The UFE model strongly emphasises the actual use of evaluations by stakeholders as the primary criterion for judging their success (Patton 1996:41). This approach ensures that the generated evidence is useful and valuable to those who need it most.

The effectiveness of UFE can be attributed to its stakeholder-driven approach. This approach encourages a sense of ownership and helps seamlessly integrate evaluation findings into decision-making. It also ensures that the evaluation is customised to meet the specific needs of the intended users, and it is more likely to be utilised in practical situations. This is in line with the views expressed by Cousins and Whitmore (1998:6) as well as Patton (1996:17).

However, UFE has been criticised for potentially prioritising stakeholder interests over methodological rigour (Barends & Rousseau 2018:96). This means that UFE evaluations may not always accurately represent a programme's effectiveness. This is particularly true when multiple stakeholders with varying interests are involved or lack the necessary skills or resources to participate effectively in the evaluation process. As a result, it is critical to acknowledge and address these external factors when implementing the UFE methodology, as they can significantly impact the use of evidence (Alkin 1990:154). According to the fundamental components of UFE, it is apparent that various factors exist that can influence the utilisation of evidence as follows:

- **Active involvement of intended users throughout the evaluation process.** While this factor is desirable, obtaining valuable feedback from users during the evaluation process poses a significant challenge due to many factors. Time constraints, varying levels of user engagement, and managing a realistic timeline all play a critical role in striking a delicate balance between soliciting worthwhile input and ensuring a smooth evaluation process. In addition,

maintaining consistent active participation from users can be an arduous task, particularly when dealing with varying levels of investment and differing perspectives (Patton 1996:6).

- **Tailoring evaluation to the specific information needs of policymakers.** The downside is that meeting policymakers needs through tailored evaluations can be demanding, potentially resulting in prioritising short-term outputs over long-term outcomes. However, it is essential to maintain a focus on meaningful indicators and outcomes while simultaneously addressing the immediate needs of policymakers (Patton 1996:41).
- **Stakeholder ownership of the evaluation process and findings.** Cousins and Whitmore (1998:6) have highlighted the challenge of ensuring that all stakeholders feel a sense of ownership towards the evaluation process and its findings. This challenge is difficult when stakeholders hold opposing interests or viewpoints or when the findings do not support all perspectives equally. As a result, stakeholders may resist or disagree with the implications of the findings and how they should be used.
- **Potential prioritisation of stakeholder interests over methodological rigour.** During the process of evaluations, the stakeholders can influence the chosen methodology (Alkin 1990:154). Unfortunately, this influence can compromise the scientific validity of the evaluation itself. As a result, biased or unreliable findings may be produced, which can ultimately detract from the overall value of the evaluation.

2.7.2 Knowledge-driven evaluation

The concept of Knowledge-Driven Evaluation (KDE) centres on the production and distribution of knowledge as the main objective of the evaluation. This theory is founded on the positivist research tradition, whereby evaluations are expected to contribute to advancing knowledge on the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes. As put forth by Weiss (1979:427), KDE emphasises the need for evaluations to add to the existing body of knowledge on programme evaluation.

One of the key strengths of KDE is its dedication to conducting thorough and methodologically sound evaluations. These evaluations contribute to a wider

knowledge base and identify best practices and evidence-based interventions that can be applied to programme development and improvement across diverse contexts. This approach, as highlighted by Weiss (1979:427) and Chen (2016:116-117), ensures that KDE's efforts are always guided by reliable data and research, allowing for more effective and impactful initiatives.

Critics have pointed out that while KDE is a valuable tool for generating knowledge, it often fails to consider stakeholders' specific context and needs when evaluating a programme or intervention (Henry & Mark 2003:307). This can limit the evaluation findings' usefulness in addressing a particular situation unique challenges and opportunities (Henry & Mark 2003:307). Additionally, the focus on knowledge generation may fail to translate into instrumental use of the evaluation results in decision-making, as it overlooks the importance of stakeholder engagement and ownership (Cousins 2004:392). Factors influencing evidence use in Knowledge-Driven Evaluation:

- **Thorough and methodologically sound evaluations:** Knowledge-Driven Evaluation (KDE) emphasises conducting thorough and methodologically sound evaluations. This means that the evaluations are rigorous and adhere to established research methodologies. By ensuring the quality of the evaluations, policymakers can have confidence in the reliability of the evidence generated, increasing the likelihood of its use in policy formulation and implementation.
- **Contribution to the knowledge base:** KDE aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on programme evaluation. By generating new knowledge on the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes, policymakers can access a broader range of evidence to inform their decision-making. This factor enhances the use of evidence by providing policymakers with a robust knowledge base upon which to draw.
- **Identification of best practices and evidence-based Interventions:** Through thorough evaluations, KDE enables the identification of best practices and evidence-based interventions. This means that policymakers can learn from successful programmes and interventions and apply them to their own contexts. By incorporating evidence-based practices, policymakers can increase the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes in policy implementation.

- **Consideration of context and stakeholder needs:** Critics of KDE have pointed out that it may sometimes overlook stakeholders' specific context and needs when evaluating a programme or intervention. It is important to consider the unique challenges and opportunities of a particular situation to enhance the use of evidence in policy implementation and formulation. By considering the context and stakeholder needs, policymakers can ensure that the evidence generated is relevant and applicable to their specific circumstances.

2.7.3 Enlightenment evaluation

The Enlightenment Evaluation (EE) theory is an approach that emphasises the long-term and indirect impacts of evaluation on policy and decision-making processes. According to this theory, evaluations play a significant role in the gradual accumulation of knowledge that ultimately shapes policy debates and influences stakeholders' beliefs, values, and assumptions over time (Weiss 1979:429). This theory was first introduced by Weiss in 1979, who argued that evaluations can have far-reaching effects beyond their immediate outcomes and can contribute to the development of a more informed and nuanced understanding of complex issues. The EE theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how evaluation can inform policy development and decision-making more effectively and sustainably.

The strength of EE lies in its recognition of the complex and non-linear nature of evaluation use. This means that EE acknowledges that evaluations can have a lasting impact on policy and practice, even if their findings are not immediately adopted (Weiss 1998:24-25). The EE perspective also emphasises disseminating evaluation findings to a broader audience. This fosters a culture of evidence-based decision-making and promotes public accountability (Nutley *et al.* 2007:136). Overall, EE's approach is crucial for ensuring that evaluations are utilised effectively and that their impact is maximised.

Despite its extensive framework, EE has come under scrutiny for its lack of emphasis on addressing stakeholders' immediate and practical needs (Shulha & Cousins 1997:198). As a result, evaluators and programme managers may not receive adequate guidance on utilising evaluation findings to inform specific decisions or actions (Henry & Mark 2003:307). Furthermore, the indirect and long-term effects of

evaluations EE emphasises can be difficult to measure and attribute, presenting challenges in accurately assessing the true impact of an evaluation (Preskill & Caracelli 1997:218). The following are the factors influencing evidence use in Enlightenment Evaluation.

- **Gradual accumulation of knowledge shaping policy debates and stakeholder beliefs:** The Enlightenment Evaluation (EE) theory emphasises evaluation's long-term and indirect impacts on policy and decision-making processes (Weiss 1998:24-25). This means that evaluations can contribute to the gradual accumulation of knowledge that shapes policy debates and influences stakeholders' beliefs, values, and assumptions over time. By recognising the long-term effects of evaluations, policymakers can understand the value of evidence in sustainably informing policy development and decision-making.
- **Dissemination of evaluation findings to a broader audience:** EE emphasises the importance of disseminating evaluation findings to a broader audience. This fosters a culture of evidence-based decision-making, where policymakers rely on reliable evidence to inform their actions. By promoting a culture of evidence-based decision-making, policymakers are more likely to consider and utilise evaluation findings in policy implementation and formulation (Nutley et al. 2007:136).
- **Maximising impact:** EE's approach is crucial for ensuring that evaluations are utilised effectively, and their impact is maximised. By recognising the complex and non-linear nature of evaluation use, policymakers can understand that evaluations can have lasting impacts on policy and practice, even if their findings are not immediately adopted. This factor emphasises the importance of considering the long-term effects of evaluations and finding ways to maximise their impact over time.
- **Limited guidance for immediate and practical stakeholder needs:** Critics have pointed out that EE may lack emphasis on addressing stakeholders' immediate and practical needs. To enhance the use of evidence, it is important to consider the specific needs and challenges stakeholders face. By providing guidance on how to utilise evaluation findings to inform specific decisions or

actions, policymakers can ensure that the evidence generated is relevant and applicable to their immediate needs (Henry & Mark 2003:307).

- **Measuring and assessing impact:** The indirect and long-term effects of evaluations emphasised by EE can be difficult to measure and attribute accurately. To enhance the use of evidence, it is important to develop methods for measuring and assessing the impact of evaluations. By understanding the true impact of an evaluation, policymakers can have a clearer understanding of the value and effectiveness of evidence in informing policy implementation and formulation.

2.7.4 Participatory evaluation

The practice of Participatory Evaluation (PE) has been in existence since the 1980s. This approach is designed to ensure that stakeholders play an active role in the evaluation process, especially those affected by the programme or intervention being evaluated (Cousins & Whitmore 1998:6). By engaging stakeholders directly in the definition of evaluation questions, selection of methods, and interpretation of findings, Participatory Evaluation aims to promote stakeholder ownership, learning, and empowerment. This approach is essential in ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and that they have a sense of ownership and investment in the evaluation process.

Participatory Evaluation is a process that prioritises democratic decision-making and considers various perspectives (Cousins & Whitmore 1998:6). However, this approach has been criticised for its possible adverse effects on technical rigour because of its emphasis on stakeholder involvement (Bamberger *et al.* 2016:7). Furthermore, it can be a demanding and resource-intensive as it necessitates close collaboration with stakeholders (Daigneault & Jacob 2014:16). Factors influencing evidence use in Participatory Evaluation:

- Active involvement of diverse stakeholders in the evaluation process (Cousins & Whitmore 1998:6).
- Stakeholder ownership, learning, and empowerment (Cousins & Whitmore 1998:7).

- Potential dilution of technical rigour due to focus on stakeholder participation (Bamberger *et al.* 2016:7).

2.7.5 Collaborative evaluation

Collaborative Evaluation (CE) is a methodology that emerged in the late 1990s, aimed at combining the strengths of the other two evaluation approaches: Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE) and Participatory Evaluation. This approach emphasises stakeholder engagement and evaluator expertise, ensuring that all relevant parties are involved in the evaluation process (Rodríguez-Campos 2012:523). By doing so, Collaborative Evaluation (CE) aims to generate more comprehensive and accurate assessments of programmes, projects, and initiatives.

Collaborative Evaluation is a method that aims to overcome some of the limitations of UFE and Participatory Evaluation. However, it encounters certain obstacles, such as power imbalances among stakeholders and reconciling evaluator impartiality with stakeholder interests. These challenges can make it hard to achieve the intended outcomes of the evaluation process (Rodríguez-Campos 2012:527). Factors influencing evidence use in Collaborative Evaluation include:

- Stakeholder engagement and evaluator expertise.
- Shared ownership of evaluation results.
- Power imbalances among stakeholders and balancing evaluator neutrality (Rodríguez-Campos 2012:527).

2.7.6 Theory-based evaluation

Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE), also known as Theory-Driven Evaluation (TDE), emerged in the 1990s and focused on understanding the underlying causal mechanisms and contextual factors contributing to programme outcomes (Chen 2016:112). This approach seeks to uncover programme implementation's "black box" by examining the program's logic model, assumptions, and contextual factors that influence outcomes.

Strengths of Theory-Based Evaluation include its ability to provide in-depth insights into programme mechanisms and its capacity to inform programme improvement and

generalisability (Chen 2016:112). However, the approach has been criticised for its complexity and potential to overemphasise theory at the expense of stakeholder perspectives (Dahler-Larsen & Schwandt 2012:85). Factors influencing evidence use in Theory-Based Evaluation

- In-depth insights into programme mechanisms.
- Informing programme improvement and generalisability.
- Complexity and potential overemphasis on theory at the expense of stakeholder perspectives (Dahler-Larsen 2012:85).

2.7.7 Summary of use theories

In this section, an in-depth analysis of six prominent evaluation use theories has been presented. These include Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE), Knowledge-Driven Evaluation (KDE), Enlightenment Evaluation, Participatory Evaluation, Collaborative Evaluation, and Theory-Based Evaluation. Each of these theories offers unique perspectives on how evaluation findings can be utilised for decision-making and improving programmes. It is imperative to acknowledge that every theory possesses limitations and disadvantages that necessitate consideration when designing and implementing evaluations aimed at utilising their results and recommendations.

Utilisation-Focused Evaluation emphasises stakeholder engagement and practicality. This approach can be beneficial in ensuring that the programme meets the needs of those it serves. However, it is important to note that this method may result in biased evaluations due to the focus on stakeholder perspectives. Participatory Evaluation fosters democratic decision-making and allows for a variety of perspectives to be considered. This approach can ensure that all stakeholders' needs are considered. However, it can also diminish technical rigour and prove to be resource intensive. Collaborative Evaluation addresses some of the shortcomings of Utilisation-Focused Evaluation and Participatory Evaluation. This approach seeks to balance stakeholder engagement and technical rigour while addressing power imbalances and evaluator neutrality. However, it is important to note that this method may still encounter challenges related to power imbalances and evaluator neutrality. Lastly, Theory-Based Evaluation is a method that delivers in-depth insights into programme mechanisms. This approach can be useful in understanding how the programme

works and identifying areas for improvement. However, it can also be intricate and may excessively emphasise theory over stakeholder viewpoints.

For evaluations that effectively enhance programmes, policies, and interventions, a nuanced approach that appreciates the strengths and drawbacks of diverse evaluation theories is imperative. By capitalising on the merits of various use theories, stakeholders can gain valuable insights instrumental in refining programmes and policies. In practice, while assessing the theories that guide evidence use, the evaluator's role consistently emerges as an important factor. To make the most of evaluations and the evidence they produce, evaluators must be willing to take a flexible approach using elements from multiple evaluation theories. The ultimate goal of evaluation rests in enhancing evidence-based decision-making, and a balanced approach to employing evaluation use theories efficiently serves this purpose.

2.8 THEORY-BASED FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EVIDENCE USE WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR SA PUBLIC OFFICIALS

After conducting an analysis and considering all relevant factors that impact the utilisation of evidence within the context of the six evaluation theories, this section categorises the use factors into four essential thematic groups. The classification is based on carefully considering the factors identified in the previous section. The goal is to provide an understanding of the various use factors identified from these theories.

2.8.1 Stakeholder engagement and ownership

Several factors play a crucial role in ensuring the effective utilisation of evaluation evidence by public officials. Factors in this thematic group include the active participation of intended users, customisation of the evaluation process to meet stakeholder needs, the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process, and the sharing of evaluation results with stakeholders. Several studies (Rodríguez-Campos 2012; Cousins & Whitmore 1998; Patton 1996) have demonstrated that stakeholders' level of engagement and ownership over the evaluation process and findings can significantly impact the utilisation of evaluation evidence by public officials in South Africa. When stakeholders are actively engaged and feel a sense of ownership over the evaluation process and findings, they are more likely to use the evidence in their

decision-making (Rodríguez-Campos 2012; Cousins & Whitmore 1998). On the other hand, it is essential to note that if public officials lack engagement and ownership, it may hinder their ability to utilise evaluation evidence effectively. There exists a clear positive relationship between the level of engagement and ownership. accordingly. Engagement levels tend to rise when ownership increases (Patton 1996).

2.8.2 Methodological rigour and quality

In public policy, numerous technical and methodological factors must be considered when conducting evaluations. These include the importance of rigorous, methodologically sound evaluations, identifying best practices, and the potential for diluting technical rigour due to stakeholder participation. This has been discussed in the literature by Weiss (1998), Chen (2015), and Bamberger *et al.* (2012). In South Africa, high-quality, rigorous evaluations are crucial for providing public officials with reliable evidence that can inform decision-making and contribute to developing effective policies and programmes. This has been emphasised by Weiss (1998) and Chen (2016). However, if the focus is on stakeholder participation or other factors, methodological rigour can be compromised. This may raise questions about the quality of evidence, which can prevent its use in policymaking, as noted by Bamberger *et al.* (2012).

2.8.3 Contextual relevance and applicability

Several factors in this group contribute to the lack of utilisation of evaluation evidence by public officials in South Africa. One of these is the insufficient attention given to context and the needs of stakeholders, a factor that has influenced the grounded theory approach of this study. Another factor is the absence of guidance that addresses stakeholders immediate and practical needs. Moreover, the complexity of Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE), as identified by Henry and Mark (2003) and Dahler-Larsen (2012), can also hinder the use of evaluation evidence. If an evaluation approach is too intricate or does not provide practical guidance for policymaking, it may discourage public officials from utilising evaluation evidence. Furthermore, if the evaluation evidence lacks contextual relevance or fails to address the specific needs and challenges of public officials, then it may also be disregarded (Dahler-Larsen 2012).

2.8.4 Dissemination and accumulation of knowledge

This category encompasses various elements, including the gradual accumulation of knowledge that shapes policy discussions, the dissemination of evaluation findings to a broader audience, and the emphasis on generating new knowledge (Weiss 1979; Nutley *et al.* 2007; Cousins 2005). If evaluation results are effectively shared and contribute to the growth of a body of knowledge, it is more probable that public officials in South Africa will utilise evaluation evidence when making decisions (Weiss 1979; Nutley *et al.* 2007). Nevertheless, if there is an exclusive emphasis on knowledge generation without adequate consideration for stakeholder engagement and ownership, the use of evaluation evidence may also be hindered (Cousins 2005).

2.9 SIX TYPES OF EVIDENCE USE IN POLICYMAKING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICA CONTEXT

Building upon Kirkhart's (2000) insights, as outlined in the preceding section, this segment examines six diverse kinds of evidence use that go beyond the typical three results-based forms of use often considered in practice. This broadened perspective sheds light on these six types of evidence's crucial role in shaping how public officials ultimately use evaluation evidence. To this end, a critical analysis will be conducted on each type of evidence use, focusing on their relevance and impact on the South African context. Examining each type of evidence use in detail, with particular attention to the factors that affect policymakers' ability to utilise them, this section aims to identify common themes underpinning evaluation use and its influence on policymaking.

2.9.1 Instrumental use

According to Weiss (1979:426), instrumental use refers to the utilisation of evaluation findings in the process of making informed decisions. This means that the evaluation results are directly applied to the decision-making procedures, enabling decision-makers to make well-informed and evidence-based decisions (Weiss 1980:397). In other words, instrumental use involves using evaluation findings as a tool to guide decision-making rather than simply as a source of information. In South Africa, evidence-based decision-making has been observed in various policy domains, including education and healthcare. However, several constraints may impede the

instrumental use of evidence, such as political resistance, lack of capacity, and contextual barriers (Hamel & Schrecker 2011; Hamel & Schrecker 2011; Shiffman & Smith 2007). These limiting factors could hinder the efficacy of the evaluation findings' utilisation and obstruct the evidence-based decision-making procedures. Factors influencing instrumental use of evidence by policymakers include:

- Political resistance to incorporating evidence in decision-making, especially when policies that are negatively impacted by controversial debates in the public sphere regarding measurement and evidence go against popular opinion (Shiffman & Smith 2007:1377; Sutcliffe & Court 2005:9).
- Lack of capacity among policymakers to interpret and apply evaluation findings (Hamel & Schrecker 2011:32).
- Contextual barriers that limit the applicability of evaluation findings to specific policy contexts (Sutcliffe & Court 2005:11).
- The credibility and quality of the evaluation evidence.

2.9.2 Conceptual use

Conceptual use involves the indirect influence of evaluation findings on policymakers' understanding, perceptions, and attitudes (Weiss 1980:389). This type of evidence use has been shown to facilitate learning among public officials in South Africa, which is essential for policy adaptation and improvement (Gilson & McIntyre 2008:751). In their study, Gilson and McIntyre examined the health sector reform process in South Africa and Zambia. The project, known as the SAZA project, successfully established a conceptual use of evidence by creating a platform that facilitated debate and discussions among policymakers. This platform, in turn, influenced the understanding and attitudes surrounding health and social problems in the two countries. However, the impact of conceptual use is often less tangible and more challenging to assess than instrumental use. Factors influencing conceptual use of evidence by policymakers include:

- The complexity and accessibility of evaluation findings, which may affect policymakers' understanding (Weiss 1980:389).
- Organisational culture and openness to learning from evaluations (Gilson & McIntyre 2008:751).

2.9.3 Symbolic use

Symbolic use highlights a critical aspect of policymaking and decision-making, where evidence is used more as a tool for legitimising and sustaining pre-existing decisions rather than informing and guiding those decisions (Amara *et al.* 2004:77). This concept is particularly relevant in the context of evidence-based policymaking, where scientific evidence or data can sometimes be more about supporting a predetermined agenda or position rather than genuinely seeking the best solution based on empirical findings (Bundi & Trein 2022:284; Walgrave & Aelst 2006:89).

In the context of South Africa, the symbolic use of evidence can take the form of using evaluations for public relations or gaining political support rather than genuinely assessing and improving policy effectiveness. This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa. It can be observed in various forms across different countries and political systems (Walgrave & Aelst 2006:89). This approach to evidence use, focusing on appearances rather than genuine substance, can be counterproductive for policy development and implementation. Nevertheless, some scholars argue that symbolic use, despite its potential drawbacks, is preferable to a complete absence of evidence use by policymakers (Contandriopoulos & Brousselle 2012:10). Additionally, symbolic use holds particular significance within the Social Cluster. Research indicates that this form of evidence employment is more prevalent in policy areas like social services, health, education, and social protection (Amara *et al.* 2004:93). These areas, integral to the Social Cluster, are directly pertinent to this study, underscoring the relevance of symbolic use in these contexts.

Understanding the concept of symbolic use is crucial for analysing policy decisions and political strategies. It helps discern whether decisions are being made based on solid evidence and a genuine desire to solve policy issues or if they are primarily driven by political agendas and the need to maintain a certain public image or support base. Factors influencing symbolic use of evidence by policymakers include:

- The extent to which policymakers perceive evaluation findings as a means to legitimise existing policies or actions (Weiss 1979:429).
- The political and public relations context, which may incentivise the use of evaluation findings for symbolic purposes (Amoakohene 2018:55).

2.9.4 Process use

Process use refers to the benefits from participation in the evaluation process, including learning and capacity-building (Patton 2020:585; Patton 2012:140; Forss *et al.* 2002:32; Patton 1997:90) In South Africa, process use has been acknowledged as an essential aspect of evidence-based policymaking, fostering collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders (Gilson & McIntyre 2008:754). According to Patton (1997:90), process use refers to how people's thinking, actions, and the way things are done change within programmes or organisations as the evaluation is conducted. This use comes from the learning that happens during the evaluation. Patton's definition distinguishes between what is learned from the evaluation's results and what is learned during the evaluation process, regardless of what is included in a report (Forss *et al.* 2002:32). However, effective process use may be hindered by limited resources, time constraints, and inadequate capacity among public officials. Factors influencing process use of evidence by policymakers include:

- The level of engagement and collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- Limited resources, time constraints, and inadequate capacity among public officials can hinder effective process use.

2.9.5 Tactical use

While some scholars consider "*persuasive, legitimising, tactical, or strategic use*" (Bundi & Trein 2022:286) as forms of symbolic use, this study distinguishes tactical/strategic use from the latter. Symbolic use is reserved for instances where evidence is employed to legitimise actions or decisions that have already been made. This distinction aligns with Patton's (2015:136) argument that "*[t]he classic three types of use—instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic—have long framed inquiries into evaluation use... Over time, as the field has matured and inquiries into utilisation have broadened and deepened, additional distinctions have emerged from research and theory.*"

Weiss (1979:429) argued that there are instances when public officials may use evidence for "*purposes that have little relation to the substance of the research. It is*

not the content of the findings that is invoked but the sheer fact that research is being done. [When] confronted with demands for action [they] may respond by saying, "Yes, we know that's an important need. We're doing research on it right now." Research becomes proof of their responsiveness. Faced with unwelcome demands, they may use research as a tactic for delaying action ("We are waiting until the research is completed...")." The strategic utilisation of evaluation outcomes involves utilising the acquired information to defer or circumvent crucial decisions, frequently as a method of dealing with various political influences or pressures (Weiss 1979:429). In South Africa, tactical use has been documented in instances where public officials use evaluations as a shield against criticism or to defer action on contentious issues. This type of evidence use can undermine the intended purpose of evaluations and hinder policy development. Factors influencing tactical use of evidence by policymakers include:

- The political context in which policymaking is happening may incentivise the use of evaluation findings to delay or avoid decision-making (Weiss 1979:429).
- Unwelcomed demands or pressures faced by policymakers, may push them to demonstrations of using evidence as proof of action (Weiss 1979:429).
- The extent to which evaluation findings align with or challenge existing policy positions.

2.9.6 Imposed use

Patton identified imposed use as distinct forms of evidence use (Patton 2015:136). Imposed use refers to a specific scenario where the application of evaluation findings becomes an essential and non-negotiable requirement, driven by external factors such as regulations, policies, or guidelines set forth by authoritative entities (Patton 2015:136). This type of use compels relevant stakeholders and organisations to incorporate insights from evaluations into their decision-making processes and operational strategies. Such mandatory implementation ensures adherence to established norms and standards, ultimately fostering increased transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. However, organisations must strike a balance between meeting external requirements and maintaining internal flexibility. In the South African context, imposed use, as illustrated by Patton (2015:136), can occur

when a national department or public entity mandates the use of evidence to guide decision-making at the provincial level. For instance, consider a scenario where the Department of Basic Education, responsible for overseeing education policy and programming, develops a list of approved evidence-based interventions intended to improve student outcomes in schools. If the national department, then mandates that provincial education budgets be allocated exclusively to funding programmes on this approved list, it would compel provincial departments to discontinue successful locally developed programmes that have not been evaluated. This situation exemplifies imposed use, as described by Patton. While this type of evidence use can promote accountability and transparency, it may also lead to a mechanical-driven approach that undermines local ownership and context-specific solutions. Factors influencing imposed use of evidence by policymakers include:

- External requirements or regulations from international donors or funding agencies that mandate the adoption of specific evaluation recommendations.
- The degree of alignment between externally imposed evaluation findings and local policy priorities and contexts.

2.10 USE BASED THEMATIC GROUPS FOR FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EVIDENCE USE WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR SA PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Understanding the factors that influence policymakers' use of each type of policy is a critical aspect of evidence-based policymaking. This section aims to categorise these factors based on their similarities to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing public officials in South Africa when using evaluation evidence. Four main groups of factors are identified and discussed: capacity and resource constraints, political and institutional context, credibility and quality of evaluation evidence, and stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The extent to which each group of factors can prevent public officials in South Africa from using evaluation evidence will also be highlighted.

2.10.1 Capacity and resource constraints

Factors in this group include limited resources, time constraints, lack of capacity to interpret and apply evaluation findings, and inadequate capacity among public officials. Capacity and resource constraints can significantly prevent public officials in South Africa from using evaluation evidence, as these limitations may hinder their ability to engage with evaluations, understand their implications, and incorporate findings into policy decisions (Patton 2012:140; Hamel & Schrecker 2011:32).

2.10.2 Political and institutional context

Factors in this group include political resistance, external requirements or regulations, political context and pressures, and organisational culture. The political and institutional context can substantially impact the use of evaluation evidence by public officials in South Africa, as it shapes the incentives and disincentives for engaging with and utilising evaluation findings. Political resistance and pressures may lead to the tactical, or symbolic use of evaluation evidence, which can undermine evidence-based policymaking (Hamel & Schrecker 2011; Shiffman & Smith 2007; Weiss 1979:429; Amoakohene 2018:55).

2.10.3 Credibility and quality of evaluation evidence

Factors in this group include the credibility, quality, complexity, and accessibility of evaluation findings. The credibility and quality of evaluation evidence play a crucial role in determining its use by public officials in South Africa, as policymakers are more likely to utilise evidence that they perceive as reliable, valid, and relevant. Low-quality or inaccessible evaluation findings can prevent public officials from using evaluation evidence, as they may not trust the findings or understand their implications (Patton 2015:137).

2.10.4 Stakeholder engagement and collaboration

Factors in this group include the level of engagement and collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the evaluation process. Stakeholder engagement and collaboration are essential for facilitating the use of evaluation evidence by public officials in South Africa, as they promote mutual learning,

ownership, and trust in evaluation findings. The lack of effective engagement and collaboration can prevent public officials from using evaluation evidence, as it may lead to a lack of understanding, relevance, or commitment to incorporating findings into policy decisions (Gilson & McIntyre 2008:754).

2.11 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THEORY-BASED AND USE-BASED FACTORS INFLUENCING EVIDENCE USE

This section compares what this study has classified as theory-based thematic group factors from use-based thematic group factors that influence evidence use in policy formulation and implementation. The similarities and differences between these thematic groups will be highlighted, as well as an assessment of their impact on the use of evaluation evidence by public officials in South Africa.

2.11.1 Comparison of theory-based thematic groups and use-based thematic Groups

The four theory-based thematic groups identified in the previous section include *stakeholder engagement and ownership*, *methodological rigour and quality*, *contextual relevance and applicability*, and *dissemination and accumulation of knowledge*. These groups are derived from six evaluation theories and *focus on the theoretical underpinnings that guide the evaluation process and the production of evidence* (Patton 2008; Cousins & Whitmore 1998; Rodríguez-Campos 2012; Weiss 1998; Chen 2015; Bamberger *et al.* 2012; Henry & Mark 2003; Dahler-Larsen 2012; Nutley *et al.* 2007; Cousins 2005).

On the other hand, the four use-based thematic groups are *capacity and resource constraints*, *political and institutional context*, *credibility and quality of evaluation evidence*, and *stakeholder engagement and collaboration*. These groups are based on the six different types of evaluation use discussed in this chapter, *focusing on the practical factors that directly influence policymakers' ability to utilise evaluation evidence*.

2.11.2 Similarities and differences

There is a noticeable overlap between the theory-based and use-based thematic groups, especially when considering *stakeholder engagement and collaboration*. Both thematic groups emphasise the *importance of engaging stakeholders and fostering a sense of ownership* in the evaluation process (Cousins & Whitmore 1998; Rodríguez-Campos 2012). This commonality suggests that stakeholder engagement is a crucial factor affecting evidence use in policymaking, regardless of theoretical or practical considerations.

Another similarity between the two sets of thematic groups is the emphasis on evaluating evidence quality and credibility. Both theory-based and use-based groups stress the importance of methodological rigour and producing high-quality evidence for policymaking.

However, there are differences in the focus and scope of the thematic groups. Theory-based thematic groups have a broader focus on the evaluation process, addressing aspects such as *contextual relevance, applicability, and dissemination of knowledge* (Henry & Mark 2003; Dahler-Larsen 2012; Nutley *et al.* 2007). In contrast, use-based thematic groups are more specific in addressing the immediate challenges and opportunities faced by policymakers, such as capacity and resource constraints and political and institutional context (Weiss 1980).

Theory-based and use-based thematic groups provide complementary perspectives on the factors that influence evidence use by South African public officials in policy formulation and implementation. While there are similarities in the emphasis on *stakeholder engagement* and the *quality of evaluation evidence*, the differences in focus and scope provide a more comprehensive understanding of public officials' challenges and opportunities when using evaluation evidence. Understanding both theory-based and use-based factors enables a more nuanced approach to enhancing evidence-based policymaking in South Africa.

By addressing the factors identified in both theory-based and use-based thematic groups, policymakers and evaluation practitioners can work together to create an environment that supports and encourages evaluation evidence in policymaking. This,

in turn, will contribute to developing and implementing more effective policies and programmes, ultimately improving the lives of South Africans.

This section has critically evaluated the six types of evidence use identified in the evaluation use literature, highlighting their influence on policymaking in South Africa. While each type of evidence use has its merits and drawbacks, it is essential to recognise that their effectiveness depends on context, capacity, and political dynamics. To enhance the use of evaluation evidence in South African policymaking, public officials need to be aware of these different types of evidence use and develop strategies to address the barriers that hinder their effective application.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the first objective of the study by answering the research question: *What are the theories underpinning evidence use in policy formulation and implementation?* The discussion on the role of literature reviews in grounded theory research outlined five reasons why a literature review might be appropriate in a grounded theory study. Six evidence-use theories were identified, highlighting several theory-based factors that influence evidence use. These theories will be revisited once the framework is developed to assess areas of overlap. Additionally, the analysis will explore how the evidence-use framework strengthens these theories and addresses some of their limitations.

The chapter aimed to provide public officials with valuable insights by analysing the factors influencing evidence use from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Key takeaways include the importance of stakeholder engagement, methodological rigour, contextual relevance, and knowledge sharing in shaping evidence use. The chapter also identified six types of evidence use in policymaking, ranging from instrumental and conceptual to symbolic and negative. The discussion on the evolution of evidence use highlighted the shift from a narrow conceptualisation to a broader understanding of evidence use.

The chapter concluded with a discussion on the definitions of evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) and their implications for evidence use. While both theory-based and use-based approaches offer valuable perspectives, a unified definition of EBPM

is ultimately needed to guide South African officials in harnessing the power of evidence for effective policy development and improved outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND THE USE OF EVIDENCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 focused on evaluation use theories with the goal of identifying theory-based factors that influence evidence use. This will serve as the basis for assessing the extent to which the framework that will be developed makes novel contributions that build on theory-based factors. The chapter also reviewed the different types of evidence use and the factors influencing their utilisation. This chapter builds on the last by examining South Africa's National Evaluation System (NES) and its role in influencing evidence use, and in so doing, it fulfils the *second objective* of this study. This allows it to answer the second research question of the study: *How does South Africa's National Evaluation System influence the use of evidence?* Section 3.2 discusses the rise of NESs. This will be followed by discussing how the NES influences policymakers' use of evidence in Section 3.3. The rationale for the focus on NES in the context of this study is motivated by the critical role these systems play in the mainstreaming and institutionalisation of evidence use in South Africa. It will be interesting to see whether issues around the latter and institutional capacity emerge as significant factors identified by respondents as important factors that influence evidence use. Section 3.4 examines the various characteristics, functions, and roles of these systems, focussing on how they influence the use of evaluation evidence. Moreover, to provide a deeper understanding, this chapter will explore the policies and legislation that govern South Africa's NES, examining the frameworks and mechanisms that have been put in place to ensure the effective use of evidence within the NPS Sections 3.5 and 3.6. By adopting this approach, Section 3.7 will conceptualise the South African NPS as a complex mechanistic system, shedding light on the areas where evaluation evidence is actively utilised to inform decision-making processes.

3.2 RISE OF NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM EVALUATION USE THEORY

This section examines the historical emergence of National Evaluation Systems (NESs) within the context of Evaluation Use Theory (EUT), emphasising evaluations' role in informing decision-making and policy development. By tracing the evolution of evaluation use theory and its influence on the growth of NESs, this chapter aims to provide an understanding of the factors contributing to the rise of these systems and their implications for evidence-based policymaking.

As discussed in Chapter 1, NESs have become increasingly prevalent as governments recognise the importance of evidence in informing policy decisions and improving public service delivery (OECD 2016). To understand the emergence of NESs, it is crucial to examine their development within the context of evaluation use theory, which highlights the role of evaluations in shaping decision-making processes (Weiss 1977). Evaluation Use Theory has evolved, reflecting shifts in understanding the purpose and value of evaluations. Early conceptions of evaluation use focussed on the instrumental use of evaluations, wherein findings were directly applied to improve policies and programmes (Weiss 1977). However, over time, the concept of evaluation use expanded to include conceptual use, which emphasises the role of evaluations in shaping policymakers' understanding and knowledge of issues, as well as the symbolic or political use of evaluations to legitimise or criticise policies and decisions (Weiss 1998).

Several factors have contributed to the development and growth of NESs within the context of Evaluation Use Theory. First, the increasing demand for accountability and transparency in public administration has emphasised the need for systematic evaluations to demonstrate the effectiveness of policies and programmes (Segone 2009). Second, the growing recognition of the value of evidence in informing policy decisions has fostered a culture of learning and knowledge generation through evaluations (Head 2010).

The emergence of NESs can also be linked to the influence of international organisations and the global policy agenda. The adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has reinforced the importance of evaluation

to monitor and assess countries' progress towards achieving these global targets (United Nations 2015:8). Furthermore, regional and international organisations have played a crucial role in promoting the development of evaluation capacity and the establishment of NESs (AfrEA 2019; ECG 2017).

The historical emergence of NESs within the context of evaluation use theory has significant implications for evidence-based policymaking (EBPM). By institutionalising evaluation processes and promoting a culture of learning and accountability, NESs enable policymakers to make more informed decisions based on empirical evidence (Lopez-Acevedo *et al.* 2012:4). Consequently, this has the potential to improve policy outcomes, enhance public trust in government institutions, and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (OECD 2016:21).

3.3 THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EVIDENCE USE BY POLICYMAKERS

The rise of NESs across the globe has significantly impacted the way policymakers utilise evidence in various countries. This section assesses the emergence of these systems, their role in promoting EBPM, and the implications of this trend on global policy development. By analysing the factors contributing to the growth of NESs and the challenges faced, this article aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers in their quest to make more informed decisions.

In recent years, the demand for EBPM has grown exponentially, driven by the need for effective and efficient policy interventions (Head 2010:78). Consequently, this has led to the rise of NESs across the globe. These systems serve as mechanisms that enable governments to systematically assess the performance and impact of public policies, programmes, and projects (Segone *et al.* 2013).

Regional and international organisations have played a critical role in fostering the development of NESs. For instance, the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) has promoted evaluation in Africa through capacity-building initiatives and the establishment of national evaluation associations (AfrEA 2019). Similarly, the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) has supported the development of evaluation capacities among multilateral development banks (ECG 2017).

The rise of NESs has significantly impacted on the use of evidence in policy and decision-making processes. By facilitating the systematic policy performance assessment, NESs enable policymakers to make more informed decisions based on empirical data (Lopez-Acevedo *et al.* 2012:4). Consequently, this has improved policy outcomes, increased accountability, and enhanced public trust in government institutions (OECD 2016:3).

Despite NESs' growth and potential for promoting EBPM, several challenges remain. These include limited resources and capacities to conduct robust evaluations, the need to enhance the use of evaluation findings in decision-making, and the need to ensure the independence and credibility of evaluations (Segone *et al.* 2013:9).

Investing in capacity-building initiatives and promoting the development of a strong evaluation culture among policymakers and decision-makers is crucial for facing these challenges, and governments and international organisations must take steps to address these challenges. Furthermore, innovative strategies, such as the use of technology and the promotion of collaborative partnerships, can help to enhance the effectiveness of NESs in promoting EBPM (Görgens & Kusek 2009:8).

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS, FUNCTIONS OF NES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

This section examines the characteristics and functions of NESs and their impact on policymakers' use of evidence. The characteristics of a system refer to its inherent qualities, features, or traits. They describe what the system is. On the other hand, the functions of a system refer to the role or purpose the system was designed to serve. Essentially, they describe what the system does.

3.4.1 Characteristics of National Evaluation Systems

NESs exhibit several distinct characteristics that set them apart from other assessment approaches. These characteristics are crucial for enhancing evidence-based policy formulation and implementation, and they include the following:

- **Systematic and comprehensive:** By providing a comprehensive framework for evaluation, NESs enable governments to make informed decisions based on rigorous assessments of policies. This broadens the scope of the system and ensures the evaluation of a wide range of public policies, programmes, and projects at all levels of government (Atkins *et al.* 2017:469; Stevens 2011:240).
- **Institutionalisation:** NESs are institutionalised within government structures, making evaluation integral to policy development and implementation. The institutionalisation of NESs within government structures ensures that evaluation is not an isolated activity but an essential part of the policy cycle. This leads to the standardisation of evaluation practice and the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation (Ettelt *et al.* 2015:320; Radin *et al.* 2017:S70).
- **Capacity-building initiatives:** NESs often incorporate capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of evaluators, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. This also includes building capacity in the methods used in evaluation. Therefore, these initiatives by NESs contribute to the development of high-quality evaluations, strengthening the evidence base for policy decisions (Qoronfleh 2020:8).
- **Multiple forms of evidence:** NESs also encompass the incorporation of a range of evidence and perspectives, including scientific research, practical experience in programme management, and political judgment. By incorporating multiple sources of evidence, NESs not only offer a comprehensive and holistic approach to policy evaluation and formulation but also allow for a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the impacts and outcomes of various policy initiatives. This can help decision-makers make more informed choices and ensure that resources are allocated in the most effective and efficient manner possible (Head 2008:5-6).
- **Context-specificity:** NESs consider various aspects, including socioeconomic, technological, cultural, and political contexts, that affect policy uptake and dissemination. Considering these influencing factors contributes to a more nuanced and context-specific policy development process (Tong *et al.* 2015:450).

The characteristics of NESs play a vital role in enhancing the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation. They also play a vital role in promoting evidence-based decision-making and ensuring accountability to citizens.

3.4.2 Functions of National Evaluation Systems

NESs serve several vital functions in promoting evidence-based policymaking. These include:

- **Performance assessment:** NESs enable governments to assess the performance and impact of public policies, programmes, and projects in a systematic and rigorous manner (OECD 2016:23).
- **Accountability and transparency:** By providing credible and reliable information on policy performance, NESs enhance accountability and transparency in public administration (Segone 2009:23).
- **Learning and knowledge generation:** NESs facilitate learning and knowledge generation by identifying best practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement (Lopez-Acevedo *et al.* 2012:4).
- **Decision-making support:** NESs provide policymakers with evidence-based insights to inform policy decisions and resource allocation (Head 2010:78).
- **Reliable and valid data:** NESs face data collection, analysis, and use challenges and suggest potential solutions to address these challenges. Addressing data collection and analysis challenges further strengthens the reliability and validity of the evidence used in policy formulation, enhancing the overall quality of decision-making (Radin *et al.* 2017:S73).

The establishment of NESs has significant implications for policymakers' use of evidence. By institutionalising evaluation processes and promoting a culture of learning and accountability, NESs enable policymakers to make more informed decisions based on empirical evidence. As a result, this has the potential to improve policy outcomes, enhance public trust in government institutions, and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

3.5 THE RISE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEM

The importance of evidence-based policymaking has been increasingly recognised in recent years, with governments worldwide acknowledging the need for robust, transparent, and accountable decision-making processes (Parkhurst 2016). In South Africa, the establishment of a NES has been a crucial step towards promoting the use of evidence in policymaking. The NES has provided a structured and systematic framework for the generation, synthesis, and use of evaluation evidence across various government sectors (Goldman *et al.* 2015:8). This section examines the rise of South Africa's NES and its impact on the use of evidence by policymakers.

3.5.1 Key components and developments

South Africa's NES has been built on several foundational components, including the development of an overarching evaluation policy framework, the establishment of evaluation units in government departments, and the provision of training and capacity-building initiatives for public officials (Presidency of the Republic of South Africa 2011:11). A key milestone in the evolution of the NES was the adoption of the NEPF in 2011 with its subsequent revision in 2019, which provided a set of principles, guidelines, and institutional arrangements for the conduct of evaluations across government (Presidency of the Republic of South Africa 2011:14; DPME 2019).

A focus on collaboration and coordination between different government departments and stakeholders has characterised the implementation of the NES. The DPME has played a central role in overseeing the NES, facilitating the sharing of evaluation findings and the integration of evidence into policy processes (Goldman *et al.* 2015:15).

The implementation of the NES has faced several challenges despite the significant progress made in establishing it. Some of these challenges include limited institutional capacity, resistance to change, and the need for more context-specific evaluation methodologies (Goldman *et al.* 2015:20). Furthermore, the complexity of the policymaking environment and the competing demands on public officials' time and

resources have posed additional barriers to the effective use of evaluation evidence in decision-making (Makinde 2015:75).

The rise of South Africa's NES has had significant implications for evidence-based policymaking in the country. The system has provided a structured framework for the generation and use of evaluation evidence, fostering a culture of learning, accountability, and continuous improvement within the public sector (Goldman *et al.* 2015:23). However, to fully realise the potential of the NES in shaping policy decisions, it is essential to address the challenges above and continue to refine the system in response to evolving needs and contexts.

3.6 POLICIES AND LEGISLATION UNDERPINNING SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEM

In South Africa, the NES is underpinned by various policies and legislation that provide the foundation for generating, synthesising, and using evaluation evidence in policy decisions (Goldman *et al.* 2015:8).

3.6.1 Policy framework for the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System

The Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWMES) framework of 2007 championed EBPM through the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) (DPME 2021). The legal mandate underpinning the roles and responsibilities in the GWMES derives from Section 85 of the constitution. It compels the Presidency to coordinate, monitor, evaluate, and communicate government policies and programmes, accelerating service delivery (DPME 2007).

The GWMES framework focuses on incorporating a management system in government and the entire public sector, synchronising it with pre-existing internal systems such as planning, budgeting, and reporting (DPME 2007:4). This framework is essential for accounting officers or CEOs to build a robust M&E mechanism within their organisation. Emphasising the utilisation of evidence by public officials, primary users will fine-tune planning and execution processes to enhance decision-making. Meanwhile, secondary users will leverage the data to develop a comprehensive

understanding across all three levels of government. Tailor-made IT systems can gather and examine data from various source systems, promoting evidence-based policy and practice (DPME 2007:5).

The GWMES aimed to provide a standardised and systematic approach to M&E, ensuring consistency and comparability across different government agencies and programmes. It promotes evidence-based decision-making by providing reliable data and information on the performance and impact of government initiatives through evidence (DPME 2007:5).

The framework includes various components: performance monitoring, impact evaluation, and feedback mechanisms. Performance monitoring involves tracking the progress of government programmes and services against predetermined targets and indicators. This helps identify areas of success and areas that require improvement, allowing for timely adjustments and corrective actions.

The GWMES also emphasises the importance of feedback mechanisms, which enable stakeholders to provide input, raise concerns, and suggest improvements. This ensures that the monitoring and evaluation process is participatory and inclusive, allowing for a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of government initiatives.

By implementing the GWMES, the South African government aimed to enhance accountability, transparency, and the ability to learn and adapt (Goldman *et al.* 2019b:1-2). This system is designed to identify effective strategies and areas that require improvement, enabling evidence-based decision-making and continuous enhancement of government performance and societal impact (Goldman *et al.* 2019b:1-2). The establishment of the DPME in 2010 was a pivotal step in centralising the coordination of monitoring and evaluation within the South African government (Kgaphola & Jacob 2020:1). The DPME serves as the 'champion' of GWMES, with a primary goal of improving government performance and societal impact through a strategic approach to managing priority outcomes (Goldman *et al.* 2019b:1-2).

The development of the GWMES in South Africa is part of a broader trend in Africa. Partnerships like 'Twende Mbele' have been formed to strengthen monitoring and

evaluation systems and build capacity across countries (Goldman *et al.* 2018:1). This initiative, funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and the Hewlett Foundation, aims to deepen and widen national evaluation systems. South Africa is one of the countries documenting its experience and progress in this regard (Goldman *et al.* 2018:1). Expanding the National Evaluation Policy Framework to include provinces and municipalities demonstrates the growing scope and influence of the GWMES within South Africa (Mapitsa 2020:1).

The GWMES is essential for promoting evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement in various sectors. These sectors include public service delivery, housing subsidies, and social behaviour change programs (Amisi *et al.* 2018; Barbier & Tengeh 2022; Kgaphola & Jacob 2020). Additionally, the GWMES plays a role in shaping long-term planning, policy coordination, and the effectiveness of language-in-education policies in South Africa (Gumede 2018; Nugraha 2019). The impact of the system extends beyond national boundaries, as it is involved in collaborative efforts to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems in other African countries (Chirau *et al.* 2022).

The primary objective of the GWMES is to facilitate a well-defined sequence of events guided by carefully considered reflection and public decision-maker action. This sequence is based on thoroughly analysing inputs, intervention activities, outputs, and the associated service delivery outcomes and their final impacts.

A flow diagram is utilised to visualise this process and is presented much later in the chapter in Figure 3.1. It illustrates how monitoring and evaluation contribute to attaining the intended policy outcomes through governance processes and utilising relevant data terrains. The diagram visually represents how the M&E system operates within the broader context of government operations.

By following this systematic approach, the GWMES enables government entities to track and assess the progress and effectiveness of their initiatives effectively. It provides a framework for gathering, analysing, and utilising data to inform decision-making and improve performance (DPME 2007:5-6).

In the specific context of this study, it is crucial to emphasise that evidence derived from evaluations serves as one of the three fundamental data sources for the GWMES. The need for evaluation data was essential for establishing the National Evaluation Framework, which aligns with the objectives outlined in the GWME Framework. These objectives include encouraging public institutions to consistently evaluate their programmes, offering guidelines on the overall evaluation approach, ensuring the publication of evaluation results by government entities, and establishing a national evaluation repository (DPME 2007:10).

3.6.1.1 Roles and functions

Based on the preceding; we can deduce the roles and functions of the GWMES as a framework that aims to promote EBPM, which is mandated by Section 85 of the Constitution. Its functions and roles can be summarised as follows:

1. **Coordination and management:** It synchronises with internal systems like planning, budgeting, and reporting to incorporate a management system in government and the entire public sector.
2. **Monitoring and evaluation:** The framework monitors and evaluates the progress and effectiveness of government policies and programmes, identifying areas for improvement and success.
3. **Performance monitoring:** This involves tracking the progress of government services and programmes against predetermined targets and indicators.
4. **Impact evaluation:** It assesses the performance and impact of government initiatives, offering a systematic approach to ensure consistency and comparability across different government agencies and programmes.
5. **Feedback mechanisms:** It emphasises the importance of stakeholder input, concerns, and suggestions to make the evaluation process participatory and inclusive.
6. **Data analysis and utilisation:** It provides a robust mechanism for gathering, analysing, and utilising data to inform decision-making and improve performance, promoting evidence-based policy and practice.

7. **Enhanced accountability and transparency:** By implementing the GWMES, governments aim to enhance accountability and transparency in their operations.
8. **Policy outcome attainment:** The system contributes to of attaining intended policy outcomes through governance processes and utilising relevant data.
9. **National Evaluation Framework:** The system was essential for establishing this framework. It aligns with the objectives of encouraging public institutions to evaluate their programmes consistently and ensure the publication of evaluation results.

3.6.2 Factors enhancing evidence use by public officials

The GWMES framework is pivotal for fostering evidence-based policymaking, enhancing accountability, transparency, and the effectiveness of government initiatives. Factors like legal mandate, use of advanced IT systems, standardisation, and effective feedback mechanisms play significant roles in optimising the use of evidence by public officials in their decision-making processes.

1. **Legal mandate:** Section 85 of the Constitution legally mandates the GWMES, compelling The Presidency to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate government policies and programmes.
2. **Use of IT systems:** Tailor-made IT systems play a crucial role in gathering and examining data from various source systems, promoting evidence-based policy and practice.
3. **Standardisation:** A standardised and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation ensures consistency and comparability across different government agencies and programmes.
4. **Incorporation of feedback mechanisms:** These mechanisms allow stakeholders to provide input, raise concerns, and suggest improvements, making the process more inclusive and comprehensive.

5. **Utilisation of evaluation data:** Evaluation data serve as a fundamental source for the GWMES, emphasising the importance of consistently evaluating programmes and publishing results.
6. **Focus on evidence-based decision-making:** Emphasis on utilising evidence by public officials enhances decision-making processes, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation.
7. **Alignment with internal systems:** The synchronisation of the GWMES with pre-existing internal systems such as planning, budgeting, and reporting is crucial for enhancing how public officials use evidence.

3.6.3 National Evaluation Policy Framework

The GWMES System Policy Framework approved by Cabinet in 2005 is based on three key components. These components are programme performance data, socioeconomic and demographic statistics and evaluation. The first two components have policy frameworks published by the National Treasury and StatsSA. The NEPF completed the trinity as envisaged in the policy, making the GWMES comprehensive. The framework is an essential piece that establishes a government-wide evaluation system. It focuses on priority areas and promotes an ethos of continual improvement in the way all government entities deliver their services (DPME 2011, 2019).

Numerous legislative provisions, such as the Constitution, back the Policy Framework. Section 195 of these laws describes the tenets of public administration, which entail encouraging efficient, economical, and proficient resource usage, emphasising development-focused public administration, guaranteeing accountability, and enhancing transparency through offering prompt, reachable, and precise information to the public. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999, the Public Service Act of 1994 (modified by Act 30 of 2007), and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) additionally supply a legal foundation for the successful administration of public policies and programmes along with the array of evaluations that might be required.

The initial NEPF was framed within the context of a problem that it was determined to address, specifically, *"Evaluation is applied sporadically in government and is not*

adequately informing planning, policymaking and budgeting, so we are missing the opportunity to improve the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of government's interventions" (DPME 2011:2). As stated in the problem context one of the reasons for the revision of the NEPF in 2019 was evidence indicating low use of evaluation evidence in "support planning, policymaking, and budgeting processes" (DPME 2019:14). As such the main purpose of the 2019 NEPF "is to promote quality evaluations, which can be used for learning to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and impact of government interventions" (DPME 2019:11).

The key aims of the NEPF are highlighted in Table 3.1, below.

Table 3.1: Framework aims, emerging themes and targets

The Framework aims to...	Themes	It provides for the following...	Policy Framework is targeted at...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote, facilitate and institutionalise the use of evaluation in government; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Institutionalisation, Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common understanding of evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political principals, managers and staff in government who should be placing the need to incorporate rigorous evaluations at the heart of their work;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen linkages between evaluation, policymaking, planning and budgeting; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Linkages, Policy-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An institutional framework for evaluations; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators such as academics and other service providers;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common language and conceptual base for evaluation in government; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Common Language, Conceptual Base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms to promote the utilisation of evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training institutions, which need to develop a wider cadre of potential evaluators with the required skills and competences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify the role of evaluations in relation to other performance management instruments; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Role Clarification, Performance Management 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frame the evaluation function in terms of its scope, institutionalisation, standards, process requirements, skill requirements, governance, financing and oversight; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evaluation Framework, Institutionalisation 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of public institutions in relation to evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Roles, Responsibilities 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the quality of evaluations undertaken in public institutions; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Quality Improvement, Evaluations 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the utilisation of evaluation findings to improve performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Utilisation, Performance Improvement 		

Source: Adapted from DPME (2011, 2019)

3.6.3.1 Uses of evaluation evidence in the NEPF

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) plays an important role in setting the basis upon which government departments should use evidence. It sets the rationale for the use of evidence and identifies several primary uses of evidence as highlighted in Table 3.2, below.

Table 3.2: Purpose and examples of reasons for evidence use in the NEPF

Purposes	Examples of reasons for use
Improving / refining policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying policy strengths and weaknesses, policy gaps • Improving theories of change (intervention logic) and ultimately impact • Enhancing quality • Improving cost-effectiveness of policy implementation • Ensuring that policies are responsive to gender inequalities and other societal inequities • Adapting global models to local contexts
Improving / strengthening programmes and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing and applying learning • Improving theory of change and ultimately impact • Identifying programme strengths and weaknesses • Enhancing quality • Improving programme cost-effectiveness • Managing interventions more effectively • Ensuring that programmes have equitable outcomes • Adapting global models to local contexts
Improving accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing impact • Assessing compliance / audit • Improving transparency • Strengthening accountability
Generating knowledge / building evidence bases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building comprehensive, equity sensitive evidence bases • Positing generalisations about effectiveness • Extrapolating principles about what works • Building new theories and models • Informing policy
Contributing to more effective decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing impact and sustainability • Ensuring evidence-informed cost-benefit decisions • Deciding on the continuation or cessation of an intervention

Source: DMPE (2019)

3.6.3.2 Factors enhancing evidence use by public officials

The NEPF serves as an instrumental policy, focusing on institutionalising and promoting the significance of evaluations in government. It provides an extensive institutional framework and assures the quality and credibility of evaluations. The

framework is pivotal in ensuring continuous improvement in government services, backed by legislative provisions, aiming to foster a development-focused, transparent, and accountable administration.

1. **Legislative backing:** The framework is supported by numerous legislative provisions, including the Constitution and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), emphasising efficiency, accountability, transparency, and proficient resource usage.
2. **Relevance and timeliness of evaluations:** Focusing on the relevance and timeliness of evaluations ensures that the findings are pertinent to the decisions at hand and are available when needed.
3. **Legitimacy and credibility of evaluations:** Ensuring that evaluations are unbiased, inclusive, and credible, established through stakeholder involvement and peer review, enhances their legitimacy and assures users of their validity.
4. **Incorporation of evaluation in management:** Incorporation of evaluation into management functions and ensuring that there is an evaluation budget and plan in all implementation programmes improves performance.
5. **Utilisation of evaluation findings:** Using the results of evaluations to inform planning, budget decisions, and general decision-making processes plays a crucial role in improving policy and management.
6. **Institutionalising evaluation:** The institutionalisation of evaluation within government entities, with specific roles and clear responsibilities, is pivotal for promoting the utilisation of evaluations.
7. **Development of skills and competencies:** Targeting training institutions and staff in government to develop a wider cadre of evaluators with the required skills and competencies is crucial for enhancing evidence used by public officials.

3.6.4 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System

The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS) guidelines build on the National Policy Development Framework (NPDF) of 2020 by the South African Presidency mainstreaming the use of evidence in the development of public policy (DPME 2021).

SA has a history of policymaking since the dawn of democracy in 1994, and the transition to a new policy regime was needed to develop a battery of policies that would engender progressive public policy to improve the lives of previously disadvantaged populations.

The SEIAS acknowledges that despite some progress, several policy implementation challenges have hindered achieving the country's developmental goals. These challenges were discussed in the problem statement that informed the rationale of this study (DPME 2021).

It's worth noting that since EBPM was mainstreamed in 2007, many government officials at all levels have received training and orientation to gain a better understanding of evidence use. This has improved their capacity to use evidence for policy and decision-making purposes. However, there was a realisation that the intended objective of these early efforts, which should have led to the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation, did not necessarily materialise (DPME 2021).

The SEIAS expands the concept of EBPM to evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM), replacing the Regulatory Impact Assessment to institutionalise the use of evidence beyond one-off projects, sporadic training, or events. It offers a reliable approach for government representatives to methodically use evidence in the creation, evaluation, and execution of policies, laws, and regulations for improved results and impact.

SEIAS, as a system, is reliant on information and evidence generated by various teams, agencies, and partners both within and outside the government. Its development to assess the overall impact of policy relies on officials' ability to

understand multiple entry points of evidence use at any stage of the policy cycle (DPME 2021:12).

Strengthening and sustaining evidence use in SEIAS is crucial for effective policymaking, as it ensures that each proposal is rigorously assessed and informed by relevant data. The SEIAS plays an essential role in the government's decision-making process, highlighting salient points related to factors that enhance the use of evidence. Its institutionalisation across government also means that departmental Executive Authorities cannot accept new policy proposals that have not used the SEIAS. By remaining diligent in applying SEIAS to new policies and pushing government officials to move beyond treating it as individual projects, a solid evidence base can be built and improve the public sector knowledge system over time. Ultimately, prioritising evidence-based policy development through SEIAS will lead to more efficient and reliable government action that genuinely serves the needs of society (DPME 2021:21).

The SEIAS guidelines also specify the different types of evidence that officials in the South African government should consider. These are highlighted in Table 3.3, below.

Table 3.3: SEIAS on the different types of evidence

Primary studies	South Africa Grey literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary studies Impact evaluation (<i>studies with a control group/counterfactual e.g., Randomised Control Trials</i>) • Qualitative primary studies (<i>e.g., case study, interviews</i>) • Quantitative primary studies (<i>e.g., surveys</i>) • Programme evaluations (<i>e.g., evaluation of state/IGO/NGO interventions</i>) • Statistical data and information 	<p>(<i>Research evidence that is not published in peer-reviewed or searchable databases</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government reports • SA expenditure reviews • SA program evaluations by departments • SA citizen-based views and perception studies • Report from consultancies
<p>Evidence synthesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic review with meta-analysis • Systematic review without meta-analysis • Meta-analyses (not systematic review) • Other review (e.g., literature review, overview of case studies, comparative studies) 	

Source: DPME (2021:21)

Within the context of this study, the terms '*evidence use*' and '*evaluation evidence*' will be used to refer to all three forms of *evaluative knowledge* depicted in Table 3.3, above. This approach aligns the study with what public officials in South Africa would also consider as evidence. While '*evidence use*' and '*evaluation evidence*' often refer specifically to the application of rigorous research findings, the title of this study adopted a more expansive definition. This study acknowledges that *evaluative knowledge* can come from a variety of sources and take many forms. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, '*evidence use*' and '*evaluation evidence*' are inclusive terms that will be used throughout the study to encompass primarily formal research findings and other the two categories of credible knowledge relevant to assessing outcomes and impacts, as shown in Table 3.3. This is a recognition of the value of diverse perspectives and information sources in decision-making, and thus, these terms will be used to represent the full spectrum of *evaluative knowledge* considered in the South African NPS.

3.7 EVIDENCE USE IN A MECHANISTIC NATIONAL POLICY SYSTEM

This section will conceptualise the use of evidence as an integral part of South Africa's national policy system, drawing on systems and mechanism theory (Craver & Tabery 2019; Adams *et al.* 2014). It will present the NPS as a phenomenon characterised by an underlying mechanism consisting of three interconnected entities, which form an organised system striving to achieve specific developmental outcomes (Craver & Tabery 2019). This conceptualisation will provide a foundation upon which we can better understand the factors that influence the use of evidence. Furthermore, it serves as a basis for identifying the sites of evidence use and the factors, grounded in the experiences of public officials, that influence the flow of knowledge into these locations. The chapter contends that the NPS's ability to attain its developmental goals relies on use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation. In this context, the NPS, as a mechanism, becomes a phenomenon whose behaviour is foundational in determining how the South African government's developmental objectives are met in ways that address the needs of its citizens.

3.7.1 Features of systems thinking and implications for evidence use

Different scholars have conceptualised the idea of systems and systems thinking in various ways, each presenting a unique perspective on their components, characteristics, and applications (Mueller 2020; Stroh 2015; Seddon 2010; Haraldsson 2004; Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011; Adams *et al.* 2014; Stewart & Ayres 2001). However, all authors emphasise the importance of understanding connections and interrelationships within complex systems. Although there are differences in their specific focus, this section aims to explore the similarities and differences across these different systems' perspectives, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted concept, which will set the foundation for a better understanding of the national policy system's use of evidence.

All seven scholars emphasise the importance of understanding connections and interrelationships within complex systems. They also recognise the need for a holistic approach to problem-solving that incorporates multiple perspectives and recognises boundaries. Mueller (2020:314), Stewart and Ayres (2001:81) and Stroh (2015:24) describe systems as interconnected networks of diverse elements. Similarly, Seddon (2010:54) and Haraldsson (2004:4) mention managing systems activities as interconnected and understanding connections and relations, respectively. The interconnected nature of systems highlights the importance of considering the impact of policy decisions on various system components. This understanding can help public officials to anticipate potential consequences and design policies that account for these interdependencies.

Stroh emphasises the coherent organisation of elements to achieve a desired purpose. Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011:3) and Adams *et al.* (2014:113, 116, 119) define systems thinking as an approach to tackling problems. Both definitions highlight the importance of understanding connections within complex systems, but Adams *et al.* (2014:113, 116, 119) provide a more comprehensive framework with specific axioms addressing various aspects of systems. The issue of complexity has become important within public administration, and to that end, there is convergence in the literature on the issue of complexity. Mueller (2020:314), Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011:3), and Haraldsson (2004:4) highlight the complexity of

systems as a defining characteristic of a system, with Mueller (2020:314) focusing on complex systems and their emergent properties specifically. The focus on complexity suggests that public officials should approach policy formulation and implementation with an appreciation of the intricate dynamics within the system. This understanding can enable them to identify patterns, trends, and potential challenges that may arise in the policy process.

All scholars share a focus on holistic thinking, whether explicitly or implicitly. For example, Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011:3) and Haraldsson (2004:4) explicitly mention the importance of holistic thinking in systems thinking. At the same time, Mueller (2020:314), Stroh (2015:24), and Seddon (2010:54) imply the need for a comprehensive understanding of systems as a whole, rather than focusing solely on individual components. Haraldsson (2004:4) describes systems thinking as a science that deals with organising logic and integrating disciplines to understand complex problems. This definition highlights the importance of holistic thinking and understanding connections between seemingly isolated elements. The holistic approach to problem-solving mentioned by Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011:3) and Haraldsson (2004:4) can encourage public officials to consider multiple perspectives and recognise boundaries in using evidence. This comprehensive approach can help ensure that policy decisions are grounded in a thorough understanding of the whole system, leading to more effective and inclusive policies.

Despite these areas of convergence, there are also areas of divergence. The scholars differ in their specific focus, with some highlighting the complexity and emergent properties of systems (Mueller 2020:314), others emphasising coherent organisation (Stroh 2015:24), and yet others concentrating on the application of systems thinking in the public sector (Seddon 2010:54; Stewart & Ayres 2001:81) or its interdisciplinary nature (Haraldsson 2004:4). Seddon (2010:54) offers a unique perspective by relating systems thinking to the design, planning, and management of work in the public sector. He emphasises the need for a systems approach to improve public services at a lower cost by managing work as an interconnected system rather than a collection of functional hierarchies. Stewart and Ayres (2001:81) focus on the implications of systems thinking for public policy initiatives, stressing the importance of understanding the interlinkages between system components that affect key policy-relevant

variables. This perspective highlights the need to anticipate the broader implications of policy actions and consider their potential impacts on other areas of a complex system.

The application of systems thinking to the public sector, as discussed by Seddon (2010:54) and Stewart and Ayres (2001:81), emphasises the need for public officials to manage policy formulation and implementation as an interconnected system rather than a collection of functional hierarchies. This perspective can contribute to improved public services at a lower cost by ensuring that policy decisions consider the broader implications of the system.

Mueller (2020:314), on the other hand, uniquely emphasises the lack of centralised control in complex systems, explaining that these systems continually adapt and evolve without definitive equilibria. Additionally, Adams *et al.* (2014) also provide a more detailed framework with specific axioms addressing various aspects of systems thinking. The similarities and differences across these different systems perspectives help us better understand the varied perspectives on systems and systems thinking. These perspectives can enhance the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation by South African public officials by promoting an understanding of *interconnectedness, complexity, holistic problem-solving, and the application of systems thinking to public policy*. These factors can contribute to more effective and inclusive policies that account for the intricate dynamics within the national policy system.

3.7.2 Systems thinking, public policy and evaluation systems

Over the last decade, several studies have examined various aspects of systems thinking in public policy and evaluation systems. These include the works of Borrás and Laatsit (2019), Magro and Wilson (2013), Caffrey and Munro (2017), and Nelson *et al.* (2018), which have contributed to the understanding of systems thinking and policy evaluation. Though they approach the topic from different angles, their research highlights the importance of adopting a systems approach in policy evaluation, as well as the challenges and benefits. This section overviews their findings and the implications for evidence-based policymaking.

Borrás and Laatsit (2019:99) argue that evaluation practices in innovation policy often do not follow a systems approach despite introducing the innovation system concept. They propose "*system-oriented innovation policy evaluation*," which involves four attributes: "*coverage, perspective, temporality, and expertise*". Their research indicates that only a few EU member states have adopted a systems approach, and they suggest that implementing it requires significant knowledge and organisational skills. The authors emphasise the need for a more substantial commitment to enhancing evaluation capacity at the national level to support system-oriented policy evaluation.

In contrast, Magro and Wilson (2013:1649) focus on the role of policy evaluation in understanding complex innovation policy systems and fostering policy learning. They discuss the transformation of evaluations into integrated, dynamic learning processes that engage with policymaking practices, which are essential for effective multi-level governance. However, they also note that existing evaluation methods often lack the sophistication required to capture intricate interactions within complex systems.

Caffrey and Munro (2017:463) explore the use of systems methodology in policy evaluation by investigating the practical application of child protection policies in child contact centres. Their research highlights how system concepts can contribute to a deeper understanding of complex policy evaluation issues by examining the policy's operation and interpretation as it interacts as a system and with other systems. A systems approach was found to reveal conflicts, local differences, and emergent effects that traditional evaluation approaches would not have uncovered.

Nelson *et al.* (2019:215) utilise a Complex Adaptive Systems perspective to examine the Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) concept within a network. Their research employs a Complex Adaptive Systems Model for network evaluations to develop ECB case studies that reveal system characteristics and manifestations. They identify five complex adaptive system features that facilitated Network ECB, demonstrating the potential benefits of implementing a systems approach in policy evaluation.

These studies contribute unique perspectives on the importance and challenges of adopting a systems approach in policy evaluation. Magro and Wilson (2013) and Borrás and Laatsit (2019) focus on the challenges and importance of system-oriented

innovation policy evaluation, while Nelson *et al.* (2018) examines the practical applications and implications of systems thinking for policy evaluation. Collectively, their work underscores the potential benefits and complexities associated with evaluating policies within a systems approach, highlighting the need for continued development and refinement of systems-based evaluation methods.

3.7.3 Implications of systems thinking for evidence use

This section explores the role of systems thinking in evaluation and public policy, drawing on the works of Borrás and Laatsit (2019), Magro and Wilson (2013), Caffrey and Munro (2017), and Nelson *et al.* (2018). The reviewed studies collectively emphasise the importance of adopting a systems approach in policy evaluation and the associated challenges and benefits. Various factors influence the use of evaluation evidence in public policy decision-making, and this section surfaces those that could help us understand the system factors that could influence evidence use within the national policy system. These factors have been categorised into those that enhance evidence use and prevent it.

Factors that enhance evidence use:

- **System-oriented innovation policy evaluation:** Borrás and Laatsit (2019:99) propose a system-oriented approach to policy evaluation that incorporates "*coverage, perspective, temporality, and expertise*". This approach encourages more evidence-based and context-specific policymaking.
- **Focus on formative learning processes:** The study by Magro and Wilson (2013:1649) emphasises the need for evaluation systems that promote formative learning, which can improve policy, formulation design and execution in real-time. Policymaking practices within the policy system can be engaged with these evaluations to transform them into dynamic, integrated learning processes.
- **Understanding complex policy interactions:** Caffrey and Munro (2017:463) advocate for policy evaluation approaches that address the complexity of policy design and implementation. Their research shows how system thinking can

enrich our understanding of complex evaluation issues, enabling us to make more informed decisions about implementation policy.

- **Evaluation capacity building within the national policy system:** Nelson *et al.* (2018:215) explore the concept of evaluation capacity building (ECB) in a system context, highlighting the potential benefits of promoting evaluation capacity among network stakeholders. They identify key 'complex adaptive system' characteristics that facilitate Network ECB, such as a highly interconnected network (Nelson *et al.* 2018:225) and information flow and feedback loops between stakeholders that can enhance the use, flow and sharing of evidence (Nelson *et al.* 2018:222).

Factors that prevent evidence use:

- **Lack of commitment to enhancing evaluation capacity:** Borrás and Laatsit (2019:99) acknowledge that implementing a system-oriented approach requires significant understanding and organisational skills, which serious obstacles can hinder. More commitment is therefore needed to improve evaluation capacity at the national level, as this positively impacts officials to use evidence.
- **Insufficient sophistication of evaluation methods:** Magro and Wilson (2013:1649) recognise that existing evaluation approaches often lack the refinement required to capture complex interactions within policy systems. This limitation can result in policy evaluation trailing behind advancements in innovation theory. This has negative implications for evidence that is drawn from theory-based evaluations.
- **Poor operationalisation of ECB within a network:** To the degree to which Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) is needed in complex adaptive systems, Nelson *et al.* (2018:215) contend that the operationalisation of ECB within a network remains poorly understood, which may limit the use of evaluation evidence in public policy decision-making since ECB facilitates information flow and feedback loops within the system that are vital for transmitting evidence.

The factors that influence the use of evidence within the evaluation system are multifaceted, with both positive and negative aspects. The works of Borrás and Laatsit (2019), Magro and Wilson (2013), Caffrey and Munro (2017), and Nelson *et al.* (2018) offer valuable insights into these factors, emphasising the need for a continued *commitment to enhancing evaluation capacity, refining evaluation methods, and promoting evidence-based policymaking* that incorporates systems thinking. These factors complement the factors that influence evidence use arising from the key features of systems, such as interconnectedness, complexity, holistic problem-solving, and the application of systems thinking to public policy.

3.7.4 The National Policy System in public administration

The National Policy System (NPS) has been characterised differently within public administration. In general, the NPS refers to the institutional framework, processes, and mechanisms that facilitate the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies at the national level. The concept of NPS includes various aspects, such as the role of government, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector in the policymaking process, the interaction of these actors, and the distribution of power and resources among them (Howlett *et al.* 2020:132-176).

A nation's NPS plays an important role in shaping the country's social, economic, and political trajectory. Several factors also influence the effectiveness of a country's NPS. These include the degree of political stability, the nature of the political system (i.e., democratic or authoritarian), and the capacity of the government and its institutions to develop and implement policies (Peters 2018).

Lasswell (1956:2) was one of the first to conceptualise the NPS as an interconnected system with seven distinct categories that started with problem identification and ended with policy evaluation. Lasswell argued that one of the key components of the NPS is the policy formulation process, which involves identifying policy problems, developing policy objectives and selecting policy instruments to achieve the desired outcomes. This process is often characterised by the involvement of various actors, such as bureaucrats, politicians, interest groups, and think tanks, who contribute their expertise, preferences, and resources to the policymaking process (Kingdon 2011).

The NPS also includes implementing public policies, which entails translating policy decisions into actionable programmes and projects. This stage of the policy process is critical, as it determines how much a policy achieves its intended outcomes (Pressman & Wildavsky 1984). The success of policy implementation is influenced by factors such as the availability of financial resources, the capacity and commitment of implementing agencies, and the level of coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders.

More importantly, within the context of this study, the NPS includes mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of public policies in achieving their intended goals. Policy evaluation is essential for ensuring accountability, learning, and the continuous improvement of public policies. Various methods can be employed in policy evaluation, ranging from quantitative techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis, to qualitative approaches, such as case studies and expert judgment (Patton 2014).

Table 3.4, lists five definitions of the NPS. For each definition, it highlights areas of emphasis. Using these identified aspects, we can contrast the similarities and differences between these definitions. From the third column, it can be observed that all definitions emphasise the importance of institutions, actors, and processes in shaping public policy outcomes (Lasswell 1956; Howlett *et al.* 2020; Cairney 2016; Sabatier & Weible 2007; Pierre & Peters 2000). It can also be noted that the role of the political and administrative context in determining the characteristics of a NPS is acknowledged by most definitions (Lasswell 1956; Cairney 2016). Some differences can, however, be noted. Lasswell (1956) and Cairney (2016) focus on the institutional framework and the role of the state, while Pierre and Peters (2000) and Howlett *et al.* (2020) highlight the network and relational aspects of policymaking. Unlike other definitions, Sabatier and Weible (2007:190) introduce the concept of nested policy subsystems.

Table 3.4: Definition of National Policy System

Source	Definition	Emphasis
Lasswell (1956)	Implicit conceptualisation of the national policy system as a complex and dynamic process involving various actors and functions. The process has seven distinct categories that start with problem identification and end with policy evaluation. Framework emphasises the interconnectedness of institutional functions and the importance of considering all of them in the policymaking process. Highlights the role of values, beliefs, and power dynamics (state and society) in shaping policy outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • Government/State • Society • Processes/ Framework
Pierre & Peters (2000)	Characterises the NPS as a network of actors , institutions , and processes that interact to produce public policies within a specific political and administrative context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • Processes • Actors • Politics & Administration
Sabatier & Weible (2007)	Conceptualises the NPS as a set of nested policy subsystems , wherein actors with shared beliefs and policy preferences engage in policy-making processes that cut across various levels of governance .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • Processes • Actors • Systems
Howlett <i>et al.</i> (2020)	The NPS is a complex web of formal and informal rules , roles , and relationships that guide the policy-making process , involving various stakeholders such as government agencies, civil society, and private sector actors .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • Processes • Rules & Roles • Actors • Stakeholders • Systems/Web
Cairney (2016)	Views the NPS as a dynamic system that shapes the direction of public policies, determines the allocation of resources , and influences societal outcomes, all of which are contingent on the country's political and administrative structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • System/Processes • Resources • Politics & Administration

Source: Compiled by Author

Although other definitions imply a system, for example, Howlett *et al.* (2020) mention a complex web, it is clear that the idea of the NPS as a cluster of integrated entities, i.e., subsystems, is not common. In defining the NPS as a three-component system, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how these subsystems are related and how they influence evidence use.

3.7.5 The mechanistic National Policy System

Chapter 1 emphasised that using a systems theory approach would contribute to the development of the social accountability root of evaluation theory and prioritise the factors that enhance the use of evaluation evidence in decision-making. Additionally, it was highlighted that utilising this approach would generate a framework developed

through a grounded theory process, which is inherently mechanistic. Such a framework represented the most effective means of understanding the processes and relationships involved in using evidence within the public sector. This latter conclusion can be fully appreciated by drawing on Figure 3.1, below, this has been created to integrate the three components of the NPS, as initially described by Olejniczak (2013).

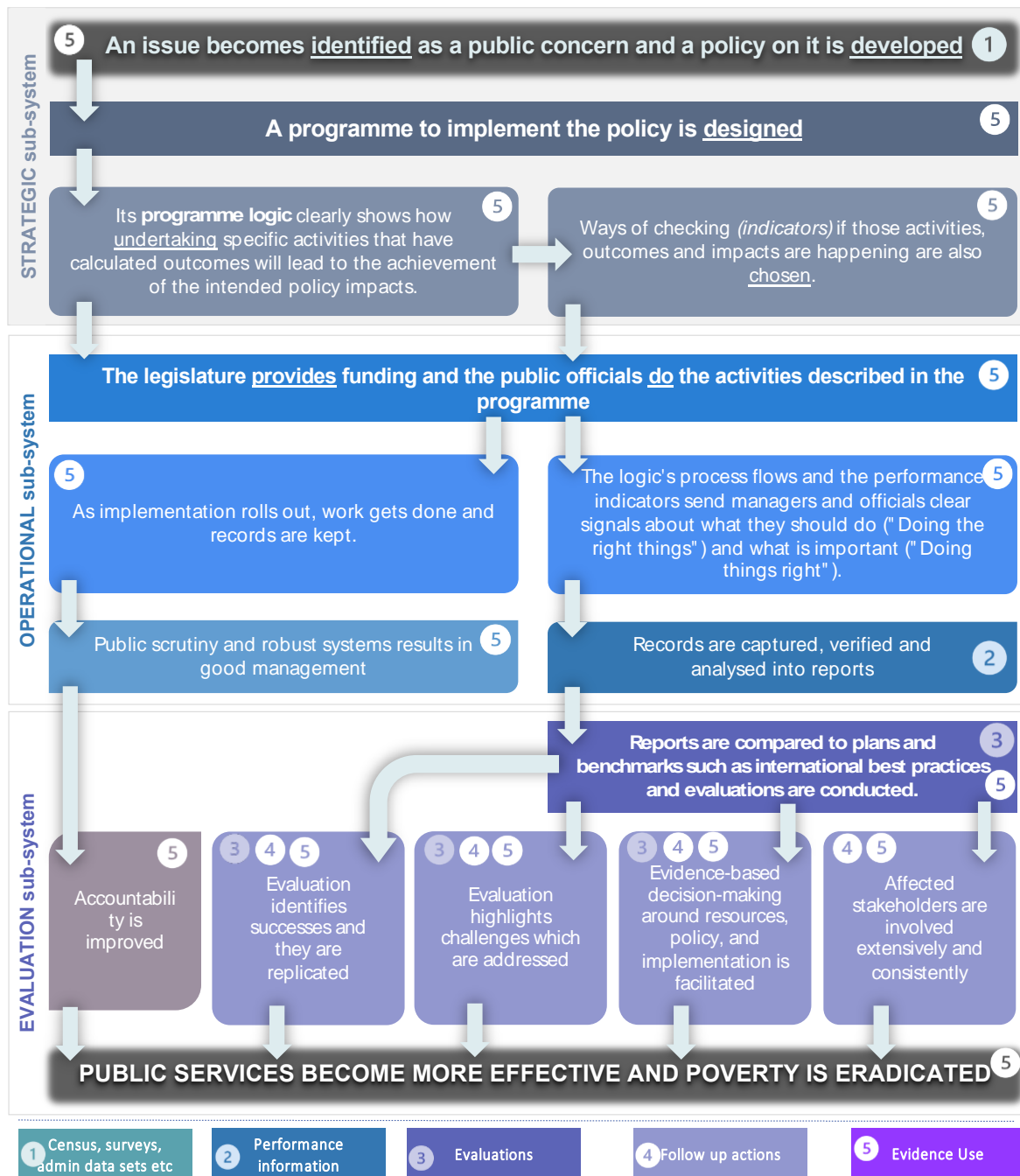


Figure 3.1: Conceptualisation of the national policy system and evidence use

Source: Adapted from Policy Framework for the Government-wide M&E System (DPME 2007:6)

This adaptation, created to integrate the three components of the NPS into a representation relevant to South Africa, is based on the conceptualisation of how public policy can achieve its intended outcomes (DPME 2007:6). By presenting the NPS as an integrated mechanistic system, it is possible to see how the different activities and processes work together and feed off each other, much like a machine.

The figure demonstrates how the strategic system identifies problems and designs interventions to tackle them and how the operational system begins the implementation process through the allocation of funding. Notably, this new conceptualisation of the NPS builds on the existing conceptualisation as it appears in the Policy Framework for the Government-wide M&E System (DPME 2007:6), which is the key policy instrument that laid the foundation for the NEPF. However, it goes further by explicitly highlighting how the evaluation function, number ③ in the figure, interacts with the follow-up actions ④, and more importantly, it explicitly introduces ⑤ evidence use as a new addition to the original conceptualisation and how evidence use can be brought to bear on all activities in the system. As such, it defines every activity in the system as a site of evidence utilisation. The central aim of this study is to understand the factors that influence the flow, that is, the use of evidence in these sites.

By introducing the use of evidence in this manner, it is possible to define sites of evidence use as the locations and activities that constitute the various activities in the NPS. Therefore, this study contributes to understanding the evidence use utilisation sites that are part of an integrated mechanistic system. This system requires feedback from the evaluation subsystem to allow better policy formulation and implementation, which together contribute to the enhancement of the effectiveness of government interventions and programmes in enhancing their effectiveness in, for example, the reduction of poverty. Crucially, a systems approach emphasises the consequences of failing to use evidence in any NPS activity, which can create a domino effect resulting in suboptimal policy outcomes. This issue will be further elaborated in the subsequent problem statement.

This new conceptualisation also builds on and extends Olejniczak's (2013) characterisation of the NPS by illuminating the specific activities that fit the South

African context and defining evidence use ⑤ as a cross-cutting activity across the NPS. Expanding on these key ideas makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of evidence use in the NPS and the benefits it can bring to policy formulation and implementation across the quantum of activities that constitute such a system.

The conceptualisation of the NPS as an integrated system underscores the complexity and interconnectedness of the processes and activities that shape public policy outcomes while also defining the study's philosophical orientation. Unlike positivist approaches prevalent in fields like medicine, which often rely on randomised controlled trials and systematic reviews, public policymaking in socio-economic sectors—such as those within the Social Cluster (the focus of this study)—necessitates the consideration of a broad array of factors and influences. These include organisational aspects, implementation strategies, and evaluation processes (Orton *et al.* 2011:2).

Figure 3.1, above, demonstrates that the policy process encompasses several stages: problem identification, option development, implementation, performance monitoring, and evaluation. The evidence required at each stage varies significantly. As a result, public policy evidence necessitates a more constructivist approach capable of addressing complexity and transcending traditional evidence-based positivist methodologies. Moreover, public policy evidence often lacks the definitiveness or robustness to dismiss alternative explanations, making interpretation essential for effective implementation. Potential confounding factors allow for subjective interpretation of evidence by public officials within specific contexts. This implies that public policy evidence is neither flawless, comprehensive, nor unambiguous and calls for a more refined interpretive approach rooted in organisational and socio-economic factors (Orton *et al.* 2011:2). This further validates the method and philosophical orientation adopted by this study.

This study will examine how public decision-makers utilise evidence in their daily work. Using a grounded theory approach, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the use of evidence across various sites of utilisation, depicted by ⑤ Figure 3.1, above.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the rise of NESs and their impact on evidence use in policymaking, particularly within South Africa. Drawing on various frameworks, the chapter examined how NES influence the way policymakers utilise evidence for evidence based decision-making. Key findings highlight the characteristics and functions of NES, their potential to support EBPM and the specific case of South Africa's evolving national evaluation system. The chapter identifies key legislative and policy frameworks underpinning the South African system and factors intended to enhance evidence use by public officials. Furthermore, the chapter explored the application of systems thinking to enhance evidence utilisation within a mechanistic national policy system context. By understanding the interconnectedness of policy elements and evaluation roles, policymakers can leverage NES more effectively to achieve desired outcomes. In conclusion, this chapter underscores the growing importance of NESs as a tool for promoting EBPM and improving policy efficacy. Continued development and effective application of NES hold significant promise for South Africa and other nations in harnessing the power of evidence for better policymaking and governance.

CHAPTER 4

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF EVALUATION EVIDENCE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL POLICY SYSTEM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The essence of Chapter 3 was to highlight the rationale and importance of mainstreaming evaluation by establishing NESs in South Africa and worldwide. The value of this within the context of this study, which focuses on the use of evidence within the public sector, relates to the importance that the frameworks and guidelines that underpin the NES have on the institutionalisation of the evaluation function and the extent to which this influences the use of the evidence generated within this subsystem of the NPS. This chapter builds on the latter by addressing the *third objective* of this study, which is *to examine the factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence in the Social Cluster in South Africa*. In doing so, it will answer the research question: *What factors influence the use of evidence by officials in the Social Cluster in South Africa?* Section 4.2 will give a profile of the realised sample, which will explain its suitability for developing the Grounded Theory (GT). Grounded Theory is a research methodology that systematically collects and analyses data to develop a theory that is 'grounded' in the experiences of participants. The section will also explain the importance of analytic generalisation within a case study design context. As outlined in the methodology section, the GT approach of Corbin and Strauss (2014) will be employed to analyse the data, primarily executed in Sections 4.3 and 4.4. Section 4.3 will also discuss the differences between the approach to coding and the presentation of results in GT relative to thematic analysis. Section 4.4 represents an integral part of the data analysis. Through axial and selective coding, this section will generate, from the open codes, 12 evidence-use categories that will play an important role in the theory building and subsequent development of the use framework. Understanding the relationship between the emergent categories is an essential step in laying the foundation for building GT. Section 4.5 revisits the theory-based and use-based factors that influence evidence use discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7, to

assess the extent to which they align with and differ from those that will emerge from the GT analysis. Section 4.6 will identify the relationships between the emerging evidence-use categories and explore the relationships within categories by constructing a system-based mechanistic evidence-use matrix. Identifying the core category is an essential aspect of GT; this will be covered in Section 4.7. Before developing the actual theory, assessing the extent to which there is sufficient variation within cases to produce a meaningful, GT is vital. Section 4.8 will give five reasons to demonstrate the suitability of the cases in theory building. Section 4.9 presents the coding paradigm and the theoretical narrative of the GT, which represents the foundation upon which the evidence-use framework will be built. This section will shed light on the underlying causal factors that underpin evidence use within the selected cases (Bryant & Charmaz 2007:34).

4.2 PROFILE OF REALISED SAMPLE

An overview of the number of participants interviewed compared to the number planned is provided in this section. Details of the multi-case study of four departments in the Social Cluster are reported in this section. The rationale and criteria used to select these departments can be found in Chapter 1. According to Table 4.1, of the eight original targeted participants, two from each department, only six were interviewed. As shown in the table below, the department code corresponds to the organisation that the official works for (i.e. **D1**, **D2**, **D3** and **D4**). To preserve anonymity, the names and genders of the four departments (i.e. DoEL, DBE, DPWI and DASC) that participated are not linked to the participants in the table. The sample included an equal number of **male** and **female** participants, three each. However, as an added layer of confidentiality, gender data is not associated with specific individuals in the table.

The case code will be used in the analysis, consistent with the convention of case study analysis (Yin 2014:32). Each participant was assigned a participant number within their respective cases, **P1** for **Participant 1** and **P2** for **Participant 2**. In the following analysis, the following case plus participant code will be used in the form **C1-P2**; this will indicate that the open code, for example, is from the second participant

from Case 1. The table also shows gender, position years of experience in the position, as well as the department and public sector.

Table 4.1: Case Profile

Department Code	Case Code	Participant Number	Position	Duration in Position	Duration in Department	Duration in Public Sector
D1	C1	P1	Director Research M&E	16	13	23
D1	C1	P2	Director Public Employment Services	13	13	26
D2	C2	P1	Director Research Coordination M&E	8	13	13
D2	C2	P2	Deputy Director Research Coordination M&E	8	12	12
D3	C3	P1	Chief Director EPWP Infrastructure Sector	15	19	19
D4	C4	P1	Director Research and Policy	10	12	30
				12	14	20.5

Source: Author, NB: Gender (n=6): The sample included an equal number of male and female participants (3 each). Gender data is not associated with specific individuals in the table.

Within a multi-case study using Grounded Theory, these profiles help identify information on the sample that provides an overview of their roles, experiences and gender. These elements are essential for contextualising their perspectives on evidence use. Overall, the gender distribution and the varying service years in diverse positions, departments and the public sector give us a rich contextual background. This allows us to understand how officials might use and perceive evidence. More importantly, within the context of grounded theory, this diversity in roles and tenure lays the foundation for robust theoretical sampling. This is important for developing a well-rounded, grounded theory process facilitated by the varied experiences of the cases. Variation in the data is critical for theory building as it offers the basis for understanding which factors are invariant and which are not across different contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the rationale for using four cases aligns well with constructing a unified evidence-use framework through Grounded Theory. Integrating findings from more than one case allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how evidence is used across different contexts within the Social Cluster. This broad perspective revealed overarching insights that would not have been apparent in the study of a single case in isolation. As will be seen in the discussion of the coding

paradigm, the four cases allowed the study to reach theoretical saturation. Out of the 609 codes that emerged, no new properties (i.e. open codes), dimensions (i.e. categories) or relationships could be derived from the data, especially given that line-by-line coding was used. The coding paradigm will also show an adequate representation of codes from all four cases across the 12 categories that emerged from the analysis and across all four paradigm components. This distribution of codes from the four cases enhances the validity of the emerging theory as areas of convergence support the credibility of the theoretical contracts that have been developed. This means that the framework for evidence use that has been developed is more likely to be useful for policymakers and practitioners across the public sector and will provide them with consistent guidelines and strategies for evidence use. Thus, a framework built from multiple cases can potentially influence evidence-based decision-making beyond the specific departments studied.

It is important not to confuse the latter conclusion with the notion of generalisation that's typical of quantitative research. Yin (2014:40) argues that the goal of case study research is not to generalise to some population, instead, it is to allow for analytic generalisation. *"Analytic generalisation may be defined as a two-step process. The first involves a conceptual claim whereby investigators show how their study's findings are likely to inform a particular set of concepts, theoretical constructs, or hypothesised sequence of events. The second step involves applying the same concepts or theoretical constructs to implicate other similar situations."* (Yin 2014:40) The theoretical narrative of the grounded theory will clearly show the concepts, constructs and the hypothesised sequence of events.

4.3 OPEN CODING

The in-depth iterative analysis aimed to construct a theory of evidence use within the Social Cluster, this served as the foundation for developing an evidence utilisation framework (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The Grounded Theory approach, with its emphasis on systematic, structured examination and interpretation of data, ensured a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives (Corbin & Strauss 2014:12). The focus of the analysis was on developing a theory that emerges from the data that was collected on evidence use.

Open coding was the initial step, wherein the data was broken down into discrete parts, and codes were assigned to capture the underlying meaning. This method emphasised identifying and labelling concepts without preconceived notions about evidence-based practices in the public sector. This was done in a highly iterative process where constant comparison and contrasting data segments while refining and adjusting previously derived open codes were done throughout the analysis. In most cases, words from participant quotations were also used to define open codes. This process achieved the objective of developing codes that are grounded in the data and reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences with the use of evidence in policymaking.

4.3.1 Initial stage of open coding

As outlined in Figure 1.2, Chapter 1, this initial stage of open coding in GT was followed by two other coding processes. This approach focused on the open codes derived from the data through line-by-line coding. Line-by-line coding is consistent with the inductive nature of GT, which focuses on producing codes and themes, that is, categories, as they are often referred to in GT, that are strongly tied to the underlying data. This means that GT often generates numerous codes, 609 in the case of this study.

4.3.2 Coding in grounded theory vs. thematic analysis

The goal of open coding in Grounded Theory and thematic analysis is to apply codes to data segments (like quotes) that share similar meanings or concepts. There are differences in how this is approached under each methodological approach. While thematic analysis can be deductive or inductive, it is generally practised deductively, a process that involves applying pre-existing or pre-defined codes and themes. As a result of the latter, thematic analysis is, for the most part, less iterative than GT. Thematic analysis is also a relatively flexible methodology whose goal is to identify, analyse and report patterns found in the data, which are typically distilled into themes. This is achieved through a coding process that involves the researcher identifying and labelling features of the data that they find interesting relative to the objectives of their study and the research questions it seeks to answer.

4.3.3 Presentation of results in Grounded Theory vs. thematic analysis

Another critical difference also arises in how the two approaches present the results of their analytical processes. Unlike thematic analysis, where reporting focuses on presenting code frequencies and the number of codes loaded on a given theme, this is not typically the primary focus of reporting in GT. Similar to GT, the focus of the presentation of results in this study was on the richness and depth of concepts represented by the open codes and how they saturated the identified categories and not how often they appeared. This focus is driven by three primary considerations that support GT's theory-building objective.

The GT process followed in this study did not focus on the number of codes generated during analysis because data collection was guided by emerging concepts and relationships rather than code frequency. Successive data collection events were, in turn, influenced by the latter as they informed the questions in the following interview. This meant that, depending on the theoretical sampling choices, some issues were given more attention in subsequent data collection events in ways that influenced the code counts of that interview.

Another disadvantage of focusing on code frequencies is the potential risk of oversimplification based merely on the broad patterns emerging in the data. Focusing on general patterns in the data might lead to a superficial understanding of the underlying phenomenon of evidence use. This outcome is in contrast to the stated goal of grounded theory, which is meant to give a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of evidence use that goes beyond the simple counting of code occurrences.

Finally, the focus in analysing public official perspectives and experiences was on uncovering the meaning and significance of evidence-use concepts within the data. In this regard, the frequency of a code does not essentially reflect the importance of its meaning to the perspectives and experiences of officials in ways relevant to the emerging evidence use theory. Infrequent open codes, more so in the context of a multi-case study, can still reveal important insights into the realities that officials are confronted with, concerning evidence-based policymaking that is crucial to a

framework aimed at mainstreaming evidence use in the public sector. The following example demonstrates this point.

The code '*Loss of faith in evidence-based policymaking*' was identified from the quotation "*I have lost faith.*" (C1-P1, 21:49) by Participant 1 (P1) from Case 1 (C1) (See Table 4.2). This was in response to how their experience with evidence use in their department had affected their attitude toward evidence-based policy.

Table 4.2: Example of data from open coding in GT analysis: 1

Code Name	Loss of faith in evidence-based policymaking
Code Definition	Loss of faith points to a lack of trust in the participant's institutions' procedures and practices regarding their ability to prioritise evidence use. There is a sense of disillusionment with the current situation regarding evidence use in policymaking.
Open Code Example	<i>"I have lost faith." (C1-P1, 21:49)</i>
Memo	It is important to acknowledge the loss of faith experienced by officials as it can serve as a starting point for attempts to rebuild the trust that has been lost in evidence-informed policymaking processes. This can be done at two levels; at the Cluster level, it could require demonstrating the value of evidence through sharing success stories of institutionally driven, impactful, evidence-based interventions from departments where institutionalisation has occurred. Within the national policy system, this could involve targeted awareness campaigns that promote transparency, accountability and open dialogue to restore confidence in the system.

Source: Author

A similar code that captured similar sentiments was from C4-P1, who generated the code, '*Feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation*', as seen in the Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Example of data from open coding in GT analysis: 2

Code Name	Feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation
Code Definition	Feelings of being stuck are often associated with the frustration and stagnation that come when one's efforts to mainstream evidence generation through evaluation within the official's department are not yielding any results. This could arise from several factors, such as the lack of support from superiors or colleagues, or it could also be the manifestation of resistance to change that arises from the new demands of using evidence.
Open Code Example	<i>"Sometimes, really, I feel like I am a bit stuck because I will always go to the branches and make sure before we come up with something like DPME says,</i>

that each and every department must come up with their evaluation plans."
(C4-P1, 12:03)

Memo

If feelings of being stuck are essential in influencing attitudes around evidence use, they could signal the first step required to resolve the underlying challenges that hinder use. Possible strategies for enhancing use could include recruiting allies and building coalitions within the department that understand and support evaluations as sources for evidence use. These allies and coalitions can serve as advocates or champions of use who can be instrumental in supporting increased resources and training and facilitating communication strategies persuading other colleagues and superiors of the value of evaluation for evidence use.

Source: Author

While these open codes only emerge from two of the six respondents from two of the four cases, their significance arises from the fact that they are expressed by officials whose primary responsibilities in their respective departments are linked to evidence generation and mainstreaming. Concerning theory building, this points to variations in the level of institutionalisation of evidence use across the four cases, something that, within the context of a multi-case study, can be extended to the Social Cluster specifically and the national policy system in general. With this understanding and variability in the data, which points to the possibility of improving departments with low levels of institutionalisation to the same levels as the other two cases, we can develop three vital elements of a theory. These assumptions serve as the foundation upon which propositions are built. The propositions, in turn, elaborate on the relationship between the key concepts in a theory on evidence use, such as '*public official attitudes towards evidence use*' or the '*institutionalisation of evidence use*'. The third element is the hypotheses, which further refine the propositions by translating them into specific statements that constitute measurable predictions that make the theory scientific by making it testable and serving as the impetus for empirical verification.

Using this example, we can identify the following three elements of a theory.

Assumption

The assumption that arises from the two open codes, '*Loss of faith in evidence-based policymaking*' (C1-P1, 21:49) and '*Feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation*' (C4-P1, 12:03), is that there is a link between an official's experience with evidence use and their subsequent attitude towards

evidence-based policymaking. More importantly, the fact that the codes are grounded in those responsible for evidence generation would indicate that their experiences are particularly salient and non-trivial.

Proposition

We can build on this assumption by crafting the following proposition:

Levels of institutionalisation of evidence use in policymaking organisations are significant factors that influence individual attitudes towards evidence-based policymaking and the perceived success of evidence-generation efforts.

Testable hypothesis

The corresponding testable hypothesis can be framed as follows.

In organisations with relatively low levels of institutionalisation of evidence use, public officials responsible for evidence generation and mainstreaming will report disproportionately more negative attitudes towards evidence-based policymaking, expressing greater feelings of being stuck and losing faith in their efforts compared to those in departments with higher levels of institutionalisation.

The significance of this example is that it also allows us to understand the notion of analytic generalisation as it is within reason to argue that all three elements have been crafted at a level of generalisation, that is, at a higher level of theoretical abstraction than the raw data. This is more so given the fact that these two cases (C1 and C2) exhibited relatively low levels of institutionalisation of evidence use compared to cases C2 and C3. Furthermore, the notion of analytic generalisation is echoed by Charmaz (2014:220), who argues *"At this point, a key difference between grounded theory and other forms of qualitative research on accuracy becomes apparent. ... Grounded theorists aim to code for possibilities suggested by the data rather than ensuring complete accuracy of the data. This approach helps you to define the range of variation of your studied process or phenomenon and provides leads for conceptualising it further..."* (Charmaz 2014:220)

In Table 4.4, below are a few examples of some of the open codes are presented.

Table 4.4: Illustration of open codes, quotations and code descriptions

Open Codes	Quotations	Code Descriptions
<p>1. Evaluation as a tool for achieving policy goals (C1-P1, 13:10)</p>	<p><i>"To me, evaluation is important in ensuring that whatever government policy it intends to do, we end up getting what we want to achieve through that policy or legislation." (C1-P1, 13:10)</i></p>	<p>This highlights the participant's understanding of evaluation as a means to verify if policies are on track to achieve their intended goals.</p>
<p>2. Importance of evaluating course correction (C1-P1, 13:10)</p>	<p><i>"If the evaluation shows that you are not on the right course, that evaluation, for me, is necessary to help you understand which way to go and what it is that you need to do to still achieve that which you plan to achieve in the first place." (C1-P1, 13:10)</i></p>	<p>Participant views evaluation as an important tool for course correction, emphasising its role in identifying deviations from intended outcomes and providing guidance for remediation.</p>
<p>3. Importance of evaluating impact (C1-P1, 17:10)</p>	<p><i>"Then, you will have challenges later on in the process. The latest example is the study that we were doing with the HSRC. When we tried to look at the theory of change, you looked at the targets put in place but did not find them." (C1-P1, 17:10)</i></p>	<p>It emphasises the need for evidence to assess the effectiveness of intervention and the importance of evaluating the impact of policies and programmes, particularly focusing on whether intended outcomes are achieved.</p>
<p>4. Pilot programmes and evaluations for wider-scale implementation (C2-P1, 09:46)</p>	<p><i>"...through to testing potential pilots or programmes so that you could do pilot type types of exercises with evaluations linked to those to inform wider scale policy implementation." (C2-P1, 09:46)</i></p>	<p>The use of pilot programmes and evaluations are seen as a strategy to test and refine policy interventions before implementing them on a wider scale. This approach can help to identify potential problems and unintended consequences early on, and to ensure that policies are effective and efficient before they are rolled out nationwide.</p>
<p>5. Early planning for evaluation (C2-P1, 43:10)</p>	<p><i>"Sometimes, I get asked, kind of towards the end of a programme implementation, especially if there's a project that has a specific duration, like a two-year project that gets run in a bunch of schools. It's best if evaluation activities are planned right up front." (C2-P1, 43:10)</i></p>	<p>The importance of planning for evaluation at the outset of a programme or policy initiative cannot be overstated. By integrating evaluation activities into the programme design and implementation early, data collection and analysis can be carried out in a timely manner to inform decision-making.</p>
<p>6. Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes (C3-P1, 28:46)</p>	<p><i>"It's something now that, or it's something that I've seen being used to ensure that the evidence is integrated into policymaking, so it's become now inbuilt into our strategy for different</i></p>	<p>This suggests that evaluations have been integrated into the standard operating procedures for policymaking, particularly in the case of the Expanded Public Works</p>

Open Codes	Quotations	Code Descriptions
	<i>phases of EPWP. We always built or planned for evaluation, so you mainstream evaluations, and then you make it part of the policy process." (C3-P1, 28:46)</i>	Programme (EPWP). This indicates a shift towards a more evidence-informed approach to policymaking, where evaluation is seen as a critical component of the policy cycle.
7. Need for process evaluation before impact assessment (C4-P1, 28:24)	<i>"...you should first make sure that we conduct a process evaluation because the impact may be wrong; you may get wrong results if maybe the implementation was not implemented as planned." (C4-P1, 28:24)</i>	Impact assessments are valid and reliable when their process is evaluated. Prior to assessing the impact of a programme, process evaluation ensures that it is being delivered as intended. It is difficult to determine whether the observed outcomes are the result of the programme itself or other factors without a proper process evaluation.
8. Evaluation questions guiding assessment of policy effectiveness (C4-P1, 35:28)	<i>"We assess how asking the relevant evaluation questions will give you an answer to see if, indeed, whatever the intervention you wanted to conduct or the evaluation you wanted to conduct is in the right direction. " (C4-P1, 35:28)</i>	Evaluation questions play a significant role in guiding policy effectiveness assessment. In order to ensure that the evaluation provides useful information for decision-making, relevant evaluation questions can help focus the assessment on the most important outcomes and impacts.

Source: Author

Two observations can be made from Charmaz: First, the multiple case study has allowed us to understand better the range of variation across cases, including the attitude towards evidence-based policymaking experienced through expressions of loss of faith and feelings of being stuck. Second, this ability to conceptualise further forms the basis for the Grounded Theory in this study, drawing from the causal framework implicit in the coding paradigm.

The table gives a structured overview of the findings and shows how the patterns in participant responses were identified and interpreted. The table also represents the qualitative data process, highlighting the open codes, supporting quotes, and interpretive descriptions of the study. This offers insights into the diverse perspectives and experiences related to evidence use. As mentioned before, 609 open codes were identified during the analysis. All codes adequately captured the phenomena of evidence use in the cases studied. Appendix D lists more of the initial codes, final open codes and corresponding quotations.

4.4 AXIAL CODING, SELECTIVE CODING AND BUILDING CATEGORIES

The goal of axial coding was to explore relationships between codes, deepening the understanding of evidence use within the public sector. According to Schurink *et al.* (2011:413) "*axial coding is a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories...*". The 12 evidence use categories were created by refining and consolidating codes that captured the salient concepts or ideas in the data regarding evidence use. The creation of the categories involved analysing the nature of the relationship between the open codes. The key consideration was to identify the central and more essential codes and how they relate to other codes based on how they influenced the use of evidence. This means that the open codes in Table 4.5, below, can be viewed as the factors that influence the use of evidence in public policymaking. The best way of understanding the latter is to see each code as representing a specific element or condition that affects how evidence is used in different contexts or sites of use, as discussed in the previous chapter, within the different subsystems of the NPS. Since the open codes are derived from the salient concepts or ideas present in the data expressed by public officials as factors that influence the use of evidence, they play an essential role in either facilitating or hindering the effective use of evidence and provide a substantive context-specific understanding of the dynamics at play in evidence-based policymaking. More important to the GT approach was selective coding, which focused on identifying categories that tied the properties (open codes) and dimensions of evidence together.

Therefore, the creation of the evidence-use categories was not arbitrary but based on a clear relationship with the open codes. Each category is defined in relation to its open codes, which are key to capturing the essence of the category. This relationship between open codes and evidence-use categories is crucial to understanding the categories and their relevance to the research. The following sections will illustrate how each category was constituted and how its description is grounded in the data, as well as the open codes that constitute it. Importantly, each category will show how it influences evidence at an institutional level, cluster and within the subsystems of the

national policy system. Throughout the following exposition the open codes will be presented with the case and participant codes.

4.4.1 Category 1: Importance & Role of Evaluation

An assessment of the codes in this category shows how the importance and role of evaluations, *'assessing policy outcomes through evaluation'*, (C4-P1, 35:28) can influence the way they are integrated into policy processes, *'mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes'*, (C3-P1, 28:46) and the extent to which they inform decision-making, *'evaluation questions guiding assessment of policy effectiveness'* (C4-P1, 35:28). This category describes how evaluations contribute to achieving policy goals supporting open code, *'emphasises the need for evaluation to achieve policy goals'*, (C1-P1, 13:10), assessing impact, making course corrections, planning, and mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes supporting the following open codes, *'Discusses the integration of evaluation into policy processes'*, (C3-P1, 28:46); *'Evaluation as a means of course correction'*, (C1-P1, 13:10); *'Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes'*, (C3-P1, 28:46). The importance of evaluations arises from their necessity in ensuring that policies and programmes are designed effectively, implemented efficiently, and adjusted based on empirical evidence supporting open codes such as, *'Highlights the role of evaluation in assessing policy effectiveness'* (C4-P1, 35:28).

In the *Social Cluster*, *Category 1 (Importance and role of evaluation)* influences evidence use in the following way: evaluations are seen as being instrumental in determining the effectiveness of social programmes and policies. For instance, evaluating *'pilot programmes [before] wider-scale implementation'* (C2-P1, 09:46) ensures that policies are tested and refined, reducing the risk of widespread implementation failures.

The importance and role of evaluations in the National Policy System has an impact on all subsystems. In the *strategic subsystem*, evaluation aids the design of interventions by targeting identified issues of what works and what does not. For example, *'early planning for evaluation'* (C2-P1, 43:10), helps set clear objectives and indicators from the outset.

Table 4.5: Emerging main 12 categories and open codes

Main Category	Open Codes
1. Importance & Role of Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluation as a tool for achieving policy goals (C1-P1, 13:10) ● Importance of evaluating course correction (C1-P1, 13:10) ● Importance of evaluating impact (C1-P1, 17:10) ● Need for process evaluation before impact assessment (C4-P1, 28:24) ● Assessing policy outcomes through evaluation (C4-P1, 35:28) ● Evaluation questions guiding assessment of policy effectiveness (C4-P1, 35:28). ● Pilot programmes and evaluations for wider-scale implementation (C2-P1, 09:46) ● Early planning for evaluation (C2-P1, 43:10) ● Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes (C3-P1, 28:46)
2. Evidence Use in Policymaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence as a basis for policy change (C1-P1, 14:26) ● Use of evaluation for new ideas (C1-P1, 14:26) ● Evidence-driven policy success (C1-P1, 39:29) ● Policy development driven by evidence (C1-P2, 1:02:10) ● Evidence as an ongoing influence in policymaking (C2-P1, 09:46) ● Evidence informing government priorities (C4-P1, 36:26) ● Evidence-based policies driven by facts, not opinions (C4-P1, 36:26) ● Respect for evidence in policymaking (C3-P1, 31:59) ● Lack of synergy in policymaking without evidence (C2-P2, 40:51)
3. Barriers to Evidence Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited understanding of evidence use in policy stages (C1-P1, 14:52) ● Comfort in non-evidence-based policymaking (C1-P1, 15:24) ● Disconnect between evidence and action (C1-P1, 15:24) ● Policy development without evidence (C1-P1, 16:01) ● Preference for policymaking without evidence (C1-P1, 16:29) ● Assumptions over evidence (C1-P1, 17:10) ● Lack of evidence use in policymaking (C1-P1, 18:58) ● Concern of non-use of readily available evidence (C1-P1, 19:28) ● Concern over lack of evidence use at high levels (C1-P1, 18:58) ● Loss of faith in evidence-based policymaking (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Disillusionment due to not aligning with evidence-based priorities (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Stagnation in evidence use despite experience (C1-P1, 26:42) ● Feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation (C4-P1, 12:03) ● Limited progress despite some positive examples (C1-P1, 26:42) ● Evidence as an impediment (C1-P1, 31:28)
4. Political & Cultural Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use (C1-P1, 19:50) ● Influence of power dynamics on evidence use (C1-P1, 31:28) ● Political will as a key enabler of evidence use (C1-P1, 45:24) ● Political will and evidence-based policy implementation (C3-P1, 23:03) ● Political priorities vs. evidence-based resource allocation (C4-P1, 10:35).

Main Category	Open Codes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selective use of evidence to support narratives (C1-P1, 20:34) ● Political interference with evidence (C1-P1, 58:06) ● Disputing data collection methods (C1-P1, 58:06) ● Political sensitivity of evidence (C2-P1, 14:59) ● Political and social contexts not always supportive of evidence use (C2-P1, 28:20) ● Political will and commitment to transparency (C2-P2, 23:59) ● Political leadership and appetite for evaluation (C2-P2, 07:09) ● Political culture and evidence use (C2-P2, 07:09) ● Socio-political environment's influence on policy focus (C3-P1, 09:33)
5. Evidence Generation & Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use (C1-P1, 36:44) ● Overlooking internally generated evidence (C1-P1, 36:44) ● Developing and publishing a research agenda (C2-P1, 53:48) ● StatsSA data as potential evidence (C1-P1, 18:58) ● Frequency and accessibility of data promotes use (C1-P1, 51:48) ● Public availability as a driver of evidence use (C1-P1, 51:48) ● Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use (C1-P1, 53:11) ● Fostering a culture of research and policy engagement with external stakeholders (C2-P1, 53:48)
6. Challenges & Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding decisions not based on evidence (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Lack of focus on high-impact interventions (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Lack of evidence-based programme development (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Reliance on anecdotal evidence and 'thumb-sucking' (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Socio-political influence on evidence use (C1-P1, 53:11) ● Evidence rejection to fit narratives (C1-P1, 58:06) ● Competing pressures and agendas (C2-P1, 12:13) ● Competing interests and the demand for evidence (C1-P1, 41:39) ● Financial and political pressures hindering evidence use (C2-P1, 12:13) ● Limited progress in evidence use (C1-P1, 26:42)
7. Success and Positive Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence-based programme development positive social outcomes (C1-P2, 27:02) ● Evidence-based policy design and impact analysis (C1-P1, 1:06:27) ● Evidence-based policies addressing ground challenges (C1-P2, 1:06:43) ● Evidence-informed policy design and testing (C2-P1, 09:46) ● Research evidence informing national assessments (C2-P1, 1:08:50) ● Evidence-based policy leads to better social outcomes (C1-P1, 1:05:16) ● Evidence-based interventions for programme improvement (C2-P1, 14:59)

Main Category	Open Codes
8. Stakeholder Engagement & Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development (C1-P1, 41:39) ● Importance of consultation in evidence-based policymaking (C1-P1, 43:49) ● Stakeholder considerations in evidence use (C1-P2, 13:39) ● Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use (C1-P1, 53:11) ● Stakeholder negotiation and consensus-building in policy development (C2-P2, 1:02:10) ● Diverse stakeholder engagement with evidence (C3-P1, 18:09)
9. Evidence as a Tool for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potential for evidence-informed programme development to address social problems (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Promoting a holistic approach to evidence use (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Potential for evidence-informed strategy development to address social problems (C1-P1, 21:49) ● Evidence as a tool for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement (C1-P2, 07:05) ● Using evidence to demonstrate impact (C2-P2, 32:41) ● Evidence as a tool for learning and improvement (C2-P2, 32:41) ● Evaluation for assessing policy impact (C3-P1, 02:46)
10. Training & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need for increased awareness of evidence sources (C1-P1, 51:48) ● Need for awareness campaigns on evaluation (C4-P1, 08:57) ● Continuous reinforcement of awareness campaigns (C4-P1, 32:08) ● Importance of having the right skills in evaluation (C4-P1, 32:39) ● Need for training and awareness on M&E (C3-P1, 34:59)
11. Accountability & Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accountability mechanisms promote evidence use (C1-P2, 07:05) ● Evidence as a requirement for report sign-off (C1-P2, 12:40) ● Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking (C2-P2, 32:41) ● Management recognition of the importance of evaluation (C4-P1, 17:36) ● Accountability as a driver of political will (C2-P1, 46:56) ● Transparency and communication with service providers (C2-P2, 20:59)
12. Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role of DPME in promoting a culture of evidence use within government (C2-P1, 12:13) ● Role of DPME in promoting evidence use (C4-P1, 32:39) ● DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports (C2-P1, 57:25) ● DPME guidelines for assessing the social and economic impacts of proposed legislation (C2-P2, 32:41) ● National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans (C2-P2, 32:41) ● Evidence-driven high-level decision-making processes and performance agreements (C2-P2, 32:41) ● Strategic planning workshops for policy assessment and reflection (C2-P2, 54:59) ● Action research papers to guide strategic planning (C2-P2, 54:59) ● Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking (C2-P2, 32:41)

Source: Author

In addition, '*mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes*' (C3-P1, 28:46), ensures that social programmes in the *operational subsystem* are implemented efficiently and promptly, as continuous feedback from functional M&E processes helps officials make the necessary adjustments. As implementation proceeds, the *evaluation subsystem* kicks in by '*assessing policy outcomes through evaluation*' (C4-P1, 35:28) and produces strategic evidence on the outcomes of interventions, as well as operational knowledge on how to improve processes.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: Given this category's focus on evaluation, it stands to reason that the *evaluation subsystem* is directly impacted by the factors in this category as it relies on evaluations to produce the evidence for the other two subsystems, strategic and operational knowledge necessary for policy adjustments and improvements.

4.4.2 Category 2. Evidence Use in Policymaking

In the *Evidence Use in Policymaking*, Category 2, the importance of using evidence as a foundation for policy changes, success, and ongoing influence in policymaking is underscored by '*discuss[ions of] using evaluation for new ideas*' (C1-P1, 14:26). Evidence, therefore, plays a key role in informing government priorities, driving policies based on facts, and ensuring respect and synergy in policymaking by '*highlight[ing] respect for evidence in policymaking*, (C3-P1, 31:59); and by '*showing how evidence informs government priorities*' (C4-P1, 36:26).

This category influences the Social Cluster through evidence-based policymaking, which ensures that social interventions are grounded in empirical data, leading to more effective and impactful social programmes. For example, '*evidence-driven policy success*' (C1-P1, 39:29) demonstrates the effectiveness of using data to guide policy decisions.

In the *strategic subsystem*, '*evidence informs[s] government priorities*' (C4-P1, 36:26) by influencing the design of social interventions by identifying development opportunities and needs during the strategic phases of policy formulation. For instance, '*evidence informing government priorities*' (C4-P1, 36:26) helps choose the most pressing issues to address. '*Respect for evidence in policymaking*' (C3-P1,

31:59) ensures that evidence is used in policymaking, guaranteeing that resources are allocated efficiently, and programmes are implemented effectively in the *operational subsystem*.

There will be a *'lack of synergy in policymaking without evidence'* (C2-P2, 40:51), which means that policy impact (strategic function) and implementation efficiency are not guaranteed. This is because evidence from the *evaluation subsystem* helps to build synergy in policymaking by answering strategic questions about the success and impact of policies and operational questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of processes.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: Since this category is focused on evidence use in policymaking, the *strategic subsystem* is influenced the most as evidence guides the selection of development opportunities and the design of targeted interventions.

4.4.3 Category 3. Barriers to Evidence Use

This category identifies obstacles that hinder the effective use of evidence in policymaking, such as limited understanding *'discusses feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation'*, (C4-P1, 12:03), preference for non-evidence-based decisions *'describes comfort in non-evidence-based policymaking'*, (C1-P1, 15:24), and political and institutional constraints *'highlights the lack of evidence use in policymaking'*, (C1-P1, 18:58).

In the Social Cluster, barriers to evidence use can lead to ineffective social policies and programmes that fail to tackle the root causes of social issues effectively. For instance, a *'limited understanding of evidence use in policy stages'* (C1-P1, 14:52) can develop poorly designed interventions.

The *strategic subsystem* can also be impacted as barriers to evidence use prevent the selection of appropriate development opportunities and the design of effective interventions. For example, *'policy development without evidence'* (C1-P1, 16:01) leads to interventions that may not address real needs. At an *operational level*, the implementation of policies may be flawed if there is a *'disconnect between evidence and action'* (C1-P1, 15:24). The lack of evidence use hinders the ability to generate

strategic and operational knowledge necessary for assessing and improving policies as officials *'feel stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation'*, (C4-P1, 12:03) in the *evaluation sub-system*.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: While the *strategic sub-system* is the most affected, based on the interviews, it appears as if all subsystems are impacted, as barriers to evidence use can lead to the selection of ineffective policies and poorly designed social interventions, which have system-wide consequences.

4.4.4 Category 4. Political & Cultural Influences

This category addresses the impact of political and cultural factors on the use of evidence in policymaking by *'highlight[ing] politics and culture as barriers to evidence use'* (C1-P1, 19:50). It includes political will and *'explores political will and commitment to transparency'*, (C2-P2, 23:59); the *'influence of power dynamics on evidence use'*, (C1-P1, 31:28), selective use of evidence, and *'discusses the socio-political environment's influence on policy focus'*, (C3-P1, 09:33).

In the *Social Cluster*, political and cultural influences can facilitate or hinder evidence-based policymaking. *'Political will as a key enabler of evidence use'* (C1-P1, 45:24) can drive the adoption of evidence-based social policies that significantly impact the sociopolitical environment and address the unmet developmental needs of South African citizens, as identified in the 2017 High-Level Report (Government of South Africa 2017).

The *'socio-political environment's influence on policy focus'* (C3-P1, 09:33) determines which issues are prioritised. As such, it impacts the *strategic subsystem* of the National Policy System through political and cultural factors that influence the selection of developmental social policies that can tackle South Africa's unmet developmental needs. At the same time, *'political will and commitment to transparency'* (C2-P2, 23:59) ensure that policies are implemented effectively, and resources are allocated appropriately in the *operational sub-system*. *'Political sensitivity of evidence'*, (C2-P1, 14:59) how evaluation results are interpreted and used in decision-making (*evaluation sub-system*).

The most affected part of the National Policy System: In this category, the heavy influence of political and cultural factors, is pervasive as it shapes the priorities and design of interventions across all *subsystems*.

4.4.5 Category 5. Evidence Generation and Capacity

This category is about more than just the capacity to generate and use evidence. It also includes internal capacity *'discuss[ing] the limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use'*, (C1-P1, 36:44), engagement with communities *'highlights engaging with relevant communities'*, (C1-P1, 53:11), developing research agendas *'explores developing and publishing a research agenda,'* (C2-P1, 53:48), and fostering a culture of research and policy engagement, *'fosters a culture of research and policy engagement with external stakeholders,'* (C2-P1, 53:48).

Evidence generation and capacity in the Social Cluster is influenced by building capacity for evidence generation and use and ensuring that reliable data that inform social policies. This can be achieved by *'developing and publishing a research agenda'* (C2-P1, 53:48), exemplified by an annual publication of the Social Cluster's research priorities. *'Fostering a culture of research and policy engagement with external stakeholders'*, (C2-P1, 53:48) through regular consultations with community leaders and organisations enhances the relevance and impact of social policies which enhance the relevance and impact of social policies.

In the National Policy System, from a strategic standpoint, *'developing and publishing a research agenda'*, (C2-P1, 53:48) helps identify key areas for intervention and effective policy design (*Strategic sub-system*). *'Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use'* (C1-P1, 53:11) ensures that policies are implemented in a way that is responsive to the needs of those affected (*operational sub-system*). *'Limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use,'* (C1-P1, 36:44) affects the ability to assess and improve policies.

The most affected part of the national policy system: The dynamics in this category will have a significant impact on the evaluation subsystem because it relies on the capacity to generate and use evidence to produce operational and strategic insights

4.4.6 Category 6: Challenges & Constraints

The factors in this dimension play a significant role in directly influencing the use of evidence. These factors represent the direct challenges and constraints officials face as they try to use evidence in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluations. These constraints include funding decisions '*highlights funding decisions not based on evidence,*' (C1-P1, 21:49), socio-political influences ('*discusses socio-political influences on evidence use,*' (C1-P1, 53:11), competing pressures and limited progress in evidence use ('*explores financial and political pressures hindering evidence use,*' (C2-P1, 12:13).

Regarding the *Social Cluster*, this category exerts an influence through '*financial and political pressures [that] hinder evidence use*' (C2-P1, 12:13) in designing and implementing social programmes. Its influence is also felt in the *strategic sub-system* as '*funding decisions not based on evidence*' (C1-P1, 21:49) can lead to ineffective policies and interventions that do not address the primary development needs of the country. Within the *operational sub-system*, '*socio-political influence[s] on evidence use*' (C1-P1, 53:11) can lead to failures that significantly frustrate the efficient and timely implementation of social programmes. These failures can cascade into the *evaluation sub-system* as '*competing interests and the demand for evidence*', C1-P1, 41:39), subsequently hindering officials' ability to generate the necessary evidence they need to improve policy processes.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: Since the challenges and constraints in this category are experienced directly, the *operational sub-system* of the NPS is most likely to be affected as these can impede operational efficiency and affect the time it takes to implement social interventions.

4.4.7 Category 7. Success & Positive Examples

This category captures factors critical in influencing the continuous use of evidence in policymaking. This is because these factors showcase successes and examples where the use of evidence triggered successful policy outcomes and, more importantly, positive social impacts, '*highlights the positive outcomes of evidence-based programme development,*' (C1-P2, 27:02). It includes examples of evidence-

based programme development, policy design '*discusses the role of evidence in policy design and impact analysis*,' (C1-P1, 1:06:27), and the successful implementation that addressed social challenges effectively '*shows how evidence-based policy design and testing can improve implementation*,' (C2-P1, 09:46).

The *Social Cluster* plays an essential role in the delivery of the Bill of Rights. This means the ability to use evidence to demonstrate that interventions designed and implemented using evidence were successful can go a long way in providing blueprints to departments in the cluster. When '*evidence-based programme development [generates] positive social outcomes*' (C1-P2, 27:02), it demonstrates the value of using empirical data to guide policy decisions in a way that can inspire more evidence use.

In the *strategic subsystem*, '*evidence-based policy design and impact analysis*' (C1-P1, 1:06:27) is a key factor needed to help identify which interventions will achieve the intended goals and set the correct targets for monitoring and evaluation. '*Evidence-informed policy design and testing*' (C2-P1, 09:46) is crucial in the *operational subsystem* as it leads to the optimal use of resources needed for efficient implementation and the effective delivery of programmes. From an *evaluation subsystem* perspective, success stories and positive examples are essential as they give officials feedback and insights into what works and why, which is essential for the much-needed refinement and adjustments of current and future policies '*research evidence informing national assessments*,' (C2-P1, 1:08:50).

The most affected part of the National Policy System: The importance of success stories and positive examples of evidence-based policymaking are greatly needed in the evaluation subsystem. These can go a long way in restoring faith in officials who currently feel disillusioned by the non-use of evidence '*disillusionment due to not aligning with evidence-based priorities*,' (C1-P1, 21:49). As such, this is also the subsystem that is most influenced by this evidence dimension as its outputs in the form of success stories provide strategic and operational evidence on successful interventions and their impacts that will serve as essential flows of knowledge in the other two subsystems.

4.4.8 Category 8. Stakeholder Engagement and Influence

The factors that constitute this category highlight the significant role of stakeholder engagement and influence in the use of evidence. This speaks to participatory processes that recruit diverse stakeholders '*highlights the importance of involving diverse stakeholders*', (C1-P1, 41:39) in the process of policy development, consultation and the eventual use of evidence '*discusses the importance of consultation in evidence-based policymaking*', (C1-P1, 43:49). It '*emphasises engaging with communities for effective policy implementation*' (C1-P1, 53:11), which has the result of making policies and interventions more inclusive in a way that reflects the views, aspirations and needs of different beneficiaries.

Engaging stakeholders in the Social Cluster represents a participatory approach that can positively impact social programmes and policies implemented with inputs from the people directly affected by interventions' outcomes. The significance of this is that it leads to the greater acceptance of interventions, which can reinforce successful implementation. This means '*involving diverse stakeholders in policy development*' (C1-P1, 41:39) can significantly enhance the Social Cluster's relevance, effectiveness and impact.

Engaging stakeholders in the Social Cluster ensures that social policies are designed and implemented with input from those directly affected. This can lead to more effective and accepted interventions. For example, involving diverse stakeholders in policy development can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of social programs '*involving diverse stakeholders in policy development*', (C1-P1, 41:39).

In the *strategic subsystem*, the '*importance of consultation in evidence-based policymaking*' (C1-P1, 43:49) contributes to identifying the main development strategies and priorities, thereby ensuring that social policies and interventions will be designed to incorporate the lived experiences of the people affected. In the *operational subsystem*. '*Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use*', (C1-P1, 53:11) ensures that social programmes are deployed more efficiently, timelier, and in the right quantity to meet the needs of beneficiaries. '*Stakeholder negotiation and consensus-building in policy development*' (C2-P2, 1:02:10) serves as a vital feedback mechanism in the *evaluation subsystem*. This

feedback will enable officials to get insights into the effectiveness of social policies and identify areas in which improvements are needed.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: Stakeholder negotiation and consensus-building play an essential role in allowing officials to identify development priorities and needs, which means that this category of evidence use will have the most influence on the *strategic subsystem*.

4.4.9 Category 9. Evidence as a Tool for Improvement

The factors in this category play a crucial role in allowing public officials to use the evidence generated from evaluation to track progress and identify areas for improvement '*highlights the use of evidence for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement*', (C1-P2, 07:05). This contributes to the on-going strategic learning and refinement of both the design and implementation of policies and interventions '*discusses the potential for evidence-based strategy development*,' (C1-P1, 21:49). Using evidence as a tool for improvement means that the factors in this dimension also play an important role in the demonstrating the nature of programme outcomes in a way that allows for improvement of future policy designs '*explores using evidence to demonstrate impact and drive improvement*,' (C2-P2, 32:41).

To strengthen the social programmes in the *Social Cluster*, evidence can be used as a tool for tailoring social programmes so that they better meet the needs of the targeted groups. This means there is the '*potential for evidence-based strategy development to address social problems*,' (C1-P1, 21:49) in a way that plays a significant role in developing more effective approaches to addressing social challenges.

Each time '*evidence [is used] as a tool for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement*' (C1-P2, 07:05), it plays a strategic role. This means evidence can be used to formulate interventions that are likely to be effective at addressing issues that evaluation would reveal as not working in the *strategic subsystem*. As a tool, evidence can be '*us[ed] ... to demonstrate impact*,' (C2-P2, 32:41), and this continuous use of evidence during the implementation stages of social programmes in the *operational subsystems* ensures that interventions are executed more efficiently and effectively, with appropriate modifications made based on empirical data. In this category, impact

evaluations become an essential policy tool that is used to assess the ultimate results of policy in the *evaluation subsystem 'evaluation for assessing policy impact'*, (C3-P1, 02:46). Thus, evidence as a tool offers a variety of tactical insights into the success of policies and actionable insights into improving implementation processes and thus reducing the chance of failure.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: The *evaluation subsystem* gains the most from the focus on evidence tools since it relies on evidence to generate knowledge on the effectiveness of policy decision-making and how to optimise and modify processes to achieve that effectiveness.

4.4.10 Category 10. Training & Awareness

The factors in this category are essential in facilitating evidence use in policymaking. The open codes that constitute this category highlight the empowering role of increased training and awareness campaigns *'discusses the importance of continuous awareness campaigns'*, (C4-P1, 32:08) as necessary interventions in reducing barriers that prevent mainstreaming evidence-based policymaking and monitoring and evaluation *'emphasises the need for training and awareness on M&E,'* (C3-P1, 34:59). This category also places significant importance on people having the right skills to conduct evaluations effectively, empowering them in their roles.

This category influences evidence use due to the importance of training and awareness initiatives in the *Social Cluster* in building institutional capacity that supports the mainstreaming of evidence use. This ensures that knowledgeable and skilled officials design and implement social programmes. This means the *'need for increased awareness of evidence sources'*, (C1-P1, 51:48) can significantly enhance the quality of policy decisions in the Social Cluster, providing reassurance about the effectiveness of these interventions.

The impact of training and enhanced awareness of evidence use permeates throughout the National Policy System *'continuous reinforcement of awareness campaigns'*, (C4-P1, 32:08). These two interventions enlighten policymakers in the *strategic subsystem* about the importance of evidence and how to use it effectively in designing interventions, thereby enhancing their understanding and use of evidence.

Ensuring that staff have the right evaluation skills leads to more effective implementation and monitoring of policies in the *operational subsystem*. This demonstrates the *'importance of having the right skills in evaluation'* (C4-P1, 32:39). The *'need for training and awareness on M&E'* (C3-P1, 34:59) plays out in the *evaluation subsystem*, where training on M&E processes improves the ability to generate and use evidence to assess policy effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

The most directly impacted part of the National Policy: The *operational subsystem*, which benefits significantly from training and awareness initiatives. These initiatives enhance officials' knowledge and technical ability, directly improving the implementation and monitoring of policies.

4.4.11 Category 11. Accountability & Transparency

Accountability and transparency, as key pillars that empower policymakers and highlight their crucial role in the policy system. This empowerment is facilitated by various factors, such as legal requirements for evidence use *'discusses legal requirements for evidence use'*, (C2-P2, 32:41), management recognition *'highlights management recognition of the importance of evaluation'* (C4-P1, 17:36), and communication with stakeholders *'explores the importance of transparency and communication'*, (C2-P2, 20:59).

'Management recognition of the importance of evaluation', (C4-P1, 17:36) not only drives the consistent use of evidence in social programmes in the *Social Cluster* but also ensures that social policies are implemented with the utmost integrity and in alignment with evidence, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence.

In the National Policy System, *'legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking'* (C2-P2, 32:41) are not just a requirement but the cornerstone of policy design. They ensure that policies in the *strategic sub-system* are based on empirical data and justified reasons, thereby emphasising the significant impact of evidence-based policy design. The *operational subsystem* of the NPS is governed by several accountability mechanisms, such as regular audits and performance reviews, which ensure that resources are used wisely and programmes are implemented in a manner consistent

with the plans in place *'evidence as a requirement for report sign-off,'* (C1-P2, 12:40). As part of the dissemination efforts within the *evaluation subsystem*, transparency and communication play a pivotal role. They are not just essential elements but the backbone, ensuring the evaluation results are shared with the stakeholders and used as part of the dissemination efforts to inform policy adjustments, making them feel included and informed.

The most affected part of the National Policy Systems: The *strategic subsystem*, which is responsible for the formulation and design of policies, is most impacted because this subsystem relies on accountability and transparency to ensure that policy designs are justified and are based on reliable evidence, sources and data.

4.4.12 Category 12. Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use

With its foundational role in evidence generation, this category empowers policymakers and government officials by creating frameworks around the subsequent use of evidence. It includes mechanisms and guidelines provided by institutions like the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) to promote a culture of evidence use within the government *'highlights the role of DPME in promoting evidence use,'* (C2-P1, 12:13). Some of the factors that it covers have a direct impact on the process and procedures used in strategic planning, performance agreements, and legal requirements for evidence use *'discusses strategic planning workshops for policy assessment,'* (C2-P2, 54:59).

The mechanisms designed to enhance evidence use play a vital role in making sure that social policies are continually improved based on empirical data and best practices. For instance, the *'role of DPME in promoting a culture of evidence use within the [Social Cluster]'* (C2-P1, 12:13) is instrumental in the development of social programmes that are systematically evaluated and adapted, leading to measurable improvements in the lives of beneficiaries.

'Strategic planning workshops for policy assessment and reflection' (C2-P2, 54:59) will help design interventions that succeed and effectively address identified issues in the strategic subsystem. The importance of *'evidence-driven high-level decision-making processes and performance agreements'* (C2-P2, 32:41), together with action

research papers, is paramount in ensuring that programmes are implemented efficiently and effectively in the operational subsystem. The '*National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans*' (C2-P2, 32:41) equip the evaluation subsystem with a framework for systematically assessing policy effectiveness and making the necessary adjustments to evidence generation and use practices, providing reassurance about the system's effectiveness.

The most affected part of the National Policy System: The evaluation subsystem plays a crucial role in this category of evidence. This category is used to strengthen evidence utilisation and ensure that policies are continuously evaluated and improved based on empirical data and best practices. This underlines the significance of the factors under this category in policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

This section has given a comprehensive description of the main categories that subsume the factors that influence the use of evaluation evidence in the national policy system. The descriptions offered give a broad definition of evidence use grounded in the lives and experiences of the officials working in the South African public sector.

4.5 COMPARISON WITH THEORY-BASED AND USE-BASED FACTORS INFLUENCING EVIDENCE USE

In Chapter 2, Section 2.11 comparative analysis of theory-based and use-based factors that influence evidence use was done. This section revisits those factors to assess the extent to which they align with and differ from those that have emerged from the previous section's analysis. The factors influencing evidence use under evaluation use theories were grouped under four broad themes that align with some of the categories developed in this study. These themes, which included *Stakeholder Engagement & Ownership*, are closely aligned with *Category 8: Stakeholder Engagement & Influence*. This alignment underscores the robustness of the categories developed in this study, as they correspond critical themes in the field of evidence use. *Methodological Rigour & Quality* emerged as a key theme related to *Category 1: Importance and Role of Evaluation*. Rigour and quality are fundamental aspects of the evaluation process that influence the credibility of evidence and, hence, have a bearing on whether evidence is used or not. *Contextual Relevance &*

Applicability as an evidence-use theory theme aligns with *Category 4: Political and Cultural Influences*; this is because of the profound intertwining role of contextual relevance and applicability with contexts strongly influenced by political and cultural dynamics. The fourth theme was *Dissemination and Accumulation of Knowledge*, which is strongly linked to *Category 12: Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use* because it addresses the structures and processes that facilitate the systematic use of evidence in policymaking, including the dissemination and accumulation of knowledge.

Concerning the factors identified under the types of evidence use, these included *Capacity & Resource Constraints*, and because they explicitly address the various challenges and constraints that impede the use of evidence, the theme is strongly aligned with *Category 6: Challenges and Constraints*. Another theme was the *Political & Institutional Context*, which emerged as important across the different types of uses discussed. This theme directly aligns with *Category 4: Political and Cultural Influences* as it informs how these factors influence the use of evidence; however, Category 4 broadens these to various factors as shown by the open codes that constitute it, such as *political will*, *power dynamics* and *institutional culture*. *Credibility & Quality of Evaluation Evidence* were common themes linked to *Methodological Rigour & Quality*, which, in turn, aligned with *Category 1: Importance and Role of Evaluation*. The fourth theme was *Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration*, which again has emerged as a cross-cutting theme aligned to *Stakeholder Engagement & Ownership* and *Category 8. Stakeholder Engagement & Influence*.

Focusing on the direct alignment between these categories that emerged from the Grounded Theory reveals that the study was able to identify key categories that overlap with both the evidence theories and the factors that emerged from the different theories. In addition, the study found seven themes in the following categories constituted by more factors that influence the use of evidence. These include Categories 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11. This means the Grounded Theory analysis produced a comprehensive set of factors that not only subsume those identified in Chapter 2 but add to them in a way that should serve as the basis for the development of a rich, Grounded Theory and comprehensive framework that allows a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diverse factors that influence the use of

evidence, thereby providing valuable insights for evidence-based policymaking and evaluation.

4.6 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEMES

Table 4.6 presents the 12 evidence-use categories and their implications for the three subsystems derived from the analysis in the previous section. Chapter 4 introduced the NPS as a mechanistic system, a novel and significant conceptualisation that prioritises the factors enhancing the use of evaluation evidence in decision-making across all three subsystems. This unique understanding of the NPS provides a relatively effective means of understanding the processes and relationships involved in using evidence in these three domains, thereby contributing to a novel and significant understanding of evidence use in policymaking.

Using this matrix, we can understand how enhancing the use of evaluation evidence within the NPS can be achieved by taking a systems approach. The advantage of capturing the NPS as a system in this form is that it represents a design that shows us how to integrate evidence into decision-making processes across government strategic, operational and evaluation functions.

The evidence use categories and corresponding examples in the form of open codes that are based on the perspectives and experiences of the officials who participated in the study highlight the different factors that influence the flow and utilisation of evidence in a way that provides a structured tool for improving evidence use in the public sector.

4.6.1 The mechanistic system evidence-use matrix

In the *mechanistic system evidence use matrix*, each cell represents a critical factor and its influence on evidence flows. It does this by identifying *barriers* and *enablers* of evidence use, *barriers* such as 'evidence as an impediment' (C1-P1, 31:28) or 'concern over lack of evidence use at high levels' (C1-P1, 18:58) and *enablers* like 'diverse stakeholder engagement with evidence' (C3-P1, 18:09) and 'the role of DPME in promoting evidence use' (C4-P1, 32:39).

Table 4.6: Mechanistic system evidence use matrix

Category	Strategic Subsystem	Operational/Implementation Subsystem	Evaluation Subsystem
1. Importance and Role of Evaluation	Code Example: 'Assessing policy outcomes through evaluation (C4-P1, 35:28)' can identify areas for improvement as well as successful strategies.	Code Example: 'Pilot programmes and evaluations for wider-scale implementation (C2-P1, 09:46)' support operational expansion.	Code Example: 'Importance of evaluating impact (C1-P1, 17:10)' offers insights into strategic and operational impacts.
2. Evidence Use in Policymaking	Code Example: 'Evidence-driven policy success (C1-P1, 39:29)' explains how evidence-based policies help plan strategic initiatives.	Code Example: 'Evidence as an ongoing influence in policymaking (C2-P1, 09:46)' ensures evidence informs operational/implementation practices.	Code Example: 'Evidence informing government priorities (C4-P1, 36:26)' uses evaluation evidence to set priorities.
3. Barriers to Evidence Use	Code Example: 'Limited understanding of evidence use in policy stages (C1-P1, 14:52)' impacts the formulation of strategic objectives.	Code Example: 'Feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation (C4-P1, 12:03)' impacts operational efficiency and adoption of evidence.	Code Example: 'Assumptions over evidence (C1-P1, 17:10)' hinder effective evaluation processes in evidence generation.
4. Political and Cultural Influences	Code Example: 'Political will as a key enabler of evidence use (C1-P1, 45:24)' shows how political support is crucial for strategic evidence use.	Code Example: 'Political sensitivity of evidence (C2-P1, 14:59)' affects operational evidence application.	Code Example: 'Political will and evidence-based policy implementation (C3-P1, 23:03)' highlights the need for political support in evaluations.
5. Evidence Generation and Capacity	Code Example: 'Developing and publishing a research agenda (C2-P1, 53:48)' supports the strategic identification of research priorities.	Code Example: 'Limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use (C1-P1, 36:44)' highlights the need for operational capacity building.	Code Example: 'StatsSA data as potential evidence (C1-P1, 18:58)' supports the capacity for robust evaluations.
6. Challenges and Constraints	Code Example: 'Limited progress despite some positive examples (C1-P1, 26:42)' highlights ongoing strategic challenges.	Code Example: 'Financial and political pressures hindering evidence use (C2-P1, 12:13)' show operational challenges in evidence application.	Code Example: 'Reliance on anecdotal evidence and 'thumb-sucking' (C1-P1, 21:49)' highlights the challenge of insufficient evidence reliance.

Category	Strategic Subsystem	Operational/Implementation Subsystem	Evaluation Subsystem
7. Success and Positive Examples	Code Example: <i>'Evidence-based programme development positive social outcomes (C1-P2, 27:02)'</i> illustrates successful strategic initiatives.	Code Example: <i>'Evidence-based policy design and impact analysis (C1-P1, 1:06:27)'</i> offers operational insights.	Code Example: <i>'Research evidence informing national assessments (C2-P1, 1:08:50)'</i> shows successful evaluation practices.
8. Stakeholder Engagement and Influence	Code Example: <i>'Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development (C1-P1, 41:39)'</i> highlights the importance of inclusive strategic planning.	Code Example: <i>'Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use (C1-P1, 53:11)'</i> highlights stakeholder engagement in operations.	Code Example: <i>'Stakeholder negotiation and consensus-building in policy development (C2-P2, 1:02:10)'</i> ensures inclusive evaluation practices.
9. Evidence as a Tool for Improvement	Code Example: <i>'Using evidence to demonstrate impact (C2-P2, 32:41)'</i> shows how evidence guides strategic adjustments.	Code Example: <i>'Promoting a holistic approach to evidence use (C1-P1, 21:49)'</i> supports ongoing operational improvements.	Code Example: <i>'Evaluation for assessing policy impact (C3-P1, 02:46)'</i> supports continuous improvement efforts.
10. Training and Awareness	Code Example: <i>'Need for increased awareness of evidence sources (C1-P1, 51:48)'</i> supports strategic training initiatives.	Code Example: <i>'Need for training and awareness on M&E (C3-P1, 34:59)'</i> emphasises operational training needs.	Code Example: <i>'Continuous reinforcement of awareness campaigns (C4-P1, 32:08)'</i> builds evaluation capacity.
11. Accountability and Transparency	Code Example: <i>'Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking (C2-P2, 32:41)'</i> highlights the role of legal frameworks in strategic accountability.	Code Example: <i>'Evidence as a requirement for report sign-off (C1-P2, 12:40)'</i> ensures operational accountability.	Code Example: <i>'Accountability mechanisms promote evidence use (C1-P2, 07:05)'</i> ensure transparency in evaluations.
12. Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use	Code Example: <i>'Role of DPME in promoting evidence use (C4-P1, 32:39)'</i> illustrates the strategic importance of institutional mechanisms.	Code Example: <i>'DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports (C2-P1, 57:25)'</i> guide operational practices.	Code Example: <i>'National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans (C2-P2, 32:41)'</i> guide comprehensive evaluation efforts contributing to strong mechanisms for systematic evaluation practices.

Source: Author

Highlighting enablers and barriers means that the matrix enhances policymakers' and practitioners' understanding of the dynamics at play in different contexts. The matrix also promotes strategic planning and implementation. It does this by showing how examples from the *strategic subsystem*, across all 12 evidence-use dimensions, inform high-level decision-making and, in a similar vein, how examples from the *operational/implementation subsystem* allow implementers to understand how evidence is applied in practical settings. This tandem between *strategic and operational subsystems* ensures that evidence plays the dual role of informing policy formulation and implementation.

The examples from the *evaluation subsystem* serve an instrumental purpose in a mechanistic way. They highlight the importance of ongoing policy and programme assessment and refinement. This creates an ongoing feedback loop that ensures that policies remain effective and responsive to the changing needs and circumstances, allowing them to address the unmet developmental needs of post-apartheid South Africa.

Given the preceding, the matrix Table 4.6 can be viewed as the manifestation of a mechanistic evidence use matrix that responds to one of the central aims of this study, which is to understand the factors that influence the flow of evidence, that is, the use of evidence into the NPS's sites of use which in this case are represented by the cells of the matrix. The matrix addresses this aim by mapping evidence flows wherein each cell representing a specific interaction between a dimension of evidence and a subsystem. These interactions thus provide a detailed map of how evidence flows through the different parts of the policy system. Table 4.7 shows an example of this interaction between the evidence use vital factor in *Category 4, Political and Cultural Influences*, which, are vital factors influencing evidence in the three subsystems.

4.6.2 Interactions within Category 4 and influences from Category 12

Using the open codes, we can see that at a *strategic level*, *political will can act as an enabler of evidence use* by supporting use in decision-making; however, if *political will demonstrates sensitivity to evidence use*, this will affect the operational use of evidence which has the potential to hinder implementation. The need to avoid this is

supported by the call from the *evaluation subsystem* that points out the importance of political will in support of evidence-based policy implementation, highlighting the *need for political support in evaluation*.

It is important to note that the flows are not unidirectional. This is more so in an environment with poor institutionalisation of evidence. This means that officials involved in generating evidence could start by appealing to their political principals to prioritise the use of evidence, from the *evaluation subsystem* to the *strategic system*. This, in turn, could activate political will in the strategic subsystem to become a key enabler of evidence in a way that would reduce the political sensitivity of evidence, positively impacting the *operational subsystem*.

The truncated Table 4.7 makes it easy to see how interactions with evidence-use categories influence the interactions in Category 4. The appeal for evidence use from political principals by officials in the evaluation system will be guided by the mechanisms to strengthen evidence use in Category 12, such as establishing clear guidelines for evidence use and providing training on evidence-based decision-making. This will happen by drawing on DPME's role in promoting evaluations by providing guidelines and frameworks as reflected in the code, '*DPME role in promoting a culture of evidence use within government*' (C2-P1, 12:13) and as shown in the cell where Category 12 intersects with the strategic subsystem.

Table 4.7: Example of interactions of the three subsystems and Category 4: Political & Cultural Influences

Category	Strategic Subsystem	Operational Subsystem	Evaluation Subsystem
:	↔	:	↔
4. Political and Cultural Influences	Code Example: ' <i>Political will as a key enabler of evidence use (C1-P1, 45:24)</i> ' shows how political support is crucial for strategic evidence use.	Code Example: ' <i>Political sensitivity of evidence (C2-P1, 14:59)</i> ' affects operational evidence application.	Code Example: ' <i>Political will and evidence-based policy implementation (C3-P1, 23:03)</i> ' highlights the need for political support in evaluations.
:	↕	↕	↕
12. Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use	Code Example: ' <i>Role of DPME in promoting evidence use (C4-P1, 32:39)</i> ' illustrates the strategic importance of institutional mechanisms.	Code Example: ' <i>DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports (C2-P1, 57:25)</i> ' guide operational practices.	Code Example: ' <i>National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans (C2-P2, 32:41)</i> ' guide comprehensive evaluation efforts contributing to strong mechanisms for systematic evaluation practices.

Source: Author

4.6.3 Responding to the social accountability root of evaluation theory

In Chapter 1, it was argued that this study's focus on the social accountability root of evaluation theory arose from the fact that using evidence in policymaking was a complicated, multifaceted process involving a range of actors and stakeholders interacting within specific contexts. Furthermore, it was noted that King and Alkin (2019) had identified a gap in the social accountability root of evaluation use theory. This gap highlighted the need for context-sensitive use theories to be developed. The matrix, by highlighting the interactions that happen at the intersection of evidence and the three subsystems, not only reveals the multifaceted nature of evidence use through the 12 evidence use categories but also how the multi-actor and stakeholder interactions inherent in policymaking occurs in the cells as the sites or specific contexts of evidence use. In this regard, the subsystem evidence use matrix contributes to a better understanding of the nature of these interactions, thereby reducing the level of complexity in understanding evidence use in policymaking. Furthermore, its grounding in the lived experiences of South African public officials offers context-specific insights that can aid in closing the gap identified by King and Alkin (2019) regarding context-specific use theories.

The matrix plays a crucial role in addressing the implementation failures implicit in this study's problem context. By categorising evidence use factors and highlighting critical elements that affect evidence use, such as political influence, capacity, and stakeholder engagement, helps policymakers identify where interventions are most needed. The use of practical examples for each category and subsystem, grounded in the lived experiences of public officials, illustrates real-world applications of evidence, offering practical insights into how evidence can be effectively used.

4.7 THE CORE THEME AND FOUNDATIONS OF THEORY BUILDING

Political and cultural influences (Category 4) significantly influence the adoption and integration of evidence in policymaking to the extent that without political support, most strategies to promote evidence use are likely to fail. Cultural attitudes are strongly influenced by 'political will and support' these, which, in turn, help inform public official

attitudes towards how they use evidence and conduct evaluations. This plays a crucial role in determining how evidence is generally perceived and utilised, and which can lead to successful evidence-based policymaking. Evidence-based mainstreaming interventions can face cultural resistance due to the political dimension impacting culture. This will likely breed scepticism towards evidence use and significantly impede the effectiveness of evidence-based policies. *'Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use'* (C1-P1, 19:50) (Category 3) gives us an example, from the data, of how cultural resistance and political interests can obstruct evidence-based decision-making.

The role of other attributes of *Political and Cultural Influence*, such as *'political will and support'* and *'political resistance to evidence,'* influence outcomes in the other 11 categories and show how interconnected these evidence-use themes are. This means that political and cultural influences (Category 4) serve as a foundational galvanising factor that directly influences all other categories, and it is this pervasiveness and interconnectedness motivates its selection as the Grounded Theory's core category. The coding paradigm and theoretical narrative will be constructed with *Political and Cultural Influences* as the central organising grounded theory construct.

4.8 EVALUATING THE LEVEL OF VARIATION ACROSS CASES FOR GROUNDED THEORY BUILDING

Before presenting the coding paradigm and theoretical narrative; it is essential to conduct a cross-case comparison. The rationale of this comparison is to assess the extent to which the data collected from the four cases can serve as the basis for developing the grounded theory. The cross-case comparison will be made across five key factors that have a strong bearing on theory building. The first aspect is the extent to which the cases provide a sufficiently comprehensive representation of the evidence use contexts and dynamics within the cases, which is important for giving a holistic understanding of the phenomena of evidence use in this study (George & Bennett 2005:13; Bhatta 2018:74). The second is the extent to which the cases facilitate the identification of the core factors influencing evidence use together with the more context-specific peripheral factors (Yin 2014:56-57). The two evidence-use factors, core and peripheral, are important in separating universal and context-specific

factors. Third is the extent to which enough differences in how evidence is used to identify barriers and enablers, which are crucial to building the evidence utilisation framework (Yin 2014:56-57). Fourth is the extent to which the variation across cases broadens the emerging evidence-use grounded theory's scope of enquiry (Yin 2014:56-57). In the case of this study, this scope of enquiry is defined by the three components of the national policy system where evidence is used, as discussed in the previous chapter: strategic, operational, and evaluative sub-systems, which represent key dimensions of the policy process. Fifth is the often-cited outcome of grounded theory, which is the extent to which the variation across cases will allow for ongoing theoretical refinement and validation of the emergent use theory (Yin 2014:56-57).

4.8.1 Comprehensive representation of the contexts and dynamics

The comprehensive representation of the context in which evidence is used and the dynamics around its use in the four cases, as revealed by grounded theory, is important. The more cases we investigate, the more our understanding of how evidence use manifests itself across and within cases is enhanced (George and Bennett 2005:13; Bhatta 2018:74). This comprehensive understanding allows us to see how the factors that influence evidence use in different contexts and conditions make it easier to identify patterns of use and the factors that occur across all four cases and those that are unique to each. This comprehensive understanding allows for developing an evidence-use theory that is reasonably robust to contextual variation and helps us understand how different evidence-use factors apply to different settings in the NPS (Yin 2014:56-57). An assessment of the codes from the four cases reveals that the officials in this study come from diverse evidence utilisation contexts with different dynamics that influence the use of evaluation evidence. It was clear from the interviews and codes that cases **C2** and **C3** demonstrate relatively high institutionalisation of evaluation practices compared to **C1** and **C4**, which show the presence of barriers and constraints to evidence use. The institutionalisation of evidence-use practices refers to the level of integration of evidence into an organisation's routine operations and decision-making processes. For example, the variation in **C3** reflected by the code *'mainstreaming evaluations into policy process'* (C3-P1, 28:46) contrasts with **C4's** *'feeling stuck in promoting evidence generation through evaluation'* (C4-P1, 12:03). These two extremes are indicative of different

stages of institutionalisation of evidence use practices in the case of **C3** and the challenges faced in **C4**. These divergent views provide comprehensive variation that allows for theory development.

4.8.2 Identification of core and peripheral factors

Of importance to this study is how all four cases identified *Political Will and Cultural Influence* as a core category that is important to the use of evidence across the board. However, categories related to capacity constraints and stakeholder engagement varied from case to case and, as such, denoted the peripheral evidence use factors. The significance of this outcome is that it allows for a theory that accounts for essential cross-cutting use factors while being flexible enough to allow for contextual adaptability (Yin 2014:56-57). This is evidenced by the presence of quotations like *"I've been in this space for too long, and I see this non-usage of evidence. It goes beyond officials in the department to management; senior management and the political people don't use evidence."* (C1-P1, 18:58), *"You know, if there's financial pressure or political instruction, it's difficult to put those aside in favour of a robust engagement of evidence."* (C2-P1, 12:13), *"So the challenge we have, especially when you have a change of administration, is that you might have different political principles with different areas of focus or emphasis."* (C3-P1, 07:23) and *"Maybe because of some reasons, political reasons, but it was not thoroughly investigated, in that case, we need to just take it and run with the request."* (C4-P1, 10:35). On the other hand, codes such as *'limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use'* (C1-P1, 36:44) and *'developing and publishing a research agenda'* (C2-P1, 53:48) highlight varying capacity issues as the peripheral factors influencing evidence use in these two cases.

4.8.3 Understanding barriers and enablers

Consistent with the assessment that **C1** and **C4** showed lower levels of evidence use institutionalisation, these two cases also showed significant barriers to resistance and the need for a more general understanding of the importance of evidence use among those outside the research and evaluation units. This contrasts with **C2** and **C3**, which had several enablers around factors such as early planning in the use of evidence and the ability to use evidence as per DPME guidelines. This balanced treatment of both

barriers and enablers, that is, contrasting results, allows for a comprehensive theory in its treatment of the factors that hinder and those that promote evidence use (Yin 2014). This dual perspective of barriers and enablers across diverse cases facilitates the development of evidence-use strategies that can unhinge the obstacles whilst potentiating the enabling conditions, which is critical for developing the evidence-use framework. Specifically, regarding the four cases, the contrast between enablers and barriers can be seen in the following codes, '*comfort in non-evidence-based policymaking*' (C1-P1, 15:24) and '*policy development without evidence*' (C1-P1, 16:01) in C1 contrast with '*early planning for evaluation*' (C2-P1, 43:10) and '*mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes*' (C3-P1, 28:46) in C2 and C3.

4.8.4 Broadening the scope of enquiry

The scope of enquiry of this study is represented by three distinct yet interrelated aspects of the policy system, which contain the various sites of evidence use. It is evident from the data collected that whilst the conceptualisation of the policy process into strategic, operational and evaluative might be instrumental to the study at hand, its applicability appears to resonate with the experiences of officials in the four cases. This resonance is seen in the role that political influence, the core category, has on the way evidence is used, which is sometimes motivated by strategic political imperatives (strategic sub-system) and the challenges it presents for those charged with the responsibilities, that is, the participants of this study, of conducting evaluations (evaluative sub-system). This, in turn, impacts how related interventions driven by their counterparts in the programmes responsible for implementation (operational sub-system) in each department are evaluated. This means attitudes towards evidence at the strategic level are not only overwhelming barriers to use as captured by, "*...Unfortunately, or fortunately, the hierarchy tends to be the deciding factor so that you can have your view, but if people higher than you believe a certain way, then that's what goes.*" (C3-P1, 30:51), they also impact on the subsequent use of evidence in implementation and evaluation. They can lead to the following observation, "*But I see comfort in those who are responsible, not using evidence. When they come up with policies, I don't know why.*" (C1-P1, 15:24). These considerations mean that the developed theory needs to account for this broad scope of issues relevant to each of these three aspects of the policy process, making the theory comprehensive and

holistic and enhancing its utility and applicability across different policy stages and processes (Yin 2014). The variation across cases allows this broadening of the theory's scope of enquiry as evidenced by the open codes *'evidence as a requirement for report sign-off'* (C1-P2, 12:40), which is related to accountability in the operational sub-system (Bhatta 2018). In contrast, *'strategic planning workshops for policy assessment and reflection'* (C2-P2, 54:59) relate to the strategic sub-system.

4.8.5 Theory refinement and validation

As mentioned above, once the grounded theory has been proposed, cross-case variation is critical in facilitating the ongoing theory refinement and validation process (Bhatta 2018:75). Case variation does this by exploiting the differences and similarities in the factors that influence evidence use across cases, allowing for continuous refinement and validation of the emerging theory. The variation provides the basis for testing and validating all emergent theoretical constructs in different contexts in a way that ensures that they are robust to changes in context-specific factors (Yin 2014). This supports the iterative nature of grounded theory, which role is vital in strengthening the validity and reliability of the emergent evidence use theory. Taking the central theme of political and cultural influence, testing the construct *'political will'* in different cases can proceed by contrasting *'political will and commitment to transparency'* (C2-P2, 23:59) in C2 relative to *'political will and evidence-based policy implementation'* (C3-P1, 23:03) in C3. This testing and contrasting done iteratively can ensure that the theory remains robust across varied political environments (Bhatta 2018).

With this outcome of the cross-case assessment, the coding paradigm and the theoretical narrative can now be presented as the basis of the study's evidence use Grounded Theory.

4.9 CODING PARADIGM FOR EVIDENCE USE

The previous section showed that the variation across cases in this study serves as a reasonable basis for developing a Grounded Theory on evidence use. This section presents Corbin & Strauss's Coding Paradigm. This structured framework is used to systematically analyse codes and categories to determine the links between them

(Corbin & Strauss 2015) as the basis for developing the study's Grounded Theory. The paradigm brings together all the elements of the Grounded Theory analysis thus far. This includes the output of the open, axial, and selective coding. It was used to examine the relationships within each paradigm component in a way that serves as the foundation for theory development (Vollstedt & Rezat 2019). Implicit in the paradigm are the causal links that will serve as the basis for articulating a causal theory of evidence use. The use of the coding paradigm and the theory that emerges is consistent with Corbin and Strauss's (2014:80) definition of theory, which they define as "*a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically developed in terms of their properties and dimensions and interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains something about a phenomenon.*" It is crucial to understand that the development of the coding paradigm is an iterative process; it begins with the initial coding and continues with the theory development and subsequent framework building, ensuring flexibility and adaptability to the data analysis processes.

4.9.1 Elements of the coding paradigm

The paradigm has four components: the **context**, which encompasses the broad setting in the public sector where evidence is used with factors such as *resource availability* and *institutional frameworks* (See Table 4.9: Evidence use coding paradigm: Contextual factors, below). The latter creates the **conditions** that not only interact with the context but also create the circumstances that set the stage for evidence use to occur, and they comprise *regulatory and policy frameworks* and *cultural acceptance of evidence* (See Table 4.10: Evidence use coding paradigm: Conditional factors, below). This leads to the third component of the paradigm, **strategies**, such as *engaging stakeholders* and *building political will and advocacy*; these represent how officials respond to the context and conditions in which evidence is being used (See Table 4.11: Evidence use coding paradigm: Strategic factors, below). These strategies lead to specific outcomes or results of the strategies officials employ. These outcomes include *enhanced political commitment to evidence-based policymaking* and *improved accountability and transparency in policymaking*, which are referred to as **consequences** in the paradigm and can be positive, negative or

neutral (See Table 4.12: Evidence use coding paradigm: Consequential factors, below).

NB: Given the information-rich nature of the code paradigm and the need to ground the data in the analysis, Table 4.8 illustrates the notation that will be employed throughout the following presentation. Reading through the following exposition is easier if the notation is already known beforehand.

Table 4.8: Table of notation used in the analysis

#	Notation	Description	Example
1.	CTF1	Contextual Factor 1	<i>'Overlooking internally generated evidence' (C1-P1, 36:44)</i>
2.	COF1	Conditional Factor 1	<i>'Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking' (C2-P2, 32:41)</i>
3.	STF1	Strategic Factor 1	<i>'Political will as a catalyst for implementing evidence' (C3-P1, 21:00)</i>
4.	CQF1	Consequential Factor 1	<i>'Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use' (C1-P1, 53:11)</i>
5.	Category 4	Main Category	<i>Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)</i>
6.	SC6.2	Sub-category 6.2	<i>SC6.2 Socio-political influence on evidence use</i>
7.	(C1-P1, 36:44)	Participant Code & Transcript time Stamp*	<i>Case 1 Participant 1, 36 mins 44 secs in the transcript</i>

Source: Author *Given the initial line-by-line coding, including the transcript time stamp, made it easier to locate text from the original script during the iterative process of coding.

4.9.2 How the paradigm informs theory building

Grounded theory typically refers to a methodology that results in an emergent conceptual framework or theory Corbin and Strauss (2014). This theory is derived directly from the systematic and iterative process of data collection and analysis, rather than from existing literature or predefined hypotheses. It is presented as a narrative that emerges from the codes and categories identified during the inductive analysis of the data. The coding paradigm plays an instrumental role in facilitating the coherent and causal exposition of the grounded theory Corbin and Strauss (2014:147). The following example gives a practical illustration of how the paradigm informs theory and framework building.

The components of the paradigm form a causal sequence that allows us to examine the context in which evidence is used, such as the **Historical Context (Contextual**

Factor 1 [CTF1]). This context influences the conditions, such as **Political Will and Leadership Commitment (Conditional Factor 1 [COF1])** in public institutions, which in turn shape the strategies employed by public officials, such as efforts to **Building political will and advocacy (Strategic Factor 1 [STF1])** for evidence use practices. These strategies then lead to specific outcomes or results, referred to as consequences in the paradigm, such as **Enhanced political commitment to evidence-based policymaking (Consequential Factor 1 [CQF1])**. This practical application of the paradigm not only demonstrates its relevance and usefulness in theory development and evidence-based policymaking but also allows for active engagement with its key concepts.

This sequence can be elaborated as follows: We can start by observing that some evidence-based practices were inherited from South Africa's past (**CTF1**). These continue to influence the *Political Will and Leadership Commitment (COF1)* in using evidence in policymaking. With the potential of past practices used before the mainstreaming of evidence in recent years continuing, there is the possibility of variations in evidence-based practices. However, public officials who have the agency or the capacity to act in their institutions have the power to employ evidence-based strategies to *Build political will through advocacy (STF1)*. If successful, these strategies will *Enhance political commitment to evidence-based policymaking (CQF1)*, demonstrating the active role of public officials in shaping the consequences of evidence-based policymaking interventions.

In the following sections, all the elements of the Grounded Theory analysis are brought together. Using the Coding Paradigm (CP), a causal theory is proposed to explain the factors influencing the use of evidence within the South African National Policy System. As such, the theoretical narrative will capture **the Grounded Theory of political and cultural influences on the use of evaluation evidence in South Africa's National Policy System**. In presenting the theoretical narrative, the open codes will link the data to the categories that capture the characteristics of evidence use. The proposed theory is built around the core category of *Political and Cultural Influences* (Category 4). It is supported by the contextual factors, causal conditions, strategic factors, and consequential factors identified in the analysis. To accomplish the task of theory development, this section shows how each factor of the Coding

Paradigm has been incorporated into the theory. It is through weaving together these elements that we can understand the dynamics involved in the use of evaluation evidence in policymaking, specifically within the Social Cluster.

4.9.3 Evidence use coding paradigm: Contextual factors creating the causal conditions

Within the boundaries of this theory, South Africa's *Socio-Political Environment* (**Contextual Factor 1**) is seen as shaping the priorities and focus of policymaking. Several factors influence this environment, including political agendas and cultural norms; these determine the issues that receive attention at a strategic level and the type of evidence that policymakers consider relevant. This is illustrated by the '*socio-political environment's influence on policy focus*' (C3-P1, 09:33), which represents a *Barriers to Evidence Use (Category 3)*. Political agendas and cultural norms are then seen as exerting an influence on the capacity of institutions to generate, interpret, and apply evidence (**Contextual Factor 2**). When there is '*limited internal capacity for evidence generation and use*' (C1-P1, 36:44), there is the potential to hinder the effective integration of evaluation findings into decision-making. This creates *Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)*, further undermining the ability for *Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)*. This means there is a need for '*political will [to act] as a catalyst for implementing evidence*' (C3-P1, 21:00), which requires strong *Leadership and Governance* (**Contextual Factor 3**) structures that can prioritise *Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)*. These two factors are critical in fostering a culture of evidence-based policymaking that recognises the *Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)*.

Understanding the *importance and role of evaluation* for evidence generation also recognises the '*need for training and awareness on M&E*' (C3-P1, 34:59). *Awareness and Training* (**Contextual Factor 4**) programmes build the skills that are necessary for policymakers to effectively use evidence because without these interventions (*Training and Awareness, Category 10*) evidence will remain underutilised.

Table 4.9: Evidence use coding paradigm: Contextual factors

Context Factor	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
CTF1. Historical Context: Past political and cultural events, decisions, and influences play a role in shaping the policy landscape and perspectives on evidence use; these include governance methods, legacy concerns, and prior policy results that impact present-day evidence-informed policymaking. (Cloete & Thornhill 2012)	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Socio-political influence on evidence use" (C1-P1, 53:11)	Historical socio-political dynamics continue to influence current practices, where past experiences shape trust in evidence-based methods.
	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Overlooking internally generated evidence" (C1-P1, 36:44)	Historical undervaluation of local evidence sources impacts current practices, leading to a reliance on external or less relevant data.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use" (C1-P1, 19:50)	Historical political resistance to change and cultural norms affect the acceptance and integration of evidence into policy decisions.
CTF2. Socio-Political Environment: Political stability, governance styles, social movements, and power dynamics influence the context in which evidence is used. This also includes the impact of the current political climate, power dynamics, social challenges, and public expectations. (Cloete & Thornhill 2012)	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will as a key enabler of evidence use" (C1-P1, 45:24)	The socio-political environment influences political will, which is critical for evidence-based policymaking.
	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Evidence as an ongoing influence in policymaking" (C2-P1, 09:46)	Political stability and governance styles impact the continuous integration of evidence into policy processes.
	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	A robust socio-political environment with strong accountability mechanisms ensures that evidence is systematically used in policy decisions.
CTF3. Cultural Norms and Values: This is the shared beliefs, traditions, and practices that affect how evidence is viewed, valued, and utilised in South African society. Cultural factors determine how open people are to change, how trustworthy scientific methods are, and what types of knowledge should be prioritised. (Gasela 2022)	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political culture and evidence use" (C2-P2, 07:09)	Cultural norms shape political will and the extent to which evidence is considered in policy decisions.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use" (C1-P1, 19:50)	Cultural resistance to evidence can lead to funding decisions that do not prioritise evidence-based approaches.
	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use" (C1-P1, 53:11)	Cultural norms influence the inclusivity of stakeholder engagement processes, affecting the acceptance and use of evidence.
CTF4. Institutional Frameworks: Broadly speaking, institutional frameworks are the formal structures, policies, and regulations	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"DPME guidelines for assessing the social and economic impacts of proposed legislation" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Institutional frameworks provide guidelines that mandate the use of evidence, ensuring systematic evaluation practices.

Context Factor	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
that govern how evidence is generated, evaluated, and used in policymaking. They are the procedural and legal foundations that make evidence-based policymaking possible. (de Coning <i>et al.</i> 2018)	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Strong institutional frameworks establish accountability mechanisms that reinforce the use of evidence in policy decisions.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes" (C3-P1, 28:46)	Institutional frameworks that integrate evaluations into policy processes promote the routine use of evidence.
CTF5. Resource Availability: The financial, human, and technological resources necessary for conducting evaluations and implementing evidence-based policies. The adequacy of these resources affects the capacity to generate and use high-quality evidence. (C. Thornhill, G. van Dijk 2014)	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Frequency and accessibility of data promotes use" (C1-P1, 51:48)	Sufficient resources ensure regular data collection and accessibility, which are crucial for effective evidence use.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Funding constraints as a challenge to implementing evidence" (C3-P1, 30:02)	Resource constraints can limit the ability to conduct comprehensive evaluations, impacting evidence quality and utilisation.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Early planning for evaluation" (C2-P1, 43:10)	Adequate resources enable thorough planning and implementation of evaluations, enhancing the role of evidence in policy adjustments.
CTF6. Policy Environment: It is comprised of the current policies, strategies, and regulatory measures that influence the integration of evidence into policymaking. This environment determines the priorities, focus areas, and constraints that guide evidence-based decisions in South Africa's public sector. (Cloete & Thornhill 2012)	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Policy development driven by evidence" (C1-P2, 1:02:10)	A policy environment that prioritises evidence-based decisions fosters a culture of using data and evaluation findings in policy development.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Pilot programmes and evaluations for wider-scale implementation" (C2-P1, 09:46)	Policies that mandate evaluations before full-scale implementation ensure that evidence guides policy rollout.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	A supportive policy environment with strong political will enhances the integration of evidence into policymaking processes.
CTF7. Organisational Culture: It is the values, beliefs, and practices within institutions that influence attitudes towards evidence and evaluation. It also speaks to a culture that values and encourages learning, innovation, and accountability that fosters the use of evidence in decision-making. (Gasela 2022)	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	An organisational culture that prioritises continuous learning and capacity building supports the effective use of evidence.
	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Fostering a culture of research and policy engagement with external stakeholders" (C2-P1, 53:48)	A research-oriented organisational culture encourages the generation and use of high-quality evidence in policymaking.
	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Transparency and communication with service providers" (C2-P2, 20:59)	A culture of transparency within organisations ensures that evidence is used ethically and responsibly, enhancing trust and credibility.

Source: Author

This highlights the need for departments to find *Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)*. Strengthening Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5) implies *Resource Availability (Contextual Factor 6)*, which can secure adequate financial and human resources that are essential for conducting evaluations and applying their findings. '*Funding constraints [act] as a challenge to implementing evidence*' (C3-P1, 30:02) and limit the scope and quality of evaluations. Evidence quality is vital in encouraging its use, and the lower the quality, the greater the '*challenges and constraints*' (Category 6) faced by officials in integrating evidence into policy.

Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12) also include ways of enhancing *Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)* in evidence generation and use, and this requires supporting *Policy and Regulatory Framework[s] (Contextual Factor 7)*. The latter mandates the use of evidence, ensuring that policy decisions are grounded in robust data and that they serve as '*Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking*' (C2-P2, 32:41). Enhancing *Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)* also serves as an important foundation for *Stakeholder Engagement (Contextual Factor 4)*, which ensures that diverse perspectives are considered. '*Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development*' (C1-P1, 41:39) can enhance the relevance and acceptance of evaluation evidence; this means effective *Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)* promotes the use of evidence in policy formulation, which, together with the other contextual factors can reduce the *Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)* encountered in the use of evidence.

4.9.4 Evidence use coding paradigm: Conditional factors

The latter contextual factors exist within a broader socio-political context and set the conditions that directly influence the use of evaluation evidence. *Political will and leadership commitment (Conditional Factor 1)* are crucial causal conditions. The commitment of political leaders to evidence-based policymaking drives the prioritisation of evidence in decision-making processes. For example, '*political will as a catalyst for implementing evidence*' (C3-P1, 21:00) shows how leadership can enhance or diminish the importance of evidence, linked with *Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)*.

Table 4.10: Evidence use coding paradigm: Conditional factors

Condition Factor	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
COF1. Political will and leadership commitment: This is the dedication and support of political leaders towards evidence-based policymaking. This includes the willingness to prioritise and use evidence in decision-making processes. (Elkington <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Political will as a catalyst for implementing evidence" (C3-P1, 21:00)	Political leaders' commitment is crucial for fostering a culture of accountability and evidence use.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Leadership commitment enhances transparency and trust in the use of evidence.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes" (C3-P1, 28:46)	Political will is necessary to institutionalise evaluation processes within policy frameworks.
COF2. Regulatory and policy frameworks: This refers to the formal structures, rules, and guidelines that mandate and govern the use of evidence in policymaking. These frameworks ensure systematic integration of evidence into the policy cycle. (Vincent <i>et al.</i> 2019)	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"DPME guidelines for assessing the social and economic impacts of proposed legislation" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Regulatory frameworks create an environment that mandates evidence use, promoting systematic evaluations.
	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Legal requirements ensure that accountability structures support the use of evidence in decision-making.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes" (C3-P1, 28:46)	Policies that integrate evaluations promote the routine use of evidence, guided by regulatory frameworks.
COF3. Institutional capacity and competency: Is the ability of institutions to conduct, interpret, and utilise evaluations effectively. This includes having skilled personnel, adequate resources, and robust systems for evidence generation and analysis. (Mlambo <i>et al.</i> 2022)	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Capacity to develop evidence-informed policies" (C3-P1, 21:54)	Strong institutional capacity is necessary for generating and using evidence effectively in policy decisions.
	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	Continuous training programmes enhance the competency of staff, improving evidence use.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Stagnation in evidence use despite experience" (C1-P1, 26:42)	Institutional capacity influences the ability to overcome challenges and constraints in using evidence.
COF4. Availability of resources: These are the financial, human, and technological resources necessary for conducting evaluations and implementing evidence-based policies. Adequate resources are	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Frequency and accessibility of data promotes use" (C1-P1, 51:48)	Adequate resources ensure regular data collection and accessibility, which are crucial for effective evidence use.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Funding constraints as a challenge to implementing evidence" (C3-P1, 30:02)	Resource limitations can restrict the scope and quality of evaluations, impacting evidence utilisation.

Condition Factor	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
essential for comprehensive and high-quality evaluations. (C. Thornhill, G. van Dijk 2014)	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Early planning for evaluation" (C2-P1, 43:10)	Sufficient resources enable thorough planning and implementation of evaluations, enhancing the role of evidence.
COF5. Stakeholder engagement: The involvement of various stakeholders, including community members, policymakers, and experts, in the evaluation process. This engagement ensures diverse perspectives are considered, enhancing the relevance and acceptance of evidence. (Twum-Darko <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use" (C1-P1, 53:11)	Broad stakeholder engagement ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, increasing the acceptance of evidence.
	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Respect for evidence in policymaking" (C3-P1, 31:59)	Engaging stakeholders builds respect for evidence and its role in policymaking.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Engagement fosters political will and transparency, crucial for evidence-based policymaking.
COF6. Cultural acceptance of evidence: Refers to the extent to which societal norms and values influence the perception, valuation, and utilisation of evidence. This includes openness to change, trust in scientific methods, and prioritisation of different types of knowledge. (Bundi & Trein 2022)	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use" (C1-P1, 19:50)	Cultural resistance can hinder the acceptance and integration of evidence into policy decisions.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Assumptions over evidence" (C1-P1, 17:10)	Cultural norms may lead to reliance on assumptions rather than evidence, affecting evidence use.
	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Evidence-driven policy success" (C1-P1, 39:29)	Cultural acceptance influences the respect and trust in evidence, which is crucial for policy success.
COF7. Accountability mechanisms: The structures and processes that ensure evidence is used responsibly and ethically in policymaking. These mechanisms include legal requirements, transparency practices, and systems for monitoring and evaluation. (Chirau <i>et al.</i> 2022)	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Accountability mechanisms ensure that evidence is used responsibly and ethically, promoting trust.
	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports" (C2-P1, 57:25)	Strong accountability frameworks promote the systematic use of evidence through clear guidelines.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Assessing policy outcomes through evaluation" (C4-P1, 35:28)	Accountability mechanisms highlight the importance of evaluating outcomes to inform policy decisions.

Source: Author

The right political will support can bolster *Institutional Capacity and Resources* (**Conditional Factor 2**), which will enhance the department's ability to conduct and utilise evaluations and build skilled personnel and robust systems for data collection and analysis. '*Capacity to develop evidence-based policies*' (C3-P1, 21:54) is related to *Evidence Generation and Capacity* (Category 5) and *Training and Awareness* (Category 10). *Political will, leadership commitment, and Institutional capacity and competency* influence the level of stakeholder involvement in policymaking. By '*involving diverse stakeholders in policy development*' (C1-P1, 41:39), *Stakeholder engagement* (**Conditional Factor 4**), with community members, policymakers, and experts in the evaluation process, ensures diverse perspectives are considered and affects the relevance and acceptance of evidence associated with the category *Stakeholder Engagement and Influence* (Category 8). With engaged stakeholders' policymakers face the pressure of demonstrating that public policies are indeed creating the outcomes they seek. This leads to the need for *Accountability and Transparency* (**Conditional Factor 5**) through *Regulatory and policy frameworks* that create an environment conducive to evaluation by mandating the use of evidence in policymaking. These frameworks ensure that evidence is systematically integrated into the policy cycle. For instance, '*mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes*' (C3-P1, 28:46) highlights the importance of regulatory support, linked to *Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use* (Category 12) and the '*importance and Role of Evaluation* (Category 1).

As a result of the cultural acceptance of evidence (**Conditional Factor 6**), influenced by societal norms and values, evidence can be interpreted and applied differently across the National Policy System. However, cultural resistance can hinder the use of evaluation findings. '*Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use*' (C1-P1, 19:50), highlights the challenges of cultural resistance, which has been linked to the influences of *politics and culture* (Category 4), as well as the constraints and challenges (Category 6). Even when the conditions are conducive to the use of evidence, the availability of resources (**Conditional Factor 4**) is crucial as it ensures that evaluations are conducted comprehensively. Resource limitations can, therefore, restrict the scope and quality of evaluations, and '*Budgeting processes as triggers for evidence use*' (C3-P1, 15:18) shows how financial planning impacts evidence use and is related

to *the constraints and challenges* (Category 6) and the development of *capacity for generating evidence* (Category 5).

Once resources are in place *Accountability mechanisms (Conditional Factor 7)* ensure that evidence is used responsibly and ethically as soon as it has been generated, thus building trust in the evaluation process and in the results. '*Legal requirements for the use of evidence in policymaking*' (C2-P2, 32:41) illustrates how accountability structures support the use of evidence, which in turn are connected to *Accountability and Transparency* (Category 11) as well as *Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use* (Category 12).

4.9.5 Evidence use coding paradigm: Strategic factors in response to causal conditions

As a result of these conditions, government officials adopt various strategies to effectively use evidence within the broader socio-political context of South Africa. It is important to remember that these strategies are emerging as mechanisms to ensure that policymaking is informed by evidence gained through evaluation to navigate political and cultural influences. A primary strategy to ensure the establishment of an evidence-based policymaking process is to cultivate *political will and secure leadership commitment (Strategic Factor 1)*. By cultivating political will and securing leadership commitment, officials can ensure that evidence-based policymaking becomes a priority. As part of this work, evidence must be promoted as well as demonstrated to have a significant impact on policy outcomes. For example, '*advocating for evidence in high-level meetings*' (C3-P1, 22:05) illustrates efforts to engage political leaders in evidence discussions, as part of *Accountability and Transparency* (Category 11). It is also crucial to develop institutional *capacity and competence (Strategic Factor 2)*, as well as to ensure that institutions have the resources necessary to conduct evaluations in line with their requirements to train personnel, develop robust data systems, and provide institutions with the necessary resources. The '*implementation of training programmes for staff*' (C3-P1, 22:54) (**Strategic Factor 3**) highlights how institutional competence is built because of initiatives relating to *Training and Awareness* (Category 10) and *Evidence Generation and Capacity* (Category 5).

Once political will has been secured and institutional capacity has been strengthened, these will serve as a foundation for *Engaging Stakeholders in the Evaluation Process* (**Strategic Factor 4**), which is vital for ensuring that evidence is relevant and accepted. Engaging stakeholders as a strategy includes recruiting community members, policymakers, and experts in the design and evaluation stages. This can be done using mechanisms such as *'organising stakeholder workshops for policy input'* (C1-P1, 43:39), which shows how engagement activities enhance the acceptance and relevance of evidence associated with the *'engagement and influence of stakeholders'* (Category 8).

Strategies are also needed around *Developing and Enforcing Regulatory Frameworks* (**Strategic Factor 6**). This is essential for the institutionalisation of evidence use. This strategy involves creating policies and regulations that mandate the use of evidence in decision-making processes. This can include *'Drafting policies to integrate evaluations into planning'* (C3-P1, 30:46) as efforts to create a supportive regulatory environment linked to *Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use* (Category 12).

A sound regulatory environment will go a long way in *Promoting Cultural Acceptance of Evidence* (**Strategic Factor 6**), which will involve addressing societal norms and values that can cause resistance to using evaluation findings. This strategy includes public awareness campaigns and efforts to demonstrate the value of evidence in addressing social issues. *'Launching public awareness campaigns about evidence benefits'* (C1-P1, 25:50) highlights initiatives to shift cultural attitudes towards evidence, related to Category 6. However, a culture of acceptance will not emerge if evaluations are underfunded. As such *Securing Adequate Resources* (**Strategic Factor 7**) for evaluation activities is necessary to ensure comprehensive and high-quality evaluations. This strategy involves advocating for budget allocations and efficiently using existing resources. *'Negotiating budget increases for evaluation departments'* (C3-P1, 15:18) highlights efforts to secure financial support linked to *Evidence Generation and Capacity* (Category 5).

Table 4.11: Evidence use coding paradigm: Strategic factors

Strategic Factors	Main Category	Open Code Examples	Implications for evidence use
STF1. Building political will and advocacy: Involves efforts to persuade and engage political leaders and stakeholders to prioritise and support the use of evaluation evidence in policymaking. (Elkington <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will as a catalyst for implementing evidence" (C3-P1, 21:00)	Political advocacy is crucial for garnering leadership support for evidence-based policymaking.
	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Advocacy efforts strengthen political will and enhance transparency in evidence use.
	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use" (C1-P1, 53:11)	Building political will often requires engaging a broad range of stakeholders to create a unified push for evidence use.
STF2. Enhancing institutional capacity: Focuses on strengthening the ability of institutions to conduct, analyse, and use evaluation evidence effectively. This includes improving skills, resources, and systems. (Eresia-Eke & Boadu 2019)	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Capacity to develop evidence-informed policies" (C3-P1, 21:54)	Enhancing institutional capacity ensures that institutions have the necessary skills and resources to generate and use evidence.
	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	Continuous training improves institutional competency, which is essential for effective evidence use
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Stagnation in evidence use despite experience" (C1-P1, 26:42)	Addressing capacity issues helps overcome stagnation and promotes more effective use of evidence.
STF3. Implementing training programmes and awareness campaigns: Involves educating public officials and stakeholders about the importance and methods of using evaluation evidence in policymaking.	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	Training programmes increase awareness and understanding of how to use evidence effectively.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Awareness campaigns can strengthen political will and commitment to using evidence.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Early planning for evaluation" (C2-P1, 43:10)	Training programmes emphasise the importance of planning and conducting evaluations for impact.
STF4. Engaging stakeholders: Involves including various stakeholders in the evaluation process to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, enhancing	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development" (C1-P1, 41:39)	Broad stakeholder engagement ensures that policies are relevant and widely accepted.
	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Respect for evidence in policymaking" (C3-P1, 31:59)	Engaging stakeholders builds respect for the role of evidence in policy decisions.

Strategic Factors	Main Category	Open Code Examples	Implications for evidence use
the relevance and acceptance of evidence. (Twum-Darko <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Selective use of evidence to support narratives" (C1-P1, 20:34)	Stakeholder engagement can mitigate the selective use of evidence by ensuring diverse input.
STF5. Promoting accountability and transparency: Involves creating mechanisms and practices that ensure evidence is used ethically and responsibly in policymaking. (Morra Imas & Rist 2009)	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Accountability mechanisms ensure that evidence is used responsibly, fostering trust in the process.
	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports" (C2-P1, 57:25)	Clear guidelines and accountability structures support systematic and transparent use of evidence.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Assessing policy outcomes through evaluation" (C4-P1, 35:28)	Promoting accountability ensures that evaluations are conducted and used to inform policy decisions.
STF6. Institutionalising evaluation practices: Involves integrating evaluation processes and standards into the routine operations of institutions to ensure continuous use of evidence in policymaking. (Eresia-Eke & Boadu 2019)	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Institutionalising evaluation ensures that evidence use becomes a routine part of policymaking.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes" (C3-P1, 28:46)	Regular evaluation practices integrate evidence systematically into policy processes.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Institutionalising evaluations requires political support and commitment to transparency.
STF7. Addressing challenges and constraints proactively: Involves identifying and mitigating barriers to evidence use, such as resource limitations, cultural resistance, and lack of capacity.	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Stagnation in evidence use despite experience" (C1-P1, 26:42)	Proactively addressing constraints helps overcome stagnation and promotes effective evidence use.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use" (C1-P1, 19:50)	Tackling cultural and political barriers is essential for effective use of evaluation evidence.
	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Capacity to develop evidence-informed policies" (C3-P1, 21:54)	Enhancing capacity and addressing resource constraints are critical for effective evidence generation.

Source: Author

In conjunction with creating a regulatory framework, these strategies will lay the groundwork for '*establishing accountability mechanisms*' (**Strategic Factor 5**) that will ensure that evidence is used responsibly. To accomplish this, structures need to be created that foster a culture of transparency and ethical use of evidence and data. A key component of this strategy is the establishment of reporting systems and legal frameworks that require the use of evidence, as well as '*setting up monitoring and reporting systems*' (C2-P2, 32:41), which demonstrate accountability mechanisms, as described in Category 11.

4.9.6 Evidence use coding paradigm: Consequential factors as final evidence use outcomes

The strategies employed by officials in response to the causal conditions lead to several consequences that impact the use of evaluation evidence in the National Policy System.

Increased Political Support for Evidence Use (**Consequence Factor 1**) results from building *political will and leadership commitment*. As political leaders become more supportive of evidence-based policymaking, integrating evaluation findings into decision-making processes becomes more robust. For instance, '*political support resulting in policy changes based on evidence*' (C3-P1, 23:05) illustrates how advocacy efforts lead to tangible policy outcomes, linked to *Accountability and Transparency* (Category 11). This support leads to *Improved Resource Allocation* (**Consequence Factor 7**) for evaluation activities, which is a direct consequence of successful resource advocacy. Adequate funding ensures comprehensive evaluations and high-quality evidence. '*Increased budget allocations for evaluations*' (C3-P1, 17:18) illustrates the impact of resource advocacy linked to *Evidence Generation and Capacity* (Category 5). Adequate provision of resources leads to *Enhanced Institutional Capacity* (**Consequence Factors 3 & 6**) a consequence of training programmes and capacity-building initiatives that have been made possible through the allocation of funds. Institutions become more competent in conducting evaluations and applying findings to policy decisions. '*Improved evaluation practices and policy formulation*' (C3-P1, 24:54) highlights the impact of enhanced institutional capacity, related to Training and Awareness (Category 10) and (**Consequence Factors 3**).

Table 4.12: Evidence use coding paradigm: Consequential factors

Consequential Factors	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
CQF1. Enhanced political commitment to evidence-based policymaking: This refers to the increased prioritisation and support for the use of evaluation evidence by political leaders and stakeholders.	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will as a catalyst for implementing evidence" (C3-P1, 21:00)	Political commitment drives the integration of evidence into policy decisions, enhancing policy effectiveness.
	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Enhanced political commitment ensures greater transparency and accountability in policymaking.
	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Engaging with relevant communities in the policymaking process for evidence use" (C1-P1, 53:11)	Broad engagement fosters political support and commitment to evidence use.
CQF2. Increased institutional capacity for evaluation: This refers to the improved ability of institutions to conduct, analyse, and utilise evaluation evidence effectively. (Gertler <i>et al.</i> 2011)	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Capacity to develop evidence-informed policies" (C3-P1, 21:54)	Enhanced capacity ensures institutions can effectively generate and use evidence for policymaking.
	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	Training and awareness programmes improve institutional competency and capacity for evaluation.
	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Stagnation in evidence use despite experience" (C1-P1, 26:42)	Addressing capacity issues helps overcome stagnation and promotes more effective use of evidence.
CQF3. Greater awareness and understanding of evaluation: This refer to the increased knowledge and appreciation of the importance and methods of evaluation among public officials and stakeholders. (Molepo 2011)	Training and Awareness (Category 10)	"Need for training and awareness on M&E" (C3-P1, 34:59)	Increased awareness and understanding of evaluation enhance the use of evidence in policymaking.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Awareness campaigns can strengthen political will and commitment to using evidence.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Early planning for evaluation" (C2-P1, 43:10)	Understanding the importance of evaluation leads to better planning and use of evidence.
CQF4. Increased stakeholder engagement and collaboration: This refer	Stakeholder Engagement and Influence (Category 8)	"Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development" (C1-P1, 41:39)	Broad stakeholder engagement ensures that policies are relevant and widely accepted.

Consequential Factors	Main Category	Open Codes Example	Implications for evidence use
to the enhanced involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders in the evaluation and policymaking process. (Twum-Darko <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Evidence Use in Policymaking (Category 2)	"Respect for evidence in policymaking" (C3-P1, 31:59)	Engaging stakeholders builds respect for the role of evidence in policy decisions.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Selective use of evidence to support narratives" (C1-P1, 20:34)	Stakeholder engagement can mitigate the selective use of evidence by ensuring diverse input.
CQF5. Improved accountability and transparency in policymaking: This refers to the establishment of mechanisms that ensure evidence is used ethically and responsibly. (Rist <i>et al.</i> 2011)	Accountability and Transparency (Category 11)	"Legal requirements for evidence use in policymaking" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Accountability mechanisms ensure that evidence is used responsibly, fostering trust in the process.
	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"DPME guidelines based on research and implementation reports" (C2-P1, 57:25)	Clear guidelines and accountability structures support systematic and transparent use of evidence.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Assessing policy outcomes through evaluation" (C4-P1, 35:28)	Promoting accountability ensures that evaluations are conducted and used to inform policy decisions.
CQF6. Institutionalisation of evaluation practices: This refers to the integration of evaluation processes and standards into the routine operations of institutions. (Eresia-Eke & Boadu 2019)	Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12)	"National Evaluation Plan and improvement plans" (C2-P2, 32:41)	Institutionalising evaluation ensures that evidence use becomes a routine part of policymaking.
	Importance and Role of Evaluation (Category 1)	"Mainstreaming evaluations into policy processes" (C3-P1, 28:46)	Regular evaluation practices integrate evidence systematically into policy processes.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Political will and commitment to transparency" (C2-P2, 23:59)	Institutionalising evaluations requires political support and commitment to transparency.
CQF7. Proactive management of challenges and constraints: This refers to identifying and mitigating barriers to evidence use, such as resource limitations, cultural resistance, and lack of capacity.	Challenges and Constraints (Category 6)	"Stagnation in evidence use despite experience" (C1-P1, 26:42)	Proactively addressing constraints helps overcome stagnation and promotes effective evidence use.
	Political and Cultural Influences (Category 4)	"Politics and culture as barriers to evidence use" (C1-P1, 19:50)	Tackling cultural and political barriers is essential for effective use of evaluation evidence.
	Evidence Generation and Capacity (Category 5)	"Capacity to develop evidence-informed policies" (C3-P1, 21:54)	Enhancing capacity and addressing resource constraints are critical for effective evidence generation.

Source: Author

Enhanced institutional capacity is supported by *Stronger Regulatory and Policy Frameworks (Consequence Factors 5)*, which result from efforts to develop and enforce regulations. These frameworks ensure that evidence use is systematic and consistent across the policy cycle. '*Consistent application of evidence due to regulatory frameworks*' (C3-P1, 32:46) illustrates the benefits of strong regulatory support, linked to Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use (Category 12).

A *Stronger Regulatory and Policy Framework* serves as a foundation for *Enhanced Accountability and Transparency (Consequence Factors 5)* in evidence use, which results from establishing accountability mechanisms that ensure that evidence is used ethically and transparently, building public trust and '*Transparent reporting of evaluation findings*' (C2-P2, 35:41) shows the outcomes of accountability structures, associated with *Accountability and Transparency* (Category 11).

By promoting transparency and enhancing public trust, cultural promotion can play a significant role in '*increasing public awareness and acceptance of evidence*' (**Consequence Factor 3**). As a result, public attitudes will shift, and evidence will become increasingly accepted and widespread in policymaking. Effective stakeholder engagement is crucial in this process, as greater societal acceptance leads to more buy-in and '*collaboration among stakeholders*' (**Consequence Factor 4**). A policy that has broad stakeholder input is more likely to be accepted and implemented effectively. The positive effects of stakeholder engagement and the influence of stakeholders can be seen in the use of '*policies with strong stakeholder support and collaboration*' (C1-P1, 45:39).

In this exposition of the interconnected and causal coding paradigm, the theoretical narrative implies that political and cultural influences shape South Africa's National Policy System. Ultimately, the effectiveness and impact of evidence-based policymaking are determined by the contextual factors that shape the strategies employed by public officials. The theory provides valuable insights for improving public policy and evaluation practices by understanding how political, cultural, and institutional factors affect the use of evaluation evidence.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the third objective of this study, which was to identify the factors that influence the use of evidence in South Africa's NPS. In doing so, it answered the research question: *What factors influence the use of evidence by officials in the Social Cluster in South Africa?* A profile of the realised sample was given, and its suitability for developing the Grounded Theory was justified. The chapter explained the importance of analytic generalisation within a case study design context. A comprehensive exposition of how the GT approach of Corbin and Strauss (2014) was employed to analyse the data, which was presented while also discussing the differences between the approach to coding and the presentation of results in GT relative to thematic analysis. An integral part of the data analysis, which involved axial and selective coding, generated 12 evidence-use categories from the open codes that played an essential role in the theory building and will contribute to developing the use framework in the next chapter. The discussion on the relationship between the emergent categories formed an essential step in laying the foundation for building the GT and the construction of the mechanistic system-based evidence-use matrix. The chapter also identified the core category as a critical aspect of the GT, and an assessment of the extent to which sufficient variation within cases produced a meaningful theory. A detailed discussion of the coding paradigm and the theoretical narrative of the GT was given, representing the foundation upon which the evidence-use framework will be built. This more profound understanding of the factors that influence the use of evidence will contribute to developing a robust and contextually relevant evidence-use framework, which can be used to improve the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation within South Africa's National Policy System.

CHAPTER 5

AN EVIDENCE USE FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION- MAKING IN PUBLIC POLICY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, data analysis and the development of grounded theory were presented. The coding paradigm facilitated the manifestation of the theoretical narrative around the core category of *political and cultural influences*. This was meant to serve as the basis for the realisation of the fourth objective of the study, which was to generate an evidence use framework to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in South Africa in general and the Social Cluster in particular. To achieve this objective, this section answers the following guiding research question. *What is the ideal framework for strengthening the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation in the national policy system in general and the Social Cluster in particular?* The following section will present the proposed framework; Section 5.2 will briefly revisit the problem context as the basis for the rationale for constructing an evidence-based use framework. Section 5.3 presents the framework and explains how it was constructed. This section is followed by a discussion of the framework's seven causal action-outcome evidence-use sequences in Section 5.4. Its strengths and limitations will be discussed in Section 5.5. Section 5.6, will revisit the review of evaluation use theories presented in Chapter 2 and identify how the proposed framework contributes to existing theory and the extent to which it addresses and enhances some of the limitations of the six evidence-based use theories. This section will form the basis for the study's contribution to theory in public policy evaluation as it pertains to evidence-based policymaking. As stated in the theoretical orientation of Chapter 1, Section 5.7 will discuss the study's contribution to the social accountability root of evaluation theory. The comprehensive analysis will contribute to the ongoing discourse on evidence use in public policymaking, helping to bridge the gap between theory and practice and promote more informed and effective decision-making within the South African context.

5.2 RATIONALE FOR AN EVIDENCE-USE FRAMEWORK: REVISITING THE PROBLEM CONTEXT

The development of the framework takes us back to the context of the problem that formed the core rationale for the study. The research carried out addresses the persistent issue of inadequate policy outcomes in South Africa within the context of the numerous policies implemented since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Hamilton 2024:79; Government of South Africa 2017; Seekings & Nattrass 2017:52). This includes significant gaps in access to education, job opportunities, vocational training, and basic services, leading to continued poverty, unemployment, and spatial inequality among historically disadvantaged populations (Mlambo *et al.* 2024:12; Dadam & Viegi 2024:17; Buthelezi *et al.* 2024:36; Adams & Yu 2024:544-545; Bhorat *et al.* 2014:8; Spaul 2013:14; Turok 2013:6). The 2017 High-Level Panel report highlighted these issues and provided more than 79 recommendations meant to accelerate policy reform; however, some of them had not been actioned by 2022 (Portfolio Committee on Agriculture 2022; Government of South Africa 2017).

Furthermore, despite the establishment of the NERF and the subsequent creation of the NER in 2011, which contains more than 141 evaluations, there remains a deficit in effectively using evidence in general and the accumulated evidence to design impactful policies (DPME 2011). The last chapter identified 12 categories of evidence use, grounded in the lived experiences of officials in four departments of the Social Cluster. These categories surfaced several factors that influence evidence use in policymaking. These included a specific set of barriers and limitations to use, which hinder the impact of evidence on policy formulation and implementation, leading to poor policy outcomes and potential citizen dissatisfaction (Hamilton 2024:79; Government of South Africa 2017).

To address these gaps, the study employed a grounded theory approach within a multi-case study design to explore the experiences of public officials in the Social Cluster. The aim was to develop a context-sensitive South African framework that will be presented in this chapter that enhances the use of evaluation evidence in policy development and implementation, promoting informed decision-making that upholds the Bill of Rights and addresses the developmental needs of South African citizens.

5.3 THE ACTION AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK FOR THE UTILISATION OF EVALUATION EVIDENCE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The causal action and outcomes framework for utilising evaluation evidence within the context of political and cultural influences in SA's NPS is a comprehensive tool. It is the outcome of the Grounded Theory process, and all the theoretical elements and conceptual tools produced during the analysis and in Chapters 2 and 3. It draws on the causal logic implicit in the coding framework and its theoretical narrative. As argued in the previous chapter, the significant influence of political and cultural factors on the use of evaluation evidence in South Africa is widespread and extends across all the categories of evidence derived in this study. The framework was developed by taking the elements of the coding paradigm and converting them into dimensions (see Table 5.1). The core purpose of the dimension was defined based on the dimension's overall role and the factors it subsumes. In each dimension, the seven factors under each component of the coding paradigm were used and a core guiding imperative and supporting action was formulated for the first three dimensions. For the fourth dimension, *Consequential Dimension of Evidence Use*, an outcome was identified instead of specifying an action, which represents the impact of using evidence across the four dimensions.

Each cluster of contextual, conditional, strategic, and consequential factors under the four dimensions is called an evidence-use sequence. This gives *seven causal action-outcome evidence-use sequences* that form the framework's elements for utilising evaluation evidence. This framework is designed to provide direction on practical, actionable guidelines on the *context* and *conditions* that influence evidence use, together with the outcomes of actions and strategies that support evidence use. The framework can be used with the '*mechanistic system-based evidence use matrix*', which gives examples of barriers and enablers to evidence use grounded in the realities of South Africa's public officials. By deriving the framework from the coding paradigm, we end up with a causal framework; through it, evidence is integrated into policymaking, *contextual factors* are addressed, *conditional elements* are leveraged, effective *strategies* are implemented, and ultimately desired *consequences* are achieved, fostering optimism in the process.

Table 5.1: The action and outcomes framework for the utilisation of evaluation evidence within the context of political and cultural influences

1. CONTEXTUAL DIMENSION OF EVIDENCE USE	2. CONDITIONAL DIMENSION OF EVIDENCE USE	3. STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF EVIDENCE USE	4. CONSEQUENTIAL DIMENSION OF EVIDENCE USE
<p>Purpose: Recognising and understanding the broader contextual factors that shape the environment for using evidence.</p>	<p>Purpose: To promote the effective use of evidence in policymaking by establishing conditions conducive to evidence generation and use.</p>	<p>Purpose: To outline strategic actionable steps that can be taken to promote the integration of evidence into policymaking.</p>	<p>Purpose: To ensure that policies are made in a way that is both effective and accountable to achieve desirable evidence use outcomes.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>1. REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS</p>	<p>1. INSTITUTIONALISING EVALUATION PRACTICES</p>	<p>1. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF EVALUATION PRACTICES</p>
<p><i>Consider the impact of past political and cultural events on current attitudes toward evidence.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Identify and document historical governance methods and their outcomes and use them as a guideline for current practices.</p>	<p><i>Make sure that rules and guidelines are developed and enforced that require evidence to be used.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Reform regulatory frameworks to incorporate systematic evaluation and evidence into policymaking.</p>	<p><i>Ensure that evaluation processes are integrated into routine institutional operations at all levels.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Create an institutionalised system for regular evaluation to ensure the continuous use of evidence.</p>	<p><i>Assist institutions in making evaluation a routine part of their daily activities.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: The systematic and sustained use of evidence in the formulation of policies leads to improved socioeconomic outcomes.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 2: SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>2. POLITICAL WILL AND LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT</p>	<p>2. BUILDING POLITICAL WILL AND ADVOCACY</p>	<p>2. ENHANCED POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING</p>
<p><i>Review and analysis the current political climate, power dynamics, and governance styles.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Conduct regular assessments of the socio-political environment to assess political stability and how it affects the use of evidence.</p>	<p><i>Make sure political leaders are committed to making policies based on evidence.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Encourage political commitment to transparency, as well as evidence-based policymaking and policy formulation.</p>	<p><i>Make the case for evidence-based policymaking with political leaders and persuade them to make commitments for the use of evidence.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Engage in advocacy campaigns and build coalitions in order to generate political support for the use of evidence in government.</p>	<p><i>Enhance the prioritisation of evidence-based decisions and the support for evidence-based decisions.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: As political leaders integrate evidence into their policy decisions, they are able to improve the effectiveness of these decisions.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 3: CULTURAL NORMS AND VALUES</p>	<p>3. CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE OF EVIDENCE</p>	<p>3. IMPLEMENTING TRAINING PROGRAMS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS</p>	<p>3. GREATER AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF EVALUATION</p>
<p><i>Understand how shared beliefs and practices contribute to the evaluation and utilisation of evidence and how it should be assessed and understood.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Foster a culture supportive of evidence use among institutional leaders and key stakeholders through participatory engagement.</p>	<p><i>Ensure that societal norms are established that encourage evidence-based decisions.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Promote public awareness about the importance of evidence and scientific methods.</p>	<p><i>It is important to educate stakeholders about the importance of using evaluation evidence in decision making.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Create and implement training sessions and awareness campaigns aimed at increasing the understanding and appreciation of the importance of evidence.</p>	<p><i>Educate stakeholders on the use of evaluation methods, and increase their understanding of them.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: There will be a better understanding among public officials and stakeholders of the importance of evidence, leading to better decisions.</p>

<p>SEQUENCE 4: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS</p> <p><i>Examine the formal structures, policies, and regulations that govern how evidence is used and how they are enforced.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Enhance institutional frameworks in order to make it easier for systematic evidence-based decision-making processes to take place.</p>	<p>4. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND COMPETENCY</p> <p><i>Ensure that institutions are capable of conducting, analysing, and utilising evaluations.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Develop skills that are necessary for effective use of evidence by investing in training and development.</p>	<p>4. ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY</p> <p><i>Enhance the skills and resources that are available within institutions.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Make sure that public officials are provided with continuous training and development programmes.</p>	<p>4. INCREASED INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR EVALUATION</p> <p><i>Enhance the ability of institutions to effectively utilise evidence in their decision making processes.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: As institutions become more proficient in generating and applying evidence, they will be able to formulate better policies.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 5: RESOURCE AVAILABILITY</p> <p><i>Determine whether financial, human, and technological resources are available for evidence generation and use.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Make sure that adequate resources are available to conduct comprehensive and high-quality evaluations and that sufficient resources are allocated to do so.</p>	<p>5. AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES</p> <p><i>Provide adequate resources for conducting evaluations in order to ensure their success.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Establish a data collection and evaluation programme that allocates financial resources, human resources, and technological resources.</p>	<p>5. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS PROACTIVELY</p> <p><i>The use of evidence is hindered by a number of barriers that should be identified and mitigated.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Take proactive measures to address the challenges of resource constraints, cultural resistance, and capacity issues, with the aim of improving the generation and use of evidence.</p>	<p>5. PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS</p> <p><i>Make use of evidence in a manner that overcomes barriers.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: When challenges are identified and mitigated effectively, resources are allocated more effectively and evidence is used more effectively.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 6: POLICY ENVIRONMENT</p> <p><i>Examine current policies, strategies, and regulatory measures to determine whether or not they are appropriate.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Ensure that policies are developed and implemented to prioritise evidence-based decision-making and adjust policies as necessary as a result of the evaluation evidence.</p>	<p>6. ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS</p> <p><i>Make sure there are structures in place to ensure that evidence is used responsibly.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Establish accountability mechanisms in order to facilitate the use of evidence in policymaking that is ethical and transparent.</p>	<p>6. PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY</p> <p><i>Establish mechanisms for ensuring that evidence is used in an ethical and responsible manner.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Establish clear guidelines and accountability structures to facilitate a transparent decision-making process.</p>	<p>6. IMPROVED ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN POLICYMAKING</p> <p><i>Ensure that evidence is used in an ethical and responsible manner.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: Increased trust and credibility in the policymaking process through the use of transparent and accountable practices.</p>
<p>SEQUENCE 7: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE</p> <p><i>Ensure that evidence-based practices and values are promoted and incorporated into institutions.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Promote a culture of continuous learning, innovation, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making in the organisation.</p>	<p>7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Ensure that the evaluation process includes the participation of various stakeholders who are interested in the outcome.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Provide opportunities for inclusive stakeholder engagement so that diverse perspectives can be obtained and evidence can be accepted.</p>	<p>7. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p><i>Make sure that all stakeholders are included and are involved in the process.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Develop platforms for stakeholder engagement in the policy development and evaluation of policies.</p>	<p>7. INCREASED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION</p> <p><i>It is important to encourage a broad level of participation and cooperation in the evaluation process.</i></p> <p>OUTCOME: As a result of the policy making process, policies become more relevant and widely accepted, which improves their implementation and impact.</p>

Source: Author

The purpose of the four dimensions can be described as follows.

- *Contextual Dimensions of Evidence Use*: Recognises and understands the broader contextual factors that shape the environment for using evidence.
- *Conditional Dimension of Evidence Use*: Promotes the effective use of evidence in policymaking by establishing conditions conducive to evidence generation and use.
- *Strategic Dimensions of Evidence Use*: Outlines strategic actionable steps that can be taken to promote the integration of evidence into policy making.
- *Consequential Dimensions of Evidence Use*: Ensures that policies are made in a way that is both effective and accountable to achieve desirable outcomes.

The purpose of this framework is not just to enhance the use of evaluation evidence in policymaking in South Africa, but, more importantly, to recognise and address the political and cultural factors that influence this process. The framework is based on a set of actions that are needed to achieve outcomes that are the culmination of all efforts to improve the use of evidence, as seen in Table 5.1. The framework was developed with the understanding that these factors are not only causal but crucial to the success of policymaking.

5.4 THE SEVEN CAUSAL ACTION-OUTCOME EVIDENCE-USE SEQUENCES

Focusing on the framework presented in the table, the causal nature of this model begins with assessing areas of interest or identifying perceived or known deficits. Once *contextual actions* are taken, the next step is to evaluate the *conditional dimensions* under which evidence is generated and used within the institution. These *conditional actions* should then inform specific *strategies* aimed at enhancing evidence use. If these strategies are successful, they will lead to improved outcomes in the *consequential dimension* of evidence use. As argued in Chapter 2, evidence-based policymaking has been defined in many ways; an expansive definition of EBPM was given by drawing on the most salient aspects of each of the seven definitions. The review of the seven definitions and the extended definition were used as a typological

classification system, serving as a conceptual tool to frame EBPM as the outcome of interest in each sequence.

After describing each sequence, the implications for practice are discussed, with a focus on drawing recommendations for policy and practice from the action-outcome framework. These recommendations are derived directly from the evidence-use action-outcome framework, which is designed to guide the utilisation of evaluation evidence. They provide practical strategies to enhance evidence use in policymaking. The examples demonstrate how applying the seven causal evidence use sequences can systematically address various factors that influence evidence use. These examples and recommendations reassure practitioners of the practical applicability of the framework to real-world cases, illustrating how the integration and impact of evaluation evidence in policymaking can be improved.

The following section explains the dynamic interactions within each of the seven sequences and discusses with examples from around the world how each sequence can be applied in the Social Cluster.

5.4.1 Evidence Use Sequence 1: Historical context TO Institutionalisation of evaluation practices.

This evidence-use sequence recognises that the *Historical Context of South Africa* (CTF1) provides the basis for the current use of evidence and aims to offer perspectives based on historical, political, and cultural events. Understanding how past governance systems have shaped current perspectives on evidence is critical to determining the starting point for evidence use and realising how historical patterns inform current behaviours and attitudes toward evidence use. Setting up regulations and principles that incorporate systematic evaluation in producing policies strengthens the foundation for *Regulatory and Policy Frameworks* (COF1). These frameworks ensure that previous experiences are institutionalised into established standards. These regulations and frameworks must be in place to ensure that evidence is used consistently in all areas of policy.

Institutionalising Evaluation Practices (STF1) seeks to incorporate these practices into institutional operations, making frameworks a regular part of the organisation's

activities. Routinising evaluation into organisational procedures means using evidence becomes a consistent day-to-day activity that may give rise to more informed and successful policy decisions. This *Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices* (CQF1) plays an essential role in contributing to the consistent and ongoing use of evidence, ultimately leading to enhanced policy outcomes. When evaluation practices are institutionalised, they become deeply rooted in the daily activities of institutions, leading to a beneficial impact on the use of evidence. This routine practice makes this action-outcome causal sequence a continually evolving process. It creates a continuous loop in which previous knowledge impacts regulations, which then becomes incorporated into organisational practices, reinforcing the reliance on evidence.

5.4.1.1 Implications of Evidence-use Sequence 1 for Practice

As suggested by this sequence, policymakers and evaluators can start by analysing historical governance methods and their outcomes in ways that inform current practices. This analysis can help them understand how past successes and failures create a foundation for integrating evaluation into routine operations. In South Africa, historical resistance to evidence use was addressed at a system level, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) through the establishment of guidelines for assessing the impacts of proposed legislation (Cloete & Auriacombe 2007:200-202; Goldman *et al.* 2013:1-2; DPME 2011:2). This underscored the need for policymakers to document and analyse historical governance practices to understand their impact on current policy attitudes. Using historical data to inform the design of evaluation frameworks and to ensure that they address past shortcomings will be necessary for evaluators, who play an essential role in determining whether the evidence they create is used. This is an ongoing process that will require continuous political will and commitment. The findings of this study on barriers and limitations to evidence use demonstrate that institutionalisation of evaluation practices still needs to be fully integrated in daily routines.

5.4.2 Evidence Use Sequence 2: Socio-political environment TO Enhanced political commitment to evidence-based policymaking

The interactions across and within the components in this evidence-use sequence ensure that political support is built and sustained for evidence use. This has the impact of creating an environment in which evidence-based policymaking is prioritised. Analysing the *Socio-Political Environment* (CTF2) provides a current snapshot of political stability and power dynamics. This assessment is critical to understanding the readiness for evidence-based policymaking, given the significant negative impact that political instability can have on the use of evidence. Furthermore, understanding the sociopolitical environment also plays a role in developing Political Will and Leadership Commitment (COF2), which ensures that leaders are motivated and committed to using evidence in their decisions.

This conditional factor then serves as a foundation for the strategy of *Building Political Will and Advocacy* (STF2), which engages political leaders and stakeholders, promoting the benefits of evidence-based policymaking. The outcome of this strategy is *Enhanced Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Policymaking* (CQF2), which is moderated by advocacy efforts that create a supportive political climate for evidence-based use. This climate, where political leaders prioritise and support evidence-based decisions, leads to more effective policies. The implementation of the *Socio-Political Environment to Enhanced Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Policymaking* sequence ensures a supportive organisational culture and inclusive stakeholder engagement. This is important because policies that consider diverse perspectives will more effectively address social needs and facilitate evidence-based decision-making in the Social Cluster.

5.4.2.1 Implications of evidence use sequence 2 for practice

The socio-political environment can influence the use of evidence. As such, analysing it helps identify whether there is a tendency towards stability or instability and the extent to which the resultant power dynamics supports evidence use. This information can build political will and leadership commitment to evidence-based policymaking. An example of this comes from Ghana, where regular assessments of the political climate highlighted the need for political will, leading to advocacy campaigns that

emphasise evidence-based health policies (Uneke *et al.* 2020:6). The general implications for policymakers are for them to conduct regular assessments of their socio-political environment to gauge political readiness for evidence use. Evaluators can also play an essential role by identifying key political leaders and stakeholders who can champion evidence-based policymaking. If political commitment and the participation of the evaluator succeed in improving use, then external stakeholders can play a role through their participation in advocacy efforts to build political support for more evidence-based decisions.

5.4.3 Evidence Use Sequence 3: Cultural norms and values TO Greater awareness and understanding of evaluation

The factors that influence the use of evidence in this sequence underscore the importance of understanding how shared beliefs and practices and the cultural context play a key role in creating an environment that values and understands evidence. The causal dynamic in this use sequence is underpinned by a context where *Cultural Norms and Values* (CTF3) shape how evidence is perceived and utilised. Ensuring that cultural norms and values support evidence use requires participatory engagement with institutional leaders and key stakeholders. These leaders play a crucial role in shaping the culture of evidence use. If successful, this leads to *Cultural Acceptance of Evidence* (COF3), a condition that is established by promoting societal norms that value evidence-based decisions. This is done through the promotion of public awareness regarding the importance of evidence and the use of scientific methods.

However, awareness alone is not enough. Targeted strategies are needed. These include *Implementing Training Programmes and Awareness Campaigns* (STF3) that educate stakeholders about the importance of evaluation evidence in a way that increases their appreciation and understanding of its use. The outcome of these strategies leads to a *Greater Awareness and Understanding of Evaluation* (CQF3) that improves stakeholder knowledge, supports evidence-based decisions, and has the potential to result in better policy outcomes. Through this sequence of actions of evidence use, a culture of evidence use is built in which stakeholders value and understand the use of evaluation evidence and the extent to which it enhances their

capacity to make informed decisions. Through this sequence of activities, a culture of evidence use will be built in which stakeholders will value and understand the use of evaluation evidence, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions based on the evaluation evidence they have access to. Stakeholders are not just passive recipients of information, but integral to the success of evidence-based decision making, making them feel valued and important.

5.4.3.1 Implications of evidence-use sequence 3 for practice

Understanding cultural norms and values is crucial to developing a culture that supports the use of evidence. Implementing training programmes and awareness campaigns can shift cultural attitudes towards valuing evaluation evidence. Drawing on the Kenyan experience, cultural resistance to evidence use in education reforms was addressed through training programmes and awareness campaigns that emphasised the reliance on evidence in assessing the rationale behind the reforms (Piper *et al.* 2018:313-314). The lessons drawn from this experience indicate the importance of stakeholder participation, whose role was to involve community leaders and other cultural influencers to support evidence-based reforms. This emphasises to policymakers the need to promote cultural acceptance of evidence through public awareness campaigns.

5.4.4 Evidence Use Sequence 4: Institutional frameworks TO Increased institutional capacity for evaluation

Given the institutional realities that officials tasked with mainstreaming evidence in government departments face, the frameworks and guidelines that support evidence-use practices are critical to ensuring the effective integration of evidence into decision-making. This evidence-use sequence of the framework stresses the need for strong institutional structures and continuous capacity building to support effective evidence-use. The importance of *Institutional Frameworks* (CTF4) lies in their ability to provide the formal structures necessary for systematic evidence-based decision-making. This is important in facilitating use, as the more robust the institutional frameworks, the more evidence is embedded in the formal structures and processes, promoting consistent and effective policy decisions. The presence of strong institutional frameworks creates the necessary conditions for enhancing *Institutional Capacity and*

Competency (COF4), which are critical in ensuring that institutions have the skills and resources needed to conduct and utilise evaluations effectively. This is important for the effective generation and use of evidence in policy decisions.

However, strategies for *Enhancing Institutional Capacity* (STF4) will still be needed to ensure continuous training and development, thereby providing constant improvement in institutional capabilities. With these conditional and strategic factors in place, evidence-use is enhanced since institutions with the necessary skills and resources can conduct evaluations and use the evidence produced effectively. This will lead to the desired outcome of *Increased Institutional Capacity for Evaluation* (CQF4), resulting in institutions being proficient in generating and applying evidence, leading to better policy formulation and implementation. This outcome's reinforcing effect enhances evidence-use by leading to more effective policy formulation and implementation, which has the long-term impact of improving overall outcomes and enhancing evidence-based decision-making in the Social Cluster.

5.4.4.1 Implications of evidence-use sequence 4 for practice

From this sequence, the aim is to provide robust institutional frameworks that can provide the foundation for building capacity and competency in conducting evaluations. This is achieved through continuous training and development that leads to institutions that are proficient in using evidence. An example of the importance of the action outcome steps in this sequence can be seen in Brazil, where urban planning policies benefited from strong institutional frameworks and continuous capacity building, leading to effective evidence-use (Caldeira & Holston 2014:2008:2009). This has several implications for policymakers and evaluators. For the former, it's about establishing and ensuring that institutional frameworks that mandate the use of evidence are in place. For evaluators, the goal is to maintain and provide continuous professional development opportunities for staff and work with policymakers to generate evidence.

5.4.5 Evidence Use Sequence 5: Resource availability TO Proactive management of challenges and constraints

Several barriers and constraints were identified, and most of them impact the ability to manage the challenges and constraints faced in using and generating evidence. This evidence-use sequence emphasises the need for institutional conditions that are primed to assess whether there are sufficient resources to mitigate the impact of challenges and constraints while ensuring that resources are available and managed effectively to support evidence-based policymaking. As a contextual factor, *Resource Availability* (CTF5) ensures that there are adequate financial, human, and technological resources for evidence generation and use, which are necessary for conducting evaluations and generating reliable evidence for policy decisions. While *Resource Availability* (CTF5) is about determining what is needed, the conditional factor *Availability of Resources* (COF5) is about guaranteeing that sufficient resources are allocated to where they are most needed for conducting evaluations and generating the proper evidence.

At a strategic level, given constant uncertainties about the availability of resources, strategic efforts must focus on *Addressing Challenges and Constraints Proactively* (STF5), and this involves identifying and mitigating barriers to evidence use, such as resource constraints and cultural resistance. Proactively managing challenges ensures that barriers to evidence use are identified and mitigated, facilitating more effective policy decisions. This leads to the *Proactive Management of Challenges and Constraints* (CQF5), which is a critical outcome that ensures that resources are used effectively and barriers are overcome, leading to more efficient evidence use. The outcome of this sequence ensures effective and accountable policy decisions, which result in the effective identification and mitigation of challenges. The goal of this sequence is to ensure that resources are allocated effectively, and challenges are proactively managed, supporting the continuous use of evidence in policy decisions and enhancing evidence-based decision-making in the Social Cluster.

5.4.5.1 Implications of evidence-use sequence 5 for practice

The need for resources for evaluation was a constant theme across all cases, and the goal is to ensure resource availability is seen as critical for conducting high-quality

evaluations. This includes proactively managing challenges and constraints, which allows for the effective use of resources and overcoming obstacles to evidence generation and use. Evidence of the primary intent of this sequence and its recommendation can be seen in India's agricultural policies, which were improved by ensuring resource availability and the ability to proactively address funding constraints and other challenges that could have impeded use (Fan & Thorat 2007:125-126). The implications for policymakers are to ensure adequate resources are allocated for evaluation activities. At the same time, for evaluators, it means identifying and mitigating potential barriers to effective use in generating evidence. Key stakeholders, for example, communities, as beneficiaries of public policy, have a role to play, advocating for resource allocation towards policies that have the greatest impact on their well-being and in requiring proactive management of challenges that would impede use.

5.4.6 Evidence Use Sequence 6: Policy environment TO Improved accountability and transparency in policymaking

Accountability and transparency are essential aspects of any policy environment that supports evidence use, and this evidence-use sequence underlines the importance of an environment with mechanisms to ensure ethical and transparent evidence use. From a context perspective, the *Policy Environment* (CTF6) must have mechanisms for examining existing policies and regulatory measures to ensure that they support evidence-based decision-making. A supportive policy environment is essential for prioritising and integrating evidence into policy decisions and for prioritising and integrating evidence into policy decisions. It serves as the foundation for *Accountability Mechanisms* (COF6) that ensure structures are in place for the responsible and ethical use of evidence. The presence of *Accountability Mechanisms* (COF6) ensures that the use of evidence is responsible and transparent, which promotes trust in the policymaking process. These conditions enable strategies for *Promoting Accountability and Transparency* (STF6) by establishing guidelines and structures that facilitate transparent decision-making processes. The pathway that facilitates use occurs through the ethical and credible use of evidence, influencing policy outcomes. The outcome of interest for this sequence is *Improved Accountability and Transparency in Policymaking* (CQF6), a critical factor in enhancing the effectiveness

and impact of policies, which results in greater trust and credibility in the policymaking process. This sequence promotes a policy environment that prioritises evidence use, establishes accountability mechanisms, and ensures transparency, enhancing evidence-based decision-making in the Social Cluster.

5.4.6.1 Implications of evidence-use sequence 6 for practice

The policy environment is important, and this must be supportive. It must also have robust accountability mechanisms that ensure the responsible and transparent use of evidence. The realisation of this leads to greater trust and credibility in policymaking. This was evident in Australia's environmental regulations, which benefited from a supportive policy environment and robust accountability mechanisms, which led to improved transparency (Gunningham *et al.* 2004:330). Implications for policymakers include the ability to develop policies that prioritise evidence-based decision-making through an established structure of accountability mechanisms.

5.4.7 Evidence Use Sequence 7: Organisational culture TO Increased stakeholder engagement and collaboration

This evidence-use sequence promotes a supportive organisational culture and inclusive stakeholder engagement. It ensures that various perspectives inform policies and are more effective in addressing societal needs, as well as enhancing evidence-based decision-making in the Social Cluster. The right *Organisational Culture* (CTF7) context must be in place for this sequence to achieve this. Once in place, such a culture will promote values and practices that support evidence-based decision-making within institutions. The latter can only happen when there is proactive *Stakeholder Engagement* (COF7), which ensures that the evaluation process includes their views and interests, increasing the acceptance and relevance of evidence. This means that *Engaging Stakeholders* (STF7) becomes a strategy that involves the creation of platforms for inclusive stakeholder participation in policy development and evaluation. The outcome of this strategy is *Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration* (CQF7), which leads to more relevant and accepted policies, improving their implementation and impact. This sequence highlights the role of organisational culture and stakeholder engagement in creating inclusive and effective policies within the Social Cluster.

5.4.7.1 Implications of evidence-use sequence 7 for practice

This sequence highlights the importance of a supportive organisational culture that fosters stakeholder engagement, which leads to more inclusive and effective policy development. The key here is to engage diverse stakeholders, ensuring policies are relevant and accepted. Canada offers an example where its public health policies were enhanced by fostering a supportive organisational culture and engaging stakeholders effectively (Haverfield & Tannenbaum 2021). The implications for stakeholders are for them to actively engage in policy development processes to ensure their diverse perspectives are considered. Policymakers can promote a culture of continuous learning and evidence-based decision-making within institutions and the implications for evaluators; they play an essential role in linking policymakers to stakeholders as they can facilitate the creation of platforms for inclusive stakeholder participation in policy development at various stages of the evaluation process.

The framework's practical implications for decision-makers are significant. By identifying and promoting the most effective factors that improve the use of evidence in policymaking, the study supports the enhancement of social accountability. It ensures that policies are evidence-based and productive. This directly addresses the need for context-sensitive evaluation to use theories that can drive positive social change. This ensures that evaluations are conducted effectively and provide meaningful insights for policy improvements.

The dynamic interactions within these action-outcome sequences create a holistic process for integrating evidence into policymaking. This framework addresses multiple dimensions, including historical context, political support, cultural acceptance, institutional capacity, resource availability, the policy environment, and stakeholder engagement. Each sequence builds upon the previous one, forming a comprehensive approach that systematically incorporates evidence into the policymaking process. By doing so, this integrated framework strengthens evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) within the Social Cluster, leading to more effective policies that better serve the needs of South Africa's citizens. The ultimate aim of the framework, with its seven-causal evidence-use action-outcome sequences, is to enable policymaking and implementation that aligns with the imperatives outlined in the Bill of Rights, as enshrined in the Constitution. This alignment ensures that policies effectively address

the unmet developmental needs identified in the 2017 High-Level Report, as highlighted in the study's problem statement (Government of South Africa 2017).

5.5 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

This section assesses the strengths and limitations of the action-outcome evidence-use framework and proposes strategies to minimise factors that could limit its practical use. The framework has several notable strengths, such as its comprehensive treatment of the factors that influence evidence use, a grounded sensitivity to context, the central role placed on stakeholder engagement, a focus on institutionalisation of evaluation practices, its emphasis on capacity building, the identification of resource constraints, and its adaptability. These benefits of the framework must be weighed against its potential limitations, which include the need for a large pool of resources to implement it, its relatively complex nature, the potential of resistance, possible variability in data collection and quality, challenges in engaging stakeholders, and difficulties in measuring long-term impact. Identifying and addressing these limitations using specific strategies and ongoing refinement is essential for improving the effectiveness and applicability of the framework in various policy contexts.

5.5.1 Comprehensive approach

The action-outcome framework of evidence use uses a comprehensive approach that draws from 12 evidence-use categories. Its evidence-use factors cover multiple dimensions of use. These include contextual, conditional, strategic, and consequential factors, which ensure a holistic approach to integrating evidence into policymaking. This comprehensive coverage allows for a thorough understanding and systematic implementation of evidence-based practices across various policy development and implementation stages. This comprehensiveness, however, comes with significant financial, human and technological resource implications for the framework to be implemented. This can have consequences for some departments, particularly in developing regions, which may hinder the full implementation of the framework, limiting its effectiveness. A possible solution to mitigate this challenge would be to devise a prioritisation and phased implementation approach that begins by identifying the most critical framework components that can have the highest impact and focus

on implementing these initially. This allows for gradual adoption, making it easier to manage with limited resources and demonstrating early successes can help garner further support and resources.

5.5.2 Context-sensitivity

The evidence-use framework's emphasis on context is a strength. It recognises that politics, culture, and socioeconomics play a significant role in whether evidence is used. The framework ensures that policymakers know how the latter evidence-use factors influence decision-making in different contexts, thereby avoiding a one-size-fits-all solution to the factors that might impede evidence use. This makes the application of the framework more contextually relevant and impactful. However, while a context-sensitive framework is essential, its adoption might face political and institutional resistance to evidence-based practices it suggests. To weaken this resistance requires political will and commitment from leaders who should be encouraged to embrace the framework and its potential. This can be done through proactive strategies fostering acceptance and commitment among political and institutional stakeholders. One way to achieve this is to involve key leaders and stakeholders early in the process to engender a sense of ownership and commitment that allows them to understand the benefits and make them part of the solution.

5.5.3 Stakeholder engagement

The framework emphasises active, participatory stakeholder engagement in evidence generation and use. Inclusivity promotes ownership and accountability, allowing all parties to take responsibility for the policymaking process's outcome. When diverse perspectives are considered, it increases the probability of developing better policies that everyone can support. However, the downside to participatory processes is the amount of time and effort required to ensure that all key stakeholders are accommodated. These challenges can be addressed by conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify relevant parties and understand their interests, capacity, and influence. This comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder landscape ensures that all critical voices are noticed and allows for targeted engagement strategies.

5.5.4 Capacity building

This framework tackles one significant factor that influences evidence use: ensuring that public officials and evaluators know how to use and generate good evidence. They need the right skills to generate evidence and use it to make evidence-based decisions. The framework emphasises enhancing skills and competencies through evidence-based and generational training and capacity-building programmes. However, the training will require resources that might be limited. A possible solution to this challenge could focus on resource optimisation by focusing on the most essential skills that will make the most significant difference in evidence generation and use.

5.5.5 Flexibility and adaptability

Another advantage of the framework is its flexibility, which allows it to be tailored to various policy contexts. This versatility ensures that the framework is usable and beneficial across policy areas and departments. However, because the framework is used in various contexts, its efficacy is determined by the availability and quality of varied data sources, which can vary greatly. Data variability can weaken the credibility of decisions and, as a result, the use of evidence in policymaking. This limitation can be addressed by developing and implementing clear data quality standards and guidelines that specify expectations for data accuracy, completeness, timeliness, and reliability. Having specified standards helps maintain consistency in data collection and analysis, which is the foundation for valid evaluations.

5.6 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

The framework developed in this study contributes significantly to evaluation and public policy, particularly within the context of evaluation use theory. By drawing on the study's theoretical framework and existing evaluation use theories, this framework enhances our understanding of how to utilise evidence in policy formulation and implementation. The framework contributes to existing knowledge by addressing the limitations and enhancing the strengths of several prominent evaluation use theories discussed in the literature.

5.6.1 Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE)

The UFE place great emphasis on stakeholder engagement and practicality, which are meant to ensure that evaluations are designed to meet the specific needs of users (Patton 1996:21). The framework developed in this study enhances UFE by incorporating the active involvement of public officials throughout the evaluation process, thereby promoting ownership and practical application of evaluation findings (see *Sequence 7: Organisational Culture to Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration*). As identified in the literature review, the UFE can potentially prioritise stakeholder interests over methodological rigour (Barends & Rousseau 2018:96). This is mitigated in the action-outcome framework by ensuring that evaluations are systematically institutionalised, maintaining a balance between stakeholder input and methodological standards, see *Sequence 7: Organisational Culture to Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration* and specifically *Engaging Stakeholders* (STF7).

5.6.2 Knowledge-Driven Evaluation (KDE)

One of the strengths of the KDE theory is that it focuses on generating thorough and methodologically sound evaluations that contribute to the broader knowledge base (Weiss 1979: 427). The framework developed leverages this strength by ensuring that evaluations contribute to identifying best practices and evidence-based interventions, see *Institutionalising Evaluation Practices* (STF1) in *Sequence 1: Historical Context to Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices*. KDE's neglect of specific stakeholder needs (Henry & Mark 2003:307) is addressed by the framework's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and context-sensitive evidence use sequences, ensuring that evaluations are relevant and applicable to the unique challenges faced by South African policymakers (*Engaging Stakeholders* (STF7) and *Sequence 5: Resource Availability to Proactive Management of Challenges and Constraints*).

5.6.3 Enlightenment Evaluation (EE)

The EE recognises evaluation's long-term and indirect impacts on policy debates and stakeholder beliefs (Weiss 1998). The action-outcome evidence-use framework promotes the *Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices* (STF1) and by extension the

use of evaluation findings to foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making, aligning with EE's emphasis on gradual knowledge accumulation (*Sequence 1: Historical Context to Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices*). EE's lack of guidance for immediate stakeholder needs (Henry & Mark 2003:307) is addressed by the framework's strategic and actionable steps that ensure evaluations provide practical and immediate insights for decision-makers (Sequences 1 to 7).

5.6.4 Participatory Evaluation (PE)

PE involves the active involvement of diverse stakeholders, which promotes ownership and empowerment (Cousins & Whitmore 1998:6). The framework developed incorporates participatory elements by engaging public officials in the evaluation process, ensuring that their perspectives are integrated (*Sequence 7: Organisational Culture to Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration*). However, the criticism of PE was the potential dilution of technical rigour due to trying to accommodate diverse stakeholder perspectives (Bamberger *et al.* 2016:7), which can compromise the credibility of evidence and lead to no use. This is managed within the framework by balancing stakeholder engagement with systematic evaluation practices via *Sequence 1: Historical Context to Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices* and setting the actions for stakeholder engagement via *Sequence 7: Organisational Culture to Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration*.

5.6.5 Collaborative Evaluation (CE)

CE combines stakeholder engagement with evaluator expertise to generate comprehensive assessments (Rodríguez-Campos 2012:523). The action-outcome framework enhances CE by fostering collaboration among various actors within the policy system, promoting shared ownership of evaluation results, a central tenet of *Sequence 7: Organisational Culture to Increased Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration*. One of the limitations of the CE relates to power imbalances between the stakeholders and experts, which leads to the challenge of maintaining evaluator neutrality (Rodríguez-Campos 2012:527). These issues are addressed by ensuring that the framework's implementation includes mechanisms for equitable participation via *Sequence 7*.

5.6.6 Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE)

TBE provides in-depth insights into programme mechanisms and informs programme improvement (Chen 2016:112). The framework amplifies TBE's strengths by focusing on understanding the causal mechanisms and contextual factors influencing evidence use (*Sequences 1 to 7*). The complexity and potential overemphasis on theory (Dahler-Larsen & Schwandt 2012:85) are balanced by the framework's practical orientation towards enhancing the use of evidence in real-world policy settings (*Sequence 3: Cultural Norms and Values to Greater Awareness and Understanding of Evaluation*).

While the issues of the socio-political environment (*Sequence 2*), *Institutional Frameworks* (*Sequence 4*) and the *Public Policy Environment* (*Sequence 6*) are implicit in all use theories. This framework explicitly deals with these three dimensions of evidence use within national policy in a way that broadens the theoretical factors in the use theories that influence the use of evidence causally and dynamically thereby introducing a comprehensive set of factors in the form of actions and outcomes into the existing body of knowledge.

5.7 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ROOT OF EVALUATION THEORY

The study's focus on the social accountability root of evaluation theory aligns with enhancing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in government programmes. This root is fundamentally concerned with how evaluations can be used to improve policies and programmes to serve society better (Christie & Alkin 2012:20). By developing a context-sensitive framework for evidence utilisation, the study addresses the gap identified by King and Alkin (2019) in the social accountability root, which calls for the development of context-sensitive use theories.

Specifically, the action-outcome framework for utilising evaluation evidence contributes to this root of evaluation theory through the seven action-outcome evidence use sequences. For example, *Sequence 1: Historical Context to Institutionalisation of Evaluation Practices* which focuses on regulatory and policy frameworks *Regulatory and Policy Frameworks* (COF1) as key conditional factors that

are meant to induce systematic evaluation and evidence use in policymaking and *Sequence 6: Policy Environment to Improved Accountability and Transparency in Policymaking* which speaks directly to the accountability of and transparency orientation of the social accountability root of evaluation theory. The interaction of conditional *Accountability Mechanisms* (COF6) and strategic factors such as *Promoting Accountability and Transparency* (STF6) is essential to create the goal of this root of evaluation.

The Grounded Theory approach used in this study allowed for exploring public officials' experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing evidence use in policymaking. This aligns with Shulha and Cousins' (1997:197) emphasis on the importance of context in evaluation use theory. The recognition that organisational structures and processes shape the context of policymaking underscores the need for theories sensitive to these specific conditions. Thus, this study contributes to the root of social accountability by providing a framework grounded in the actual experiences and contexts of policy actors in South Africa.

The framework developed in this study contributes to the existing knowledge and theory in the field of evaluation and policy by advancing the social accountability root of evaluation theory through context-sensitive approaches, addressing gaps and enhancing the strengths of various evaluation use theories, providing practical guidelines for policymakers to improve the utilisation of evidence and promoting a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing evidence use in specific contexts. The action-outcomes evidence-use framework, therefore, supports the development of more efficient and effective policies, ultimately contributing to the advancement of evaluation theory and practice in public administration.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the proposed action-outcome framework for evidence use, detailing how the results of the grounded theory analysis that produced the coding framework and theoretical narrative were used to construct a comprehensive tool that captures the salient causal factors that influence the use of evidence. The rationale

for the framework, as a response to one of the study's main objectives, was also discussed. More importantly, it was highlighted that the framework was also an important part of responding to the study's problem context, which formed an essential part of the justification of this study. A discussion of the framework's seven causal action-outcome evidence-use sequences unpacked the causal nature of each sequence, explaining how the desired evidence-use outcomes under the fourth dimension would materialise from the actions under the three other dimensions of the framework. The chapter also revisited the review of evaluation use theories presented in Chapter 2 and identified how the proposed framework contributed to existing theory and the extent to which it addressed and enhanced some of the limitations of the six evidence-based use theories. This discussion formed the basis for the study's contribution to theory in the public policy evaluation field as it pertains to evidence-based decision-making. As stated in the theoretical orientation of Chapter 1, the chapter demonstrated how the study contributed to the social accountability root of evaluation theory. The practical application of the framework was demonstrated through real-world examples of how each sequence can enhance evidence use in practice, thereby highlighting the potential impact of the research on policymaking in South Africa. The chapter highlighted the framework's implications for policymakers, evaluators, and key stakeholders, emphasising its potential to improve decision-making and policy formulation.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter presents the culmination of the research undertaken in this thesis. The primary goal of determining the factors that influence the use of evidence within the National Policy System, has been comprehensively investigated through a multi-case study design of four national departments. This was achieved using a Grounded Theory approach that drew on the context-specific experiences of public officials in the Social Cluster concerning how they use evidence. This served as the foundation for creating a framework for evidence use. The research process ensured the reliability of the findings, which directly addressed the following objectives.

1. To assess theories underpinning evidence use in policy formulation and implementation.
2. To examine South Africa's National Evaluation System and its influence on evidence use.
3. To examine the factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence in the Social Cluster in South Africa.
4. To generate an evidence use framework for strengthening evidence-based policymaking in South Africa in general and the Social Cluster in particular.

This chapter will begin by giving a brief synopsis of the preceding chapters, highlighting which objective of the study it addressed and how it answered each research question. A discussion of the recommendations for policymakers, evaluators, and key stakeholders will then follow. The study's limitations will pave the way for identifying potential avenues for future research. The summary will underscore the relevance and importance of the study and the need for continued investigation in this area.

6.2 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

The following sections present the synopsis of each chapter.

6.2.1 Synopsis of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 introduced the study by establishing the context under which the investigation was conducted. This highlighted the scarcity of context-sensitive frameworks of evidence-use that were grounded in the experiences of South African public officials. It discussed the orientation of the study as it relates to the general rise of M&E systems and the mainstreaming of evaluations as part of the increased focus on EBPM. The chapter looked at the empirical literature for the factors that influence the use of evidence establishing the basis upon which the study rationale and problem context would be defined. The theoretical framework that underpins the study was also explored. Of the three roots of evaluation theory, it was argued that this study contributed to the root of social accountability. This root emphasises the importance of evaluation use and has an orientation towards evaluation and decision-making, which were the main concerns of this study. The discussion of evaluation as a subsystem of a national policy system was meant to highlight the nature and context of public policymaking. In this environment decisions are driven by strategic imperatives in line with the incumbent political party of the day, and implemented by the administration, which also facilitates the evaluation of the policies and intervention that are meant to achieve the goals of those strategies. In this context, the challenge of evidence use emerges as each of these functions is often driven by different sets of public officials. As revealed by the participants in this study, the challenge for those tasked to ensure that departments engaged in EBPM highlighted the factors that influence the use of evidence, with political and cultural factors emerging as a central organising influence on use. These challenges lead to the framing of the problem context, which highlighted that despite commitments to a developmental state, evidence suggests that the array of policies implemented since 1994 has not yet adequately met the needs of society in South Africa, 30 years after the end of apartheid (Amusa & Fadiran 2024; Hamilton 2024; Phaahla 2024; Government of South Africa 2017; Seekings & Nattrass 2017:52). Multiple deprivations persist among the historically disadvantaged black African population, calling for a re-evaluation of

current policy configurations based on the most recent evidence and the extent to which implementation failures are a function of factors that prevent that use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation (Portfolio Committee on Agriculture 2022; Government of South Africa 2017). In this problem context, the ultimate objective of this study was framed as the development of a framework that will enhance the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation. The remainder of the chapter focused on discussing and justifying the methodological approach alongside the study's limitations, delimitations and ethical implications.

6.2.2 Synopsis of Chapter 2

The first objective of the study and its related research question were addressed and answered in Chapter 2, respectively. The chapter began with a brief discussion of the role of literature reviews in grounded theory research. Then, it proceeded to explore six evidence-use theories, which identified what was referred to as theory-based factors that influence evidence use. This was essential given the theory-building focus of this study. A discussion of the evolution of evidence use emphasised how it has evolved from a narrow conceptualisation to a broader framing with six types of evidence uses of evaluation results being assessed. These identified what was called use-based factors of evidence use. The theory-based and use-based factors that influence the use of evidence were compared, to identify a standard set of factors that influence use. The identification and presentation of these factors fulfilled the study's *first objective*, which was, *To assess theories underpinning evidence use in policy formulation and implementation*, thereby answering the research question: *What theories underpin evidence use in policy formulation and implementation?* The identified factors that influence evidence use were grouped into the following themes: for theory-based factors of use these included, *Stakeholder Engagement & Ownership, Methodological Rigour & Quality, Contextual Relevance & Applicability* and *Dissemination & Accumulation of Knowledge*. The use-based thematic groups for factors that influence evidence use included *Capacity & Resource Constraints, Political & Institutional Context, Credibility & Quality of Evaluation Evidence* and *Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration*. The chapter ended with a discussion of EBPM and ventured a comprehensive definition which served as a conceptual tool for contextualising evidence based decision-making during framework development.

6.2.3 Synopsis of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 examined South Africa's NES and its role in influencing evidence use, and in so doing, it fulfilled the *second objective* of this study (i.e. *To examine South Africa's National Evaluation System (NES) and its influence on evidence use.*). This chapter discussed the rise of NESs and how they influence policymakers' use of evidence. The rationale for the focus on NES in the context of this study was motivated by the critical role these systems play in the mainstreaming and institutionalisation of evidence use in South Africa. The study results showed that issues around the latter and institutional capacity emerged as significant factors identified by respondents as essential factors influencing evidence use. To provide a deeper understanding of evidence use, the chapter explored the policies and legislation that govern South Africa's NES, examining the frameworks and guidelines that have been put in place to ensure the effective use of evidence within the NPS. The chapter also conceptualised the South African NPS as a complex mechanistic system, shedding light on the areas where evaluation evidence is actively utilised to inform decision-making processes. Specifically, there are 12 evidence-use categories, especially categories 1: *Importance & Role of Evaluation*, 11: *Accountability & Transparency* and 12: *Mechanisms to Strengthen Evidence Use*, revealed that it is through the mainstreaming and institutionalisation of evidence-use via the various frameworks and guidelines presented in the chapter that the NES exerts an influence on the use of evidence. This allowed this chapter to answer the second research question of the study: *How does South Africa's National Evaluation System influence the use of evidence?*

6.2.4 Synopsis of Chapter 4

This chapter built on the three preceding chapters by addressing the *third objective* of this study. A profile of the realised sample was given, and its suitability to develop the Grounded Theory was examined. The chapter also explained the importance of analytic generalisation within a case study design context and the differences between the approach to coding and the presentation of results in ground theory relative to thematic analysis. Through axial and selective coding, the open codes were incorporated into 12 evidence-use categories that played an important role in the

theory building and subsequent development of the use framework. Understanding the relationship between the emergent categories was also accomplished in this chapter, and laid the foundation for building the grounded theory. The theory-based and use-based factors that influence evidence use were revisited to assess how they aligned with and differed from those that emerged from the Grounded Theory analysis. While they were overlaps, the analysis showed that the study identified seven additional categories of evidence use not directly covered by the theory-based factors. The relationships between the emerging evidence-use categories and the relationships within categories were assessed by constructing a mechanistic system-based evidence-use matrix that identified barriers and enablers of evidence use across the three policymaking subsystems. Before developing the actual theory, an assessment of the extent to which there was sufficient variation within cases to produce a meaningful, Grounded Theory was also conducted. This gave five reasons that demonstrate the suitability of the cases in theory building. Identifying the core category (*Category 4. Political and Cultural Influences*) was an important step of the Grounded Theory approach, and this led to the presentation of the causal coding paradigm and the theoretical narrative of the Grounded Theory that represented the foundation upon which the evidence-use framework was built. The comprehensive analysis in this chapter and open codes, which represented various factors that influence evidence-use, means that the 12 evidence-use categories addressed the *third objective* of this study, which was: *To examine the factors influencing the use of evaluation evidence in the Social Cluster in South Africa*. In doing so, it answered the research question: *What factors influence the use of evidence by officials in the Social Cluster in South Africa?*

6.2.5 Synopsis of Chapter 5

Drawing on the analysis in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 used the coding paradigm and the theoretical narrative around the core category of *Political & Cultural Influences (Category 4)* as the basis for framework construction. The chapter briefly revisited the problem context as the basis for constructing an evidence-based use framework. Then, it explained how the action and outcomes framework for utilising evaluation evidence within the context of Political & Cultural Influences was constructed. This was followed by discussing the framework's seven causal action-outcome evidence-

use sequences. The construction of the framework achieved the *fourth objective* of this study, which was: *To generate an evidence use framework for strengthening evidence-based policymaking in South Africa in general and the Social Cluster in particular.* In fulfilling this objective, this chapter answered the following guiding research question: *What is the ideal framework for strengthening the use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation in the national policy system in general and the Social Cluster in particular?* The chapter also revisited the review of evaluation use theories presented in Chapter 2 and identified how the proposed framework relates to and builds upon these existing theories, thereby providing a clear theoretical foundation for the framework. For each theory, an evaluation of the extent to which it addresses and enhances some of the limitations of the six evidence-based use theories was given and, as such, formed the basis for the study's contribution to theory in the field of evaluation in public policy as it pertains to EBPM. A key aim of the study was to contribute to the social accountability root of evaluation theory; this chapter demonstrated how the developed frame accomplished this. The chapter discussed the practical contributions of the framework by assessing the implications of the findings for policymakers, evaluators, and key stakeholders using real-world examples. The contribution to theory and practice presented in this chapter demonstrated how the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on evidence use in public policymaking, helping to bridge the gap between theory and practice by promoting more informed and effective decision-making within the South African context.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study, as detailed in the preceding chapters, have surfaced several key areas where improvements can be made in evaluation and evidence-based decision-making. Based on the analysis of the coding paradigm, the theoretical narrative and, more importantly, the framework developed, this section presents a set of recommendations meant to create an environment where the political and cultural influences on evidence use are turned into enablers. The recommendations are intended to guide future research, inform policy decisions, and enhance evidence-based practices specifically within the Social Cluster and generally, in South Africa. All of this is meant to maximise the potential benefits of the insights gained from this

study. Several recommendations can be identified that support the seven evidence use sequences of the framework.

6.3.1 Build and sustain political will

Regular advocacy campaigns and workshops are crucial, particularly those focused on political leaders and key stakeholders. These initiatives underscore the significance of evidence-based policymaking. Effective advocacy programmes can be designed and delivered by partnering with academic institutions and civil society organisations. This approach aims to garner increased political support and commitment to evidence-based decision-making, enhancing policy effectiveness and accountability. To implement this recommendation, political leaders and elected officials will need to support advocacy campaigns, champion transparency, and allocate funds and human capital for evidence-related activities.

6.3.2 Enhance institutional capacity and ensure resource availability

The results showed that there was still a need to improve the level of training that public officials receive for the generation, analysis, and use of evidence by investing in continuous training programmes. These can be established with local, regional and international organisations to facilitate current and relevant training and development for South Africa. Government departments and technical agencies will need to ring-fence budgetary resources toward training initiatives and collaborations to ensure ongoing investments in capacity-building. The outcome of these interventions will be improved skills and competencies within institutions, helping to generate high-quality evidence and implement effective policies.

6.3.3 Foster inclusive stakeholder engagement

The study highlights stakeholder engagement as a critical theme in evidence use. It is essential to facilitate the participation of stakeholder groups in the policymaking process by establishing formal platforms and mechanisms. Government departments and evaluation facilitation agencies must ensure that stakeholders are involved in all phases of policy development, actively involving them in defining evaluation questions, selecting methods, and interpreting findings. This participatory approach ensures that

policies and include diverse perspectives, leading to more relevant and effective outcomes.

6.3.4 Establish and strengthen accountability mechanisms

The review of the NES revealed that South Africa has the frameworks and guidelines to support evidence use. However, the analysis of this study revealed a need to reconsider revisiting and strengthening guidelines and accountability structures to ensure that evidence is ethically and transparently used in policymaking. Parliamentary committees, oversight bodies, and DPME play a role in achieving this by ensuring that legal requirements for evidence use are established, enforced, and supported by regular audits and public reporting on decisions based on evidence. This can engender greater trust and credibility in the policy-making process, thereby promoting a more responsible and transparent approach to decision making.

6.3.5 Document and analyse historical and socio-political contexts

The core category that emerged of *Political & Cultural Influences* is partly sustained by several historical dynamics that still exert an influence in the current socio-political context, as highlighted by the action-outcome framework of evidence use. Given the all-encompassing nature of these cultural influences, it is necessary to establish an archive of historical political events, governance methods, and past policy outcomes to inform current policies and practices in the future. This can be achieved through a dedicated team within the DPME responsible for collecting, documenting, and analysing historical and sociopolitical data within the country. The goal will be to better understand how past events shape current attitudes towards the use of evidence so that policymaking can be better informed and contextually relevant.

6.3.6 Promote leadership commitment

One of the most important factors that influence use that could make a significant difference is the participation of political principles. Parliament, The Presidency, and DPME can encourage political leaders to commit to evidence-based policymaking publicly. This can be achieved by having leaders highlight the role of evaluation evidence in shaping effective policies during budget speeches or public addresses. This can be followed by giving and demonstrating their commitment by allocating

additional evaluation resources. The goal would be to demonstrate continuous communication that presents successful evidence-based policies, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency.

6.3.7 Disseminate evaluation findings effectively

The dissemination of findings can be an essential factor in influencing the use of evidence. This will require producing clear and accessible reports and presentations tailored to different stakeholder audiences. Departments can achieve this by continuing to follow DPME guidelines for creating summary briefs for policymakers, detailed technical reports for programme managers, and infographics for the public. It will also be essential to leverage multiple dissemination channels, including online platforms, policy briefs, and stakeholder meetings, to ensure broad access to evaluation findings.

6.3.8 Enhance system based evidence use and generation

The system-based evidence-use matrix offers a comprehensive, coherent, and structured approach to understanding and enhancing evidence utilisation within a national policy system. DPME, working with all stakeholders in the NES, can use the matrix to serve as a basis for developing a system-based approach to evidence generation and use, ensuring that evidence is used transparently and consistently in decision-making processes. Section 4.6 demonstrated the practical utility of the framework, highlighting how it can be used to understand ways of improving the use of evaluation evidence within the NPS as an integrated system. The advantage of capturing the NPS as a system in this form is that it represents a design that shows us how to integrate evidence into decision-making processes across government strategic, operational, and evaluation functions.

6.3.9 Integrate elements of the mechanistic system-based evidence-use matrix into national policy frameworks

The system-based evidence-use matrix, which, with its comprehensive, coherent, and structured framework, is a practical tool for policymakers and practitioners in the public sector. Government departments can effectively use it to integrate evidence into all aspects of policy formulation and implementation, providing a clear roadmap for

evidence-based decision making. The matrix's practical and illustrative nature alone can be integrated into national policy frameworks, demonstrating to policymakers and practitioners how evidence can be systematically considered at all stages of the policy formulation and implementation process.

6.3.10 Integrate an understanding of evidence use barriers and enablers into capacity-building training programmes

The mechanistic system evidence use matrix identifies *barriers* and *enablers* of evidence use; as such, the matrix enhances policymakers' and practitioners' understanding of the dynamics at play in different contexts. It also promotes strategic planning and implementation by showing how examples from the *strategic subsystem*, across all 12 evidence-use Categories, inform high-level decision-making and, in a similar vein, how examples from the *operational/implementation subsystem* allow implementers to understand how evidence is applied in practical settings. The examples from the *evaluation subsystem* serve an instrumental purpose as they highlight the importance of ongoing policy and programme assessment and refinement. This makes the matrix a tool for designing training and awareness programmes around the categories, building capacity for evidence generation, interpretation, and application across the different subsystems in ways that potentiate enablers and moderate barriers. The National School of Government (NSG) and Public Training Institutes can embed the matrix in evidence use capacity-building training programme curricula.

6.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study employed a Grounded Theory methodology in a multi-case study design involving four departments and six participants. Data collection was carried out using an open-ended instrument. While this approach has provided valuable insights and contributed to developing a context-sensitive framework, some limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations are considered considering Yin's (2014) comprehensive treatment of various aspects of case study design.

6.4.1 Limited sample size

Chapters 1 and 4 extensively discussed the advantages of a four-department case study. Chapter 4 further highlighted the importance of case variation as a reasonable basis for developing Grounded Theory. From the data analysis and the open codes created, it was clear that the six participants provided 'rich and thick' descriptions of their lived experiences regarding evidence use. The study might have benefited from including more departments. Within a multi-case study design, the goal is not so much to have more participants from the same department since, in this case, perspectives eventually converge as the same conditions shape lived realities. The variation needed is at the case level. The challenge in securing more departments to participate lies in negotiating access with gatekeepers. Obtaining permission for the four departments took a considerable amount of time. The impact of a limited number of cases and, by extension, participants is that it restricts the generalisability of the findings.

Although the four cases offered depth on evidence use practices, there is the possibility that the insights gained may not be representative of broader trends or applicable to other contexts. Yin (2014) emphasises the importance of adequate sample size for analytical generalisation because case studies are generally not intended to provide statistical generalisation.

When time and resources permit, future studies should consider increasing the sample size and diversity of cases. This expansion could be achieved by introducing focus group discussions and conducting studies involving participants across departments. These could be organised at the cluster level, where permission is negotiated with the cluster's lead department. A more extensive and diverse sample will provide a broader understanding of the factors that influence evidence use and will help validate the framework in different contexts. This potential for future research to improve the transferability and reliability of findings should be viewed as an exciting opportunity for the field.

6.4.2 Case-selection bias

Given that the study did not use probability sampling, the selection of the four departments and six participants could introduce selection bias. Although great care was taken to select the four departments, as discussed extensively in Chapter 1, this effect is unavoidable where cases are chosen based on purposive criteria rather than a systematic sampling strategy. The findings may reflect specific contexts or perspectives that do not capture the full diversity of experiences and practices regarding the use of evidence within the broader population. Yin (2014) underscores the importance of a carefully considered case selection process to ensure that the cases are relevant and can provide meaningful insights. This study achieved the latter by carefully documenting case selection in Chapter 1.

Future studies can address the issue of case selection by implementing blended systematic and purposive case selection strategies. This sampling approach will ensure that the selected cases represent various experiences and contexts. Concerning the purposeful sampling of cases, future research can consider theoretical replication as a crucial goal to enhancing the reliability of the study. The approach in this case could include using theoretical sampling methods to select cases that can provide complementary and contrasting information. These could go beyond the approach used in this study, using the number of evaluations in the national repository as indicators of the institutionalisation of evidence generation and use. This might involve selecting cases based on criteria such as policy impact, sector, or geographic region.

6.4.3 Data collection methods

Data collection methods can also introduce bias. In this case, the data was collected using an open-ended instrument, which, while allowing in-depth responses, can lead to inconsistent and subjective data. This has the potential to introduce variability in responses and interviewer bias, which can affect the data's reliability and consistency. Open-ended questions also focus on specific topics while neglecting others. The study tried to minimise both biases by adhering to the interview schedule and asking questions similarly to the degree that each interview allowed.

With time and resources permitting, future research can employ a multi-method approach to data collection. This approach, which combines open-ended interviews with other methods, such as surveys or focus groups, can enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Triangulating these primary data sources can provide a richer data set and more nuanced insights, which ensure the robustness of the research.

6.4.4 Generalisability and Transferability

Although generalisability was never the study's goal, one still does not want findings that are too ideographic and without any implications outside the four departments studied. While Chapter 4 discussed the importance of analytic generalisation, the possibility remains that even though a four-case study was used, the study findings might still be too context-specific and may not be easily transferable to other settings or Clusters. This means that the framework developed for the Social Cluster might not be directly applicable or relevant in a different Cluster due to differences in cultural, political, or socioeconomic environments. The challenge lies in ensuring that the developed framework can be adapted and tested in various contexts to validate its broader applicability. While case studies are inherently context-specific, this study implemented Yin's suggestion that researchers should aim for analytical generalisation by linking the findings to broader theoretical constructs. In the case of this study, this was achieved using the coding paradigm and the grounded theoretical narrative.

Future studies can opt to conduct comparative studies across different clusters to ensure greater analytical generalisation. This will allow for the inclusion of departments that differ significantly in factors that influence evidence, such as culture, political dynamics, and socioeconomic contexts. This will facilitate a deeper understanding of how these different contexts influence evidence-based practices, thereby enhancing the transferability of the framework.

6.4.5 Depth versus Breadth

The study's focus on four cases while providing the in-depth insights needed for a grounded theory might have been gained at the expense of breadth. The detailed understanding gained from a few cases may overlook broader patterns and trends that

could be identified with a larger sample size or a more extensive comparative analysis. Yin argues for the balance between depth and breadth in case study research. Although in-depth case studies provide valuable detailed insights, complementing them with survey studies can enhance the overall understanding and applicability of the findings (Yin 2014).

While this might be difficult to implement, future research could explore strategies for balancing in-depth analysis with cross-cluster surveys. This will allow detailed insights to be captured while also identifying broader patterns. This lends itself to using a mixed-method approach that combines detailed case studies with surveys of policymakers and stakeholders. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of evidence use, capturing detailed case-specific insights and generalisable trends.

6.4.6 Temporal limitations

Invariably, the study is limited by its temporal scope, which captures a snapshot in time that does not capture longitudinal dynamics that influence evidence use. The concern here is that policymaking processes and the use of evaluation evidence can evolve. A single-point-in-time study might miss these dynamics and trends. Yin (2018) emphasises the value of longitudinal case studies for understanding changes and developments over time. Incorporating a longitudinal component could provide deeper insights into how evidence use in policymaking evolves. This acknowledgement of the study's temporal limitations motivates the potential for future research to provide dynamic insights.

The idea of a longitudinal case study allows the framework's impact to be assessed over time to understand how evidence use, and policymaking processes evolve. This can be accomplished by tracking the framework's implementation over several years and monitoring changes in policy outcomes and institutional practices. Longitudinal data is essential because it can provide insights into the sustainability of the framework's impact and help identify long-term trends and adjustments.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter of the study provided an overview of each chapter, highlighting how each contributed to the study's objectives. Drawing on the developed action-outcome evidence-use framework, key policy recommendations were formulated that focused on enhancing the framework's effectiveness and practical use. The chapter also extensively discussed limitations while suggesting avenues for future research. Overall, as highlighted, the study achieved all its objectives and adequately answered all research questions. The action-outcome evidence-use framework is a comprehensive tool grounded on factors that influence the use of evidence in South Africa's public sector. The proposed framework, with its emphasis on practical use, can serve as the basis for the continued mainstreaming of evidence-based decision-making in South Africa that complements existing evidence-based use practices. Finally, the Grounded Theory that was developed is also a significant contribution to theory and practice as it offers a contextual understanding of *how* and *why* evidence-use factors influence evidence use.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Key informant interview guide

School of Public Management and Administration

A systems approach towards a framework for utilising evaluative knowledge in the national policy system

Interviewee Name & Surname

Department

Programme

The following open-ended questions will guide the face-to-face interview. Follow-up questions will ONLY be asked if the response to the main question does not surface all the relevant issues.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. What is your position?

2. How long have you been in this position?

3. How many years have you worked in

a) the Public Sector and

b) in this Department?

SECTION A:

1. What is your understanding of evaluation evidence in the context of the national policy system?
2. What is your understanding of the use of evaluation evidence during the different stages of the policymaking process (*e.g., problem identification, problem definition, policy design, implementation, or evaluation*)?
3. How do the organisational culture and political atmosphere within the

department influence the use of evidence in shaping policies?

- *Follow-up 1:* Can you share a specific instance where culture and political environment significantly influenced the choice of evidence in a policy decision?
- *Follow-up 2:* How do you think your own experiences within this institutional culture have shaped your view on the use of evidence in policymaking?

4. Based on your experience, how have past events and previous policy choices influenced the way evidence is used in making new policies today?

- *Follow-up 1:* Could you provide an example of how a past policy decision continues to influence current evidence-based policymaking?

5. How does the broader sociopolitical / socioeconomic context in South Africa influence the use of evidence in policymaking?

SECTION B:

1. What specific events or triggers have you observed that directly initiate the use of evidence in policymaking processes?

- *Follow-up 1:* How do these initiating events vary across different policy areas or contexts?

2. Could you describe instances where a particular piece of evidence significantly influenced a policy decision? What were the circumstances?

- *Follow-up 1:* What lessons were learnt from this case about the role of evidence in policymaking?

3. From your experience, what are the key factors or requirements that you believe are necessary for the effective use of evidence in national policymaking?

- *Follow-up 1:* In your opinion, which of these factors is most often missing or underdeveloped in the current policy system?

4. How do the political will, capacity, and competencies of policymakers and institutions affect the integration of evidence into policy decisions?

- *Follow-up 1:* Can you describe a situation where political will or lack thereof played a crucial role in the use or disregard of evidence?

5. In your experience, are there any types of evidence that consistently act as catalysts for policy changes?

- *Follow-up 1:* Can you provide an example where this type of evidence led to significant policy change?

- *Follow-up 2:* Why do you think these particular types of evidence strongly influence policy decisions?

SECTION C:

- 1. Can you discuss the strategies that you have used or seen being used to ensure the effective integration of evidence into policymaking?**
 - *Follow-up 1:* What challenges have you encountered in implementing these strategies?
- 2. How do government officials handle situations where stakeholders involved in making policies have different views or understandings of the evidence presented to them?**
 - *Follow-up 1:* Based on your observations, how successful have government officials been in managing and resolving differences in views or understandings of evidence among policymaking stakeholders?
- 3. What strategies could increase the capacity and competence of policymakers to use evidence more effectively?**

SECTION D:

- 1. How do you assess the outcomes of policies that have been formulated or implemented based on specific pieces of evidence?**
- 2. Can you share some instances where using evidence in making policies, achieved the intended goals?**
 - *Follow-Up 1:* What made these successes possible?
- 3. Can you give examples of times when the evidence used in policymaking produced outcomes that were not anticipated? How were these outcomes addressed?**
 - *Follow-up 1:* How have such experiences with unanticipated results altered the approach to creating policies and incorporating evidence in the future?

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE BY THE UNIVERSITY



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Tel: 012 420 4381
Email: shannie.maharaj@up.ac.za

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Approval Certificate

25 September 2023

Department: School of Public Management and Administration

Dear Mr NS Ngandu

The application for ethical clearance for the research project described below served before this committee on:
2023-09-08

Protocol No:	EMS143/22
Principal researcher:	Mr NS Ngandu
Research title:	A systems approach towards a framework for utilising evaluative knowledge in the national policy system
Student/Staff No:	21740993
Degree:	Doctoral
Supervisor/Promoter:	Dr. T Masiya
Department:	School of Public Management and Administration

The decision by the committee is reflected below:

Decision:	Approved
Conditions (if applicable):	
Period of approval:	2023-09-18 - 2024-07-31

The approval is subject to the researcher abiding by the principles and parameters set out in the application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research. The approval does not imply that the researcher is relieved of any accountability in terms of the Codes of Research Ethics of the University of Pretoria if action is taken beyond the approved proposal. If during the course of the research it becomes apparent that the nature and/or extent of the research deviates significantly from the original proposal, a new application for ethics clearance must be submitted for review.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely



PROF JA NEL
CHAIR: COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTERS

Approval Letter to Conduct Research in the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure



Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X85, PRETORIA. 0001 Int Code: +27 12 Tel: 406 1300 Fax: 321 3888
E-mail: Fredah.Maseko@dpw.gov.za website: www.publicworks.gov.za

Attention: Mr. NS Ngandu
202 Greenwood
Olympus Drive
Boardwalk Villas Ext 4
0043

Dear Mr. NS Ngandu

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON "A SYSTEMS APPROACH TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR UTILISING EVALUATIVE KNOWLEDGE IN THE NATIONAL POLICY SYSTEM" WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT: MR N.S NGANDU

1. Your request dated 31/05/2023 pertaining to the above mentioned matter is hereby acknowledged.
2. Please be informed that It is a requirement by the Department that the researchers submit the ethical clearance letter when request approval to conduct researches within the Department
3. The Department has decided to grant you a provisional approval to enable you to apply for the Ethical Clearance Letter with the University of Pretoria.
4. Please use this provisional approval to apply for Ethical Clearance Letter with the Institution
5. Please be informed that approval must be sought from DPWI upon granting of your Ethical Clearance Letter by the University of Pretoria before you can conduct the interviews within the Department.

Yours Sincerely

Ms. T Hlatshwayo

Act Deputy Director General: CS

Date: 10/07/2023

Approval Letter to Conduct Research in the Department of Employment & Labour



employment & labour

Department:
Employment and Labour
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Postal Address: Private Bag X117, PRETORIA, 0001 • Street Address: Laboris Building, Francis Baard Street, PRETORIA
Tel: 0850101018 Fax: (012) 309 4737 or (012) 309 4738

Enquires : TN DIRE
Telephone : 012 3094186

Dear Mr Ngandu

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR'S OFFICES.

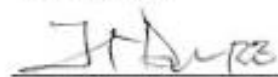
Your email dated 09 June 2023 refers.

Please be advised that your request to conduct research in the Department of Employment Labour's Offices has been approved in principle.

The final approval letter signed by the Director-General will only be offered to you when the Clearance Certificate/University's Ethics Committee's Approval as well as the Structured Questionnaire/Interview/Survey or any other method of data collection has been received by our legal department and they are satisfied that your research information will not be used for the purpose of putting the Department of Employment and Labour into disrepute in any way whatsoever.

We trust that the above is in order.

Yours faithfully



**ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
THOMAS DIRE**

Date: 10/06/2023

Approval Letter to Conduct Research in the Department of Sport, Arts & Culture



Private Bag X897 | VVL Building | 202 Madiba Street | Pretoria, 0001 |
Email: info@dsac.gov.za | Tel: 012 441 3000 | Fax: 012 441 3699

Private Bag X9015 | Room 1621 | 120 Plein Street | Cape Town, 8000 |
Email: info@dsac.gov.za | Tel: (021) 465 5620 | Fax: (021) 465 5624



Mr Norval Stewart Ngandu
PhD Student in Public Administration, Major in Public Policy
Student Number: U21740993
SNgandu@hsrc.ac.za

Dear Mr Ngandu

APPROVAL GRANTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE FOR YOUR PhD STUDIES: THESIS SUBJECT: " A SYSTEM APPROACH TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR UTILISING EVALUATIVE KNOWLEDGE IN THE NATIONAL POLICY SYSTEM"

In response to your request dated 20 September 2022, permission is herewith granted for you to conduct research, and interview two public officials within the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. (One official within Programme 2, Recreational Development and Sport Promotion and one official within Programme 3, Arts Culture Promotion and Development)

In line with the University's Code of Research Ethics, your commitment to protect the confidentiality and identity of the officials who will agree to participate and be interviewed by yourself throughout your study, is essential.

Good luck with your studies, and on behalf of the Department, we look forward to reading your completed thesis.

With my best wishes

Yours sincerely,

**DR CYNTHIA KHUMALO
ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE**

DATE: 25/06/23

Cc: Ms Khan - DDG: Recreational Development and Sport Promotion
Dr Khumalo - DDG: Arts Culture Promotion and Development

Approval Letter to Conduct Research in the Department of Basic Education



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001, Sol Plaatje House, 222 Struben Street, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa
Tel.: (012) 357 3000, Fax: (012) 323 0601, www.education.gov.za

Ref no: 72503/1
Enquiries: Ms L. Molemela
Tel: (012) 357-3221
Email: Molemela.L@dbe.gov.za

Mr NS Ngandu
Private Bag X41
PRETORIA
0001

By e-mail: SNgandu@hsrc.ac.za

Dear Mr Ngandu

RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS WITH DBE OFFICIALS

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) received your request to conduct interviews with DBE officials for your research on "A systems approach towards a framework for utilising evaluative knowledge in the national policy system".

The request is approved on condition that the researcher adheres to the conditions set in the research protocol and to the ethical conduct of using research information.

It is emphasised that the information received from the interviews should solely be used for the purpose of this research. The Research Co-ordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate will liaise with the relevant DBE officials on your behalf.

We recommend that you submit this letter as evidence that the Department is aware of your research and that you share the findings with the DBE at the conclusion of your study.

APPENDIX D: OPEN CODES AND QUOTATIONS

List of initial codes, open codes and quotations

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
1	Evaluation as a means to an end	Evaluation as a tool for achieving policy goals	"To me, evaluation is important in ensuring that whatever government policy it intends to do, we end up getting what we want to achieve through that policy or legislation." (C1-P1, 13:10)
2	Having confidence in policymaking without evidence	Comfort in non-evidence-based policymaking	"But I see comfort in those who are responsible, not using evidence. When they come up with policies, I don't know why." (C1-P1, 15:24)
3	The difficulty of evaluating impact retrospectively	Difficulty in retrospectively evaluating impact	"When we tried to look at the theory of change, you looked at the targets put in place but did not find them." (C1-P1, 17:10)
4		Stagnation in evidence use despite experience	"I think there's no change, as I've said in the past. You started by asking me how long I have been in the department. I started in the department in 2000." (C1-P1, 26:42)
5	Evidence of negative impact ignored	Evidence of negative consequences ignored for political gain	"...it was evident that the study was saying that if you introduce a national minimum wage, for example, at R3500, it means that all people who are in employment, but anything less than R3500 will lose their jobs." (C1-P1, 26:42)
6	Influence of powerful actors on evidence use. Power imbalances hinder evidence use	Influence of power dynamics on evidence use	"Unfortunately, because of the powers, if I get that aspect of power, it will depend on who is doing it because some are more powerful than others, and they will get it up to cabinet." (C1-P1, 31:28)
7		Need for stronger enforcement of evidence requirements	"So, that leaves out the crucial evidence that you need at some point." (C1-P1, 31:28)
8		External pressure for impact assessments	"Maybe I can bring in the layer of structures, but now I am outside of my department. I see cabinet's role in bringing in socio-economic impact analysis, which forces departments to do impact assessments before whatever policy they're developing reaches cabinet." (C1-P1, 31:28)
9	Evidence mechanisms are limited in their effectiveness	Limited effectiveness of current evidence mechanisms	"I see this as something that is pushing, but still, you know, people can put things together and submit, and those things pass." (C1-P1, 31:28)
10		Involving diverse stakeholders in policy development	"I think their identification of stakeholders involved is another important area in designing your policy..." (C1-P1, 41:39)
11	The use of evidence is hindered by a lack of political will	Lack of political will hinders evidence use	"If the wishes driving them do not need that evidence, they might influence you to do things that are not based on evidence." (C1-P1, 45:24)
12		Underutilisation of impact evaluations	"I wanted to come to that one to say things like impact; I don't see us really taking those into consideration to influence or contribute to the decisions that are made for policies to be developed." (C1-P1, 48:42)
13		Limited impact of DPME role	"I can see that the introduction of the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation was supposed to help in improving that area. But I don't really see the impact." (C1-P1, 51:48)
14		Socio-political influence on evidence use	"And now it brings to me this issue you asked me about the socio-political in power, that sometimes these things they lose today benefit from evidence because somebody has got interested and wants it to go somewhere." (C1-P1, 53:11)
15	Politicisation of evidence	Political interference with evidence	"Then this person, Senior Politician starting to compare why are we having this high unemployment and why India does not have something like that. They will start to challenge you to a level where you will really need StatsSA." (C1-P1, 58:06)
16		Limited success in resolving disagreements on evidence	"I would say it's half and half; sometimes you win, and sometimes you don't." (C1-P1, 1:04:00)

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
17	National labour migration policy as an example of evidence use	Policy development driven by evidence	"I think the example I gave you on national labour migration is not yet time to assess the impact of the policy since it's still being developed. I would say that evidence was used..." (C1-P1, 1:06:27)
18		Changing culture of evidence in reporting	"So that roll of evidence, it definitely so today that report, you really the accuracy of it is tested on the evidence that comes together with that report." (C1-P2, 07:05)
19		Interconnectedness of policymaking processes promotes holistic approach to evidence	"Yes, and definitely, a policymaking process has to undergo those cross processes, and those tend to influence each other." (C1-P2, 13:39)
20		Divergent perspectives on policy benefits	"The department was looking on the other side to say this could help alleviate unemployment in the area, but they had other social issues that they thought would affect them." (C1-P2, 13:39)
21	Trends and evidence-based decisions	Historical trends and evidence-informed decision making	"We even come up with the trends, if, for instance, we are talking about unemployment, perhaps we don't look at it currently, we need to go even back, maybe 10 years or even more, to say, what has been the development in this area in those years? What changed where? And how have we come to where we are now?" (C1-P2, 22:20)
22		Political decisions made without evidence	"Yes, I have some examples, for instance, the skills development a political decision was taken some time back, I think that was 2009, to move skills development functions from the Department of Labour and create a new department, which was Higher Education and Training, that that is a typical example, where there was no evidence in taking that decision." (C1-P2, 27:02)
23		Evaluation as a precursor to policymaking	"The policymaking is or should be preceded by an evaluation of what has happened for evaluation of past policies followed by planning." (C1-P2, 34:13)
24		Evidence to assess past events and inform future actions	"And then because of what had happened, society organisations may move forward, maybe left behind we go through those reports or the analysis of those reports to move forward, which then leads to changes." (C1-P2, 36:48)
25	Evidence of impact in skills funding programmes	Evidence of impactful intervention and resource allocation	"We do have those reports where they state that the skilling at the time contributed to employment; the figures are there. Those skills funding programmes made the contribution..." (C1-P2, 39:03)
26	Evidence-based arguments for active labour market programmes	Evidence-based arguments for programme development	"It also helps develop the UIF itself. In that way, you will be getting more contributors to that funding. The more people who get into employment, the more people contribute to the UIF, so it grows." (C1-P2, 39:03)
27		Accessibility of evidence	"I think that it is crucial to be accurate, and all that evidence should be accessible." (C1-P2, 47:28)
28	National development plan as an example of evidence-based planning	Long-term strategic plans and evidence-informed policymaking	"But it is important, for instance, that we have this National Development Plan commissioned by the Presidency. That plan looks at the challenge and what each department or state entity, including the private sector, could contribute to national development. So, that actually demonstrates that capacity, the capacity was demonstrated there." (C1-P2, 50:07)
29		Social partners with varied interests	"There is always that issue, especially with social partners, because social partners have varied interests because you have communities that have different circumstances, you have labour unions, which themselves are different points of view, and you have a business community." (C1-P2, 59:46)
30	Engaging stakeholders in the resolution of contentious issues	Stakeholder engagement in addressing contentious issues	"So, out of that, we do put stakeholders together to chart the way forward." (C1-P2, 1:02:10)
31		Policy development driven by evidence of social problems	"Others were getting exploited when they get different countries. Others the jobs that they were promised you find that when they get there, those jobs are not there, then they ended up doing something." (C1-P2, 1:06:43)

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
32	Analysing problems based on evidence	Evidence-based problem analysis	"All the way from kind of problem analysis like what are the issues, you know, starting with kind of a review, of where a sector might be at or outcomes amongst a population..." (C2-P1, 09:46)
33		Pilot programmes and evaluations for wider scale implementation	"...through to testing potential pilots or programmes so that you could do pilot type types of exercises with evaluations linked to those to inform wider scale policy implementation." (C2-P1, 09:46)
34		Evidence use as an afterthought due to competing pressures	"...and then M&E is sometimes more of an afterthought or an aspect of compliance rather than something people are really interested in, in doing carefully and understanding thoroughly and allowing it to really influence the direction that's taken, I think, partly because of competing pressures." (C2-P1, 12:13)
35		Conflicting roles in evidence generation, monitoring and evaluation	"I mean, my position in the department is an interesting one, a little bit in a way awkward because I'm responsible for research, monitoring and evaluation." (C2-P1, 18:30)
36	Awkward position of research, monitoring, and evaluation unit	Competing pressures and agendas influencing evidence use	"I think, partly because of competing pressures." (C2-P1, 18:30)
37		Data systems for understanding the ECD sector	"And we've actually invested a lot in data systems to understand the sector of Early Childhood Development better." (C2-P1, 21:21)
38		Increased attention to evidence	"So, I think, gradually, they are paying more attention to evidence in the education space." (C2-P1, 28:20)
39	Increased attention to evidence in education	Political concerns overriding evidence	"I think that evidence took quite a while to have influence because it was more political. Like there were other political concerns." (C2-P1, 31:04)
40		Technological solutions for evidence accessibility	"So maybe there's interest in having IT people come in and develop a dashboard. The dashboard should be able to show all sorts of information about the sector and should be easily accessible to senior people, etc." (C2-P1, 31:04)
41		Real time use of evidence to inform decision-making in times of crisis	"So, we saw basically that closing schools was bad for children's health, even with a new pandemic; we also saw that opening schools didn't increase the spread of the virus." (C2-P1, 35:20)
42	Negative impact of school closures on children's health	Evidence use between crisis situations and long-standing challenges	"Whereas many of the kinds of persistent challenges in the education system are things we've kind of known about for a long time, and the evidence might be suggesting doing one or two things and it's kind of a long-term resilience, resistance to it or inertia in the way we do things." (C2-P1, 39:16)
43		Lack of data for impact evaluation	"And you know, you need outcomes data, firstly, and that sometimes doesn't exist." (C2-P1, 39:16)
44	Contrasting evidence use in crisis vs. Persistent challenges	Political will as convenience	"I'm not sure how much political will there is for evidence use, per se, I sometimes think it's where evidence is convenient for the political will it may be, it's convenient to use that evidence, then." (C2-P1, 46:56)
45		Opposition parties and evidence use	"And I think if, you know, other politicians saying opposition parties became more if they started to use evidence more, maybe that would, in turn, stimulate more political will amongst incumbents to engage on evidence and also be seen to be using evidence more." (C2-P1, 46:56)
46		Frustration with the equal weighting of evidence	"It sometimes frustrates me that I might be presenting, say, what I might regard as a really rigorous piece of evidence that had methodological advantages over what we've done previously or other types of evidence out there." (C2-P1, 51:14)
47	Parties in opposition and the use of evidence	In-house evidence generation	"Obviously, we've tried to generate evidence internally. So you know, commissioning studies, sometimes being very involved in actually running the studies collecting data ourselves." (C2-P1, 53:48)

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
48		Evidence to inform policy development	"...to encourage people to do research on topics that are very policy-relevant rather than maybe have more academic interest." (C2-P1, 53:48)
49		Financial constraints as obstacles to evidence-based action	"I think part of that is financial. So, I definitely think currently, there's a lot of financial pressure on the government. There is just no new money coming in as budget cuts are happening." (C2-P1, 56:37)
50		Challenging existing policies with new evidence	"I mean, maybe, but it was a bit of an unusual situation. So maybe, like, initially, schools were closed. And then the evidence was sort of suggesting that actually, it might be doing more harm than good." (C2-P1, 59:59)
51	Evidence of enhanced teacher capacity through lesson plans	Evidence use promoting better understanding of programme	"When our evidence is saying from observing lessons is that we actually see the way the lesson plans work because they kind of give teachers a wider repertoire of methods to use." (C2-P1, 1:01:56)
52		System-wide reforms influenced by evidence	"So around 2010 - 2011 around there, I think we actually did see a few quite key system-wide reforms come into place in education." (C2-P1, 1:08:50)
53	Evidence as a key driver of improvement in international assessments	Evidence use for continued programme improvements	"I think these were strong contributing factors to the improvements that we actually did see in South Africa's performance on international assessments." (C2-P1, 1:08:50)
54		Rigorous evidence to withstand scrutiny	"And then the evidence part is doing that in a way that's rigorous, and can stand up to science or scrutiny." (C2-P2, 03:08)
55		Political leadership and appetite for evaluation	"Whereas, depending on your political leadership and appetite, another political party or minister or head of department might not be so keen because, as you can imagine, evaluations and, more so, making them public means that you are under scrutiny. And as politicians, that means it's your profession or your... you could be dismissed for that." (C2-P2, 07:09)
56		Evolution of evidence use in education policy	"Initially, in the first few years, there was the understanding that you just need to generate the evidence and then give it to the relevant people for them to implement it; because we are the M&E section, we're not implementers, we were not the programme. But I think we learned over time that it's not that easy." (C2-P2, 10:28)
57	Responsiveness to local context in curriculum development	Selectivity in applying evidence	"And trying to keep our own lessons, that things that being said, internationally, that work in other places are not necessarily for us." (C2-P2, 12:39)
58		Uncertainty and the need for evidence	"I think a second component is where there's not enough known. So, COVID was an excellent example; there was a great appetite for evidence in education." (C2-P2, 16:16)
59	National Treasury's demand for evidence in funding allocation	Financial accountability mechanisms promoting evidence use	"The National Treasury was asking for financial allocation information." (C2-P2, 19:03)
60		Managing trade-offs in evidence-based decision-making	"And then I think being clear as well about trade-offs, which people don't often do, is important, so to say, if you do this, if you follow this path, it's going to cost you this thing." (C2-P2, 20:59)
61		Quantitative evidence for national policymaking	"I mean, from my perspective, what we push for is that you need largely quantitative evidence." (C2-P2, 28:45)
62		Quantifying the magnitude of social problems	"But we would, I would say that you need a quantitative aspect to that as well, so that we can measure magnitudes. How big is this problem that is everyone's problem? Which category of people is it affecting the most?" (C2-P2, 28:45)
63		Well-framed questions in the SEIAS process	"...there's a bunch of really good, well-framed questions that you have to answer. So, who is this policy targeting? What could be the alternative responses? Why do you want this as the specific response? How are you going to monitor and evaluate, etc?" (C2-P2, 32:41)

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
64		Evidence as a tool for learning and improvement	"So, it was a way of forcing all of us to not just accept and approve the report but to engage in what we're going to do next." (C2-P2, 32:41)
65		Multiple objectives within a single programme	"So an example of that is, with the school nutrition programme, the three areas of work that you need to do well, the three pillars are educating learners on good feeding, it's food gardens at schools, and then it's the actual school nutrition programme. In terms of funding, the gardens have like a 5% funding." (C2-P2, 35:27)
66		Extensive consultation to accommodate stakeholders	"I mean, with great difficulty, but I think the main approach is to try and we consult a lot to have consultation after consultation after consultation and try and accommodate people." (C2-P2, 37:09)
67		Recruiting fit-for-purpose policymakers	"I would probably say recruiting fit-for-purpose people. And what I mean by that is, historically, most departments like ours would have hired teachers. People who are formally teachers, and obviously, there's nothing wrong with teachers, but not every part of our department is teaching." (C2-P2, 38:57)
68	Impact of ARVS and child grants on school enrolment	Evidence as a tool for learning and improvement	"And if we circle back to what could have happened there, it's ARVs, ARVs, and child grants; increasing child grants in terms of scope and age means ARVs people are living longer, which means that more people are alive. That is a good use of evidence." (C2-P2, 40:51)
69		Importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation	"Yes, and I mean, we've come up with a range of reasons for why, but that was definitely the opposite of what we expected." (C2-P2, 46:36)
70		Evidence to address socio-economic challenges	"So, for example, if we have a lot of like now, we are operating in an environment of low growth, isn't it? Low economic growth means that poverty is increased. So there's a lot of focus on society in terms of poverty alleviation to say what is the best? How should the government focus to then help alleviate poverty?" (C3-P1, 09:33)
71	Budgeting processes as triggers for evidence use	Budgeting processes as triggers for evidence use	"Also, the budgeting processes that triggers because when you do budgeting, there's always a competition for resources. And so, you need to have clear evidence to back up your request for funding." (C3-P1, 15:18)
72		Diverse stakeholder engagement with evidence	"And of course, there were a lot of different stakeholders (with evidence). You could then have a basis for the decisions you're making, like their communities and even political principles." (C3-P1, 18:09)
73		Evidence to support hard policy decisions	"So okay, this is what you want to do, and the evidence is showing us this, so if you have to make a hard decision, you need to have political will as well, even if it's supported by evidence." (C3-P1, 21:00)
74		Evidence-based policymaking for poverty alleviation	"Then also issues to deal with SMME development as well, or impact on poverty alleviation." (C3-P1, 26:24)
75		Capacity constraints in policy implementation	"...or there may be a lack of capacity to implement. For example, we may not have optimal capacity in public bodies to implement a policy." (C3-P1, 30:02)
76		Evidence acceptance across internal and external stakeholders	"Yes, that's correct. So even with external stakeholders or something." (C3-P1, 32:33)
77		Increased acceptance of evidence through exposure to research	"More training, awareness, and training would help because people who have been exposed to research find it easier to accept evidence than people who have not been exposed to research." (C3-P1, 34:59)
78		Evidence-based policy success as a general trend	"Is that generally the case?" "Yes, that's generally the case because where you had proper evidence that informed the proper formulation of policy." (C3-P1, 37:57)
79		Unintended consequences of evidence-based policies	"So that was the unintended consequence." (C3-P1, 42:12)

No.	Initial Open Code	Open Codes	Quotations
80		Evidence as a justification for funding	"...they should be used to inform policymakers, decision-makers, and budgeting." (C4-P1, 03:32)
81		Process evaluation to guide implementation	"And we've also got a type of implementation of the process type of evaluation. As I explained, during the implementation phase, you will be told that this is the right direction to follow." (C4-P1, 07:16)
82	Top-down decision-making and prioritisation of projects	Top-down project prioritization without diagnostic evaluation	"Sometimes, they will just say, remember, I did talk about the diagnostic type of evaluation; they will just say, we want this project." (C4-P1, 10:35)
83		Preference for research over evaluation	"But when it comes to the research, they will tell you a lot; let us do research on this and that." (C4-P1, 12:03)
84	Negative impact on economic growth due to lack of evaluation	Poor outcomes in the absence of evidence use	"So, if we can only focus on research, for example, not taking into account the research results, somehow we may negatively impact the growth of economic development issues in the country." (C4-P1, 14:02)
85	FOSAD meetings as a platform for promoting evaluation	Leadership platforms for promoting evidence use	"Again, I think maybe DPME should make sure that during the FOSAD meetings, the FOSAD is the meeting where DGs together make sure that they really drill down the importance of having the evaluation results in each and every department and maybe report progress." (C4-P1, 14:02)
86	Reporting evaluation results to cabinet	Evidence use at the highest levels of government decision-making	"...and again, they need to be reported to cabinet." (C4-P1, 17:36)
87		Evaluation evidence as a basis for policy development	"As I explained, maybe after I've conducted an evaluation study, it will tell you that now you must come up with a policy." (C4-P1, 22:26)
88		Evidence use as a function of understanding, not resistance	"(With respect to whether there are any types of evidence that consistently act as catalysts for policy change), I think they are, if and only if, in our department, evaluation is taken a bit seriously or it's well understood, because one may say it's not taken seriously, but maybe it's not well understood." (C4-P1, 27:11)
89		Limited understanding of different evaluation types	"Because they do not understand that they are different types of evaluations." (C4-P1, 28:24)
90		Institutionalising evaluation as a strategy for evidence use	"In the presentation, before I can ask the colleagues to come up with a potential evaluation topic, the evaluation projects that need to be conducted, I first talk about the importance of institutionalising the evaluation." (C4-P1, 32:39)
91		Early stakeholder engagement to prevent sabotage	"...Otherwise, they may even sabotage what we're doing if you involve them at a certain stage." (C4-P1, 34:24)
92		Evidence informing government priorities	"And again, they will also inform, maybe, government's priorities because they affect, unlike the one that I explained earlier to say if we just thumb suck to say, we need to come up with this intervention." (C4-P1, 36:26)
93	The development of policy in a vacuum	Policy development in a vacuum	"So, the evaluation results encouraged or advised the programme to ensure that there's something because right now, they're just working in a vacuum; something should be driving that important initiatives." (C4-P1, 39:33)

APPENDIX E: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Declaration of professional edit

20/08/2024

This is to declare that a thorough edit has been conducted using Microsoft Word's 'Track-Changes' function on Stewart Ngandu's thesis, titled, '*A systems approach towards a framework for utilising evaluation evidence within the South African National Policy System*' (2024).

The following is a checklist of aspects covered:

1. **Technical edit**
2. **Sentence structure edit for clarity**
3. **Document Structure edit**
4. **Formatting consistency edit**
5. **Tables and figures edit**
6. **Language and tone edit**
7. **Referencing standardisation**

Identified the Need for a Final Review:

- Conduct a final read-through to ensure all edits are cohesive and maintain the document's overall flow and argument
- Verify that all track changes have been appropriately addressed and accepted/rejected
- Standardise the format of tables as either text or image files throughout the document. Some images are too low-resolution and need to be edited for improved clarity.

SIGNED:



AT: Johannesburg

ON: 20/08/2024

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