

Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Evidence-informed Policy Making

An approach to policy decisions that aims to ensure that decision making is well-informed by the best available research evidence. It is characterized by the systematic and transparent access to, and appraisal of, evidence as an input into the policy-making process.

Source: SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking

The term evidence-based policy is used in the literature, yet largely related to only one type of evidence – research. Using the term evidence-influenced or evidence-informed” reflects the need to be context sensitive and consider use of the best available evidence when dealing with everyday circumstances.

Source: Bowen S, Zwi AB (2005) Pathways to “evidence-informed” policy and practice: A framework for action. PLoS Med 2(7): e166.

Evidence-informed policy provides an effective mechanism to establish in a scientifically valid way, what works or does not work, and for whom it works or does not work.

Source: ODI Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work?

Public policy informed by rigorously established objective evidence.

Source: Wikipedia

Evidence

The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.

Source: Google

Data

Factual information (as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation.

Source: Merriam Webster

Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis.

Synonyms: facts, figures, statistics, details, particulars, specifics.

Source: Google

Policy

The following definitions come from the 2016 Kenya Guidelines for Evidence Use in Policy Making:

A *policy* can be defined as a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or individual. It is defined by Black’s Law Dictionary (2nd Ed) as “the general principles by which a government is guided in its management of public affairs”.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health policy as referring to “decisions, plans, and actions that are undertaken to achieve specific health care goals within a society. An explicit health policy can achieve several things: it defines a vision for the future which in turn helps to establish targets and points of reference for the short and medium term” (WHO undated).

What is the difference between “evidence-based” and “evidence-informed” policy making?

The difference lies in the fact that in the end, policy **will not always succeed in being *based on research*** evidence because of many other competing factors. However, the process needs to consider available research evidence even if this does not eventually inform the policy options chosen, i.e. evidence-informed policymaking processes.

Evidence, in this definition, could be derived from research, citizens and stakeholders, and from practice and implementation. Evidence informed policy is not based exclusively on research evidence or on one set of findings. This terminology allows for the reality that sometimes research findings are considered and rejected; but the resulting policy was still evidence-informed.

Note that key aspects of evidence-informed policy include:

- Evaluation of research findings to determine which programs have solid evidence of positive or negative outcomes;
- Support of rigorous evaluation for innovative programs that are new or previously unstudied, to build the number of research-proven interventions.