

**Role of Research Institutions in Influencing Development
Policies: The Kenyan experience**

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Abstract

This paper examines the policy making process in Kenya and alludes to the divergence between theory and practice in policy making. It demonstrates IPAR's role in influencing policy; presents the methodology used to influence policy; gives an account of a success story; and highlights, based on experience, the challenges facing the institution as well as the opportunities available for strengthening its role. It concludes that for a research institution to play its rightful role in influencing policy, it needs to recruit and retain highly qualified and credible researchers, have at its disposal adequate financial resources and establish a good working relationship with various stakeholders without compromising on its independence.

Résumé

Cet article examine le processus d'élaboration des politiques au Kenya et fait allusion à la divergence entre la théorie et la pratique en cette matière. Il met en évidence le rôle joué par l'*Institute of Policy Analysis and Research* (IPAR) pour influencer les politiques; présente la méthodologie utilisée pour influencer ainsi sur les décisions; rend compte d'une expérience réussie; et met en évidence, en fonction de l'expérience, les défis auxquels l'institution est confrontée et les possibilités ouvertes en vue du renforcement de son rôle. Il conclut que pour qu'une institution de recherche puisse jouer son véritable rôle dans l'influence des politiques, elle a besoin de recruter et de s'attacher des chercheurs hautement qualifiés et crédibles, de compter sur des ressources financières adéquates et d'établir une bonne relation de travail avec les divers intervenants sans compromettre pour autant son indépendance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of Structural Adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s in most African economies was not backed with any solid research on what policies would work and where. According to Phillips and Seck (2004), the governments were generally bankrupt, and most state-driven economies had experienced economic stagnation or even decline for several decades. Hence, the first round of structural adjustment policies were generally imposed by international financial institutions based on theoretical models. The reform process was eventful and the record checkered. The results were generally dismal. This led to a re-thinking of the continent's development approach and to a consensus among African policymakers that a market economy is a legitimate goal. Moreover, in order to deal with the vagaries of market-driven development dynamics, and given governments' limited capacity to conduct sound research and policy analysis, the need arose to establish research and policy institutes across Africa. The institutes conduct policy research that seeks homegrown solutions that take account of local institutions and the political economy. They inform the policy making process with varying degrees of success.

Kenya's experience in 1980s and 1990 with respect to the design and implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) brought to the fore the need for capacity building. This is because, during the SAPs regime, University Departments and Institutes of Development Studies remained distanced from policy and decision makers. In addition, the policy makers themselves did not recognise the need to interact with professionals with analytical capacity to share insights on various developmental issues. With utmost need to address the detrimental effects of SAPs, the government recognised the need for close consultation with local experts on policy issues. Consequently, the country mandated a number of policy research institutions (both government owned and non-governmental)¹, to conduct research and policy analysis and advise the government and its development partners on homegrown solutions to local problems. This paper examines the experiences, challenges and opportunities that these institutions face in influencing economic policies by looking at: the policy making process in Kenya; the role of the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research in informing the policy debate; approaches and successful/unsuccessful cases in influencing policy; and challenges and opportunities for influencing policy. It also gives a synopsis of the key characteristics of other players in the policy research arena.

2. POLICY MAKING PROCESS

Policy has broadly been defined as the translation of a government's political priorities and principles into programmes, projects and actions to deliver desired changes within a given time frame². Policies and their implementation are expressions of political processes and the distribution of power, Killick (1981). Policies are made by policy makers, the persons bestowed with the power, either by society or a group of people in a society, to make decisions, Gitu (2001). The policy process is circular and involves interrelated stages, ((Juma and Clark (1995), Ng'ethe (1998)). The policy process is also largely iterative, Bardach (1996). Policymaking defines the process by which broad government statements are arrived at and involves: issues of identification; analysis of available policy options; and actual policy choice or legitimization, (Ng'ethe (1998)). Policy research and analysis examines the policymaking process by systematically evaluating the technical and political implications of alternatives proposed to solve public problems. It encompasses both the process of examining and assessing policies or programs and the product of that analysis. The role research and policy institutions and institutes of development studies are assumed to play to inform decisions forms an important intermediary between the policy problem and the policy solution(s).

2.1 The Theory of Policy Making

A number of theories have been advanced on how governments should make public policies. One that has highly been criticized is the welfare optimising model, which is based on the theory of consumer behaviour. According to the model, a government is able to maximize the society's welfare by ranking society's preferences among alternatives-with potential conflicts between them removed by the application of a consistent set of priorities and weights. Such a set of societal preferences forms the Social Welfare Function which the government satisfies by reviewing all alternative lines of action before selecting the policy, which will achieve the stated objectives with maximum efficiency. If such a process is applied to all problem areas, the economy will achieve 'pareto optimality' condition.

The model is based on the following assumptions: existence of a mechanism through which the government can translate community preferences into a social welfare function and that the government will adopt this as expressing its own policy objectives; society is broadly agreed in its objectives and priorities; governments have sufficient concentrated power at the centre to ensure that the public interest prevails over

¹ A detailed list of various research and policy institutions in Kenya is attached in Appendix 1

² Comptroller and Audit General (2001), Modern Policy-Making: Ensuring Policies Deliver Value for Money, National Audit Office, Britain.

special interest groups within society; and existence of a huge volume of information about the nature of the problems confronted, the possible ways of responding to these problems, and the consequences of adopting each of the feasible alternatives. These assumptions are not tenable in practice which renders its applicability impracticable in the real world.

An alternative to the welfare maximizing model is the satisficing model of decision making, which is based on the modern theory of the firm. The model postulates that governments do not search for optima but for solutions that are 'good enough'- solutions which will command the necessary minimum of group, organisation and individual support without provoking violent resistances from those who are opposed. Philips and Seck (2004), citing Herbert Simon (1957) notes that according to the theory of bounded rationality, most decision makers are satisficers rather than optimisers. That is, because exhaustive research of all viable options for each decision would be prohibitively costly, the search is usually interrupted early with the selection of the first option that is good enough. In hierarchical organisation, depictive of the government bureaucracy, those at the top have the privilege of putting forth their options first, and they forge alliances to ensure their adoption. Claims regarding the rational quality of a policy option are made in the process of implementing it, despite the fact that it was usually arrived at in the context of a limited search for alternatives.

Odhiambo-Mbai (1998) citing (Lindblom, 1958) notes that according to the theory of Disjointed Incrementation, the day-to-day process of policy making is a conservative exercise. As such, policy makers often do not drastically alter the existing policies but instead, they merely incrementally improve on the existing policies.

The models acknowledge the existence of many players in the policy arena. Philips and Seck (2004) calls this arena a market of ideas fuelled by actions and pronouncements reflecting the preferences of distinct groups of actors who seek to maximize their welfare. Regardless of this acknowledgement, a policy outcome cannot satisfy everybody and as such it is hard to establish a social welfare function. There has to be winners and losers in the policy making process. In practice, policy outcomes can be influenced by a small number of actors with strong preferences without any regard to the costs and the losers in the process.

2.2 Policy Making Practice in Kenya

The policymaking framework in Kenya has a mixture of bottom-up and up-bottom approach, and this is largely dependent on the nature of a particular policy. The extreme in policy making is when the policies are adopted by a decree of the president like the current education policy on free primary education. In normal circumstances, policies in Kenya undergo a process of discussions and are adopted, based on expected costs and benefits.

The Ministry of Planning and National Development is responsible for the employment of all planning officers and gives broad policy direction through the coordination and writing of District Development Plans (DDPs), National Development Plans (NDPs) and Sessional Papers (SP). The National Planning Officers (largely chaired by the heads of Macroeconomic Planning and Rural Planning departments) gives circulars to District Development Officers (DDOs) outlining the broad theme of the government's development strategy for a period of five years and the specifics within which they have to design their DDPs. Under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning, a secretariat involving senior planning officers is formed to coordinate the writing of the plans. The DDPs are written before the NDPs. Once the Secretariat has received the Drafts of DDPs, a workshop is held to deliberate on their design, content, clarity and workability. One flaw in this planning process is the lack of full participation of the DDOs, to verify, clarify and justify the inclusion of particular programmes in their plans. Consequently, programmes not considered as a priority by the secretariat are removed from the plans.

Since the operationalization of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) in 2000/01 financial year, the Macroeconomic Working Group (MWG)³, MTEF Secretariat and eight Sector Working Groups (SWGs)⁴ were formed. The SWGs draws their membership from various line ministries and government agencies. The Secretariat for the design and writing of the 9th NDP (2001 – 2006) made use of the MWG and eight SWGs to write the plan. The Chapters of this plan coincide with the working Groups with the inclusion of a chapter on Monitoring and Evaluation, a chapter that had not been in the earlier development plans.

The MWG, defines the resource envelope for the planning period based on the forecasts of a model, jointly developed by the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) in 2000. In addition, the MWG projects the movements of optimal level of targeted macroeconomic variable (Gross domestic Product, Balance of Payments, inflation, and interest rates) and

³ The MWG comprises of representative from various institutions to include Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and National Development, Central Bank of Kenya, Kenya Revenue Authority, Central Bureau of Statistics, and Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis.

⁴ In 2000/01 financial year six sectors were created namely: Public Administration; Public safety Law and Order, Human Resource Development; Physical Infrastructure; Agriculture and Rural Development and Trade and Industry and late in 2001/02 financial year, National Security and Information Technology were added to make eight Sector Working Groups.

stipulated growth of all sectors necessary to achieve the macroeconomic targets. The various SWGs analyse the various proposals from the DDPs and synthesises the various policy initiatives that the government needs to formulate to achieve the macroeconomic targets. The Secretariat convenes to put together all the SWG reports which forms the NDP that gives policy focus for a period of five years. In the event that the government changes the broad policy focus, a Sessional Paper is written to direct the new focus. The NDP and DDPs spell out the broad government policy objectives that are operationalized through the annual budgets. During the preparation of the development plans, the government does not seek for expertise from independent research and policy institutions. KIPPRA participates by virtue of its affiliation to government as a government think-tank.

An all-inclusive participatory approach to budget formulation is important to enhance transparency. Inclusiveness of civil society organisations (CSOs), researchers, academicians, media, government and corporate sector in the budget process is vital on the basis of improving budget formulation, ensuring efficient resource allocation and better oversight of the budget process. Although the budgeting process is generally participatory, the level and quality of participation is limited by time, human and financial resources.

Participation in the budgeting process is by invitation to submit proposals: policies that require government finances to be implemented are discussed, designed and adopted through the budgeting process. A study by IEA (2003) rated the overall participation in the process as dominated by the government with minimal outsider contribution. The guidelines given for the budget proposals, especially to research and policy institutions, are restrictive and the time period is short. For instance, for financial year 2004/05, the invitation to IPAR to submit policy proposals for consideration was sent on 26th of January 2004 with a deadline of 29th February 2004 with the following guidelines:

“In order to remain focused on the need for change, we suggest that your submission includes:

- i. the nature of limitations the current framework provisions have on your organization;
- ii. improvements or the benefits the proposed changes will have on your organization; and
- iii. benefits and/or contributions the proposed changes will have on the economy.”

The policy proposals that a research institute needs to make for consideration in the budget are not of necessity geared to benefit the research institutes, but rather the various sectors of the economy at large. Research institutions are not production or distribution firms. They conduct research in different fields and on the basis of domestically available data and best practice elsewhere, endeavours to advice the government and its development partners. More often they do not have a vested stake in policy issues.

Any submission made must answer the above questions, highlight limitations of the current policy, proposal remedies and show how the proposed policy will benefit both the government and the organisation in particular. The proposals initially used to be presented to the budget steering committee prior to 1999. Currently, the proposals are presented to the Secretariat chaired by the Director, Fiscal and Monetary Affairs Department. All invited institutions and organisations, willing and capable of making proposals are given audience as long as they are able to meet deadlines. However the budget secretariat reserves the right to incorporate or reject the concerns raised in the annual budget. The budget defines the direction of national policy, the plan of action, and the cost implications of government programmes and projects during the fiscal year, while at the same time identifying the resources required to implement them. The Minister for Finance presents the budget to Parliament annually on or before June 20th. Parliament legitimises the policy proposals by approving the budget.

Other policies that are not financed through the budget, especially those implemented by non-governmental organizations are not articulated in the development plans and are not deliberated in the budgeting process. Thus, NGOs make policy proposals to probable financiers and if they are accepted and financed, the NGOs implement them. Currently, this sector is not properly regulated and quite a number of NGOs have mushroomed in the country, with most of them being 'briefcase NGOs'. The government is not responsible for monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects implemented by NGOs. They account for funds allocated directly to their financiers. It is clear from the foregoing discussion that in order to influence policy, the institutions that carry out research and policy analysis must establish the most ideal intervention point in the policy formulation process. In addition, they must be acceptable and respected by the principals calling the shots in the process.

2.3 Mechanisms for Monitoring the Implementation

Though the Ministry of Planning and National Development is responsible for setting out the broad policy direction, different ministries and government agencies formulate their own policies and push for their implementation through their budget allocation. There is no established body in government responsible for monitoring the implementation. The various government agencies oversee the implementation of their own policies once the money is allocated.

With increased realization by government of gross misappropriation of funds on various policy programmes, the ministry of Planning and National Development, in financial year 2004/05, has established a Monitoring and Evaluation Department within the Ministry, to be responsible for the monitoring of all policies financed by government.

2.4 Comment on Theory Vs. Practice

Ideally, research institutions are supposed to generate intellectual capital which becomes a critical input in the policy making process. In theory, the issue of what constitutes intellectual capital and the technological process of inputting it in the policy production process remains basically unresolved. However, in practice, in an effort to define their locus in the policy process, research institutions (as can be inferred from Appendix 1) have evolved into three almost distinct categories as shown below:

Institution Type	Type of Intellectual Capital
Basic Research	Research findings with policy implications; University type research
Policy Research	Policy scenarios analysis; internal research agenda; internal human resources capital; balancing between supply-driven and demand-driven activities
Clearing House	Generally contracted work and out-sourced researchers
Advocacy	Pooling research findings and championing a course of action
Brief Case	Non-institutionalized and personality-centred

Once this fundamental distinction has been made, the logical issue that arises is one of the theoretical and practical mechanism of policy influence. It is assumed that the intellectual capital, notwithstanding its shade as out-lined above, is the desired input in the policy making (influencing) process. When the input is available, then two other considerations become necessary. First, the measurement of policy outputs and policy impacts (outcomes) has not been satisfactorily resolved. Second, the question of the transmission mechanism through which the policy inputs are turned into policy outputs and impacts remains adamantly unclear. The corollary to this is the question of whether the policy input-output-impact relationship is an event or a process and consequently whether the situation is ordinarily deterministic of stochastic in nature.

The pressure has been great on research and policy analysis institutions to treat their outputs (i.e. discussion papers, policy briefs, dissemination workshops and committee participation) as direct inputs to the policy process whose outputs must be determinable at any point in time. In this perspective, the input-output relationship is considered deterministic and hence measurable at any point in time. This is arguably unrealistic.

The practical situation is that the relationship has a diffuse transmission mechanism and as such the process has a complicated aggregation of measurable/non-measurable, immediate/long-term, definite/indefinite and desirable/undesirable outputs and outcomes. In this scenario, it is the persistence of the generation of policy inputs that are directed to specific policy concerns that would be important in assessing whether or not an institution is influencing policy – except of course, when the institution is basically an advocacy organization. The success of the institution may be proxied by the demand for its output – i.e., purchases of its publications, visits to its website, number of persons using its library, requests by government departments to participate in government activities, etc.

3. THE ROLE OF IPAR IN INFORMING THE POLICY DEBATE

IPAR endeavours to strengthen the national capacity to develop, implement and evaluate public policy by undertaking independent and objective research and policy analysis, and sharing the results with the Kenyan government and its development partners. It also seeks to serve as an institutional and resource centre by offering technical, research and information support for national development. It provides objective data-based findings and recommendations and articulates them at national and other forums for the benefit of interested parties including government, NGOs, the private sector and the donor community. This is operationalized through four programmes namely: Governance and Development; Macroeconomics; Real Sector (Agriculture and Industry); and Social Sector (Education and Health)). Each programme designs its activities along a broad theme of the institute that is derived with due recognition of current political, economic and institutional developments in the country. Research output is documented as Discussion Papers, Working Papers and Policy Briefs. Occasional Papers and thematic books are also produced.

The policy papers constitute 70% of the work done by the institute and are guided by the Senior Research Fellows. Once the proposals are written, the Institute organises for a stakeholders' workshop to present to them the emerging policy issues that the studies intend to address. The purpose of such a workshop is to solicit for any more concerns that stakeholders may wish to be incorporated into the study. The researchers incorporate views of the stakeholders and carry out the study. Once the study is finalized, another stakeholders' workshop is held to disseminate the finding of the study. A policy brief is written to the government spelling out policy proposals for the government's actions.

The objective of the institute is to give to the government and its development partners policy proposal based on objective research whose implementation would improve the welfare of Kenyans. The implementation of the policy has largely remained a prerogative of the government and there is always a limit as to how much the Institute can do to ensure the implementation of recommended policy.

Besides carrying out objective research and policy analysis, IPAR has designed a capacity building programmes (Internship), that specifically targets middle level officers working in government. The officers are recruited through a competitive interview for a period of six months, within which they are trained on how to identify policy concerns, analyse them and make recommendations. Because the interns are from government, they form a good basis of interaction between the institute and government. This helps to disseminate most of the finding, especially on issues they have participated.

In addition, the Institute is commissioned by the government and/or independent organisations to carry out research on urgent policy issues and advice on the best way forward. Such *ad hoc* commissioned work is an indication of the perceived credibility of the institution.

4. CASE STUDIES OF SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

The success or failure of the institute to influence policy hinges on its approach and perception of stakeholders about its credibility.

4.1 Approach

Internship Programme: This is a key institutional capacity building component within IPAR's mandates in which, through competitive internship programme, the Institute contributes to capacity building for young professionals seeking to enhance their careers in policy research and analysis within government, private sector and other institutions. The trainees are attached to researchers in specific programmes for a period of six months. During this period, the interns receive hands-on training in different aspects of policy analysis, including data collection, data management, analysis and report writing. The expected outcomes are: training in understanding policy analysis framework, proposal formulation, data collection, data analysis, report writing, seminar presentation and policy formulation. Each intern participates fully in all the activities of IPAR. In addition, the following outputs are expected: an inception report specifying clearly the distinction between policy research and policy analysis and how the attachment is likely to impact on the interns professional engagement with the government; a concept note identifying a policy problem, conceptual framework and the methodology, theoretical framework, justification of the study, literature review, and methodology (relevant to the intern's employment) discussed with the supervisor; a research proposal indicating: research/policy problem, objectives, background information, theoretical framework, justification of the study, literature review and methodology presented in a staff seminar/colloquium; and an acceptable final seminar paper presented at the end of the internship programme.

After six months, the interns return to their ministries and generally become both the Institute's contact person in government or are Research Associates of the Institute. This guarantees continuity in terms of policy analysis, policy dialogue and policy influence in the parent government departments. Since the inception of the internship programme, the Institute has trained 27 young professionals: 8 from local universities; 1 each from Oxford University - UK, a financial institution, and a research foundation; 4 from Ministry of Finance; 2 from Ministry of Agriculture; 3 from Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development; 1 from Ministry of Health; 2 from Ministry of Education Science and Technology; 2 from Ministry of Planning and National Development; 1 intern was from the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) and another from the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Currently, 3 of the former interns are pursuing PhD programmes, 14 are working in other research and policy institutes and 10 are working in different government ministries.

Besides young professionals from government ministries, the Institute allows attachment of PhD students who have their own financial support for the period they are carrying their field work. Such students are expected to be carrying out research in an area that is relevant to IPAR's research and analysis programmes. While at IPAR, they are supervised by the relevant programme coordinators. These students eventually find their way to either the government, research institutions or institutions of higher learning where they impact on policy issues. The Institute has also been hosting and participating in the supervision of students, who are government junior economists and are sponsored to pursue Masters degrees in Economic Policy Management, at a number of universities on the continent.

Peer Review: All policy papers prepared by IPAR researchers go through two important stages. First, an internal discussion session in which relevant government officials interested in the particular area are invited. Secondly, once the internal issues raised are incorporated in the paper, two peer reviewers review the final output. One of these reviewers is usually a senior government technocrat dealing with this subject. This is considered to be an effective way of disseminating research findings to key policy makers.

Research Associateship: Besides acting as Peer Reviewers, some of the more qualified and experienced policy makers in relevant government departments act as the Institute's Research Associates. They undertake independent research and policy analysis or collaborative work with IPAR staff to produce both Discussion Papers and Policy Briefs. Subsequent discussions and recommendations form an important channel of influencing policy.

Workshops and Policy Briefs: The end product of any IPAR research activity is the production of a Discussion Paper and a Policy Brief. As a routine, these documents are distributed to all relevant departments of government as well as other interested parties. Besides sending the documents to the various institutions, copies are also sent to targeted consumers in government. In addition, dissemination workshops are held to discuss the findings with invited stakeholders who include government policy makers. Experience has shown that for these documents to have significant influence, the participation of Permanent Secretaries, principle ministry officials and Members of Parliament is important. The media is also an effective means of channelling research findings to policy makers. However, experience shows that the media has a serious weakness in that unless the findings are presented in a sensational way, they may not be reported.

Participatory Research: When researchers and stakeholders come together in focused group discussion to design the research programme of an institute, then research output tends to be demand driven. Such an approach tends to have immediate impact in terms of policy influence. The danger with this approach is that the institute may lose its independence and especially in designing and carrying out original and potentially beneficial supply-driven intellectual capital.

Participation in Policy Committees: The participation of individual researchers in various policy committees and government arranged meetings as well as presentation of policy proposals (e.g. budgetary) to the government are very effective ways of influencing policy. The effectiveness of this method depends on the extent of intellectual capital accumulated in a particular area and the willingness of the institution to contribute to policy without financial compensation by the government.

University Linkages: A remote and somewhat long-term mechanism for influencing policy is the establishment of linkages with universities in terms of actual teaching by institute researchers, supervision of post-graduate dissertations, compilation of teaching materials, peer reviews, research associateship and collaborative work. The Institute has used and continues to use this multi-pronged approach in order to enhance its capacity to influence policy.

4.2 Success Story

All these activities have been successful to varying degrees. The level of success is based on a multi-level consideration, namely, institutional, programme (sectoral), project (publications) and individual researcher level. Further, the indicators of success include: number of top government officials attending dissemination workshops; diversity of representation in dissemination workshops; media coverage; incorporation of research findings in government policy documents; intensity/interest of participation in the discussion of the findings; number of publications purchased; stakeholder participation in research; request for publication by government departments and development partners; number of other parties asking for publications; interest shown by government technocrats wishing to join the institution as interns; frequency of requests by government departments for researchers to contribute/participate in policy discussions; and number of requests by universities to host and supervise post-graduate students.

There is no single index of measuring success and the realization is that measuring success may be a daunting task. Nevertheless, IPAR has had two very successful cases. The first one was a paper produced by one of the Institute's Research Associates on *Privatization of Security in Kenya*. The paper did not meet the rigorous publications criteria set for all IPAR publications and hence was published as a Working Paper. However, the subject was extremely important since the issue of insecurity was considered to be of national importance. As soon as the paper was published, the Ministry of Internal Security requested for 150 copies and requested the Institute to nominate a person to join a Ministerial Committee working on a regulatory framework for the provision of private security. This was an instant success in influencing policy.

The second case was when the Ministry of Transport decided to implement rules and regulations governing the operations of the *matatu* (pro-poor mode of transportation) sector. This caused a lot of confrontation between the government and the *matatu* owners leading to a *matatu* strike. In the ensuing confusion, the owners approached IPAR to assist them to undertake a number of studies on the sector with a view to making recommendations which would bring tranquillity and understanding in the sector. The studies were participatory. The government was also interested and participated. In the end, the Institute acted as an arbitrator and the matter was resolved. These two experiences had immediate success. In our view, the factors leading to this success are: (i) need-driven; (ii) perception of institutional capability and credibility; and (iii) donor interest in the issue.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFLUENCING POLICY

Research and policymaking are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Research can constructively inform policy and learn from it (Phillips and Seck, 2004). Though this has been acknowledged as evidenced through the creation and nurturing of research and policy institutions, these institutions are faced with a number of challenges in their endeavours to inform the policy process.

5.1 Challenges Based on Experiences

Acceptability: Research results, no matter how good they are, if the policymakers do not accept and act on them, remain nothing better than a wish list. Besides doing research, researchers need to repackage their findings in a language and format acceptable to policymakers. Quite often, researchers make policy recommendations without necessarily quantifying the costs and benefits associated with the intended policy change. This is because there are few studies, if any, which provide a variety of scenarios that show the possible outcomes of different policies.

Accessibility and quality of information: The information that is readily available to researchers and policy analysts is secondary data. In Kenya a comparison of locally collected data that is documented in the government published Economic Surveys and globally available data on Kenya in the World Development Indicators and United Nations data indicate significant variation. This casts a spell on the quality of data available. Therefore, depending on which data the results are founded, and the government's perception of the sources, results may be acceptable or rejected by the policymakers. In addition, some government data is classified and as such, is confidential. Access to such data is limited and involves a process to get authority to use it, which delays the research. Research is further delayed by government policy on researchers which requires all research utilizing government data or interviewing government officials to be cleared by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

Capacity: To attract and maintain high calibre staff for a period long enough to make an impact on the policy realm has a cost implication, the Institute must pay market competitive international salaries. In addition, sourcing experts on recent research fields like economic governance, health and poverty is proving to be hard. More often, researchers use local research institutions as platforms to attract highly rewarding jobs in international research institutions. In the event that more than one senior researcher leaves an institution a programme can easily come to a standstill for quite some time before another expert is recruited.

Policy Reversals: Government policy is characterised with inherent policy ambiguity and reversals. This is dependent on status of the county's relationship with the development partners, initiators and the financiers of the policy. In the event that the government changes the policy focus or reverses a particular policy, ongoing research on the same is rendered indefinitely irrelevant. This has costs and kills the morale of researchers.

Independence: The Challenge of being acceptable by policy makers and yet remaining an independent think tank is a delicate one. Sometimes, the government may think that the Institute is anti-government especially when it publishes descending findings on important national policy issues. In such a situation, the litmus measure is seen when government representatives decline to attend dissemination workshops for fear that their participation may not be taken positively by their superiors.

Collaboration: In Kenya, there is no collaboration amongst the various research and policy institutes, in spite of the fact that one institution finances them. This has led to duplication of efforts and conflict of interest, especially when it is realised too late that two or more institutions have invested huge sums of money to finance a similar research. The soft option is when one institute has to abandon the study. This problem comes up as a result of independence of programme design within institution and as long as the funding agencies are different, it will persist.

Timeliness: Timeliness in carrying out research is important if its findings need to influence policy. Because it is hard to predict the focus of government policy, a number of researchers work on fundamental problems without policy agendas in mind and their works are reflected in professional journals or gather dust on book selves. According to Ryan (2004), a perfect solution that is late is a wasted effort. He further notes that much of the work done by researcher is often at the problem-identification level that needs to be digested and popularised by a different set of researchers who grasp its policy relevance. This implies that much of the work done has no immediate policy content.

Donor Interests: When a research institute is donor funded, then the agenda of the donor becomes a binding constraint on how much of influence the institution can bear on government policy. The donor tends to treat the institution just as a disposable vehicle to be used to accomplish an interest-related mission. If the research agenda of the institution become non-compatible with the principal interest of the donor through a donor platform shift, then the institution's influence weakens.

5.2 Emerging Opportunities

Close Consultation: With increased realisation by the government for the need for homegrown solutions to domestic problems as evidenced by mushrooming of research institutions, there is good will from the government to work closely with experts of policy issues. Research institutions need to prove their worth. It is the responsibility of the institutes to re-establish themselves by conducting well focused objective research above what government departments and universities are capable of conducting to convince the government that they have value to add to the policy process.

Consensus Building: The government has realised that policy ownership is important for its implementation to be successful. Increasingly, the government is involving stakeholders in the designing and implementation of policies. This has opened up a forum that researchers can exploit. They need to educate the stakeholders by informing them on the policies based on their research findings.

Intellectual Capital: As the institution has matured and accumulated a wealth of intellectual capital in some areas, policy makers and other stakeholders have increasingly started to recognize the visibility of the institute as a reputable organization. Its non-partisan research agenda and findings are becoming increasingly sellable to the government.

6. CONCLUSION

The co-existence between research and policy making must continue. Independent think-tanking and research is key in national development. IPAR has endeavoured to influence policy by being close-enough yet far-enough with government policy makers. The Institute has consistently created capacity and credibility in various areas of policy concerns. Consequently, it has become increasingly recognised by the government. However, its efforts to undertake sellable research findings have met with various challenges in the areas of capacity, resources and credibility. These are persistently being tackled. At the same time, the Institute has identified opportunities that are being exploited to enhance its visibility and influence within the policy making arena. In order to achieve the envisioned success, the necessary conditions are the recruitment and retention of highly qualified and respected researchers and the availability of sustainable financial resources.

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APPENDIX 1

Profile of the Main Policy Research and Advocacy Institutions – Kenya (2003)

Institution	Establi-shed	Mission	Vision	Funding	Nature	Area of Concentration	Audience
AERC	1988	To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into problems pertinent to the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.	None	DANIDA, Sida/SAREC, USAID, ACBF, EU, IBRD, AfDB, NORAD, DFID, IDRC, SDC, Rockefeller Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Government of Netherlands, Government of France	Research and capacity building	Policy research, training in economics	Researchers, universities, policy makers,
KIPPRA	1996	To provide quality public policy advice to the Government of Kenya by conducting objective research and analysis and through capacity building in order to contribute to the achievement of national development goals	To be the leading public policy research institute in Africa, an international center of excellence	GOK, ACBF, USAID, DFID, EU	Research and policy analysis	Human resource development, social welfare, environment, agriculture and rural development, trade and industry, public finance, money and finance, macroeconomics	The government, research institutions, private sector
IDS	1965	To promote development knowledge and debate and encourage the utilization of research findings in postgraduate teaching and training and in shaping the growth of development thinking, theory and practice.	To be a leading center of excellence for development research, teaching, training and advisory services on issues of policy, practical and academic concerns and private domains.	UON, DANIDA, DFID, IDRC	Research, teaching	Development, MSEs, Entrepreneurship, Environmental policy	The Government, researchers, academics, NGOs, CBOs, the general public
IPAR	1994	To strengthen the national capacity to develop, implement and evaluate public policy by undertaking independent policy analysis and research and sharing the results of efforts with Kenya and its development partners	To become a national centre of excellence offering constructive policy ideas to the government of Kenya and its development partners in order to increase welfare	ACBF, USAID, SISERA	Research and policy analysis	Institutions, transition, empowerment, governance, macroeconomics, agriculture, industry, health, education	The Government, civil society, private sector, donor community
IEA		To promote pluralism of ideas through open, active and informed debate on public policy issues	A Kenyan society with a well managed economy and an informed public in which national interest, justice and dignity of all citizens are upheld	DFID, SIDA, Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Ford Foundation, USAID, NOVIB (Netherlands), Membership fees	Information and knowledge brokerage	Socio-economic public policy issues, budget, trade, constitution, law and the economy.	Government, parliamentarians, private sector, civil society, the media
CCG Centre for Corporate Governance	2001	To promote good corporate governance to achieve sustainable wealth creation, increased employment opportunities and overall improvement in the quality of life for the people of Kenya	None	The World bank, Global Corporate Governance Forum, United Nations Economic Commission For Africa, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	Training, research, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy		Private sector
ACEG	1993	To increase knowledge of the policies that work to accelerate economic growth and expand income opportunities for the people of Africa.	None	USAID, Netherlands Program of Development Co-operation, DFID, CIDA, ACBF, Barclays Bank of Kenya, EAC, ECA, Eveanor Armington Foundation, UNDP, Ford Foundation GoK, World Bank (past and current)	Research and policy advisory	Economic growth, social development	Researchers, research institutes, African governments, private sector, civil society, CBOs

Institution	Establi-shed	Mission	Vision	Funding	Nature	Area of Concentration	Audience
CGD Centre for Governance and Development	1993	To strengthen representative institutions and empower civic actors and economic groups for a just and equitable society.	An informed, equitable, democratic and prospectus Kenya committed to the rule of law.	USAID, DANIDA, ACTIONAID, Rights and Democracy (Canada), Westminster Foundation (UK)	Advocacy	Strengthening parliament, civic education, economic governance	Parliamentarians, local leaders, the general public
CLARION	1993	To provide legal and policy research to sustain and enhance human rights, democratisation and good governance in Kenya	None	DANIDA, HIVOS (Netherlands)	Research, advocacy, civic education	Human rights, governance, corruption	Government, the general public
Tegemeo	1995	To carry out research, analysis and outreach on policy in the domain of agriculture, rural development, natural resources and environment	Being developed	USAID	Research, capacity building, outreach	Agricultural marketing, productivity growth, raising small holder incomes, food security, commercialisation, environment, natural resources	Researchers, universities, policy makers farmers, manufacturers, traders
ATPS	1994	To improve human and institutional capacity for technology policy formulation, implementation, research, analysis, assessment, monitoring, evaluation and dialogue.	To become a centre of excellence and brokerage between science and technology policy researchers and technology makers and implementers, and to become a centre of reference on key issues of technology policy in the sub-Saharan region.	IDRC, CARNAGIE CORPORATION, Rockefeller Foundation, World Bank, OPEC Fund, Ford Foundation, Coke Cola Eastern Africa, InfoDev, AfDB, Royal Dutch Government	Policy research, capacity building	Industry, Science and Technology,	Researchers, policy makers
AFREPRE N African Energy Policy Research Network	1987	To strengthen local research capacity and to harness it in the service of energy policy making and planning	Being developed	SIDA/SAREC, a wide range of national, bilateral and multilateral agencies provides support for specific short term activities	Research, policy analysis, advocacy, capacity building	Energy, institutions, rural development, urban poor	Researchers and policy makers in the region
ACTS African Centre for Technology Studies	1988	To provide new sustainable interventions for policy communities in Africa and the rest of the world through research and training conducted in an interactive and consultative manner	Being developed	USAID, Ford Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, World Resources Institute, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, NORAD	Policy outreach, research, capacity building	Bio-policy, climate change policy, governance, sustainable development	Government, communities, private sector, civil society, researchers