

# The Evidence-Based Model and Public Policy Making in South Africa

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The South African government, through the National Development Plan vision 2030, has made a commitment to invest in evidence-based approaches to policy and decision-making. The literature shows that, whilst the evidence-based approach to decision-making seeks to ensure that implementation is successful, too often, decisions are taken and implemented, but the intended results are not met. This article intends to explore two main questions, 1) what is the extent of evidence used currently in public policy-making in the South African water and sanitation sector? 2) Is there a need to improve, and what should the alternative look like? In order to respond to these questions, the article reflects on an empirical study, undertaken by the author, as part of his PhD journey. This article reflects on the findings from a mixed method approach, which took the form of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a quantitative self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were identified and selected using purposive and accidental non-probability sampling methods. This article reflects on the findings, which indicate that there is enough research evidence that remains unutilised, which, if harnessed, can steer more effective government policy decision-making in the water and sanitation sector in South Africa. The article further shows that there are several limitations, which require the attention of government and policy practitioners. This paper recommends an evidence-based policy-making framework for the South African government which considers the configuration of the government system. The conclusion is drawn that limitations in evidence used by the South African government, in general, range from consensus on the evidence-based process, what constitutes evidence, selective use of evidence, political influence on evidence, the extent to which monitoring and evaluation can provide enough evidence, and the purpose of research, among others. It is a recommendation of this study that the South African government invest in strengthening partnerships at the policy development and design level to ensure seamless policy implementation and build capacity in conjunction with its partners and stakeholders on evidence-based policy development, design and implementation.