

Social Science Research and Policy-making in Africa: Status, Issues and Prospects

Wilfred A Ndongko*

Introduction

The importance of this conference on Social Sciences in Post-Independent Africa, especially at this time of persistent socioeconomic crisis which have been aggravated by the poor choice of policy instruments and decisions in many African countries, cannot be overemphasized. To this extent, I believe that it is the responsibility of African social science researchers to provide the inputs, based on sound and objective scientific research, which could form the basis of the policies which are formulated to promote socio-economic development and transformation in Africa.

There is no doubt that the pace of economic transformation depends partly on the state of the knowledge of research endeavour in the social sciences and the ability of policy-makers and technocrats in transferring that knowledge into specific policy packages, national development programmes and projects. In order to have the greatest, desirable and positive impact on the socio-economic development of African countries, social scientists must direct their research efforts to the challenging issues and problems of national and subregional development in Africa.

The need for this approach to research, has become more and more evident because of the relatively small size of the social science community in many African countries. In fact, despite the considerable sums of money which have been used in funding social sciences research in many African countries, the impact of research output on policy-making and national development has been minimal if not negligible. As a result, there has been the repeated charge that social science researchers and scholars in African countries confine themselves to their ivory towers and there is, therefore, need for their research to be more relevant to national development issues and problems.

In view of the extreme importance of social science research for policy-making, execution and monitoring in Africa, the purpose of this paper is two fold. First, it is to demonstrate the lack of co-ordination between social science research and policy-making in African countries. Second, it is to

illustrate the importance of social science research as a foundation of sound public policy, particularly in African countries where economic and social development indicators are crude, faulty and unreliable.

The necessity to address this problem, particularly in the context of African countries arises from the fact that research provides all bases for government policies in any political system. Whether the researcher should participate in policy-making is a debatable issue since decision-making is not itself part of research. Not debatable, however, is the need for researchers to propose alternative instruments of government policies and to examine the consequences of the use of the instruments on the target population.

Certainly, one important and necessary condition for the success of government decision-makers in any society is their ability to understand the economic, political, cultural and social problems of the masses; and to anticipate their needs and aspirations. At the same time, decision-makers must be able to anticipate whether or not the possible means of satisfying those needs are adequate. In this regard, social science research has an important role of analyzing the important and strategic factors which influence the formulation of government policies in general, and the choices of decision-makers in particular.

The Status and Problems of Social Science Research and Policy-making in Africa

Social science research as a tool of sound government policy has not been given adequate attention and support in many African countries. In particular, very few attempts have been made to support research endeavour and to utilize the results of social science research in order to ascertain the current state of affairs, indicate future economic, political, cultural and social prospects and advocate what corrective measures, if any, may be needed.

Because there is often very little or no coordination between research endeavour and the government policies many of the latter have tended to fail or are inadequate. For example, consideration is not often given to the fact that the preparation and execution of a government annual budget rests in part on an analysis of the needs and desires of the people and the availability of the resources to meet those expectations. Consequently, national annual budget estimates are often based on false or unrealistic assumptions. Equally important, is the initiation of development programmes, which are intended to alleviate the economic, political, social and cultural problems of African countries — the plight of the peasant, the problems of small businesses, etc., without due reference to the beneficiaries.

Since few attempts are often made to undertake social science research on these types of socioeconomic problems, the result has been the initiation of many policies which have hardly been successful. This is true of cases

where wrong policy instruments have been chosen to achieve a particular development goal or objective and also of situations where existing policy instruments have not been properly analyzed to determine whether or not their utilization could ensure or lead to the achievement of the socioeconomic goals that are being pursued.

This is true of those African countries where many para-public institutions have been created without examining the existing ones, with a view to determining whether or not there are potential duplications of objectives and functions; why the existing ones have partially or totally failed in their mission; and what the potential advantages of the new institutions over the existing ones are. Rather than undertake this invaluable and important exercise before introducing new policies, many para-public bodies have been created in many African countries with the objective of providing jobs to political favourites, notwithstanding the duplication of objectives and functions between the existing institutions and the new ones.

Furthermore, the failure to use the results of social science research as inputs for policy-making in many African countries is due to the absence of adequate financial and material support for researchers. Very often, African social research institutions hardly ever carry out their research functions. Instead, many of the research institutions waste time on administrative procedures, setting up committees and holding numerous meetings which produce little or no results. In fact, many of the pronouncements on the importance of social science research for policy-making are hardly translated into reality.

Most disturbing is the fact that financial requests for the support of social science research in many African countries are generally met with administrative red-tape. As a consequence, many researchers, who carry out research on political, social and cultural issues and problems, are compelled to turn to international institutions for financial support which is very often hard to come by. This can be explained partly by the keen international competition for research funds and partly by the wider financial commitments as well as the specific research interests of the funding institutions.

Concerning the relationship between African policy-makers and university/research and training institutions, it should be pointed out that the relationship has oscillated between different phases of consent, mutual suspicion, confrontation and impasse. Putting this in a rough historical context, it has been observed that the 1960s were a decade of euphoria and consensus; 1970s were marked by hostility and conflict; 1980s by impasse, where interaction was stunted.

However, the 1990s hold the promise of a turning point — a situation which has been made possible by a combination of transition to democratic systems of political governance and market-oriented economic reforms. Yet,

the promise of the 1990s as a turning point in the relationship between the academics and government policy-makers has to be carefully nurtured.

At the present time, Africa has over 200 regional, national or sub-regional research institutions most of which depend on foreign financial support. Though foreign funding has appeared to assure these regional research centres of autonomy from interference from the respective African governments, it has made them particularly vulnerable to sudden changes in donor funding policy and research interests.

Furthermore, African research institutions have been beset by a myriad of problems, notably: poor communications facilities, inadequate infrastructure and the bureaucratic impediments of host governments. In order for these national, regional or sub-regional research institutions to effectively play their role, it is necessary to enhance their viability, among other things, by providing them with sufficient financial support and effective dissemination of their research results.

An examination of some country experiences reveals that many African countries can be broadly categorized into those with formal institutional structures for policy interface between policy-makers and policy researchers, and others without such structures. The categorization is not watertight; rather some institutions do display dominant features of institutionalization of policy interface, while others display ad hoc interface arrangements. There also exist other research organizations at the regional and international levels which provide policy advice to African Governments on a regular basis.

Some of the country experiences in policy interface include Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Cameroon. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the Special Action Programme in Administration and Management for African Regional Project (SAPAM) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1992 commissioned studies on policy interface experiences of five of these countries, namely; Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania. These case studies reveal that policy interactive mechanisms consist of research and consultancy assignments to policy experts, membership of government task forces and committees and conferences.

Most importantly, some country experiences have shown that little interface has been tolerated or practised in the core area of policy decision-making. However, there are countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania with formal structures for interface between policy-makers and researchers. Here, research institutions have either been attached to universities or set up as parastatal arms of government. In these cases, Boards of Directors and principal officials of the institutes which are appointed by government, have provided the link between the research institutes and policy-makers. However, a large number of the institutes are

not multi-disciplinary and do not cooperate with similar institutes domestically or internationally. A few institutes do combine training with multi-disciplinary social research.

Where government does not give specific research assignments, research findings and recommendations are not sometimes considered as inputs into the policy-making process. However, in cases where research assignments are contracted out to research institutes by government, the results are generally accepted and implemented. In those countries with formal institutional structures for interface, research and consulting assignments are contracted outside the normal structures. Considerations of friendship generally induce the assignment of research contracts to private companies and individuals. Such contracts are very often either unsuccessfully completed, sometimes abandoned, or poorly done.

The second group of African countries which include Kenya, and Senegal, lack formal institutional structures for promoting interface between policy-makers and researchers. In these countries, research institutes are attached to universities but are not normally required to provide inputs into the policy-making process. Governments give out research assignments to individual scholars, and a large part of the interface takes the form of organization of specialized workshops and seminars by researchers for policy-makers. A trend observed in recent years in some African countries has been the secondment of experienced researchers from universities to high-level administrative and policy positions in government. Almost invariably, such researchers who are redeployed never return to the universities and research institutions. In the long-run, this practice has weakened their capacity to undertake objective research.

Some important groups of research institutions and associations operating in Africa are those organized by regional organizations. Examples of such institutions are African Institute for Development and Planning (IDEP), African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD), Association of Arab Economists, Nigerian Economic Society, West African Economic Association, etc; which are largely engaged in research, training and the organization of conferences and seminars.

Many international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have, particularly since the 1980s, increased their influence on policy-making in African countries, particularly in the formulation and implementation of structural adjustment and stabilization programmes. Officials, researchers and consultants who are hired by these organizations regularly visit African countries to assess ongoing adjustment programmes and to suggest alternative economic policy management frameworks.

Generally, those African countries which have established formal institutional structures for interface and in which researchers are actively involved in the policy-making process do derive benefits from them. First, ministries and parastatal utilize research findings carried out by the universities and research institutes. Since these ministries are not adequately endowed with the required expertise to carry out such studies, the policy-making process has to some extent improved.

Second, the active participation of researchers in different committees set up by government has made it possible for the considerable scientific experience of African researchers to be placed at the disposal of policy-makers on a confidential basis. On the one hand, the participation of researchers in government committees has exposed them to the practical side of their disciplines as well as enhanced their research and teaching capabilities. However, where decision-makers have been distrustful of researchers, hostility, dislike and antagonism have abound. As a result, researchers have been deliberately kept out of the policy-making process and their research findings and recommendations underutilized.

Countries which lack formal institutional structures for interface between policy-makers and researchers have suffered from a number of shortcomings. In some cases, the relationships between policy-makers and researchers have been characterized by ad hoc actions whose impact has been limited to specific sectors and few projects. In addition, such countries have failed to develop a reliable and comprehensive data base which is necessary for proper decision-making, implementation and monitoring.

Some regional research centres have over the years accumulated considerable experience which is useful to government decision-making in the areas of development planning, research, conferences and technical training for high-level policy-making. In spite of their expertise and competence, the existing interface mechanisms have not facilitated the utilization of their considerable experience in policy formulation.

Many international financial institutions have been quite successful at producing detailed studies of the socioeconomic performance of those African countries implementing structural adjustment and stabilization programmes. In particular, they have utilized their role as creditor institutions to influence macro-economic policy frameworks in many debtor African countries. On the basis of the foregoing analysis of the status of research and policy-making in Africa, five dilemmas can be identified which have to be addressed in promoting interface. These are:

- (i) The dilemma between supply-driven consultancy and research versus demand driven consultancy and research;
- (ii) The dilemma of appropriate balance in use of local versus foreign experts in policy-formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

- (iii) The dilemma of autonomy versus dependence in determination of research/consultancy priorities;
- (iv) The dilemma of insufficient use of local experts in research institutions and their assimilation in government policy-making process and bureaucracy; and
- (v) The dilemma of determining the phase at which the policy cycle requires the advice of social research scientists.

On the other hand, several impediments to interface can be identified. From the perspective of the research and training institutions, the following have been the key impediments:

- (i) **The General Tardiness of the Civil service:** There is a certain tardiness that the researcher finds when he goes to government policy-making institutions. In general, he observes remarkable disinterestedness over public concerns. Meetings duly scheduled scarcely take place on time. Indeed, the outsiders are more punctual than the government officials who do arrange such meetings.
- (ii) **Lack of Organized Information:** The important role of management information systems in rational decision-making has often been recognized by government policy-makers in speeches and conference papers, but in practical terms, inadequate steps have been taken for their impact to be discerned.
- (iii) **Lack of Transparency:** Government public policy-making process has tended to be amenable to outside influence. In particular, the core of policy management (namely policy formulation) has been kept in the hands of government policy-makers mainly for reasons of secrecy.
- (iv) **Tendency of Politicians to use Outputs for Political Ends:** Ironically, there has been occasions when policy-makers have been too solicitous and patronizing for the comfort of the researchers. Instances of such occasions are when the policy-makers expect researchers to come out with findings or conclusions that support positions already taken by the former. This has often compromised the researchers integrity and professionalism in the process. Naturally, social science researchers have tended to resent such advances and have risked being branded as anti-government and therefore by-passed when lucrative consultancy opportunities arise.
- (v) **Bureaucratic Conservatism:** Another problem generally encountered in the interaction between researchers and the public policy-makers is what the former consider to be nonchalant, conservative approach to doing things. This has been particularly true of top career officials in the civil

service, who either satisfied with the old methods and approaches or too lazy to adopt brain-cracking scientific systems, are resistant to change, innovation and experimentation. These are the greatest enemies of policy analysis.

Unfortunately, sometimes there is justification for their skepticism and antipathy against rigorous examination of policy alternatives; in that having been in the service for a considerable length of time, they have seen several instances of carefully devised development plans and strategies being set aside under political pressures, especially following a change of regimes. Under such circumstances, social science researchers, who insist on rigour and analysis, have been made to feel too theoretical, unrealistic and their views have been considered to be of no relevance to practical socioeconomic problems facing the policy-makers on the ground. As a result, African policy-makers have tended to favour advice from Western donor agencies and the international financial institutions, and thus neglecting that from experienced and dedicated national experts.

- (vi) **Low Remuneration and Discriminatory Pay Practices:** Sometimes the interaction runs into difficulties when the expectations, especially, in financial terms, do not materialize. As has been pointed out earlier, when researchers and consultants undertake commissioned studies for the government, they are expected to be paid, and paid well too. Consequently, they see no justification for being remunerated less than expatriate consultants for doing similar work.

Experience has shown that African researchers and consultants who have been involved in the government policy-making process have always been poorly paid, the norm in places like Ghana being less than 10% of what their expatriate counterparts generally receive. Ingenious but unimpressive arguments have been marshalled to justify the government's low rate of remuneration, including the fact that researchers as public servants are not to be compensated for offering additional services to the State.

- (vii) **Reluctance to Associate with Autocratic Regimes:** Poor interaction has also been explained in terms of political instability and its antecedents. For example, the autocratic tendencies of the political leadership has given rise to political instability which the typical African social science researchers abhor. The latter, having been brought up in democratic tradition of liberalism believe in the freedom of the press, independent judiciary and the due process of law, freedom of association, free elections and so on.

Unfortunately, however, some African governments have tended to maintain their position by the barrel of the gun and by so doing have trampled on the liberties of their people. Under such circumstances, some researchers prefer

to have nothing to do with such African governments. They feel uncomfortable in the company of politicians and consider doing business with such governments amounting to selling their conscience.

- (viii) **Lack of Effective Exposure about Potentials of Training Institutions:** Government departments in many African countries tend to be unaware of the potential for research institutions. This has led to the neglect of research results as inputs in the policy-making process.
- (ix) **Obsession with Foreign Experts:** Obsession with foreign experts has been cited as a hindrance to the use of indigenous experts and researchers who are in local universities and research institutes. This problem has been discussed more often among the researchers than by government policy-makers who generally deny its existence.
- (x) **Lack of Resources by Government Institutions:** In some cases, government departments lack the financial resources to engage the services of African consultants from the university institutions and research institutes.

Policy-makers also believe that there are problems on the part of the university and research institutions, which have prevented fruitful interaction. Some of the problems identified include:

- (i) **Inadequate Consultancy Capacity:** The social science researchers in many African countries are scarcely up to date in their areas of specialization and research. Libraries are thin and several years behind in terms of the acquisition of current academic journals and other publications. Researchers can hardly boast of well-equipped laboratories to enable them undertake break-through investigations. In short, researchers generally do not always possess the knowledge and skills required by the policy-makers for their ambitious development projects and programmes. This has been the argument for the continuous reliance on foreign experts and consultants.
- (ii) **Confidence and Loyalty Gap:** The problem of confidence and loyalty gap has been also real. Can the policy-makers always be assured of dedicated service on the part of a researcher or adviser who may not even come from his tribe? Some government officials do have their doubts, and this has tended to work against their requesting African researchers to carry out consultancy for them. Many African governments are even more apprehensive, when lecturers and researchers are known to be vocal and outspoken. Can they, therefore, be relied upon to keep the confidentiality of unresolved policy issues? All these doubts have destroyed the basis for useful interaction between policy-makers and African social scientists.

(iii) **General Mistrust:** Serious antagonism has developed between policy-makers and university based researchers in some African countries. This has been the case in Ghana and Nigeria where public officials generally do not approve of national experts and researchers being paid "fantastic sums". Instead, they prefer consultancy contracts involving large sums of money to be awarded to expatriates or to the mushrooming local consultancy firms which operate outside the research and university institutions.

As a concluding note to this section of the paper, it should be pointed out that the consequences of this regrettable situation, regarding the absence of effective collaboration between social science research institutions and policy-making entities in African countries, are obvious. By neglecting the use of social science research as the basis of sound government policy, policy-makers have failed to objectively address the socio-economic problems facing many African countries today. As a result, wrong and inappropriate policy instruments have been applied at the wrong time and very often to the wrong problems. The outcome is that difficulties have been encountered in the process of implementing and monitoring the chosen policy instruments.

Furthermore, the prevailing situation has led to enormous waste of time, energy, manpower and financial resources which are scarce in many African countries. Certainly, the absence of financial support for social science research projects initiated by indigenous researchers has led to frustration. This has tended to force researchers more and more to design projects which largely reflect the research priorities of international development organizations and foundations and not those of the African countries.

Such a situation if left unchecked will eventually deprive African countries of their skilled manpower since many of the specialists may in the long-run want to take up permanent research positions in those international organizations. In order to alleviate this unfortunate situation, it is absolutely necessary that African policy-makers and research institutions recognize the importance and relevance of social science research as an input in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

There is an important role, in this regard, for social science research as a facilitator of policy formulation in African countries. Achieving this objective requires that African social science researchers undertake research, using appropriate methodologies to ensure their credibility, and for policy-makers to use such findings to facilitate the formulation of national development policies. In many African countries, however, this collaboration between social science research and policy-makers has been totally absent.

In order for social science research to serve as facilitator of government policy, three conditions must be met:

- Social science research should investigate social, economic, political and cultural policy issues, problems and phenomena;
- Social science should offer prescriptions of the public policy issues analyzed,
- And it should make predictions about the future evolution of events to guide public policies.

The limited impact of social science research in many African countries can be explained partly by the failure to meet these conditions, and partly by the failure of governments to seriously consider policy advice that emanates from the results of social science research. In order to deal with these problems, it is suggested that the public policy objectives in any given area or sector be defined so as to identify the kind of research problems which are needed to serve as vital inputs to policy-making.

It is preposterous to prescribe fixed modalities concerning the relationship between policy-makers and researchers, regardless of the special circumstances of each African country. What is needed is to have continuous and sustained dialogue through the creation of appropriate forums or mechanisms for interface. In this regard, it is possible to make a new start with the hope of establishing a new consensus within the framework of the optimism of the 1990s. Various sub-regional and regional research and training institutions such as CAFRAD, ESAURP and IDEP have played, and will continue to play a critical role in promoting-interface between policy-makers and research institutions.

The Importance of Social Science Research as a Tool of Policy-making

As a tool of policy formulation, social science research has three distinct phases of operation which are closely related to each other. Firstly, social science research involves the investigation of the economic, political, cultural and social structures of the country in question. This calls for the continuous gathering of data (both quantitative and qualitative) on the size and nature of the system under investigation.

The Institute of Human Sciences of Cameroon, for example, undertook studies on the socioeconomic impact of the co-operative societies in the North West Province. The studies were designed to determine the effectiveness of these societies and to see how it can be adopted by, if not adapted to other parts of the country. The findings and recommendations became invaluable to the Cameroon government as inputs to the decisions to support cooperative societies which were examples of collective efforts of preserving and consolidating sustained national development in the country.

The Institute also undertook extensive studies on demographic shifts in Cameroon; notably on rural-urban migration of youths. Data collected as a result of these studies enabled the Cameroon government to reappraise and

reinforce its socioeconomic development policies. In addition, agro-economists from the Institute also carried out studies directed at examining the effectiveness of "development missions. Sociologists, on the other hand, examined the impact of the "disenclavement" effort on the local population. There is no doubt that these economic and sociological studies were intended to serve as a "fed-back" to the Cameroon government decision-makers and to enable them reexamine their policies in these problem areas.

The second stage of social science research involves diagnosis. This calls for the description, with the aid of the available data, of the events that are taking or have taken place in the system, an analysis of the forces which have accounted for such events. They may include, for example, such day-to-day developments in the socioeconomic system as changes in population, employment level and the general price levels.

The final phase of social science research involves the prediction of future trends and patterns of developments in the socioeconomic system under study. This is the most difficult and interesting stage, especially as many uncontrollable but strategic factors do come into play during the process of making such predictions. In a nutshell then, social science research involves the investigation of the economic, political, social and cultural system of the country in question with a view to obtaining the relevant socioeconomic data which can assist researchers in making predictions about the future trend of events.

On the other hand, what does government policy mean and what does it involve? Government policy, refers to government efforts to look after the "general interest" either by changing certain qualitative aspects of the existing system (for example the creation of a Customs Union, a para-public corporation, nationalization of foreign industry, etc.), or by changes within the qualitative framework of the given economic, political, cultural and social structure, some parameters or instruments of policy (for example, the personal income tax rate, the interest rate, the exchange rate, etc.)

Given the individual preference indicators of the citizens, the objective of government policy is:

- (a) to fix a collective or social preference indicator (such as the national economic development plan) which spells out the broad development goals;
- (b) to choose the relevant and adequate instruments of policy for the realization of those goals; and
- (c) to formulate the relationship between the goals and policy instruments on the one hand and the socioeconomic system on the other.

Thus, policy formulation, like social science research, involves three closely related phases: an indication of the goals to be attained, the choice of the

relevant policy instruments, and the specification of the relationship between the stated goals, the chosen policy instruments and the socioeconomic structure.

Certainly, any sound government policy requires objective social science research on many counts. Firstly, the establishment of a collective or social preference function, necessarily requires a complete knowledge, if possible, of the socioeconomic behaviour of the individuals in the society and the various development indicators of the socioeconomic system. This information can only be obtained through an objective investigation of the relevant economic, social, political and cultural system, the absence of which, the formulation of the social preference function can hardly be carried out on a rational basis.

Second, an analysis of the date (or any aspect of the structure of the country), which reveals certain changes in the system including how and why they have taken place; enables the policy-maker to identify the various problems and issues which call for government action and to select the appropriate goals, including the relevant policy instruments which can be utilized to achieve those goals.

Finally, the specification of the relationship between the policy goals and instruments of policy requires the application of the knowledge of social science research techniques. This is necessary because the establishment of such a relationship could enable the policy-maker, for example, to find out what the impact of a selected policy instrument or set of policy instruments would be on a particular goal or set of goals during a specified period of time.

For purposes of illustration, if an increase in tariff barriers is advocated as a means of improving conditions in some domestic industries, it is generally possible to gauge in advance the effect on these industries and on the national economy as a whole of such a measure. It is also possible to estimate with some reliability the extent to which the importation of foreign products would be reduced, for specific increases in the tariff rates. All these exercises require an adequate knowledge of prediction techniques; the application of which is even more challenging in African countries which have been experiencing rapid economic, political, social, cultural and structural changes for sometime now.

In concluding this section of the paper, it should be pointed out that any successful government policy would require continuous and effective collaboration between African social science researchers and decision-makers and those national institutions responsible for guiding the economic, political and social destiny of the masses of the people in the African countries. Such collaboration could take the form of frequent exchange of views between the social science community and government decision-makers on national development problems and issues.

Furthermore, the usefulness of social science research depends largely on the manner in which the research results are presented and subsequently used by policy-makers as vital inputs into the decision-making process. For example, in Cameroon, unlike in many African countries, social science researchers had up to 1991 been provided with adequate institutional, structural and financial means to enable them carry out research on some socioeconomic development problems which have been affecting the day-to-day survival of the people. It has, therefore, been a challenge to the Cameroonian social science community to ensure that their research is objective, and reflects the basic needs of government ministries, state corporations and other users of such results.

Unfortunately, however, by the end of 1991 these expectations were never fulfilled despite the fact that the Institute of Human Sciences was created in 1980 with the main objective of providing the necessary research inputs into national policy-making process. The reasons for this sad experience range from the incompetence of many researchers, weak research methodology and analytical techniques, lack of self-confidence and appreciation of rigours of social research on the part of some researchers, to the absence of effective communication between policy-makers and researchers, administrative red tapes, bureaucracy and poor vulgarization of research results; just to mention a few.

The socioeconomic crisis in Cameroon resulted in a gradual but considerable reduction of funds for social research programmes and operations in the Institute. This situation finally led to the closing down of the Institute by the Government in October 1991. Needless to emphasize, it is hoped that other African countries can draw on the Cameroon experience with a view to avoiding the sad and expensive mistakes which were made in the case of the former Institute of Human Sciences of Cameroon.

It is, therefore, in view of the Cameroon experience in particular and the issues relating to the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions in Africa in general, that the final section of this paper has been devoted to making some recommendations which are aimed at enhancing policy dialogue and interface between these two actors in the development process.

Recommendations and Conclusions

In view of the importance of social science research as a tool of policy-formulation as well as the implementation and monitoring of government programmes, the following recommendations have been made in respect of (a) the guidelines for enhancing interface or dialogue between government policy-makers and research/training institutions; and (b) sustaining the process of promoting more effective interface, through

national, regional and international research networks, between policy-makers and research/training institutions in Africa.

On the role and responsibility of African governments, it is recommended that:

- governments should strive to provide formal institutional framework to support co-operation between researchers and policy-makers;
- african countries should organize workshops and seminars at which researchers and policy-makers could interact and discuss policy issues and problems;
- the responsibility for establishing specific interface mechanisms should be left to African national and regional institutions;
- the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions should be backed by appropriate data base;
- different avenues for effecting contacts between policy-makers and researchers should be explored;
- in countries where many research institutions exist, an independent central coordinating organ should be established to monitor and collate research findings, provide forum for discussion of problems and promote policy consensus;
- in order to promote national development by local consultancy capacity and provide local consultants with reasonable remunerations that they would not regard as discriminatory, governments should formulate guidelines for fair compensation of national experts;
- to ensure that research institutions are involved and contribute effectively to the development process, governments should provide adequate funding for research;
- to ensure the rationale and effective utilization of existing indigenous skills and resources, governments should encourage the development of data bank of experts;
- governments should keep research institutions informed of their policy and national development priorities;
- where governments directly assume the role of appointing directors of research institutions, it is recommended that they make such appointments on the basis of merit;
- governments should create institutional arrangements that would provide for regular interaction with national research institutions;
- governments should recognize the fact that university research and training institutions have important roles to play in the training of highly skilled personnel and in the improvement of management

capacity. In this context, government should create an enabling environment for meaningful exchange of ideas towards national development process;

- governments are encouraged to develop policy analysis units in sector ministries and departments. This will help to avoid piece-meal policies that have not been subjected to critical examination and study.

As concerns the role and responsibility of universities and research organizations in the enhancement of dialogue and interface, it is recommended as follows:

- liaison offices staffed with competent officers be established by the universities and research institutions. These offices should be designed to act as interaction channels with policy-making centres. Through these arrangements, universities and research institutions could inform the policy centres of their on-going research and the findings of their completed research, together with annotated synopsis of their policy implications;
- research institutions and universities should aim at excellence by improving upon the quality of their research. This calls for a rigorous internal self-assessment in the areas of research designing, data collection, report writing and report packaging. The credibility and, therefore, continuous acceptance of the relevance of these institutions will to a large extent depend upon the quality of the outputs they deliver;
- to win the confidence of policy-makers, universities and research institutions should establish sound internal management and administrative procedures. Their financial administration and other management systems should be transparent;
- universities and research institutes must be proactive in outlook by keeping pace with the thinking of governments on national development issues and problems.

In order for the proposed collaboration and interface to be enduring and self-sustaining, definite strategies will have to be marshalled, deployed, monitored and constantly evaluated to guarantee their effectiveness. In this regard, there must be the adoption of a regional research policy — at the African level — with the establishment of national implementation strategies. This should be accompanied by the establishment of national and international networks with technical and infrastructural support. An important requirement thereafter should be the adoption of action plans which emphasize national development priorities with the view to orienting research towards the satisfaction of socioeconomic and political needs.

Human resource development and effective utilization for both policy-makers and researchers constitute an essential component of the package of policy measures required to sustain a durable interface. There is no doubt that the presence of a crop of professionally qualified and practically experienced staff on both sides could enhance the efforts towards meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Specific steps should therefore be taken to make appropriate regular and systematic training available to both researchers and policy-makers.

As the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions can best thrive in an environment characterized by peace, stability, transparency, tolerance of ideas and one that has established mechanisms for resolving policy differences, public policy should be approached as an open system and accommodate the various view points of the different actors in the system. To ensure sustained dialogue between the two actors, efforts should be made to remove legal and other restrictive regulations that may hinder effective interface.

Sustained and effective interface can be achieved only in circumstances where the capacity for such an interface exists on both sides. To improve and enhance the capacity for interaction, it is important at the initial stage to take an inventory of what exists. To this effect, it is recommended that directories of training institutions, research institutions, funding sources, publishing houses, professional associations be compiled in order to sustain, constantly upgrade and strengthen existing capacity to resolve policy issues and problems and avail decision-makers of the information needed for effective policy-making.

Additionally, it is recommended that some modalities for sustained interface and promotion of dialogue between the government policy-makers and university research and training institutions be spelt out. These modalities are that:

- a national forum be created for dialogue between prominent policy-makers and academics/researchers;
- research and training institutions should give more visibility to their activities;
- special seminars and workshops should be conducted for senior policy-makers on policy-making and policy analysis;
- governments should make increased use of indigenous consultants/researchers for the analysis/evaluation of policy issues;
- governments should encourage access to policy relevant data by academics and researchers.

Since governments can benefit from the detached objectivity and familiarity with scientific process and evaluation methodology, it is recommended that

they involve academics and researchers in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. It is also strongly recommended that all policy analysis activities be institutionalized. To this extent, a catalytic group conversant with policy analysis/policy methodology and close to the organizational leadership be constituted to provide a forum for meaningful dialogue between researchers and policy-makers. Furthermore, a mechanism for the enrichment of experience be provided so as to enable researchers and academics to work in policy-making roles and practitioners to spend some time in research institutions reflecting on their experience and interacting with researchers.

In view of the usefulness of disseminating knowledge and information on policy issues and other issues relevant to the interface, it is recommended that books, journals, special bulletins and research reports of importance to policy matters be published and widely disseminated. Efforts should be made to mobilize funding from donors, the private sector and other sources. Attempts should be made to supplement the shrinking research funding caused by the economic crisis being experienced by many African countries.

It should be pointed out that in spite of the shrinking funding base, it is still possible to generate additional resources provided it can be shown that the research activities would be useful to the State, the private sector or the society at large. Viable and well-focused research programmes, properly packaged and presented could stand a good chance of funding.

While it is recognized that many activities which are aimed at enhancing interface may not require additional funding as most of the basic infrastructure may already be in place, it is nevertheless recommended that additional resources be tapped from the actors in the interface process. To this extent, it is recommended that national focal points be established to initiate action and also act as catalysts and monitoring units in the sustaining process.

Finally, CODESRIA is urged to initiate action at the regional level by approaching African governments through its established research channels to institutionalize measures aimed at sustainable policy interface. In this regard, it is recommended that CODESRIA should organize regional seminars aimed at getting the above initiatives underway. The seminars could then be used to launch national focal points constituted from senior government policy-makers and social science researchers. Finally CODESRIA should indicate its willingness to assist those African countries interested in participating in this important initiative.

As a concluding note to this paper, there is no doubt that the effective utilization of Africa's human resources can play a major role in stimulating their economies and putting the continent back to recovery and sustained growth and development. This is extremely important because Africa's track record of tapping existing resources in the Universities and research institutions for policy development (analysis, formulation, implementation

and evaluation) as clearly demonstrated in paper, has not been very encouraging.

References

- Aiyepku, W, O, 1978, "Organizational Considerations in the Information/Utilization Mode of African Policy-Makers", in C, O, Kisiedu (ed), *Information for Economic Planning and Development for the African Region*. Legon, Ghana.
- Aiyepku, W, O, 1980, *The Perception and Utilization of Information by Policy-Makers in Nigeria*, Lagos, National Library of Nigeria.
- Aiyepku, W, O, 1982, "The Perceived Responsibilities of NISER in the Dissemination of Development Information", *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Ake Claude, 1980, "Social Sciences and Development", *Africa Development*, CODESRIA, Vol. 5, No. 4, Dakar, Senegal.
- Bujra, A, and Mkandawirc, T, 1980, "The Evolution of Social Science in Africa: Problems and Prospects. *Africa Development*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Dakar, Senegal.
- Bujra, A, S, and Khidir E, El, 1992, "Dialogue Between Policy-Makers and Research Institutions: The Historical and Socio-Political Context", Paper presented at the ECA/PIISD/SAPAM, Rabat, Maroc.
- CAFRAD, 1992, "Implications des Institutions de Formation et de Recherche dans le Processus des Réformes et du Développement en Afrique : Exemple et Rôle de CAFRAD", Paper presented at the ECA/PIISD/SAPAM Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- CODESRIA, 1990, *The State and Social Sciences*, Proceedings of the Sixth General Assembly of CODESRIA, Dakar.
- Diejomaoh, V, P, 1992, "Social Science Priorities for National Development", *Research for Development*, Vol.2, No. 2, NISER. Ibadan.
- ECA, 1992, "Notes on the Guidelines for Promoting more Effective Interface Between Policy-Makers and Training/Research Institutions", Paper presented at the ECA/PHSD/SAPAM Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- ECA, 1992, "Synthesis of Selected Country Experiences", Paper presented at the ECA/PHSD/SAPAM, Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- Knott Jack and Aaron Wildavus, 1980, "If Dissemination is the Solution What is the Problem", *Knowledge Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*. Vol. 1, No.4.
- Maliyamkano, T, H, 1992, "The Contribution of Policy-Oriented Research Centres to Economic Reform and Development: Problems and Possibilities", Paper presented at the ECA/PHSD/SAPAM, Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- Mkandawire T, 1989, "Introductory Remarks on the African Social Science Research Environment", *APPS Newsletter*, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Mohrir, V, N, 1992, "Institutionalization of Policy Analysis in Developing Countries: An Explanatory Approach", Paper presented et ECA/PHSD/SAPAM Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- Nagel, Stuart, S, 1992, "The Need for Improved Policy Analysis in Developing and Industrialized Nations", Paper presented at the ECA/PIISD/SAPAM Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- Ndongko, W, A, 1985, *Reflections on The Economic Policies and Development of Cameroon*, MESRES/SHI, Yaounde.

- Ndongko, W, A, 1985, *The Utilization of Social Sciences in the Formulation of Policy: The Cameroon Experience*, CODESRIA Conference on the Utilization of Social Sciences in Policy Formulation and Research in African Universities, Dakar.
- Ndongko, W, A, 1992, "Social Science Research and Policy-Making in Developing Countries: A Critical Analysis", Paper present at ECA/PHSD/SAPAM Senior Policy Workshop, Rabat, Maroc.
- Odhiambo, T, R, and Isoun, I, 1988, eds, *Science for Development in Africa*, Academy of Science Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya.
- UNECA, 1979, *DEVSIIS — Africa: A Pan-African Documentation and Information System for Social and Economic Development*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

* United Nations Economic Commission for Africa,
UNECA/OES/PPCO/ECA/MRAG, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia