

Review of: "Bridging Empirical Evidence and Diverse Epistemologies in Public Policy: Evidence-Based Policy and the Issue of Subjugated Knowledges"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This article is both extremely interesting and highly promising. The numerous references demonstrate a highly relevant interdisciplinary approach to an original and important topic. Several central points are particularly noteworthy: the pseudo-rationality of political actions, evidence-based policy (EBP), the technocratic nature of knowledge, the issue of subjugated and marginalized knowledge, intersectionality, and radical democracy. The proposal of a framework for better understanding how to integrate marginalized or subjugated knowledge into EBP is especially compelling.

However, the text sometimes lacks rigor in the articulation of concepts and coherence in the sequencing of ideas. The argumentation could be more focused, and the definitions of the key terms need to be clarified consistently. At times, the sentences are too long, with multiple complex concepts, some of which are used in an approximate way or require further elaboration (e.g., technocratic, true, empirical, etc.). Key concepts and their links should be identified in order to establish a clear problem and answer it through the various sections. The end diagram is an excellent idea, but it would benefit from a clearer problem statement and definition of key concepts.

I hope my comments will help the authors improve this important work. I would be delighted to read another revised version.

Regarding the introduction

The introduction of the article does not sufficiently justify its main objective. It begins by addressing the relationship between science and politics, suggesting that the social order tends to link them. Then it mentions that the article will focus on evidence-based policy (EBP) and subjugated knowledge, but the rationale behind this choice seems insufficiently explained. Integrating certain elements from the paragraph on EBP into the introduction would help to clarify the central problem. Additionally, the focus on subjugated knowledge deserves a more robust justification. While I do not dispute the theoretical choice, it would be helpful to expand on it, perhaps by exploring the concept of situated knowledge or referencing "strong objectivity" as a way of addressing the limitations of EBP.

"In this way, this text tries to exemplify how approaches to improving public administration can update and include the various critiques of scientific knowledge, especially those related to aspects of exclusion and epistemic diversity, which is especially relevant for different regions of the global South."

However, the article does not seem to fully address this objective. For instance, EBP is not limited to scientific knowledge but also incorporates experiential and contextual knowledge (evidence). Yet, the article appears to reduce EBP to science alone. Is the text proposing a framework for recognizing the politicization of public decisions? Acknowledging subjectivity in the production of scientific knowledge? Integrating subjugated knowledge not only into science but also into experiential knowledge? It would be beneficial to clarify the relationship between these key concepts and democracy from the outset to present a more coherent overview.

I also believe that the Nutley & Smith quote is not the most relevant. It would be more appropriate to reference the founders of EBP, which originally emerged from evidence-based medicine. This could be mentioned in the introduction to illustrate how public action is often conceived in the same way as medical decisions: rational and linear, despite the ongoing debate between these fields. Additionally, it is important to emphasize that EBP encompasses several types of knowledge, with concrete examples where possible. Finally, when discussing subjugated knowledge, it would be useful to specify whether it refers to scientific or experiential knowledge, or how this knowledge is integrated into EBP.

Regarding Part 1

I don't fully understand why Part 1 concludes with: "In Western democracies, at least two mechanisms can be identified in this process for determining 'true' interpretation and discourses: (x) social demand and (y) empirical (scientific) measurement"

How is this conclusion drawn? Why are these two mechanisms emphasized? The question of truth in political decision-making has been extensively explored in the political science literature. It seems that this section should engage more directly with that literature. For example, I would link the paragraph on biological capacities to establish truth with the literature on cognitivist approaches to public policy. Several concepts need further elaboration, definition, and alignment with the central problem: i) truth (I would avoid being overly definitive, especially in our post-truth era, where truth is often idealized), ii) discourse and the discursive aspect of public policy (discourses are distinct from facts and the formulation of public policy), iii) depoliticization or the rationality sought by EBP (this concept needs further development and may be at the heart of the problem).

The article seems more focused on explaining how we can recognize the "social" in the production of knowledge (whether from experience, social demand, or science) and its use (as discussed with Weiss). Perhaps the premise should be that knowledge is a social construct, and we should explore how this influences EBP.

Some references:

Parkhurst, J. O. (2017). *The politics of evidence : From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence*. Routledge.

Oliver, K., & Pearce, W. (2017). Three lessons from evidence-based medicine and policy : Increase transparency, balance inputs, and understand power. *Palgrave Communications*, 3(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-017-0045-9>

Hughes, C. E. (2007). Evidence-based policy or policy-based evidence? The role of evidence in the development and implementation of the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 26(4), 363-368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09595230701373859>

"This study has at least two limitations": which study?

For me, this paragraph lacks a "big picture" perspective. I would either begin directly with Part 2 or more broadly contextualize EBP within the wider field of public policy literature. The central issue needs to be refocused, and more precision is required.

It would also be useful to decentralize the discussion from the UK, as EBP is an internationally promoted approach, supported by global organizations such as EVIPNET (as later described in the article).

Regarding methodology

The methods used are extremely interesting, as are the theoretical approaches. A dedicated paragraph explaining this in more detail would be valuable. Additionally, a clearer link between social injustice and the production of knowledge is needed. Providing a more precise definition of the method would help establish coherence between the various concepts and ideas presented, ultimately improving the clarity of the article.

Regarding Part 2

In this section, the concept of democracy needs to be explored in greater detail. Why are we discussing democracy here? Is it a central goal of EBP? If so, how? Returning to the core concepts is necessary to maintain a coherent framework. How is democracy connected to the concept of EBP?

"On the other hand, we find the argument for extending the type of evidence used in government influenced mainly by Carol Weiss' typology, which shows different methods by which research and evidence can affect public policy and government"

I am not sure that Weiss' typology directly influences the use of evidence. Rather, the typology demonstrates how knowledge can be understood and utilized. It is more of a tool for grasping how knowledge is more than an object to be exchanged—it is a social construct. Thus, two perspectives could be distinguished: knowledge as a social object, both in its production (by researchers) and its use.

"These two foundational perspectives, (a) differentiated practices between decision makers and researchers and (b) Weiss's typology, resulted in at least two alternatives: continuing with an indirect (enhanced) use or toward closing the gap and promoting the direct (linear) use of research in public policy (Oliver et al., 2014)"

I don't agree with this analysis. What evidence supports these conclusions? At most, the technocratic promotion of data usage is indeed influenced by the popularization of EBP, but it doesn't stem from the fact that knowledge is considered a

social construct. Moreover, what exactly do "direct" and "indirect" uses refer to here? How does this distinction influence the application of knowledge? It would be helpful to provide concrete examples. Also, what is meant by "linear use" in this context?

"The EBP approach is initially similar to its predecessors."

Which predecessors? It would be beneficial to explore the historical background of the institutional desire to rationalize public policy-making.

At the end of the paragraph, the article mentions various scientific methods (meta-analysis, systematic reviews, etc.). However, the relevance of this paragraph remains unclear. How does the mention of these scientific methods contribute to the discussion? It seems crucial to clarify the kind of knowledge being referenced in the context of EBP (scientific, experiential, etc.). For example, the term "empirical" is mentioned several times regarding the basis for decisions in EBP. What does "empirical" mean in this context? Are we referring to science? Evidence? Experiential knowledge?

"I present the following points as a possible interpretation of a contemporary approach to EBP, primarily intended for regions of the world with low institutionalization of knowledge management, such as low- and middle-income countries"

I believe it is rare for knowledge management to be institutionalized, even in high-income countries. As you rightfully note later, the issue of subjugated knowledge is relevant not only in Southern countries but also for marginalized populations in both the Global South and North (given the intersection of various oppression systems at micro and macro levels).

"Likewise, the EBP has been sustained by a technocratic vision of public service, which assumes that professionals are better able to decide for populations, leading to a centralization of decisions, which has been criticized from a democratic perspective under the argument of representativeness and depoliticization, limiting social learning about the public, and its multiple implications (Dewey, 2012 [1946])"

I disagree with this characterization. A technocratic approach does not necessarily imply that professionals are believed to be better at deciding for the public. Rather, it suggests that knowledge is perceived as a technical object transmitted in a detached manner, without consideration of the social context in which it is produced and applied. Furthermore, the basic idea behind EBP is also to incorporate experiential data; science is just one component of the knowledge database intended for decision-making (in theory).

Regarding Part 3

As previously mentioned, the notion of "truth" and "true discourse" must be clarified. What exactly are we referring to?

While John Dewey and others emphasized the importance of considering the voices of the population when making health decisions, the references in this section seem somewhat outdated. Baptiste Godrie, for instance, has recently written about the inclusion of various forms of knowledge in research. Additionally, many scholars have discussed participatory science and action research. Godrie even coordinated a special issue on radical epistemologies, which addresses these issues comprehensively.

Once again, we shouldn't contrast social demand with empirical and scientific measurement unless we provide a justification for why.

Why is there a specific mention of gender equality at the end of the paragraph when the rest of the text references multiple systems of oppression that produce subjugated knowledge?

Why focus solely on the concepts of efficiency and justice? How were these two terms chosen, and how do they relate to the central issue? Regarding efficiency, we could also discuss public accountability. Efficiency for whom? Justice for whom? And in relation to what?

Section 3.1

I think it's an excellent idea to divide Part 3 into three sections, and the approaches developed in each of these subsections are commendable. However, the content lacks rigor and doesn't adequately support the main argument.

It's inaccurate to speak of "intersectional categories." Instead, we should refer to systems of inequality or oppression that are intersectional and create unique social positions for individuals based on their multiple identities. This complexity is a key factor in the difficulty of recognizing subjugated knowledge. The issue is not about "disaggregating" categories but about considering them in how we value knowledge and discourse. For example, in qualitative research, we should ask how testimonial injustices (which impact certain populations in specific contexts, such as Indigenous women in healthcare settings when the doctors are economically privileged Caucasian men) affect the quality of the data collected. Ultimately, this section doesn't fully address these points. Intersectionality theory offers an approach for addressing these issues, but the paragraph doesn't go into enough detail. This could be contrasted with Section 3.2 and epistemic injustices.

Section 3.2

Are we really discussing "testimonial subjugated knowledge" here? It seems we are actually talking about testimonial and hermeneutic injustice. If the expression is retained, it should be properly defined. The example of Indigenous testimonies also needs further elaboration and should be supported by relevant research. It would also be beneficial to delve deeper into defining subjugated knowledge and linking it to structural injustices related to knowledge production and use.

Section 3.3

Why are only two possible solutions presented? This section has very few references. I believe the literature on proposed solutions should be broadened to include more perspectives. Furthermore, epistemic injustices are often implicit—people don't always realize that they are either creating or experiencing testimonial injustices. Therefore, we should explore how to address these biases more thoroughly in the literature. It's not enough to "bring everyone to the table so that all voices are heard." The two types of injustice are also interconnected. Marginalized people may not only exclude themselves but also contribute to negative discourses about themselves. For example, in France, people living in precarious conditions

have sometimes described themselves as maladjusted in collective forums. There is also a wealth of decolonial literature that could enrich this section.

Section 3.4

The exploration of different types of confrontation between subjugated and dominant knowledge is interesting. However, are we discussing this at a macro level, in the context of political decision-making, the construction of knowledge, or everyday interactions? The level of analysis needs to be clarified to provide a more precise and structured framework. This is why a methods section could be particularly useful.