

Editor's Note:**From Intuition to Evidence: Evidence-Based Knowledge Management (EBKM) as an Infrastructure for Responsible Decision-Making****Rasoul Zavaqai¹****Abstract**

Purpose: The expansion of universities, research institutions, information databases, statistical systems, and the growing production of journal articles, theses and dissertations, expert reports, and policy documents has not necessarily produced a corresponding improvement in the quality of organizational and national decision-making. By addressing this paradox between the accumulation of knowledge and the persistence of problems, this editorial argues for a transition from unsystematic reliance on intuition, experience, authority, and fragmented data toward Evidence-Based Knowledge Management (EBKM). It further proposes a conceptual and operational framework for translating trustworthy knowledge into decisions that are transparent, evaluable, and open to revision.

Methodology: This editorial adopts a conceptual, analytical, and critical approach, drawing on the literature on evidence-based knowledge management, evidence-based management and decision-making, knowledge translation, evidence-informed policymaking, information and knowledge science, organizational learning and memory, open science, and research assessment. Through a critical integration of these intellectual streams, major barriers to the effective use of knowledge are identified and a proposed architecture for EBKM is developed.

Findings: The analysis identifies person-centered decision-making, the research–practice gap, the absence of an epistemic audit trail, selective use of evidence, asymmetrical organizational memory, the illusion of data-driven decision-making, and uncritical reliance on artificial intelligence as major obstacles to translating knowledge into trustworthy decisions. To address these problems, a nine-stage EBKM architecture is proposed: defining the problem and formulating an answerable question; gathering multisource evidence; critically appraising evidence; synthesizing and contextualizing evidence; creating an evidence dossier; implementing decisions in staged and reversible forms; evaluating outcomes; feeding results back into organizational memory; and reviewing, downgrading, or retiring outdated knowledge.

Conclusion: Evidence-based knowledge management does not imply eliminating intuition, experience, or professional judgment and replacing them with data or algorithms. Rather, it requires these forms of knowledge to be subjected to appraisal, comparison, and accountability. Within this framework, trustworthy scientific research, organizational and local evidence, appraisable professional expertise, and stakeholder values and perspectives are integrated as complementary sources of evidence. Embedding EBKM in scientific, economic, policy, and social systems requires institutional infrastructures capable of translating evidence into decisions and decisions into learning. Universities and scholarly journals can contribute to this transition by strengthening evidence synthesis, transparency, reproducibility, publication of negative findings, and knowledge translation.

Value: The conceptual contribution of this editorial lies in offering an integrated view of EBKM that combines the rigor of evidence appraisal associated with evidence-based medicine, the architecture of knowledge organization and retrieval from information and knowledge science, the institutional sensitivity of public policymaking, the analytical capacity of data analytics and artificial intelligence, and the contextual and learning-oriented perspective of organizational studies. The proposed framework shifts knowledge management from a logic of knowledge accumulation and storage toward the governance of the life cycle of knowledge claims and responsible decision-making.

Keywords: *Evidence-Based Knowledge Management; EBKM, Evidence-Informed Decision-Making; Knowledge Translation; Evidence-Based Management; Evidence-Informed Policymaking; Organizational Memory; Knowledge Management.*

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1-Introduction: The Paradox of Knowledge Production and Persistent Problems

How can we explain the persistence, and, across different periods, the recurrence in similar forms, of many of the country's scientific, economic, social, cultural, and managerial problems despite the expansion of universities and research centers, the growing number of researchers and postgraduate graduates, the development of information databases and statistical systems, and the production of a vast body of journal articles, theses and dissertations, expert reports, and policy documents? This question is not intended to overlook the financial, technological, institutional, and human-resource constraints affecting the science and decision-making systems. Rather, it draws attention to a fundamental paradox: greater capacity to produce knowledge has not necessarily been accompanied by a corresponding capacity to use knowledge effectively. Over recent decades, Iran has undergone considerable development in the expansion of higher education, the training of skilled human resources, scientific output, and innovation infrastructure. The UNESCO Science Report, while documenting growth in master's and doctoral graduates and trends in Iran's scientific publishing, also points to the expansion of innovation centers, accelerators, science and technology parks, and knowledge-based firms. At the same time, the report emphasizes the need to align university programs more closely with the actual needs of the economy and society and to strengthen the links among research, innovation, and development (UNESCO, 2021). The problem, therefore, can no longer be understood simply as an insufficient volume of scientific production or a shortage of expertise. The more consequential question is how the knowledge that is produced is appraised, synthesized, interpreted, and brought into the decision-making process at the point at which it is needed.

Evidence on knowledge translation in Iran also illustrates this gap. For example, an assessment of knowledge translation activities in Iranian universities of medical sciences found that, despite a relatively favorable research environment and growth in scientific publications, the organizational context was not sufficiently supportive of the transfer and use of research findings. Inadequate supportive regulations, limited knowledge-translation infrastructure, and insufficient interaction between research producers and research users were among the major problems identified (Gholami et al., 2013). Although this finding is confined to the health sector, it provides a clear illustration of a broader challenge. Knowledge production and knowledge use are distinct processes, and strengthening the former without developing mechanisms for the latter does not necessarily result in better decisions or more effective action.

Nor is this research-to-action gap unique to Iran. The management and public-policy literature points to a persistent disconnect between the available research evidence and the decisions organizations actually make. Even in settings with substantial scientific capacity, managers and policymakers may rely on unsystematic experience, entrenched routines, immediate pressures, advice from authority figures, or selectively chosen evidence. Evidence-based management therefore emphasizes translating principles derived from the best available evidence into organizational practices and replacing unexamined personal preferences and fragmented experience with critical, transparent, and revisable judgment (Rousseau, 2006). Systematic reviews are particularly important in this regard because, rather than relying on a single study or report, they can provide a



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more reliable, transparent, and context-sensitive body of management knowledge (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Moreover, the continuing accumulation of information is not invariably an advantage. When sources are numerous, heterogeneous, contradictory, or insufficiently appraised for quality, information abundance can generate cognitive overload, make it more difficult to distinguish trustworthy sources, and encourage selective use of findings. The value of a source, therefore, does not lie merely in its availability. Evidence must be reliable, relevant to the problem at hand, and sufficiently readable and usable for decision-makers (Straus & Haynes, 2009). A systematic review of policymakers' use of research likewise identified limited access to high-quality, relevant, and timely research, together with weak interaction between researchers and decision-makers, as important barriers to the use of evidence (Oliver et al., 2014).

In the absence of such mechanisms, similar decisions may be repeated, unsuccessful experiences may be reproduced without reassessment, organizational priorities may shift with changes in leadership, and evidence may be sought selectively to justify decisions that have already been made. Under such conditions, an organization may possess an abundance of data, documents, and reports while still lacking a critical, learning-oriented, and trustworthy organizational memory. The fundamental challenge of our time, therefore, is the inability to distinguish trustworthy knowledge and translate it into decisions that are defensible, evaluable, and open to revision.

2-Intuition and Evidence: Distinguishing the Context of Discovery from the Context of Justification

Real-world decision-making, whether at the individual and organizational levels or in the domain of public policy, is never simply the product of linear calculation, complete information gathering, and mechanical comparison of alternatives. Managers, professionals, and policymakers frequently operate under ambiguity, time pressure, incomplete information, competing objectives, and uncertain consequences. Under such conditions, accumulated experience, pattern recognition, professional judgment, and intuition inevitably enter into cognition and decision-making. In the decision-making literature, intuition is generally understood as an affect-laden judgment arising through rapid, holistic, and largely nonconscious associations, such that an individual may arrive at a conclusion without being able to articulate fully and step by step how that conclusion was reached (Dane & Pratt, 2007).

From this perspective, intuition cannot simply be eliminated from organizations or from decision-making. Intuitive judgment may draw a decision-maker's attention to a weak but meaningful signal, a risk not yet visible in formal data, an emerging opportunity, or a hidden relationship among events. An experienced physician, crisis manager, researcher, or professional expert may sense that something about a situation is unusual before being able to formulate the reasons for that judgment explicitly. The theory of "intuitive knowledge management" likewise seeks to foreground this less visible layer of organizational cognition, positioning intuitive insights alongside explicit and tacit knowledge and proposing a framework for their identification, transfer, refinement, and organizational use (Tavallaei et al., 2025). The value of this proposition lies in its reminder that professional knowing cannot be reduced entirely to documents, recorded data, and fully articulated reasoning.



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Nevertheless, the unavoidable presence of intuition in decision-making should not be conflated with its intrinsic validity. A judgment is not necessarily correct merely because it is rapid, internally generated, or difficult to articulate. Research on intuitive expertise shows that the reliability of intuition depends on the conditions under which it develops. Professional intuition is more likely to be dependable in environments characterized by relatively high validity and regularity, that is, where observable cues bear reasonably stable relationships to subsequent outcomes and where individuals have had sufficient opportunities for practice and for receiving prompt, clear, and valid feedback. By contrast, in highly irregular, unstable, or feedback-poor environments, even extensive experience does not necessarily produce accurate intuition. Under such conditions, a person's subjective confidence may reflect the internal coherence of a mental narrative rather than the correctness of the judgment itself (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

Accordingly, long tenure, managerial rank, scholarly reputation, political standing, or the intensity of a person's confidence cannot, by themselves, establish the validity of a claim. Organizational power may confer decision-making authority, but it does not confer epistemic immunity. Intuition may indeed arise from expertise and pattern recognition, but it may also be shaped by personal interests, conflicts of interest, selective memory, entrenched stereotypes, confirmation bias, or overconfidence. Research on organizational decision-making has shown that people may continue to rely excessively on subjective judgment even when structured methods and valid decision aids are available, partly because they believe their personal experience captures complexities that analytical tools cannot adequately represent (Highhouse, 2008). Such a belief may sometimes be justified; without evaluation and feedback, however, it can become a rationale for preserving opaque and non-evaluable decisions.

At this point, two fundamentally different questions must be distinguished. The first concerns how an idea, warning, or proposed solution arises in an individual's mind; the second concerns why others should regard it as credible and act upon it. The answer to the first question may involve intuition, experience, imagination, dialogue, chance, or even inspiration. The answer to the second, however, must rest on evidence, reasoning, openness to criticism, comparison with alternatives, and evaluation of consequences. An intuitive origin neither invalidates an idea nor provides sufficient grounds for accepting it as valid. Many valuable hypotheses may first emerge as sudden insights or professional hunches; what determines their epistemic status is not how they originate, but how they subsequently withstand critical scrutiny.

The position advanced in this editorial can therefore be condensed into a single proposition: intuition in the context of discovery; evidence in the context of justification.

Intuition may identify a problem, generate a new question, signal a risk, or suggest a hypothesis for action. Yet before it can serve as a basis for organizational or public decision-making, it must move beyond the status of a private experience: it must be articulated as a clear claim, documented, opened to criticism, compared with available data and research, and subjected to evaluation in terms of its consequences. Intuition therefore has the right to raise problems and generate hypotheses, but not the right to determine truth or impose decisions.

This distinction does not imply the elimination of professional judgment or the replacement of human beings by numbers and algorithms. Evidence-based management likewise does not disregard managers' experience and expertise.



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Rather, it seeks to integrate professional judgment with the best available scientific evidence, organizational data, contextual conditions, and stakeholder perspectives, while keeping that judgment open to review and revision (Rousseau, 2006). The move from intuition to evidence is therefore, at its core, a move away from claims grounded primarily in personal authority toward decisions whose rationale, limits of validity, uncertainties, and consequences are visible and open to question.

3. What Is Evidence-Based Knowledge Management?

The concept of evidence-based knowledge management (EBKM) has not yet developed the same clearly established theoretical boundaries as more mature concepts such as evidence-based medicine or evidence-based management. Its earliest explicit formulations emerged primarily in healthcare and emphasized the systematic integration of information management, knowledge creation and sharing, research evidence, and professional decision-making. From this perspective, the value of knowledge management lies not merely in collecting and storing information, but in its capacity to provide trustworthy and actionable knowledge that can improve decision-making and organizational performance (Corrao et al., 2009). More recent research likewise suggests that knowledge management tools, from databases, networks, and observatories to evidence reviews, policy briefs, and deliberative mechanisms, become consequential when they facilitate access to, appraisal, translation, and use of evidence in decision-making (El-Jardali et al., 2023).

Building on this literature, and extending the concept beyond healthcare to scientific, economic, cultural, and social organizations and systems, this editorial defines evidence-based knowledge management as follows:

Evidence-based knowledge management is a system for generating, gathering, critically appraising, synthesizing, contextualizing, applying, monitoring, and updating knowledge claims in order to support decisions that are more trustworthy, transparent, equitable, and open to revision.

The use of the term *system* in this definition is deliberate. Evidence-based knowledge management is not a single tool, information repository, guideline, or method of literature searching. Rather, it comprises an integrated set of rules, processes, roles, competencies, and infrastructures that govern the entire life cycle of a knowledge claim. This cycle begins with the formulation of a problem or hypothesis, proceeds through the collection and appraisal of evidence, leads to decision and action, and continues through outcome assessment and the revision or retirement of knowledge. The objective, therefore, is not simply to make existing knowledge available to decision-makers. It is also to establish how that knowledge was produced, how trustworthy it is, under what conditions it applies, what evidence may contradict it, and when it should be reviewed.

First, this definition prevents evidence-based knowledge management from being reduced to the storage and retrieval of articles and documents. Digital libraries, organizational repositories, and advanced search systems may be necessary components of a knowledge infrastructure, but their existence alone does not ensure evidence-informed use of knowledge. An abundance of resources, in the absence of appraisal for quality and relevance, may itself contribute to information overload. Straus and Haynes (2009) identify three particularly important attributes of evidence resources: reliability, relevance, and readability or usability. Among these, reliability takes precedence. A source that is highly readable and apparently



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relevant but methodologically unreliable may lead a decision-maker more efficiently toward the wrong conclusion.

Second, the definition avoids reducing evidence-based knowledge management to data-driven decision-making, analytics, or artificial intelligence. Data and analytical tools can reveal patterns, compare alternatives, and help anticipate possible consequences of decisions, but raw data do not constitute evidence in and of themselves. For data to support or challenge a claim, their quality, provenance, method of collection, completeness, temporal and contextual relevance, and limitations must be assessed. Similarly, AI-generated output is not an independent form of truth; it is a derivative product of data, source materials, and computational processes and therefore needs to be examined for traceability, error, bias, and loss of context. Evidence-based knowledge management makes use of technology, but it does not delegate epistemic validity or responsibility for decisions to technology.

The evidence-based management literature suggests that sound decisions generally emerge from the integration of four sources of evidence, rather than reliance on any single source (Rousseau, 2020):

1. Trustworthy scientific research: findings from primary studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and other rigorous forms of evidence synthesis;
2. Organizational and local data and facts: information about performance, resources, capacities, costs, populations, and observed outcomes within the specific context in which a decision is to be made;
3. Appraisable professional experience and expertise: the judgment of professionals who possess relevant domain experience, have been exposed to meaningful feedback, and have a performance record that can, at least to some extent, be evaluated;
4. Stakeholders' values, needs, and perspectives: the preferences, concerns, rights, and anticipated consequences experienced by employees, citizens, clients, social groups, and others affected by a decision.

These four sources are neither always consistent with one another nor necessarily assigned equal weight. An intervention may appear effective in the research literature but lack the infrastructure required for implementation in a particular organization. Local data may indicate an urgent need for action while the proposed intervention is unacceptable or inequitable for certain groups. Likewise, an expert may recommend a course of action based on professional experience that conflicts with research findings or established base rates. The task of evidence-based knowledge management is not to eliminate such tensions, but to make them visible, document them, and subject them to transparent judgment. An evidence-based approach does not promise complete certainty; rather, it clarifies the boundaries of what is known, what remains unknown, and how much confidence can reasonably be placed in a decision.

Accordingly, evidence-based knowledge management does not eliminate experience or professional judgment; instead, it transforms experience from an unquestioned source of authority into a source of evidence that can be examined and calibrated. Nor does it entail mechanical compliance with an article, a number, or an indicator, since scientific studies themselves may be limited, inconsistent, biased, or poorly matched to the context in which a decision must be made. It does not imply disregard for cultural and social context, because the transferability of a solution from one organization or society to another must itself be assessed. Finally, it does not mean delegating decision-making to algorithms, because



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organizational and public decisions involve not only predictions about consequences but also responsibility, equity, values, resource constraints, and accountability.

A subtle but important distinction should therefore be made between the terms evidence-based and evidence-informed. The former may be interpreted as suggesting that scientific evidence directly and deterministically dictates the final decision. In complex social and policy settings, however, evidence is one input into decision-making and must be considered alongside the political and institutional context, available resources, feasibility, equity, acceptability, and stakeholder values. For this reason, the World Health Organization conceptualizes evidence-informed decision-making as a process of identifying, appraising, and mobilizing the best available evidence for policy and practice, while emphasizing the use of diverse forms of evidence and their integration into the policy process (World Health Organization, 2022a). Contemporary policy frameworks similarly recognize that effectiveness is not the sole criterion for decision-making; equity, feasibility, affordability, sustainability, and stakeholder acceptability also matter. Despite this qualification, the term evidence-based knowledge management is retained throughout this editorial because it offers greater conceptual clarity and normative force: it explicitly asserts that knowledge claims and decisions should be connected to evidence that can be scrutinized. Here, *evidence-based* does not imply the mechanical dominance of evidence over judgment. Rather, it denotes a systematic commitment to seeking the best available evidence, critically appraising it, integrating it with context and values, and making explicit the reasons for departing from it when such departures are necessary. In this sense, evidence-based knowledge management can be understood as an infrastructure that connects knowledge production, the validation of knowledge claims, responsible decision-making, and learning from consequences.

4. Diagnosing the Current State: Why Does the Accumulation of Knowledge Not Lead to Better Decisions?

The growing volume of research, expert reports, information databases, statistical systems, and management dashboards increases the *potential* for informed decision-making, but it does not guarantee that decisions will actually be grounded in the best available evidence. There is an institutional, cultural, and epistemic gap between possessing knowledge and being able to use knowledge in a trustworthy manner. An OECD report shows that even in public administrations with advanced resources and infrastructures, effectively connecting the supply of evidence with the demand for policy-relevant knowledge remains challenging. The use of evidence depends on skills, motivation, opportunity, organizational culture, and sustainable institutional mechanisms (OECD, 2020a). Consequently, accumulating knowledge resources without reforming the structures through which decisions are made may simply increase the volume of available information without producing a commensurate improvement in the quality of judgment and action.

4.1. Person-Centered Rather Than Evidence-Centered Decision-Making

The first problem is the tendency for the perceived validity of a decision to derive from the status of the decision-maker. In a person-centered organization, a proposal may be accepted or rejected not primarily on the strength of its reasoning and supporting evidence, but according to the administrative rank, organizational influence, managerial experience, or reputation of the person advancing it. In such



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an environment, a change in leadership may lead to changes in priorities, programs, and even interpretations of the problem itself, because policies are tied to the memories and preferences of individuals rather than to an institutionalized process for defining problems, appraising alternatives, and documenting the rationale for decisions.

Managerial position unquestionably confers decision-making authority and responsibility for action, but it does not in itself confer epistemic privilege. A manager's experience may provide valuable contextual knowledge, yet it should be considered alongside local data, scientific research, the expertise of other professionals, and stakeholder perspectives. When the views of organizational authorities become insulated from criticism, knowledge management may inadvertently become a mechanism for documenting managerial preferences rather than critically informing them. Under such conditions, knowledge repositories and expert reports are used not to shape decisions, but retrospectively to validate and justify decisions that have already been made.

4.2. The Research–Practice Gap

The second problem is the persistent divide between the production of research and its use in practice. Universities and research institutions generate articles, theses and dissertations, reports, and datasets, but policymakers are often confronted with a fragmented collection of individual studies that have not been translated into forms that address operational problems. Policymakers typically require clear answers concerning the nature of a problem, available intervention options, costs, likely consequences, and levels of uncertainty. Academic outputs, by contrast, are generally designed primarily for communication within scholarly communities and are structured according to disciplinary conventions.

As noted earlier, an assessment of knowledge translation in Iranian universities of medical sciences identified important shortcomings in supportive regulations, knowledge-translation infrastructure, and interaction between researchers and research users despite substantial research capacity (Gholami et al., 2013). This finding should not be generalized to all organizations and sectors in Iran without further evidence, but it clearly demonstrates that knowledge production and the translation of knowledge into decisions are distinct processes, and that strengthening the former without investing in the latter does not necessarily produce the desired outcomes. The systematic review by Oliver et al. (2014) similarly found that interaction between researchers and policymakers, access to relevant and timely research, and mutual understanding of needs are important determinants of evidence use.

The problem, therefore, is not simply that managers do not read research articles. A more fundamental issue is that the scientific system itself is not sufficiently organized to generate systematic reviews, evidence maps, policy briefs, and synthesized answers to real-world problems. As a result, academic knowledge remains dispersed across individual outputs, while decision-makers seeking timely answers may turn instead to personal experience, the nearest available expert, or the most readily accessible report.

4.3. Decisions Without an Epistemic Audit Trail

The third problem is the absence of an epistemic audit trail for decisions. In evidence-informed decision-making, it should be possible to reconstruct the pathway from the original problem to the final choice. It should be clear how the problem was defined; what data and research were examined; what criteria were used to include or exclude sources; what alternative options were considered; how



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much confidence was placed in each option; what conflicts of interest existed; and which body or actor was responsible for evaluating the consequences.

In many organizational decisions, meeting minutes or a final directive may exist, yet there is no accompanying record that reveals the knowledge base and reasoning underlying the decision. We may know *what* was decided while remaining unable to determine *why* it was decided or *on what evidentiary basis*. This weakens organizational learning because, following success or failure, it becomes difficult to identify which assumptions, data, or arguments proved accurate and which did not. Accountability is likewise diminished because decision-makers can attribute outcomes to unforeseen circumstances without having documented their original assumptions and levels of uncertainty.

Knowledge management without an epistemic audit trail creates, at best, a memory of decisions made, rather than a memory of how decisions were formed, how credible their underlying assumptions were, and what consequences followed from them. Such a memory is insufficient for genuine organizational learning.

4.4. Selective Use of Evidence

The fourth problem arises when a decision is made in advance and evidence is subsequently sought to support it. In such circumstances, evidence no longer functions as a basis for judging among competing alternatives; instead, it becomes an instrument for legitimizing a prior choice. Cairney (2022) contrasts this practice with evidence-based policymaking and describes the associated tendency as policy-based evidence-making: policymakers first establish a preferred direction and then selectively identify evidence that supports it.

Selective evidence use can take multiple forms: emphasizing one supportive study while ignoring contrary findings; choosing a favorable time period for analysis; selecting indicators that portray a program as successful; omitting unintended consequences; or invoking another country's experience without examining contextual differences. Even an apparently extensive review of the literature can become a vehicle for confirmation bias when the research question, inclusion criteria, and method of appraisal are not transparent.

Evidence-based knowledge management therefore requires more than broader access to information. It requires rules for fair and systematic searching, documentation of contradictory evidence, critical quality appraisal, and explicit acknowledgment of uncertainty. Decision-makers should be able to explain not only which evidence they used, but also which evidence they excluded and the reasons for doing so.

4.5. Asymmetrical Organizational Memory

The fifth problem concerns the asymmetry of organizational memory. Organizations commonly document successes, achievements, best practices, and favorable narratives, while failures, inaccurate predictions, resistance, unintended consequences, and low-impact policies are less likely to become part of the formal organizational record. This asymmetry is not merely a technical weakness of information systems. Failure may threaten the reputation of managers, organizational units, or officially endorsed programs, thereby creating organizational disincentives to record it.

The literature on organizational forgetting shows that organizations may unintentionally lose valuable knowledge or fail to transform their experiences into knowledge that can be used subsequently. Managing organizational forgetting therefore requires distinguishing among what should be retained, what should be



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updated, and what routines or beliefs should deliberately be abandoned (Martin de Holan et al., 2004).

When only success is recorded, an organization constructs an unrealistic representation of its own capabilities. Future managers encounter a portfolio of “best practices” without knowing how many interventions failed, what hidden costs accompanied them, or which contextual conditions were necessary for apparent success. A balanced organizational memory must preserve success as well as failure, decisions as well as consequences, and validated knowledge as well as rejected hypotheses.

4.6. The Illusion of Data-Driven Decision-Making

The sixth problem is the tendency to equate data abundance with evidence-based decision-making. Building dashboards, integrating databases, and displaying dozens of indicators can create an appearance of managerial rationality and control. Yet data acquire evidentiary value only when they are interpreted in relation to a clearly formulated question, an explicit claim, and meaningful alternatives.

Data whose provenance, collection procedures, indicator definitions, coverage, measurement errors, date of production, and limitations are unclear may obscure a problem rather than illuminate it. Indicators may also reshape organizational behavior: units can begin optimizing what is visible and measurable rather than pursuing the substantive objective the policy was intended to achieve. The OECD (2020a) likewise distinguishes evidence-informed policymaking from mere data-driven decision-making, emphasizing that public decisions should draw on multiple sources, including research, evaluation, data, and informed professional judgment, and should make explicit the trade-offs and judgments embedded in the decision process.

A dashboard can show what is happening, but it cannot by itself explain why it is happening, which intervention is likely to work, or what consequences that intervention may have for different groups. Transforming data into evidence requires quality appraisal, causal analysis, comparison with the existing research base, and contextual interpretation.

4.7. Artificial Intelligence and the Reproduction of Error

The seventh problem has become increasingly salient with the incorporation of generative artificial intelligence into knowledge searching, summarization, and production. These technologies can substantially accelerate information retrieval, document classification, pattern identification, and the preparation of preliminary syntheses. However, the speed, fluency, and apparent coherence of an output should not be confused with accuracy, validity, or evidentiary adequacy.

Generative systems may produce false or unsupported information, obscure contextual differences and disagreements among sources, reproduce biases embedded in training data, or generate references that cannot be verified. The NIST Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework: Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile identifies confabulation or the generation of confidently stated but erroneous or unsupported content, information integrity, content provenance, and the configuration of human–AI oversight among important risk areas. It therefore emphasizes independent evaluation, empirical testing, provenance documentation, continuous monitoring, and clearly defined human accountability (Autio et al., 2024).

AI-generated output should consequently not be treated as an independent source of evidence. At most, it can serve as an intermediary for locating, organizing, and



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comparing sources. Its credibility must be assessed through consultation of primary sources, scrutiny of how the output was generated, relevant expert judgment, and human evaluation. An organization that incorporates algorithmically generated responses into its decisions or organizational memory without source traceability may reproduce and institutionalize error at a speed and scale far greater than that of individual human error.

Overall, the central problem highlighted by this critique of AI is the absence of an institutional architecture for the appraisal, synthesis, application, and review of such outputs. A society may produce more knowledge and develop more sophisticated information systems; yet if it does not assess the provenance and quality of claims, document the reasons underlying decisions, preserve failures within organizational memory, and hold power accountable to epistemic scrutiny, its decisions may continue to rest on habit, status, short-term expediency, selective use of information, and unchecked intuition.

5. A Proposed Architecture for Evidence-Based Knowledge Management

The transition from conventional knowledge management to evidence-based knowledge management cannot be achieved merely by creating a new repository, purchasing a technological platform, or adding a few indicators to management dashboards. What is required is a coherent architecture capable of making the pathway from problem to evidence, from evidence to decision, and from decision to learning and revision visible and assessable. Such an architecture must encompass the entire life cycle of knowledge claims. It should therefore manage not only the production and storage of knowledge, but also the appraisal of its validity, the integration of multiple sources, the explicit documentation of uncertainty, the assessment of consequences, and the retirement of knowledge that has become outdated or invalid. Guidance on evidence-informed decision-making and Evidence to Decision frameworks similarly emphasizes a structured, transparent, and multistage process in which evidence is gathered and appraised, relevant decision criteria are made explicit, and the basis for the final choice is visible to those affected by it (Alonso-Coello et al., 2016; Moberg et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2022a).

The following nine-stage architecture is proposed in this editorial as a framework for embedding evidence-based knowledge management in organizations and decision-making systems.

5.1. Converting a Problem into an Answerable Question

The first stage is the precise definition of the problem. Many decision-making processes begin with broad formulations such as “declining educational quality,” “low productivity,” “brain drain,” “declining social trust,” or “failure of research policy.” Such formulations, however, cannot effectively guide an evidence search until they are translated into clear and answerable questions.

At least five elements should be specified for each problem: What exactly is the problem? Which individuals or groups are affected? In what organizational, geographical, economic, or cultural context does it occur? What outcome is considered desirable? And within what time frame is that outcome expected?

For example, the question “How can the quality of higher education be improved?” is too broad to guide a meaningful search for evidence. A more actionable formulation would be: “Which educational intervention, implemented over a two-year period, is most likely to improve retention and academic progression among newly enrolled students in public universities without



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exacerbating educational inequality?” Such a formulation substantially clarifies what evidence should be sought.

Evidence-based management likewise begins with asking: translating a practical problem into an answerable question for which relevant evidence can be identified. If the problem is initially framed in vague, directional, or solution-driven terms, even a comprehensive search may ultimately serve only to legitimize a solution that was selected in advance (Barends et al., 2014; World Health Organization, 2022a).

5.2. Gathering Evidence from Multiple Sources

Once the problem has been clearly defined, evidence should be gathered from multiple sources. Reliance on a single article, database, expert, organizational report, or type of data is inconsistent with the logic of evidence-based knowledge management. Organizational and public decisions take place in complex contexts, and no single source can adequately represent every relevant dimension of a problem.

Four principal sources of evidence should therefore be considered together:

1. findings from scientific research, particularly systematic syntheses of research evidence;
2. local and organizational data, statistics, and factual information;
3. professional experience and expert judgment;
4. the values, needs, and concerns of stakeholders affected by the decision.

The relative evidentiary value of these four sources is neither equal nor fixed. In one situation, the research evidence may be strong while local data are limited. In another, findings from the scientific literature may not be readily transferable, whereas professional expertise and locally generated data may provide essential insights. The purpose of multisource evidence gathering is therefore not simply to accumulate information, but to enable comparison, complementarity, and the identification of tensions among different forms of evidence.

The evidence-based management literature similarly regards sound decision-making as the deliberate and explicit integration of these multiple evidence sources rather than as obedience to a single research article or exclusive reliance on managerial experience (Barends et al., 2014; Rousseau, 2020).

5.3. Critically Appraising the Quality and Adequacy of Evidence

Gathering evidence is not the end of the process. In a system in which vast quantities of articles, reports, datasets, and analyses are produced every day, the central challenge is not simply to find *some* evidence, but to determine which evidence is sufficiently trustworthy to inform action. Each source should therefore be examined, at a minimum, in terms of:

- methodological validity;
- recency;
- relevance to the question;
- transferability or generalizability;
- conflicts of interest;
- data quality;
- and the degree of uncertainty.

For scientific research, questions should be asked about the appropriateness of the study design, sampling procedures, measurement, and analysis. Have the findings been replicated elsewhere? Could selective publication or conflicts of interest have influenced the results? For organizational data, attention should be given to



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data provenance, indicator definitions, coverage, missing data, the possibility of manipulation, and the quality of recording procedures.

Professional expertise must likewise be distinguished from mere length of experience. Long service without meaningful and valid feedback does not necessarily produce more accurate judgment. In relation to stakeholder evidence, it is also necessary to ask which groups were heard and which were absent or excluded from consultation.

Three criteria, reliability, relevance, and readability or usability, are fundamental when assessing evidence resources, but their order matters. A highly readable and apparently relevant source can mislead decision-makers if its methodological foundations are weak (Straus & Haynes, 2009). Evidence-to-decision frameworks likewise emphasize appraisal of the certainty of evidence, benefits and harms, costs, and feasibility of implementation (Moberg et al., 2018).

5.4. Synthesizing, Comparing, and Contextualizing Evidence

Even high-quality evidence does not translate automatically into a decision. Different studies may produce conflicting findings. An intervention may have been successful in another country, while the institutional, legal, economic, or cultural conditions in Iran differ substantially from those of the original setting. A policy may also appear effective at the population level while producing adverse consequences for particular groups.

Evidence synthesis should therefore make disagreements among sources visible rather than suppressing them through selective emphasis on a preferred conclusion. At this stage, it should be possible to determine:

- where a reasonable degree of agreement exists;
- which findings conflict with one another;
- the quality of each body of evidence;
- which factors may limit the transferability of findings to the Iranian context;
- and which questions remain unresolved.

Contextualization, however, should not become a pretext for dismissing inconvenient evidence. Statements such as “our circumstances are different” are meaningful only when the specific legal, cultural, economic, organizational, or institutional differences capable of modifying the relationship between an intervention and its outcomes are explicitly identified.

The WHO-INTEGRATE Evidence to Decision framework demonstrates that moving from evidence to decisions requires consideration not only of benefits and harms, but also of human rights and sociocultural acceptability, equity, societal implications, economic considerations, and feasibility (Rehfuess et al., 2019). WHO guidance on evidence-informed decision-making similarly stresses the need to draw on diverse forms of evidence and to adapt them to context and the policy process (World Health Organization, 2022a).

5.5. Creating an “Evidence Dossier” for Every Major Decision

One of the distinctive elements of the proposed architecture is the creation of an evidence dossier for major organizational and public decisions. The purpose of this dossier is to make the epistemic pathway of a decision reconstructable: it should show how the process moved from problem definition to the selection of a final course of action.

An evidence dossier should include:

- the primary question or problem;
- the search strategy and sources examined;
- appraisal of the quality and relevance of each body of evidence;



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- alternative options considered;
- anticipated benefits, costs, and risks of each option;
- supporting and opposing perspectives;
- conflicts of interest;
- areas of uncertainty;
- groups likely to be affected by the decision;
- and the rationale for the final choice.

The purpose of such a dossier is to move a decision beyond the status of a personal and transient event and transform it into a process that is traceable, open to criticism, and capable of generating learning. Evidence to Decision frameworks are designed for precisely this purpose: to structure and make transparent the criteria, evidence, judgments, and rationale underpinning a decision, thereby enabling those affected to understand the basis on which a recommendation or policy was formulated (Alonso-Coello et al., 2016; Moberg et al., 2018).

The evidence dossier should also distinguish carefully between absence of evidence and evidence of absence or ineffectiveness. Insufficient research does not establish that an intervention is ineffective, just as the existence of a single positive study does not establish its effectiveness with certainty. Explicitly documenting this distinction helps prevent uncertainty from being transformed into unwarranted confidence.

5.6. Staged, Pilot, and Reversible Implementation

In complex and high-risk settings, decisions should not invariably be implemented at full scale, all at once, or in ways that are difficult to reverse. When the evidence base is limited, the context is uncertain, or the potential consequences are substantial, pilot or staged implementation allows the core assumptions underlying a decision to be tested under real-world conditions.

Before implementation begins, several issues should be specified:

- the scale at which the intervention will initially be implemented;
- the baseline and evaluation indicators;
- the time required to observe meaningful outcomes;
- the conditions under which the intervention will be modified, discontinued, or expanded;
- and the body responsible for independent oversight.

A pilot should not become a ceremonial exercise designed merely to confirm a decision already taken. A genuine pilot must allow for failure, adaptation, and, when warranted, abandonment of the proposed solution. Particularly for reversible policies, staged implementation reduces the cost of learning and helps prevent premature scaling of error. From an evidence-informed perspective, implementation is not the end of the decision process; it is part of an ongoing cycle through which new evidence is generated and organizational learning takes place (World Health Organization, 2022a).

5.7. Evaluating Direct, Distributional, and Unintended Outcomes

Once a decision has been implemented, evaluation should move beyond a narrow focus on activities and outputs toward the actual consequences of the intervention. The number of meetings held, regulations issued, participants involved, projects approved, or funds spent are indicators of implementation; they are not necessarily indicators of success.

Evaluation should establish:

- the extent to which the intended outcome was achieved;
- which groups benefited;



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- which groups were harmed or benefited less;
- the direct costs and opportunity costs incurred;
- what unintended consequences emerged;
- and to what extent the observed effects can reasonably be attributed to the intervention itself.

This evaluation logic should be built into the decision from the outset. If indicators, baseline measures, and required data are defined only after implementation, evaluation may become vulnerable to the organization's preferred interpretation of results. Evidence-informed decision frameworks similarly emphasize that benefits and harms, equity, cost, acceptability, and feasibility all form part of judging a policy, and that improvements in average outcomes should not conceal unequal consequences across different population groups (Moberg et al., 2018; Rehfuess et al., 2019).

5.8. Feeding Results Back into Organizational Memory

An organization that makes decisions but does not learn from their consequences creates merely a history of actions, not a genuine knowledge memory. Within the proposed architecture, evaluation findings should be fed back into organizational memory and retained alongside the original decision.

That memory should record:

- the decision and its rationale;
- the contextual conditions under which it was implemented;
- the extent to which intended outcomes were achieved;
- failures and successes;
- groups that benefited and those that were adversely affected;
- observed exceptions;
- hypotheses that were supported or rejected;
- and the conditions that limit generalization of the findings.

In this way, the organization moves from merely recording best practices to maintaining a repository of evaluated practices. A successful intervention becomes a transferable lesson only when it is clear why it worked, under what conditions, and for whom.

Research on organizational forgetting likewise shows that organizations may lose knowledge they have created or fail to preserve and retrieve it in subsequent situations. Knowledge management must therefore recognize the dynamic interplay among knowledge retention, organizational forgetting, and knowledge reuse (Martin de Holan & Phillips, 2004).

5.9. Reviewing, Grading, and Retiring Outdated Knowledge

The final stage concerns continuous reassessment of the validity of organizational knowledge. Many knowledge management systems are designed primarily to add documents and content, but lack explicit mechanisms for downgrading, superseding, or retiring knowledge that has lost validity. As a result, outdated regulations, obsolete data, decontextualized experiences, and lessons learned under conditions that no longer exist may remain alongside current knowledge and continue to influence future decisions.

Every significant knowledge asset should therefore carry metadata indicating:

- its provenance and responsible owner;
- date of creation and most recent review;
- level of validity or confidence;
- context and scope of applicability;
- status of the supporting evidence;



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- and the date or conditions for the next review.

Knowledge content might, for example, be classified as validated, conditional, under review, contested, obsolete, or rejected. Knowledge whose evidentiary basis has weakened need not always be permanently deleted. It may still deserve preservation for historical analysis, prevention of repeated mistakes, or documentation of policy evolution. However, it should no longer occupy the same status within the organization's active knowledge base as currently validated knowledge.

Effective knowledge management therefore requires not only learning, but also the capacity for purposeful organizational forgetting, the deliberate retirement of rules, assumptions, and beliefs that are no longer consistent with current evidence or organizational reality (Martin de Holan & Phillips, 2004).

5.10. Institutional Requirements for the Proposed Architecture

Implementing these nine stages cannot be achieved through guidelines alone. The scoping review by El-Jardali et al. (2023), which examined 141 studies on knowledge management tools and mechanisms, showed that sustained use of evidence depends on access to and quality of data, adequate resources, institutionalization of tools, program sustainability, networked collaboration, capacity building, a supportive organizational culture, and political and managerial commitment. The review further demonstrated that databases, observatories, evidence networks, and registries can support problem identification, planning, resource allocation, and policy dialogue, but that the mere existence of such tools is insufficient to change decision-making.

Organizations seeking to establish evidence-based knowledge management must therefore define clear roles and responsibilities in addition to investing in technological infrastructure. These may include:

- information professionals, responsible for searching, retrieving, organizing, and documenting evidence;
- researchers and methodologists, responsible for critical methodological appraisal;
- analysts, responsible for examining organizational and local data;
- knowledge brokers, responsible for translating and mediating evidence for decision-making contexts;
- stakeholders, responsible for articulating needs, values, concerns, and experienced consequences;
- and managers and institutional leaders, responsible for ensuring transparency, accountability, and the possibility of revising decisions.

The architecture becomes effective only when evidence use ceases to be a peripheral or ceremonial activity and becomes embedded within formal processes of problem definition, resource allocation, policy approval, implementation, and evaluation.

The proposed cycle can therefore be summarized as follows:

Problem definition → multisource evidence gathering → critical appraisal → synthesis and contextualization → evidence dossier → staged implementation → outcome evaluation → organizational learning → review and retirement

This cycle transforms knowledge from a static, accumulated product into a living, conditional, contestable, and revisable organizational asset. In such a system, the value of knowledge is measured not by the number of documents stored, but by an organization's capacity to explain what it knows, how it knows it, how



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confident it can be in that knowledge, under what conditions the knowledge applies, and when that knowledge should be reconsidered.



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6-Evidence-Based Knowledge Management in National Systems

Evidence-based knowledge management moves beyond the level of an organizational approach when it becomes embedded in the decision-making architecture of national systems. At this level, the issue is not merely whether a manager or institution has access to research and data. Rather, institutionalized rules and processes are needed to ensure that major scientific, economic, political, cultural, and social decisions are informed by clearly formulated questions, multisource evidence, critical appraisal, documented decision rationales, and systematic assessment of outcomes.

Such an approach does not imply that all sectors should conform to a single model. The types of evidence considered relevant, the criteria used to appraise them, and the relative weight assigned to values will necessarily vary across different systems. Nevertheless, one principle should remain constant: any decision that affects public life, national resources, or the future of institutions should have a traceable epistemic basis, an explicit rationale, and a mechanism for evaluation.

6.1. The Scientific and Academic System

Within the scientific and academic system, evidence-based knowledge management should extend from the identification of educational needs to resource allocation and research evaluation. Decisions to establish, expand, merge, or discontinue an academic program should not be driven solely by the demands of a particular department, competition among universities, managerial preferences, or the historical continuation of existing structures. Such decisions should instead draw on a combination of demographic trends, regional and national needs, scientific and technological developments, faculty capacity, educational infrastructure, graduate employment outcomes, the quality of students' learning experiences, and the broader social consequences of the program.

The same logic applies to student admissions policies. Decisions to increase or reduce enrollment capacity should be informed not merely by the number of applicants, but also by the quality of education, student-to-faculty ratios, the capacity of the labor market and society to absorb particular forms of expertise, regional equity, and the long-term consequences of such decisions.

Evidence-based knowledge management in this domain also requires the effects of scientific and academic policies to be evaluated after implementation. Promotion regulations, funding schemes, the establishment of new academic programs, and the expansion of postgraduate education should themselves become objects of systematic research, critical scrutiny, and continuous revision. Science policy should not be treated as an unquestionable administrative framework; it should itself be subject to evidence, evaluation, and learning.

6.2. The Economic and Industrial System

In economic and industrial systems, an evidence-based orientation should entail systematic evaluation of the rationale, implementation, and outcomes of policy instruments such as subsidies, tax incentives, tariffs, credit facilities, support for knowledge-based firms, and industrial development policies. Allocating public resources on the basis of corporate reputation, sectoral pressure, organizational relationships, or untested assumptions may lock scarce resources into particular interventions without necessarily generating productivity, innovation, or sustainable employment.

Before implementation, every major support policy should specify a theory of change, a clearly defined target group, a baseline, outcome indicators, a time



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horizon, and explicit criteria for continuation, modification, scaling, or termination. Where uncertainty is high, limited and staged implementation should take precedence over immediate system-wide expansion. The OECD emphasizes that policy experimentation in science, technology, and innovation makes it possible to test interventions at a controlled scale, expand those that prove effective, and discontinue those that do not produce the intended results. Such experimentation can support innovation while reducing the risks associated with premature scaling (OECD, 2024).

In this domain, real-world firm-level data, including productivity, employment, exports, firm survival, innovation performance, regional effects, and the opportunity costs of support, should be integrated with independent evaluation and comparative methods. Recording and publishing the outcomes of industrial policies, including negative findings, is particularly important. Without an institutional memory that also preserves failures and the conditions under which policies did not work, each new government or managerial team may simply reproduce earlier policy instruments under new labels.

An evidence-based approach to economic policy therefore means transforming risk from something implicit and politically obscured into a set of assumptions that are explicit, measurable, and manageable.

6.3. Governance and Public Policy

In public governance, one of the most consequential reforms would be to require major decisions, laws, and national programs to be accompanied by an evidence annex. Such an annex should explain the problem being addressed, the sources consulted, the quality of the evidence, alternative options considered, groups likely to be affected, anticipated costs, key uncertainties, and the rationale for the final choice.

Making the reasoning behind a decision publicly visible can strengthen transparency while also enabling scientific scrutiny and institutional learning. It can prevent terms such as “expediency” or “necessity” from becoming vague justifications that place decisions beyond questioning.

Ex post evaluation of laws and policies should likewise become a routine component of the governance cycle. A comparative OECD review across 42 countries found that policy evaluation can strengthen accountability, learning, and public-sector effectiveness. At the same time, many countries continue to face limited use of evaluation findings, the absence of coherent whole-of-government evaluation strategies, and insufficient human capacity for evaluation (OECD, 2020b). This illustrates an important principle: adopting legislation or implementing a program is not the end of the policy process. It remains necessary to determine whether the policy achieved its objectives, what costs it generated, which groups benefited or were harmed, and whether its continuation remains justified.

There may also be circumstances in which decision-makers choose an option that is not aligned with the prevailing evidence on effectiveness or efficiency because of ethical, legal, security, distributional, or political considerations. Evidence-based knowledge management does not make such choices impossible. It does, however, require departures from the available evidence to be stated explicitly, together with the reasons, risks, and expected consequences involved.

Evidence should not become a rhetorical cover for political decisions; equally, political choice should not conceal the knowledge base, or lack of one, on which a decision rests.



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6.4. The Cultural and Social System

Cultural and social issues are particularly vulnerable to policymaking based on broad impressions, salient anecdotes, moral concerns, personal experience, and unsupported generalizations. Concepts such as public trust, social capital, identity, lifestyle, cultural participation, and social problems are multidimensional and context-dependent. They cannot adequately be understood through a single indicator, a limited survey, or managerial perceptions alone.

Evidence-based knowledge management in this domain therefore requires the integration of quantitative and qualitative research, regional data, analyses of demographic and age-related differences, expert knowledge, and the lived experiences of groups affected by policy.

Citizen participation in this process should not be treated merely as a mechanism for persuasion or for legitimizing a decision after it has already been made. Citizens' perspectives constitute an important source of evidence concerning how a problem should be defined, whether an intervention is feasible, and what its real-world consequences may be. The World Health Organization identifies citizen voice as an important yet underused form of evidence in policymaking and emphasizes its systematic integration into evidence-informed decision-making processes (World Health Organization, 2022b). The WHO-INTEGRATE framework likewise demonstrates that judgments concerning complex interventions should consider not only effectiveness, but also human rights and sociocultural acceptability, equity, societal and economic implications, feasibility, and stakeholder perspectives (Rehfuess et al., 2019).

A successful cultural or social policy, therefore, is not simply one that improves an indicator on average. It should also be possible to determine in which regions and among which groups the observed effect occurred, who failed to benefit, and whether the intervention generated unintended consequences such as stigmatization, exclusion, widening inequality, or declining trust. The participation of affected groups should begin at the stage of problem definition and continue through the design, implementation, and evaluation of solutions.

Overall, evidence is not a substitute for politics, ethics, or public values. No dataset or research article can, by itself, determine which goals a society ought to pursue or what distribution of costs and benefits should be regarded as just. The role of evidence is to make decision-makers' claims testable, clarify the available options and their consequences, and make choices more open to justification, evaluation, and revision.

At the national level, evidence-based knowledge management does not eliminate the need for political choice. It does, however, require governments and public institutions to make explicit, and to be accountable for, the costs, trade-offs, uncertainties, and affected groups associated with their choices.

7. The Role of Universities, Scholarly Journals, and the Field of Knowledge-Research Studies in This Transition

The transition toward evidence-based knowledge management cannot take place solely within executive organizations and policymaking institutions. Universities and scholarly journals also have a fundamental role in shaping this transition. A university should not function merely as a factory for producing articles, theses, dissertations, and data; it should also build institutional capacity for the appraisal, synthesis, translation, and application of knowledge. Establishing evidence-synthesis units, developing evidence literacy, supporting research data



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management, strengthening interaction between researchers and decision-makers, and incorporating research-impact assessment into university systems can help narrow the gap between knowledge production and its societal use. In such a university, the value of research is not measured solely by whether it is published; its trustworthiness, openness to scrutiny, potential for reuse, and contribution to clarifying real-world problems are also important.

Scholarly journals, in turn, are not merely neutral channels through which articles are disseminated. Their editorial, peer-review, and publication policies help determine which forms of evidence become visible, which findings are retained within the scientific record, and which research behaviors are rewarded. If journals disproportionately publish studies with positive, novel, or striking findings while neglecting replication studies, negative findings, and unsuccessful interventions, they may create a distorted representation of the available evidence. Empirical research has demonstrated that selective publication of studies and outcomes can bias the evidence base available to decision-makers and lead to overly optimistic or incomplete estimates (Dwan et al., 2013). Publication decisions should therefore not depend on whether a study produces a “positive” result; the quality of the research question, methodology, analysis, and transparency of reporting should remain the principal criteria for evaluation. Mechanisms such as Registered Reports, in which research questions and methods are evaluated before the results are known, can also reduce the dependence of publication decisions on the direction or statistical significance of the final findings (Chambers et al., 2015).

One important direction is stronger support for systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and evidence and gap maps. However rigorous an individual study may be, it represents only one component of a much broader evidentiary landscape and is rarely sufficient, by itself, to support organizational or policy decisions. Through transparent searching, critical appraisal, and systematic synthesis, reviews can provide a more balanced picture of both what is known and where uncertainty remains. Adherence to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines for systematic reviews and PRISMA-ScR for scoping reviews increases the transparency with which search strategies, eligibility criteria, synthesis procedures, and review limitations can be examined (Page et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018). Evidence and gap maps can similarly identify areas where evidence is abundant, reveal important research gaps, and show the distribution of studies across interventions and outcomes, thereby helping both policymakers and research planners establish priorities (Snijlsteit et al., 2016).

Alongside evidence synthesis, scholarly journals should regard replication, reproducibility, and re-evaluation studies as essential components of scientific progress. Innovation does not consist solely in adding new claims to the literature. Testing the robustness of existing claims, examining their generalizability across different settings, and identifying the conditions under which a theory or intervention fails are equally legitimate forms of knowledge production. Initiatives to improve open and reproducible science emphasize methodological transparency, preregistration, sharing of research materials, reproducibility, and reform of incentive structures because the credibility of scientific claims depends fundamentally on their capacity to withstand independent scrutiny (Munafò et al., 2017; Nosek et al., 2015). Accordingly, a study that fails to confirm a prominent previous finding, or demonstrates that an intervention is ineffective in the Iranian



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context, should not be excluded from publication merely because it lacks a positive or conventionally novel result.

Evidence-based knowledge management also requires responsible access to the components of the research process. Data, research instruments, questionnaires, protocols, analytical code, and decision criteria should, where ethical, legal, confidentiality, and privacy constraints permit, be documented and made accessible in ways that support retrieval and reuse. The FAIR Principles emphasize that digital research objects should be findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable, while broader transparency and openness guidelines provide mechanisms for improving the inspectability and verifiability of empirical claims (Nosek et al., 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2016). Open science, however, does not imply unrestricted disclosure of all research data. Restrictions may be necessary for ethical, legal, privacy, or protective reasons, but such restrictions should have a clear justification and the conditions of access should be explicitly stated.

Transparency regarding funding sources, professional relationships, and conflicts of interest is another indispensable component of this architecture. A conflict of interest does not necessarily imply misconduct or invalidate a study, but undisclosed conflicts make independent assessment of research findings more difficult. Journals therefore have a responsibility to require authors, reviewers, and editors to disclose relevant financial and nonfinancial relationships and, where conflicts exist, to apply clear and fair mechanisms for recusal and reassignment of evaluation or editorial decision-making. International recommendations for scholarly publishing similarly regard transparent disclosure of such relationships as essential to maintaining trust in the scientific process (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [ICMJE], 2026).

Scholarly journals can also move beyond publishing individual research articles and contribute to the translation of bodies of evidence into decision-relevant knowledge. A credible policy brief should not be based on a single study, a single professional experience, or the preferences of its author. Rather, it should clearly define the problem, synthesize the relevant body of evidence, explain the quality and limitations of that evidence, compare policy options, and make implementation and contextual considerations explicit. World Health Organization guidance similarly conceptualizes an evidence brief for policy as a product designed to synthesize and summarize evidence on a clearly defined issue and to support evidence-informed policy dialogue (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2020).

Against this background, the field of Scholarly Communication and Knowledge-Research Studies can progressively strengthen an evidence-oriented direction in accordance with its scientific and operational capacities. This could include welcoming systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and evidence and gap maps; ensuring that replication and reproducibility studies, negative findings, and evaluations of unsuccessful interventions are not rejected merely because they lack a positive result; strengthening research on the evaluation of knowledge-related policies and programs; encouraging authors to articulate the practical and policy implications of their findings while avoiding claims that extend beyond the evidence; and gradually embedding data-, instrument-, and protocol-availability statements, together with conflict-of-interest disclosures, into publication practices. Policy-oriented contributions should likewise, wherever possible, be



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grounded in a synthesis of a body of evidence rather than in the findings of a single study or the scholarly authority of an individual author.

A scholarly journal should therefore not be merely a repository of articles. It should function as one of the links through which research is transformed into evidence, evidence into decisions, and decisions into social learning. This orientation does not mean transforming journals into decision-making agencies, nor does it imply that every piece of research must demonstrate immediate practical application. Some fundamental research may have no direct short-term policy or operational implications. The point is that, through editorial policies, peer-review standards, and publication formats, journals can contribute to the transparency, trustworthiness, synthesizability, and responsible use of knowledge. In this sense, scholarly communication can become not only an infrastructure for the production and dissemination of science and knowledge, but also an active component of the cycle through which research becomes evidence, evidence informs decisions, and decisions generate social learning.

8-Conclusion: A Call for Epistemic and Institutional Transition

The debate on evidence-based knowledge management cannot ultimately be reduced to a choice between “human judgment” and “data,” or between “experience” and “research.” Intuition, experience, and professional judgment are genuine and, at times, indispensable components of decision-making. They can reveal weak signals, generate new questions, suggest preliminary hypotheses, and provide an initial direction for action when information is incomplete. None of these functions, however, exempts experience or intuition from criticism, testing, and accountability. Experience acquires greater epistemic value when its domain of validity is specified, its track record can be evaluated, and its relationship with data, existing research, and the actual consequences of decisions is made explicit. Evidence-based management likewise does not seek to eliminate managerial judgment. Rather, it places such judgment alongside the best available research evidence, organizational facts, and the values and needs of stakeholders so that decisions are not based exclusively on authority, habit, or personal confidence (Rousseau, 2006).

A review of the intellectual streams that have shaped this field suggests that none of them, taken in isolation, is sufficient to provide a comprehensive model of evidence-based knowledge management. An adequate model should draw from evidence-based medicine its rigor in appraising the validity of evidence, thereby distinguishing between sources that are merely available and those that are reliable, relevant, and usable (Straus & Haynes, 2009). From information and knowledge science, it should draw an architecture for filtering, organizing, retrieving, and presenting knowledge, because evidence that does not reach decision-makers at the appropriate time and in an intelligible form will have limited influence on practice. From public policymaking, it should incorporate sensitivity to power, institutions, stakeholders, equity, and feasibility, since evidence use cannot be achieved merely by establishing a database or introducing a technical tool; it depends on organizational culture, collaboration, sustainable resources, and the institutionalization of evidence-use processes (El-Jardali et al., 2023). From data analytics and artificial intelligence, it should harness the capacity to process, connect, and rapidly update large volumes of information without conflating data or algorithmic outputs with trustworthy evidence. Finally, from organizational studies, it should incorporate sensitivity to context,



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organizational learning, organizational memory, and variation in the conditions under which knowledge can be applied. Recent research at the intersection of knowledge management and analytics likewise demonstrates the potential of these technologies while making clear that the technological dimension is only one component of evidence-based knowledge management, not its entirety (Thakral et al., 2025).

From this perspective, evidence-based knowledge management is neither a software system nor merely a method for searching the literature; it is an epistemic infrastructure for responsible decision-making. Such an infrastructure should be capable of governing knowledge claims from their emergence through appraisal, application, and subsequent review; making their provenance and quality visible; acknowledging inconsistencies in the evidence and levels of uncertainty rather than concealing them; and establishing a continuous connection among decision, implementation, consequences, and learning. Evidence-based knowledge management is therefore not, by itself, a direct solution to every scientific, economic, political, cultural, or social problem facing a country. It is, however, a necessary condition for selecting, justifying, testing, and revising potential solutions. Without such an infrastructure, even a society endowed with universities, researchers, data, and advanced technologies may continue to base its decisions on power, habit, short-term expediency, selectively chosen evidence, and unchecked intuition.

Achieving this transition requires, above all, institutionalization: establishing evidence dossiers for major decisions; expanding evidence-synthesis and knowledge-translation units; documenting sources, assumptions, conflicts of interest, and dissenting views; implementing uncertain policies in stages; conducting ex post evaluation of decisions; retaining failures and negative results within organizational memory; and reviewing or retiring knowledge that has lost its validity. Such a system does not require decision-makers to claim certainty at all times. Rather, it requires them to make explicit the boundaries of what is known and unknown, explain the basis for their choices, and accept responsibility for learning from consequences. The literature in this field likewise indicates that bridging the research–practice gap depends less on producing ever more evidence than on developing the institutional capacity to access, appraise, synthesize, and use evidence on a sustained basis (Rousseau, 2006; El-Jardali et al., 2023). The transition from intuition to evidence, therefore, is not a transition from human beings and experience to numbers and algorithms. It is a transition from decisions that cannot be questioned to decisions whose provenance, rationale, uncertainty, and consequences can be made visible, scrutinized, and revised. A knowledge-based society is not simply one that produces the greatest number of articles, datasets, or documents; it is one that can distinguish trustworthy knowledge from assertion, reputation, and authority, apply that knowledge in the appropriate context, assess the consequences of its decisions, and learn from both success and failure with epistemic integrity.

In closing, the future belongs not to the society that knows more, but to the society that uses what it knows more responsibly and in a more evidence-informed manner.

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