



SERIES



THINK TANKS AND UNIVERSITIES

edited by Sharron Sutton

Today the institutional landscape for research and knowledge generation in many countries is becoming ever more varied, and more fractured, as different types of institutions join the field.

PETER TAYLOR

By working together to get evidence into the hands of policymakers, the media, civil society organizations and other actors, think tanks and universities can influence public policy debates by promoting more objective, evidence-based decision-making. The anticipated end result? Making a real difference in people's lives.

SHANNON SUTTON

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THINK TANKS AND UNIVERSITIES

In this series:



“In order to overcome the “mutual suspicion of motives” and appreciate one another’s strengths, clearly defined roles are essential when engaging in collaboration. Communication can ensure that both institutions are aware of each other’s intentions as well as comparative advantages. ”

SHANNON SUTTON

Editor, Think Tanks & Universities series at On Think Tanks

Think Tanks and Universities:

This is a series on the relationship between Think Tanks and Universities, edited by Shannon Sutton, from The Think Tank Initiative. The reports from the accompanying study can be found on the Think Tank Initiative's website. The posts in the series relate to research undertaken in Latin America, Africa and South Asia, plus additional articles published by On Think Tanks in relation to the topic.

ARTICLES IN THE SERIES:

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For the last three articles, On Think Tanks produced additional content on the relationship between think tanks and universities that may be worth considering.

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by Enrique Mendizabal

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by Enrique Mendizabal

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by Hans Gutbrod



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THE SCENARIO



“There is increasing demand and expectation from the state, the private sector and society at large, for universities to produce high quality research (both theoretical and applied).”

ENRIQUE MENDIZABAL

THE OPPORTUNITY



“Think tank researchers appreciate the status that comes from working with their colleagues in universities. And university researchers appreciate the flexible conditions related to working with their colleagues in think tanks, as this helps them avoid the often heavy bureaucracy of universities that makes it difficult to kick-start time-sensitive research.

PETER TAYLOR

WHAT TO DO



“Collaboration between think tanks and universities can lead to stronger outputs, enhanced credibility, and better decision-making. However, hurdles such as unreliable funding and informal collaboration present challenges. In order to overcome these barriers, better communication, flexible funding, and support for capacity development are necessary.”

SHANNON SUTTON

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THINK TANKS AND UNIVERSITIES

It turns out that researchers from think tanks and universities are producing knowledge and evidence – and getting it into the hands of policy actors – in ways that might not have been possible had they not worked together.

PETER TAYLOR

Think tanks and universities: A whole greater than the sum of the parts?

BY PETER TAYLOR

Peter Taylor is a Program Manager for the Think Tank Initiative.



Globally, both universities and think tanks provide policymakers, civil society organizations, the media, and other actors with the evidence they need. TTI commissioned studies in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia to learn more about whether these institutions collaborate or compete, as well as where there might be complementarities. It turns out that researchers from think tanks and universities are producing knowledge and evidence – and getting it into the hands of policy actors – in ways that might not have been possible had they not worked together.

Sound policy making needs a continuous flow of equally sound information. Many different actors contribute to policy processes and they all have their own particular information needs. While policy makers all over the world are often criticised for using evidence selectively when making their decisions, many realise the value of high quality data and analysis. Similarly, civil society organizations and the media increasingly want to access reliable and robust information so that they can participate effectively in national debates on policy issues.

So who actually provides the evidence that these actors need? Universities have long been seen as the key generators of research in many countries. But a shift is occurring. Today the institutional landscape for research and knowledge generation in many countries is becoming ever more varied, and more fractured, as different types of institutions join the field.

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI), supports think tanks, or policy research institutions, in 20 developing countries. We have seen that as the range and type of institutions doing research grows, competition gets tougher. It's harder to find and retain skilled researchers who have more and more job options. It's harder to get funding from donors who see an

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increasing number of good research proposals. And it's harder to get policy makers to pay attention to a study given the number of other institutions producing policy research.

Reflecting on these challenges has raised quite a few important questions for us. By supporting one type of institution, is there a danger of unintentionally creating challenges for the other? How does selective funding affect the relationships between universities and think tanks – as collaborators, or competitors? Is it important to promote collaboration between these institutions? And when collaboration does happen, how does it help or hinder the flow of knowledge into public policy processes and debates?

To help us find out some of the answers to these questions, TTI supported a series of studies which looked at how the relationships between universities and think tanks play out in Africa, South Asia and Latin America. The studies highlighted the strong practical orientation and policy focus of think tanks, and the more theoretical emphasis of many university researchers. They also confirmed that researchers from think tanks and universities often work together because they share an interest in quality research which has the potential to influence policy making for the good of society. Think tank researchers appreciate the status that comes from working with their colleagues in universities. And university researchers appreciate the flexible conditions related to working with their colleagues in think tanks, as this helps them avoid the often heavy bureaucracy of universities that makes it difficult to kick-start time-sensitive research.

Although competition certainly exists between the two, the studies have confirmed that researchers from think tanks and universities are producing knowledge and evidence – and getting it into the hands of policy actors – in ways that might not have been possible had they not worked together.

So how can TTI encourage this positive situation to continue? We learned that several factors are important: 1) a culture of collaboration that encourages researchers to work with others and leads to better uptake of their findings, 2) financial support that is flexible and allows think tanks to be innovative and nimble enough to work with universities on complex societal problems and 3) excellent researchers who possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes that support good partnerships. These are just the high-level findings. In the following series of blogs, the investigators who undertook the studies reflect and share their own thoughts on what they found out – and on how they believe think tanks and universities can build relationships that help them achieve a whole which is greater than the sum of the parts.

Editor's Note:

This is the first of a five-part series on think tanks and universities, which is based on the global Think Tanks and Universities study commissioned by TTI.

In the second article in this series, Grupo FARO's Orazio Bellettini and Adriana Arellano will reflect on their findings from the Mas Saber study in Latin America. Latin America

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is under-represented in the global knowledge ecosystem and, while universities and think tanks are key to increasing Latin America's knowledge production capacities, the links between them are weak. The authors propose that networks of collaboration be established and mobilized through approaches such as expanded training, financial support, and exchanges.

In the third article, Darlison Kaija of PASGR explores the African context. She notes that bureaucracy, differing attitudes and a lack of resources all pose potential threats to collaboration between think tanks and universities, while misconceptions can jeopardize these relationships. However, these institutions have a great deal in common and it is essential to understand where their comparative advantage lies.

In the fourth article, Arif Naveed (University of Cambridge & SPDI) explores variations in policymaking and knowledge generation across Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. He notes that common factors including organisational flexibility, funding, and better research motivate universities and think tanks to collaborate. Practical solutions such as incentives, enhanced capacity, and long-term programmatic funding can serve to strengthen these relationships.

In a fifth article in the series, Shannon Sutton of TTI considers next steps for think tanks and universities. Collaboration between think tanks and universities can lead to stronger outputs, enhanced credibility, and better decision-making; however, hurdles such as unreliable funding and informal collaboration present challenges. She finds that, in order to overcome these barriers, better communication, flexible funding, and support for capacity development are necessary.

Despite representing 10% of the world's population, research shows that Latin America produces less than 3% of the world's scientific knowledge, has 2% of the top 500 hundred universities, and generates 0.2% of the patents worldwide.

ADRIANA ARELLANO & ORAZIO BELLETINI

Más Saber América Latina: Promoting links between think tanks and universities

BY ADRIANA ARELLANO, ORAZIO BELLETTINI

The reports from the accompanying study can be found on the Think Tank Initiative website. This article was written by Grupo FARO's Orazio Bellettini, Executive Director and Adriana Arellano, Research Director.



Despite representing 10% of the world's population, research shows that Latin America produces less than 3% of the world's scientific knowledge. Latin America is under-represented in the global knowledge ecosystem, and the region needs more inter and intra-regional collaboration. While universities and think tanks are key to increasing society's knowledge production

capacities, the links between them are currently weak. Networks of collaboration must be established and mobilized through approaches such as expanded training, financial support, and exchanges.

In the world of economics, things are made with raw materials and labour – but also with knowledge. And, as time goes by, knowledge is valued more and more. At present, 98% of the cost of a cup of coffee is attributed to the know-how, while only 2% covers the actual cost of coffee beans. This is why sectors intense in knowledge and creativity have been growing in the last decades. In the 1900s only 10% of people worked in the creative industries (e.g. R&D, arts, education), while in the 2000s this percentage increased to 40%, and continues to grow.

Nonetheless, our capacities to produce knowledge, at least that measured by the number of papers published in peer-reviewed journals, are unequally distributed around the world. Traditionally, the Anglo-Saxon block (USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) have contributed with over half (52%) of the knowledge produced in the world; after them, Western European countries produced 27% of the knowledge generated worldwide. In sum, 10% of the countries produce close to 75% of the scientific knowledge generated in the world, according to data from National Science Foundation in 2010, World Development Indicators and OECD in 2011.

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Why does this happen?

- Investment: They invest around 3% of their GDP in R&D;
- Institutions: They have established institutions to promote private-public partnerships;
- Skills: They train and attract some of the best researchers in the world.
- Collaboration: In addition, several studies show that countries are more innovative and produce more knowledge when they collaborate more with others.

Knowledge production in Latin America

Despite representing 10% of the world's population, research shows that Latin America produces less than 3% of the world's scientific knowledge, has 2% of the top 500 hundred universities, and generates 0.2% of the patents worldwide.

Latin America produces little knowledge in part because of a low investment in R&D, but also because there is little collaboration both within the region, and between Latin America and other regions in the world. As we see in the figure below, even in the Southern Cone – the sub-region that produces the most scientific knowledge and consists of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil – the vast majority of the scientific papers are produced without collaboration.

So, for Latin America to increase its participation in the global knowledge ecosystem, the region needs more inter and intra-regional collaboration.

Más Saber América Latina

Our project, implemented by Grupo FARO and the Centro de Políticas Comparadas de Educación, at the Universidad Diego Portales in Chile, focused on exploring the links between think tanks and universities in Latin America in order to produce recommendations to incentivize collaboration between these institutions.

Latin America has 11,120 tertiary education providers: 3,518 of which are recognized as universities, and 638 of which are recognized as think tanks. The study used case studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, and quantitative methods (including webometric and bibliometric analyses) to understand how these institutions interact. Results of the study show that:

- Interactions between universities and think tanks are few when quantified in terms of links between organizational websites (Uruguay and Argentina show the highest percentages of links to Latin American and Caribbean Universities from the total of links received on think tanks webpages, however these percentages are well below 10%).

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- Of a sample of 30 think tanks analyzed for their collaboration with universities in the production of articles published in SCOPUS, only 16 collaborated with universities. However, these are the ones that produce more articles in SCOPUS and research generated by think tanks is often disseminated through alternative channels.
- 68% of the institutions with which think tanks collaborate to publish articles in SCOPUS are universities.
- The link between think tanks and universities is weak and sporadic. Relationships between these actors are de-institutionalized, informal, disjointed and personalized.
- Universities and think tanks have different research foci. Universities, when they produce knowledge, are more focused on theoretical research papers published in indexed journals, while think tanks aim to generate applied research published in short papers.
- The factors that promote collaboration are:
 - Shared researchers
 - Joint efforts to communicate and disseminate results
 - Joint efforts to produce applied knowledge
 - Networks
 - Complementary capabilities (for example, in research results, communications and policy influence, theoretical research, and applications for theories)
 - Spaces and events for dialogue

What should we do?

Some recommendations from the study include:

- Create databases of research products, indexed and not indexed, so that researchers both in think tanks and universities can access them easily and find synergies, complementarities and opportunities to carry out shared research projects.
- Widen the study of the knowledge ecosystem, analyzing its links, networks, actors and roles, to further understand the dynamics of knowledge production, dissemination, usage and translation into public policies.
- Create and strengthen training programs for public policy specialists and policy designers to facilitate the process of translating evidence into practice, and enhance the role of both think tanks and universities in this ecosystem;

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- Design fiscal incentives for businesses and individuals to support research both in think tanks and universities;
- Promote financial support targeted to collaborative public policy research projects;
- Promote collaborations between think tanks and universities around the dissemination of research results, not only in indexed journals in the region, but also through social media; and
- Design exchange programs for public policy researchers in the region to promote more collaboration among knowledge producers.

In the 21st century, knowledge is not produced in isolation; instead it depends on the establishment and mobilization of networks of collaboration. Think tanks and universities are key to increasing society's knowledge production capacities. The challenge is to promote more collaboration between them knowing that, as stated by Garcé and López, researchers in the Más Saber team:

collaboration is not an end in itself; it truly is part of the broader objective of increasing the offer of social research focused on improving the quality of public policies in Latin-American democracies.

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**[in latin america]
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ADRIANA ARELLANO, ORAZIO BELLETTINI

**Authors, Más Saber América Latina: Promoting links between think tanks
and universities**

Think tanks and universities have quite a bit in common in Africa, and complement each other in research and training, although less so in policy dialogue and consultancy.

Both think tanks and universities allocate at least 91% of their time to research and training.

DARLISON KAIJA

Universities and think tanks in Africa: Competing or complementing?

BY DARLISON KAIJA

Darlison Kaija is a Programme Coordinator for Research at PASGR, an independent, non-partisan pan-African not-for-profit organisation located in Nairobi, Kenya.



While African think tanks and universities frequently work together, these relationships are complicated. Bureaucracy, differing attitudes and a lack of resources all pose potential barriers, and misconceptions can jeopardize collaboration. In reality, these institutions have a great deal in common and it is essential to understand where their comparative advantage lies.

Traditionally, universities have played a primary role in leading and undertaking research in many African countries. However, this is changing. The rapid increase in the number of think tanks and their prominence has the potential to both enhance, and undermine, the contribution and role of universities to research.

Our study, *Think Tank-University Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa* shares findings from Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

We found that think tanks and universities work together in many ways at both the institutional and individual level. These associations tend to be unstructured, tenuous, and ad hoc in nature. The links between them are rarely embedded in established structures or guided by defined processes or rules. Where “formal” institutional collaborations have developed, they are often underpinned by pre-existing individual relationships.

The table on the next page provides a summary of the likely relationships between think tanks and universities at both institutional and individual levels.

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Possible combinations of goals (ends) and means (strategies)	Possible relationship	Explanation of the relationships at both institutional and individual levels
Similar ends with similar means	Cooperation	A cooperative relationship is likely when, on a given issue, think tanks and universities not only share similar goals but also prefer similar strategies for achieving them (A convergence of preferred ends as well as means).
Dissimilar ends with dissimilar means	Confrontation	A confrontational relationship is likely when think tanks and universities consider each other's goals and strategies to be antithetical to their own (Total divergence of preferred ends as well as means).
Similar ends but dissimilar means	Complementary	A complementary relationship is likely when think tanks and universities share similar goals but prefer different strategies (Divergent strategies but convergent goals).
Dissimilar ends but similar means	Co-optation	A co-optive relationship is likely when think tanks and universities share similar strategies but have different goals (divergent goals but convergent strategies). These kind of relationships are unstable and often transitory.

Source: Adapted from Najam, A. (2002). 4Cs of NGO-Government Relations: Complementarity, Confrontation, Cooperation and Co-option. LEAD Occasional Papers Pakistan

Collaborations between universities and think tanks are complex and are influenced by social, economic, cultural, and political factors. These affect both the motivations and the nature of these collaborations. The motivations for cooperation are diverse and range from the need to improve effectiveness and efficiency, to the pursuit of individual interests (such as taking on an extra job to boost personal earnings). The nature of the collaboration depends on factors such as national context, the types of institutions involved, areas of focus, ideological orientations, and the kinds of support each receives from funding organizations.

Challenges

We found, however, a number of common challenges that arise when think tanks and universities choose to collaborate. These often relate to:

- **Bureaucracy:** The high level of bureaucracy in universities tends to frustrate both university and think tank staff members when trying to establish collaborative relationships. In the absence of a deliberate and formalized collaborative culture as well as lack of formal avenues for information sharing and communication, there is a limited understanding of what either party has to offer to the other.
- **Different attitudes:** The different traditions and attitudes in universities and think tanks can create competition, and start collaborations off on the wrong foot. Think tank professionals believe that problem-solving, particularly in the policy world, should be driven by real demand and not by theoretical considerations. University academics contend that scholarly rigour is a better approach to generate knowledge that solves problems, and criticize think tanks for skewing results in favour of pre-set positions. This causes the institutions to interact when they have to, and keep their distance when there is no obvious need for cooperation.
- **Lack of resources:** The lack of relevant resources hampers effective collaboration. Human resources with the required partnership skills; spaces that can be used to foster collaboration; financial resources; and technological resources are all important tools to support cooperation. Development assistance can provide much-needed support to nurture positive and complementary relationships, but great care and sensitivity is needed to avoid distorting the existing power relations between think tanks and universities.

Misconceptions

These challenges, however, are quite inevitable and are probably present in every country in the world, to different degrees of complexity. In fact, a key element that turns these challenges into real barriers for collaboration is the prevalence of deeply seated misconceptions of what collaboration between think tanks and universities looks like. A few examples relate to:

- **Competition:** Incorrectly, there is a perception that think tanks have displaced universities as the centres of research activity; the research output of universities has declined while the output by think tanks has increased. In reality, however, think tanks and universities have quite a bit in common in Africa, and complement each other in research and training, although less so in policy dialogue and consultancy. Both think tanks and universities allocate at least 91% of their time to research and training.
- **One-way relationship:** There is a view that universities effectively supply think tanks with employees (graduates or teaching staff) and work (through

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commissioned research). In fact, both parties bring different but complementary skills and resources. However, shared common interests, a clear agenda, knowledge of the skills and resources that each party can offer, and strict roles are critical for successful collaboration. 64% and 80% of think tanks and universities respectively engage researchers from both universities and think tanks (mixed team) in carrying out research, though collaboration is mainly initiated by think tanks.

- It's all rosy: It is often assumed that collaborations between think tanks and universities are complementary and all lead to positive outcomes. Unfortunately, while think tanks and universities often complement each other in research and training (as seen in #1), these collaborations are nuanced and unlikely to be represented by purely positive (or negative) experiences.

What can we conclude from this?

Overall, it is important to appreciate that each actor has its comparative advantage, especially in the research-to-policy process. The systematic approach of universities and the policy-savviness of think tanks could make collaboration rewarding.

In Africa, organic institutional collaboration has not worked well, perhaps because the financial rewards are not delivered to the individuals who do the work. Institutional collaboration may collapse if it is in conflict with individual self-interest.

A middle ground that presents a win-win environment and takes into account the unique needs of individual researchers, the needs of research institutions as well as those of donors, is needed.

Think tanks and universities can potentially develop useful synergies if they explore collaboration opportunities, taking into consideration the country context and addressing the challenges in this landscape.

Sound policy making needs a continuous flow of equally sound information. Many different actors contribute to policy processes and they all have their own particular information needs. While policy makers all over the world are often criticised for using evidence selectively when making their decisions, many realise the value of high quality data and analysis.

PETER TAYLOR

Author, Think Tanks and Universities: a whole greater than the sum of the parts?

While universities and think tanks in South Asian countries are expected to share the goal of solving public policy problems, their officially stated aims and objectives, career and incentive structures, organizational dynamics, and sources of funding draw rigid boundaries between them.

ARIF NAVEED

Think tanks and universities – different, yet similar: The South Asian context

BY ARIF NAVEED

Arif Naveed is a Gates Scholar and doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and a Visiting Associate at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.



While policymaking and knowledge generation vary across Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, common factors including organisational flexibility, funding, and better research motivate universities and think tanks to collaborate. Practical solutions such as incentives, enhanced capacity, and long-term programmatic funding can serve to strengthen these relationships.

How do think tanks and universities in South Asia interact? To what extent does external support to policy research affects these relationships? And how might these relationships be improved in order to contribute to the impact of policy research in the region?

Through South Asian regional studies in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS), along with researchers from the Universities of Bath and Cambridge, set out to answer these questions and learn more about the relationships between think tanks and universities.

Policymaking and knowledge generation

Overall, we found that both policymaking and knowledge generation vary across the three countries; so too do the organisational practices of think tanks and universities.

In Bangladesh, given the significant financial, organizational, and political constraints, few actors are located in what we call the “knowledge society” – characterised by an ability to produce independent knowledge. The bulk of policy research is provided by “civil society” actors, who conduct monitoring, evaluation and ex-post analyses which feed into policymaking. Universities are underfunded, leading many professors to seek research opportunities with NGOs, the private sector, or think tanks, resulting in an ad-hoc relationship between universities and think tanks. There are exceptions, of course, and one example is BRAC University’s Institute of Governance and Development.

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In Pakistan, the historic underdevelopment of the social sciences due to political and ideological reasons is reported to restrain research capacities. Most universities view themselves largely as teaching and training places rather than active knowledge providers; consequently, their relationship with policy processes is virtually non-existent. Think tanks have emerged against this backdrop, mainly as non-government organisations, and hold a significant position in policy landscape. Their key dilemma is that they lack access to public resources and are financially dependent, almost exclusively, on their international development partners, which has implications for the autonomy of their research agendas. Collaboration between think tanks and universities does take place, but is informal and is mostly down to the actions of individuals, such as academics joining think tanks' governing boards or working as consultants. There is also an emergence of policy research centres at private universities for policy engagements. Some think tanks are also transforming themselves into degree-awarding institutions; for example, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics has become a university.

Finally, in India, in contrast to the other two cases, the tradition of knowledge generation in the social sciences at universities is relatively strong. The involvement of universities in policy processes is also significant, particularly for those outside the public sector. There are decades-old think tanks in the country, some of which are well-recognised internationally. In addition, as in Bangladesh and Pakistan, several think tanks have been formed by university academics and exist as flexible organizations that can access resources as well as engage with policy processes.

Motivating factors

Through this study we find that positive engagement between think tanks and universities is possible; however, it depends on certain motivating factors that are common to all three countries. These include:

Organisational flexibility: By and large, universities have complex bureaucracies with rigid procedures reducing the efficiency required by the real-time needs of policymaking. Think tanks, in contrast, are more able to restructure and reposition themselves around emerging policy needs, challenges, and opportunities. Their procedural flexibility attracts university-based academics wanting to engage with policy processes but discouraged by their universities' organizational inefficiencies. The academic networks which they bring to think tanks are often reflected in their governing boards, providing think tanks with academic credibility and strategic foresight.

Funding: Funding is significant in shaping these interactions. Public sector universities may have no, or limited, financial resources for conducting primary research and policy analysis. Think tanks' ability to generate external resources often motivates academics to engage in collaborative research. In many instances, collaboration is pursued by think tanks to increase the probability of winning research grants for joint proposals. That being said, both groups of institutions tend to have different, mutually exclusive, sources and modes of funding that discourages institutional collaborations. Project based funding, the major mode of funding for

think tanks, does not encourage long-term institutional collaboration. Even the occasional instances of long-term support to select group of think tanks may promote in-house staffing development rather than collaboration. Long term funding, which both ensures autonomy over the research agenda and conditions research to be collaborative seems to be the only way to promote interaction between think tanks and universities in the short run.

Better research and dissemination: Academic research typically aims to promote disciplinary debates and is heavily dictated by theoretical and methodological protocols. In contrast, policy research requires high levels of interdisciplinarity and methodological fluidity. Collaborative research projects have the potential to bring interdisciplinarity and methodological flexibility to universities' research, as well as theoretical and methodological rigour into think tanks' research. Collaboration with think tanks gives university-based academics opportunities to disseminate their research at a wider scale through seminars, public lectures, and conferences hosted by think tanks which are also known for making an effective use of mass and social media. Moreover, jointly produced policy analyses have a higher probability of conversion into peer-reviewed publications.

The way forward

While universities and think tanks in South Asian countries are expected to share the goal of solving public policy problems, their officially stated aims and objectives, career and incentive structures, organizational dynamics, and sources of funding draw rigid boundaries between them. Permeating these boundaries, through collaborative research, can potentially benefit both groups of institutions. It can add policy relevance to academic research and theoretical and methodological rigour to think tanks' research while improving the overall quantity and quality of evidence and analysis for policy making. It can also enhance the capacity of both think tanks and universities to negotiate their autonomy over research agendas vis-à-vis commissioners of research.

However, this requires creating synergies between the two groups of institutions in South Asia. Academics need to be rewarded for their contribution to policy processes; think tanks need to create incentives for academic publications by their staff. The quality, quantity, and nature of human and financial resources are integral in determining the research outputs of both think tanks and universities, and have implications for their mutual interactions. Overall research capacities in the disciplines of social sciences, weak in the three countries, are essential for generating rigorous policy discourses but require long term strategies. Short courses on social science research methods for both university and think tank researchers can be effective in creating space for collaborative initiatives in the short run.

Lastly, the funding regime must also be revisited. Universities in South Asian countries, and likely other regions too, need greater access to funds for operational costs of research, dissemination and networking. Think tanks need stable, long term programme support, giving them freedom to determine their research agendas and allowing them to develop institutional linkages with universities. Research grants conditional upon collaborative projects can perhaps be the starting point to exemplify the benefits of collaboration. Shannon Sutton's blog post on 'next steps' highlights a few such examples from South Asian institutions NCAER and CSTEP.

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Through our studies in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, the Think Tank Initiative is learning that collaboration between think tanks and universities can lead to stronger research outputs, capacity development, enhanced credibility for both institutions, and a wider scope of research.

SHANNON SUTTON

The think tanks and university series – Next steps: Jumping the hurdles

BY SHANNON SUTTON

Shannon Sutton is a Senior Program Manager with the Think Tank Initiative at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). If you want to read more about this subject visit the Think Tanks and Universities Topic Guide.



Collaboration between think tanks and universities can lead to stronger outputs, enhanced credibility, and better decision-making. However, hurdles such as unreliable funding and informal collaboration present challenges. In order to overcome these barriers, better communication, flexible funding, and support for capacity development are necessary.

As Peter Taylor observes in his first post in this series on the relationship between think tanks and universities, researchers from think tanks and universities are collaborating to produce knowledge and evidence – and get it into the hands of policy actors – in ways that might not have been possible had they not worked together. Through our studies in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, the Think Tank Initiative is learning that collaboration between think tanks and universities can lead to stronger research outputs, capacity development, enhanced credibility for both institutions, and a wider scope of research. And by working together to get evidence into the hands of policymakers, the media, civil society organizations and other actors, think tanks and universities can influence public policy debates by promoting more objective, evidence-based decision-making. The anticipated end result? Making a real difference in people's lives.

Of course, it's not that simple. There are barriers that can get in the way of successful collaboration between institutions, and several hurdles emerge as common to all three regions (further details of which can be found in Caitlin Myles' summary document *Understanding Think Tank-University Relationships in the Global South*). In order to better understand these barriers, and how they might be overcome, this post explores the challenges that think tanks and universities face when it comes to working together, and draws from these lessons to identify potential ways forward.

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The Hurdles

Mismatched ends/means: There are some key characteristics that tend to differ between these institutions. Think tanks focus on influencing policy through research on relevant topics, while universities involve a broader thematic focus and, primarily, teaching responsibilities. Think tanks tend to be smaller, more agile, and flexible, while universities are often quite large: as seen in all three studies, the level of bureaucracy at universities can frustrate both university and think tank staff when trying to work together. They also differ in terms of autonomy and funding (more on that below).

Lack of a culture of collaboration: As the studies show, collaboration is often informal and based on relationships between individuals. Primarily because there is no formalized collaborative culture between the two institutions, Myles notes that there tends to be 'a lack of awareness about one another's strengths and a mutual suspicion of motives.' Think tanks are seen as biased and lacking in rigour, while universities are viewed as out of touch with policy issues.

Inadequate and unreliable funding for research: Funding is clearly a major challenge in all three regions. Within both institutions, overhead costs are rarely covered by project-based funding and the funding that does exist tends to be unpredictable. Research agendas can be donor-driven and funding models do not always suit the needs of universities, think tanks, and donors. This is particularly problematic for universities, which tend to be highly bureaucratic and inflexible.

Limited capacity: Institutions in all three regions face challenges to recruit and keep excellent researchers, and human resources can be a major challenge. Institutional collaboration requires intensive project management, and both think tank and university staff generally lack the time to take on this role.

Moving Forward: Lessons for think tanks, universities, and donors

Given that the potential for collaboration is huge, what can be done to overcome these hurdles? General solutions emerged from all three studies and can be grouped around common themes of communications, the nature of funding, and capacity development.

Ensure better communication and clear agendas: In order to overcome the "mutual suspicion of motives" and appreciate one another's strengths, clearly defined roles are essential when engaging in collaboration. Communication can ensure that both institutions are aware of each other's intentions as well as comparative advantages. There should also be an agreed-upon agenda. A great example is the memorandum of understanding that Indian think tank NCAER has with the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.

Provide flexible funding aimed at creating incentives for collaboration: Funders should provide flexible, core, long-term funding. This will allow institutions to choose if they want to collaborate, as well as who they want to work with. As Taylor notes in his blog

post, funding for think tanks should allow institutions to be innovative and nimble enough to work with universities on complex societal problems. Similarly, universities' research agendas should not be determined by donors and funding to these institutions should be both predictable and flexible. Donors can favour collaborative work and design funding opportunities to encourage it, as TTI does through projects such as its Opportunity Funds. And there may be a role for policymakers to play: authors of the Latin American study propose legislation that provides incentives for private sector investment in research, noting examples of tax incentives in Brazil and Uruguay. Similarly, new Indian legislation requires companies to invest 2% of their net profits in corporate social responsibility.

Support think tanks and universities in identifying capacity development needs: Think tanks and universities should increase their human resources dedicated to facilitating collaboration, so this does not become a burden for other staff. Researchers should also be offered opportunities for capacity building and, as both groups require skilled researchers who possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support good partnerships, they could collaborate to train one another's staff in areas where they have a comparative advantage. An example of this comes from CSTEP in India, which receives research advice from the faculty at the Indian Institute of Science.

While a silver bullet doesn't materialize from these lessons, a recipe for strong and more effective collaboration is emerging. Some clear take-aways, along with avenues for further research, surface for think tanks, universities, and donors— all of which will help these institutions in their objective to influence policy debates and promote stronger decision-making.

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By supporting university based think tanks, therefore, funders can create positive externalities that can have critical effects across the entire knowledge sector -as well as on other public and private policy players.

ENRIQUE MENDIZABAL

A case for funding university-based/linked think tanks: More and better staff for others

BY ENRIQUE MENDIZABAL



I rarely write about individual think tanks – mainly because I do recognise that, given think tanks’ complexities, it is very easy to get it wrong. But on this issue I am using the case of Peru mainly to help in presenting the argument with clarity. Just for the record, and hopefully to get a reaction to this idea, I think this has implications for initiatives such as AusAID’s Knowledge Sector Support Programme, the Think Tank Initiative, and the Think Tank Fund. But it is perfectly relevant for other research funders and their grantees looking for ‘impact’ to report on.

I want to address the fact that the university based think tanks is not at the top of most think tank funders’ priorities. And even when they are funded (and they are) this is done as if they were independent (is any really independent?) think tanks and with the explicit objective of enhancing their capacity to influence policy – very little else seems to matter. This is a shame in part because these think tanks are probably better able than any others to promote the development of evidence informed policy capacities – see Kirsty Newman’s post on this: [Policy influence versus evidence-informed policy](#).

But it is also the case that we are missing out on an important function that these think tanks can fulfil particularly well: to train researchers for other think tanks.

It just occurred to me that while I was studying economics at the Universidad del Pacífico in Peru I, as pretty much all my fellow students, spent some time working at the university’s think tank, CIUP. Some spent just a few months involved in one or two projects while others took up positions as long term interns and research assistants. I stayed at CIUP after graduating as did some of my peers. Others, who had worked at CIUP before graduation went on to work for other local think tanks such as GRADE, MacroConsult, Apoyo, etc. Of all those who stayed at CIUP after graduation not all became full-time researchers there. Some stayed but many left to join other these other think tanks – as well as public and private organisations in Peru and abroad. Some have gone back after years working in other centres and sectors.

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The point is that CIUP's link to the university and its education responsibilities – which can be seen by some funders as a constraint on their independence – in effect led to it 'subsidising' the development of the capacity of its competitors' (or comparators') staff (which they would have otherwise had to develop themselves – although I must point out that GRADE, Macro and other centres do develop the capacity of their young researchers but I would argue that there is at least an initial investment made by the university based centres that provides a good base to build on). I have come across the more extreme situation in several countries where there are no university think tanks: young researchers telling me that they joined a think tank after graduation because they had not learned how to do research at university; and think tank directors have confided that they have to build the capacity of their young recruits whose research skills are close to nil.

Of course in Peru there are other such university think tanks and so CIUP shares this role. But in many countries there are not that many good universities with strong and respected think tanks where students can first learn to do research and practice the skills they will need later on. And in other cases there simply are no university think tanks at all (or those that exist are not really fulfilling this role) and so graduates and think tanks are left without the skills they need. Additionally, without the opportunity to practice policy research, many graduates are simply unaware that think tanks can be an exiting and interesting career path.

When I say that without CIUP-like organisations young graduates would not have the opportunity to learn how to do policy research and analysis, I am speaking from experience: this is where I learned about policy analysis and had the chance to practice it and get the taste for it. My peers and I may have learnt lots of information (theories, models, facts) in class but would not have had the chance to apply it to real and practical questions had it not been for the think tank and the opportunities the university gave us to work with the researchers at CIUP on real policy research and analysis.

By supporting university based think tanks, therefore, funders can create positive externalities that can have critical effects across the entire knowledge sector – as well as on other public and private policy players. This support can come in the form of:

- Institutional funds to encourage more students to participate in policy research and analysis initiatives with senior researchers. These projects can offer students the opportunity to experience the various aspects of think tank work: data collection, analysis, project management, communications, policy engagement, fundraising, etc.
- Travel grants for top students to spend a few weeks or their summer holidays in think tanks in the US, Europe or elsewhere (and my usual disclaimer applies: NOT international development think tanks).
- Seminar series on think tanks and the roles they can fulfil as a way of encouraging them to get involved.

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Of course, where no university think tanks are present or where their capacity is quite low a more concerted effort should be made to either rebuild them or establish closer links between universities and non-university think tanks. In Zambia, for example, the student chapters of the Economic Association of Zambia facilitates internships in think tanks for their members. But if funders provided funds, via the think tanks, to support this the effect this could have on the future capacity of think tanks would be enhanced.

In Serbia, too, the Belgrade Centre for Security Studies has a fantastic internship programme informally linked to the Faculty of Political Science. They don't just use their interns for data collection or analysis (or coffee-making) but have also designed a lecture series that includes sessions on think tanks, research methods, and communications. Most of their interns then go on to work for other organisations in Serbia and take what they learned with them.

This kind of experience is invaluable for encouraging a greater number of highly competent young graduates to join think tanks and for giving them the skills that they and their future employers will need.

In summary, in a growing number of developing countries:

- **Universities have funding (or access to funding) and need research capacity; and**
- **Think tanks need funding (or access to funding) and have research capacity**

Think tanks and universities: not just a communications' partnership

BY ENRIQUE MENDIZABAL

Some time ago I wrote an article for the LSE's Impact of Social Sciences Blog in which I argued that universities could collaborate with think tanks to enhance their capacity to communicate their theories and ideas. Universities, I argued, are not always best places to turn complex ideas into popular ones. Think tanks, on the other hand, are supposed to do this.

I was thinking of the British context when I wrote this. Or, at least, of a situation in which well-funded universities co-exist with well-funded think tanks and where both have the capacity to undertake research. In fact, the context I had in mind is one in which universities have a greater capacity to undertake research than think tanks.

But in a different context, there are other reasons why universities and think tanks would want to work together. And one of these reasons provides an opportunity to explore a possible funding model for think tanks.

The context that I have in mind has some of the following characteristics:

- Universities are poorly funded and are therefore unable to produce research or, what is increasingly common in developing countries, they have sufficient funds but simply do not have the capacity to produce research (maybe they never had that mandate in the first place, or they have lost their researchers to other actors such as central banks, donors, NGOs, consultancies and, yes, even think tanks). Look at what happens in Peru:

Public Universities only spent 14% of the \$/824.6 million (USD274 million) they had for research in 2013.

- There is increasing demand and expectation from the state, the private sector and society at large, for universities to produce high quality research (both theoretical and applied).

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- Think tanks find it hard to access public funding or private funding in the form of grants, thus making it difficult for them to develop long-term policy research programmes.
- Think tanks also find it hard to find new bright minds to join their organisations: there are few qualified researchers in their labour market and these are highly coveted by better funded organisations.

In summary, in a growing number of developing countries:

- Universities have funding (or access to funding) and need research capacity; and
- Think tanks need funding (or access to funding) and have research capacity.

Over a long conversation, Orazio Bellettini, director of Grupo FARO in Ecuador, suggested that this opens the possibility for a win-win situation. We just need to find the mechanisms to make it happen. Luckily, there is a well known case from the UK that could serve as inspiration: IDS. Hans Gutbrod offers a very similar argument in a post he wrote on the CRRC's experience.

The Institute of Development Studies as a model?

[Editor's note: I should note that I am not trying to describe the IDS model in detail. I am using it to encourage a discussion of the possibility for a new form of think tank - university partnership.]

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) was founded as an independent research institute based at the University of Sussex, but it does not belong to the university. IDS has close links with the University, but is financially and constitutionally independent. It is, in fact, registered in England as a charitable company (no. 00877338) limited by guarantee, and with registered charity number 306371.

This hosting takes the shape of a contract between both institutions. IDS pays a 'fee' to the University of Sussex for its use of its building, university services, and other benefits. A straight forward contractual arrangement that works well for both.

IDS's original mission included both research and teaching so the relationship with the university allowed it to obtain accreditation for its teaching programmes. At the same time, the university gained a new centre and teaching programme - which at the time was not something one could find any where else in the UK.

Some characteristics of this relationship, from IDS' point of view, include:

- IDS is governed by a Board of Trustees, who are responsible for agreeing our overall

strategy, setting policy, monitoring performance and promoting the interests of the Institute.

- Consequently, IDS has its own identity. Its website is separate from the university's: this is IDS' and this is the University of Sussex's (and this is the UoF's international development programme).
- IDS has control over its communications, including how and what it communicates. In fact, its head of comms is part of the strategic leadership group.
- Funding from its clients or funders is provided to IDS and not to the university. This means that when a funder or client funds an IDS researcher to undertake a study, it is funding IDS and not the University of Sussex.
- As a consequence, IDS has control over its finances including how it manages its income, allocating it to different objectives as it sees fit.
- This means IDS can make strategic choices about the issues it wants to study and how it wants to go about doing so. It can establish partnerships with other organisations independently of the university. Its board and its strategic leadership group make sure of that.
- IDS' staff is hired by the think tank but benefits from the affiliation to the university when it comes to staff benefits. Not all IDS staff have teaching responsibilities and its strategic freedom allows it to allocate these as it best sees fit.
- The university accredits the institutes' teaching programmes. Although IDS runs its own international development postgraduate programmes, students effectively graduate from University of Sussex.

Is this the best model for a think tank in a developing country? Well, it is a start.

The IDS model is different to what I had in mind in terms of funding. The win-win situation we are referring to implies that universities would have to fund the think tanks to do research - at least a significant proportion of its long term research agenda. In the case of IDS its largest five donors in 2013/14 were:

- 1) UK Department for International Development (38.9%)
- 2) Economic and Social Research Council (9.3%)
- 3) International Development Research Centre (4.3%)
- 4) Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (4.1%)
- 5) Program for Appropriate Technology (3.8%)

So, in this case, the university is not a key funder. But in our model, and in contexts where universities are well funded but lack the capacity to undertake research themselves, we could expect a significant proportion of funding for research to come from the university itself. Some of those USD274 million in the case of Peru could make a huge difference for more than a few think tanks in the country and, why not, the region.

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This last point is important. This model should work with foreign think tanks, too. Cash-rich universities wanting to leap-frog to the international leagues could very well attract global think tanks to set-up shop within their campuses – physically or virtually.

A new win-win model

Therefore, the new model proposed could involve:

- A partnership or contract between an independent think tank (with its own legal status, board, leadership, and identity), most likely a charity, and a University, public or private.
- Core funding from the university for the think tank to undertake core academic and/or practical research on issues that are set by the think tank but with, understandable and appropriate, influence of the university – maybe through the think tank’s board or an advisory committee.
- A likely condition that core funding may be providing against the expectation of a certain number of academic publications per researcher or overall. This is particularly relevant for universities interested in improving their local and international ranking.
- Either or both the participation of the think tank’s researchers in teaching programmes led by the university or the accreditation, by the university, of a teaching programme led by the think tank.
- A payment, from the think tank to the university, for items such as rent (in case the university provides the think tank with office space), utilities, services, and, possibly, the university’s good will. This payment may be agreed as all cash or part cash part in-kind. It could be a fixed amount or may involve a degree of variability, for instance, through an overhead charged on each project or on the institute’s operating profits (annually or multi-annually).
- A number of rights and responsibilities from both parties to protect each institution from the actions of the other as well as to ensure each other’s independence – intellectual, operational and financial– yet take full advantage of the association.

Making this happen will take more than lawyers (but they will be necessary). It will demand a charm offensive and the development of long term partnerships. A possible road-map could include:

- An internship programme to provide students or graduates at the university to join think tanks. Again, ad-hoc arrangements based on personal relationships need to be replaced for formal agreements based on institutional links.

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- Small research projects that can help to build trust and strengthen the links between both organisations.
- A visiting lecturers programme through which researchers at the think tank participate in teaching programmes at the university. Many researchers at think tanks already teach part-time at local universities. But the relationship in these cases is mostly based on personal relations rather than at an institutional level.
- Long-term research programmes funded by the University (or through the university) involving the think tank's researchers.

These may involve some costs that think tanks and their funders should be willing to accept. The pay-off is likely to make up for it.

They may also demand change to universities' own mandates and rules and in the case of public universities, it could involve national educational policy changes, too.

Who better than think tanks to advocate for them?

Think tank sustainability is another part of the university synergy: if the think tank does not enjoy stable long-term core support, it will struggle to retain talent. Appointments at university can keep qualified senior researchers funded and available to engage in think tank activities.

HANS GUTBROD

Think Tanks and Universities: Practical Considerations

BY HANS GUTBROD

Hans Gutbrod is the Executive Director at Transparify



From what I have seen both from my time at CRRC and more recent encounters with think tanks, I entirely agree with Enrique on the synergies between think tanks and universities (see Enrique's post on funding university based think tanks). I want to follow up by drawing attention to the more practical side of this symbiotic relationship as well as the significant risks that these linkages can bring.

Opportunities

The most practical synergy for think tanks at universities is space. Being located at a university offers access to its lecture halls and seminar rooms. If think tanks want to convene, they need a centrally located conference room for 80+ people. Think tanks thus require real estate where it is most expensive. In medium-priced capitals such a space will cost more than \$20,000 to rent annually, or upward of \$700 per event at a hotel or conference center. At universities, space can be shared, greatly reducing costs.

The same think tank/university synergy applies to office space. Universities may be able to eke out a few rooms in exchange for the contribution that a think tank brings. One of CRRC's think tanks had spent two cramped years in a commercial office building, at \$55,000 a year, without a lecture hall, before moving into Azerbaijan's oldest private university.

Given the joint interest in research, there are other practical synergies: if it wants to be plugged into ongoing debates, a think tank needs a small library and access to journals. Yet, as with space, most think tanks do not need a library enough to justify big investments, or the salary of an experienced librarian. In a low-income country, the annual costs for purchases, space and staff will start at \$25,000. Add extra computers for data processing or training, an additional projector for an event, translation headphones, a focus group room, full-time security staff, and costs quickly escalate.

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Totalling up this back-of-the-envelope calculation, a think tank can easily spend anywhere up from \$80,000 per year on basic facilities. Meanwhile, there are many expensive items both universities and think tanks need, and neither need full-time. At a university, the money a think tank saves on infrastructure can be invested in joint research projects, internships, library investments, speaker series or visiting lecturers/scholars.

Think tank sustainability is another part of the university synergy: if the think tank does not enjoy stable long-term core support, it will struggle to retain talent. Appointments at university can keep qualified senior researchers funded and available to engage in think tank activities. Intermittent funding is not a problem that Brookings is likely to have, but it's a reality in many developing countries, or for younger think tanks. Universities can thus, indirectly, provide some core support for the organization.

And then there are huge advantages for universities, in that think tanks contribute to public discourse and policy debates in ways that universities cannot. Weighing in on specific issues is beyond the mission of universities. Academics, in turn, much as they may be heard as individual intellectuals, typically are not organized for deep policy linkages. Think tanks, as teams, are much better set up to make a systemic impact, since they can engage in sustained advocacy. They have staff to analyze data sets quickly, systems for peer review, and ideally communication staff that can reach out to decision-makers. Their successful work, in turn, feeds into teaching, making the universities more attractive for students, as Enrique also pointed out.

Challenges

With all these advantages, why are think tanks not always placed at universities? Think tanks can do more with less, they gain reach, students learn, universities become more visible. It would seem the default option, an obvious symbiosis. Yet there are number of constraints and challenges that the relationship needs to navigate.

First, think tanks need to ensure their independence. This can prove a challenge, especially in murky political contexts. One June, I received a call from our Armenian director. She told me that we had been asked to move our office, located with the leading State University. Apparently the Economics Faculty needed our rooms. I traveled to Yerevan, and was shown a confined substitute space. We had a sinking feeling: continuing in that architectural exile was going to be tough. We were wondering whether this threat was related to our widely visible corruption study. That study had demonstrated that corruption in Armenia had gotten worse, in spite of much-promised reform. No one made that link explicit, so we didn't finally know. We played for time, and were lucky to have top-level political support in the diaspora, and ended staying in place. Somehow the Economics Faculty coped. While we were fortunate to have outside support, this story illustrates the vulnerabilities of university-based think tanks when the findings of their research are at odds with the potent interests at play in a university.

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The vulnerability of university-based think tanks makes a powerful board all-important. Board members should be senior enough to trump university encroachments, whether they are about physical space, or more overt attempts to interfere with research or staffing. Governance can be interlinked, although it is preferable that the university leadership does not serve in the think tank board. The presence of university administrators on the board may reinforce the notion that there is a reporting line from the think tank to the university leadership. Instead it's preferable to have shared board members. That was indeed the arrangement we had for CRRC's Georgian office: one of our board members was also the chair of the board of our host institution. This gave us good assurance. We knew we had a fallback in case the annual renegotiation of rent would get out of hand.

Strong arrangements are necessary to ensure that the think tank remains nimble. I have seen university-based think tanks in which there is such tight supervision by the university that the think tank could not respond to ongoing political issues, or proactively promote a particular policy. Consequently, the institution restricts itself to responding to requests from government agencies, as well as publishing reports of the "State of the National Economy" type. Like a utility provider, the work of such a think tank can be valuable, important and reliable. However, less tightly integrated think tanks are more likely to innovate and be entrepreneurial within policy debates.

Independence and agility can be secured by a separate legal entity for the university-based think tank. The success of policy research projects often depends on quickly assembling teams, to be responsive to ongoing issues. A separate entity allows dedicated staffing and implementation. Integral to our fundraising at CRRC was our efficient CFO with private sector experience at Ernst & Young. He ensured that we got all the contracts implemented, up to 150 enumerators hired per survey, each paid according to how many interviews they did, and paid on time, all the taxes deducted and documented, for internal and external audits, the full financial report going back to the donor or client, and all of this many times over throughout the year, and each project slightly different, often with different tax configurations or exemptions.

Some university administrations are not geared to administer research projects flexibly and quickly. They focus on mass administration, not bespoke responsiveness. Illustrating how organisational integration can reduce flexibility, one university-based think tank said that it typically takes them a year to hire full-time staff, since they have to follow university procedures.

Hiring more generally requires strategic design: how will the position of the Executive Director be filled? From within the university? Would the Executive Director have to be a full professor? Could an Executive Director who is not a professor command sufficient respect within the university? Some of these considerations make the candidate pool rather small, and may risk that the appointment is not only based on merit, but also on patronage. Advance thinking should address these issues. For example, one experienced leader in a university-based think tank restructured his organisation's bylaws, to ensure

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that candidates would be recruited through a broad search, and not be an internal appointment. This reinforces the role of a powerful board, which forms a selection committee.

Still a good opportunity

In summary, there are very powerful synergies, suggesting that it makes much sense for think tanks to base themselves at universities, or very close to them. For think tanks, especially young ones, it can be worth making themselves attractive for universities. This can be done by identifying comparable role models, and thus building the case for one's potential host with a vivid and visitable example.

However, good fences make good neighbors: there is a risk that some of the most valuable aspects of a think tank – honesty, responsiveness to policy context, flexibility – can be smothered if the university's embrace gets too tight. Universities thus play the biggest role in making the synergy possible, by offering secure physical, organizational and intellectual space. Lastly, donors can be constructive facilitators, by sharing experience, providing outside support and reinforcing governance, until a long-term virtuous cycle kicks in.

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Universities in South Asian countries, and likely other regions too, need greater access to funds for operational costs of research, dissemination and networking. Think tanks need stable, long term programme support, giving them freedom to determine their research agendas and allowing them to develop institutional linkages with universities..

ARIF NAVEED

Author, Think tanks and universities – different, yet similar: The South Asian Context

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