



pasgr.org

PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL
& GOVERNANCE RESEARCH



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

About PASGR

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan pan-African not-for-profit organisation established in 2011 and located in Nairobi, Kenya. Currently engaged in more than 12 African countries, PASGR works to enhance research excellence in governance and public policy that contributes to the overall wellbeing of women and men.

Our vision is *a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent's public policy issues*. PASGR's three core programmes bring together the right mix of universities, research institutions, government, policy actors, researchers and academics to:

- Establish and sustain partnerships at national/regional and international levels for advancing research, higher education and training;
- Facilitate the creation of policy and research communities;
- Enhance the institutionalisation of a research culture in Africa's universities and research organisations; and,
- Coordinate a collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy with universities in Africa.

PASGR is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organisation.

The Professional Development and Training Programme (PDT)

The Professional Development and Training Programme enhances individual and institutional research capacity and the utilisation of social and policy research. PDT works with partners to:

- Design and deliver high quality, experiential professional training that builds policy actors' and researchers' skills and competencies;
- Deepen delivery partners' institutional capacity to design, deliver and accredit distinctive professional development courses; and,
- Innovate in design and content to enrich participants' learning experience, and maximise impact and reach.

Our training courses

A suite of high level professional development courses for active and committed researchers and policy actors is offered.

The courses are designed to be adaptable for different research and policy audiences. They are especially effective when we bring together participants from different countries, organisations and disciplinary backgrounds.

Courses are developed and delivered through partnerships between scholars from non-African institutions (including the UK's Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex) and an array of highly motivated, creative and excellent African scholars who undergo a training of trainers programme.

Course modules are frequently reviewed and redesigned for currency and relevance using lessons and experiences obtained in the course of previous training.

The training has two components:

- The researcher-centred component
- The policy actor component

The Researcher-Centred Component

This training offers post-graduate students, doctoral candidates and early to mid-career social science researchers and faculty a substantial opportunity to update and upgrade their skills in social science research methods. Participants are walked through each phase and dimension of designing rigorous social science research. It consists of a suite of ten modules that are designed to provide alternative and innovative approaches to engaging with a research problem. The first three modules are foundational and introduce the theoretical and practical issues involved in the design and successful execution of a policy-engaged research project. The remaining modules are based on the theoretical and practical aspects of methods of data collection using both quantitative and qualitative tools and are offered as electives to complement the core modules.

1 Designing Social Inquiry

The module's first goal is to develop participants' critical engagement with the existing state of knowledge in their respective fields. It equips participants with the competencies to question conventional definitions of the problem, the categories or techniques used for its analysis, and possible interpretations. It also helps participants to turn ideas or assumptions into researchable questions.

This module introduces participants to advances in concept formation and illustrates how concepts can be modified, redefined, or created to accurately capture the empirical events, actors, or processes being investigated.

2 Multi-Method Research

There is a growing interest in mixed method research among social scientists due to its relevance for policy-oriented research. The practice of mixing methods has emerged as a suitable complement to the dominant quantitative and qualitative paradigms. This module provides insights into the mixed method approach and its utility for policy engaged research. It examines the basic assumptions of the mixed method tradition and its fundamental principles.

3 Critical Policy Engagement

Researchers engaged in policy-related work stand to benefit if they interest policy actors in the work they are doing, involve them in the various stages of their research project, and get their feedback to enrich the research design. This module aims to enhance researchers' capacity to strengthen their relationship with policy actors in order to improve their research design and the chances that their findings will be used to engage policy.

The module helps participants develop knowledge and skills related to building relationships with various policy actors and decision makers. It refines participants' ability to communicate research ideas and findings. It equips them with skills to distil the key message(s) they would like to communicate to relevant policy actors.

4 Survey Design & Execution

Surveys produce rather than collect data. Designing an effective survey, one that captures what one is after, is an art. Moving from general hypotheses and research questions to specific and measurable concepts, and then to simple questions which respondents can understand and answer, is far from straightforward. There are many decision points. There are also trade-offs in how we measure concepts, the response categories we choose, sampling strategies, and even how interviews are conducted.

All of these components influence the kind of data a survey produces. This module equips participants with knowledge and skills to design and execute effective surveys.

5 Comparative Case Studies

This module looks at different comparative case study designs and the types of causal claims and interpretive analysis they allow. It discusses how to define "a case" and locate it within broader phenomena. The module also explores how case study research contributes to theory development and concept formation.

It further discusses how to address validity, selection bias and the representativeness of cases in small-N case study analysis.

6 Interpretive Methods and Ethnography

Interpretive social science rests on the idea that unlike the world of physical objects, the social world is made up of thinking and feeling beings engaging in meaningful action. To understand the social world, then, we must grasp the point of view of the actors who inhabit it and the context in which they do. Interpretive methods, used by various branches of the humanities and social sciences, frequently play a role in concept and theory generation, and can be used in conjunction with comparative case studies, action research, and network analysis. They can also be used, at various stages of a research project, to inform or complement quantitative methods.

Interpretive methods are particularly central to anthropology and ethnography, on which we focus here. In particular, this module provides training in two of ethnography's core techniques: participant observation and semi-structured interviewing. Participants also practice coding and analysing the data generated by these techniques.

Through a combination of presentations, applied learning (practical experience), group work and feedback, participants develop an appreciation for the different ways in which interpretive social inquiry and the key methods mentioned above can contribute to policy-oriented research.

7 Social Network Analysis

Any research problem where relationships are important may benefit from social network analysis. Social network analysis is an analytical approach that allows researchers to analyse patterns of relationships among a set of actors. The actors are usually people, but they can also be organisations, cities, websites, nations, etc. Social network analysis can be applied to substantive problems that cut across many subjects and disciplines. In this course, participants are introduced to the theoretical foundations and research methods used in social network analysis. The module also explores the usefulness of social network analysis for the study of governance and public policy.

8 Applied Quantitative Research

This module introduces basic statistics and econometric techniques, underlining the appropriate techniques that can be considered for analysis depending on the type of data available. It further explores the idea and intuition behind randomisation and why it is important in establishing causality.

Practical examples are given for understanding the concept of randomisation and why it can lead to erroneous results if it is not taken into account. The difference between correlation and causality is illustrated using different designs that establish causality, such as randomised control trials (RCTs). It also distinguishes between inferences based on design vis-à-vis those based on econometric techniques.

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Action Research

Action research brings multiple stakeholders into the process of research and data analysis that makes the process of meaning making more robust. It allows theories of change to be tested through the action of stakeholders. By engaging multiple actors in a process, wider ownership is achieved making sustainable outcomes more likely. Action research is gaining increasing recognition amongst practitioners and policy makers as it allows evidence to be generated through the process of executing projects and policies. An important advantage of action research is that, as a deliberative and iterative process, it allows flexible responses to complex situations that are constantly evolving. Many traditional research tools build static pictures of situations which are assumed for research purposes to be relatively static.

This module explores a variety of methods ranging from co-operative inquiry to participatory action research and systemic action research. Case studies from a variety of African contexts such as water, HIV and AIDS and Climate Change Adaption are used.

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Impact Evaluation

This module teaches elements of impact evaluation methods of welfare programmes in developing countries. It is designed for an audience of social scientists and is presented at a low-medium level of technical difficulty. The course focuses on the design of a rigorous impact evaluation rather than on statistical or econometric analysis. The module is not only designed for researchers interested in conducting impact evaluations, but also for those interested in overseeing, commissioning or studying impact evaluations conducted by other researchers.

The Policy Actor Component

This training offers policy actors and policy researchers a unique opportunity to develop their capacity to appreciate research and data, and to discern and judge the quality and utility of research and data for policy. It is also aimed at helping them create awareness of importance of research and data for policy. The training is made up of the following modules:

Contemporary Political Economy Analysis

This course introduces participants to contemporary political economy analysis (PEA), and to the research methods that can help them practise it.

The course employs a case-based pedagogy, aiming for a dynamic, experiential and participatory approach to the materials. Participants are acquainted with some key PEA approaches through the core components of the research design process and its applicability to studies on political economy.

Informed Research Consumers

This module seeks to help policy actors distinguish between good and bad research. It also offers practical experience on how to inject research evidence into policy processes and subsequent enactment.

Research Communication & Engagement

In this course, participants compare their policy experience to the standard model of policy impact of research. We explore an alternative to the Standard Model by mapping out and systematising the group's collective knowledge of the multi-layered sphere of actors, institutions, and processes that shape public policy.

Apart from these modules, PDT continuously develops new training modules that are both relevant and result from demand. Currently PASGR is developing modules on Gendering Social Science Methods, and Basics of Digital Learning and Teaching.

Target audience profile

These courses are designed for:

-  University based academics and researchers;
-  Researchers from think tanks, policy institutes, knowledge producing civil society organizations and governments;
-  Those interested in broadening their knowledge and skills in methodological tools for policy-oriented social science and governance research;
-  Individuals who have a track record of successive research projects as lead or participating researchers; and,
-  PhD students and post-doctoral researchers seeking to enhance their skills in designing research using a multi-method approach relevant to social policy and/or governance.

**Participants are competitively selected after a call for applications.
They come from different African countries**

[Orange highlights, as at September 2016.]



Pedagogy

The courses provide blended high quality short-term training, comprising initial pre-contact online interactions, face-to-face sessions and post-contact online follow up. Cohort sizes are limited to 20-25 participants for effective learning and interaction.

The training follows an alternative pedagogy that uses interactive learner-centred techniques such as group projects, role plays, fieldwork and guided discussions coupled with peer learning. Premium is placed on technology enhanced learning that involves use of an online learning platform and a variety of multi-media materials i.e. electronic case studies, documentaries and animations, to support teaching and learning.

It focuses on a practical and applied methods approach. For the research-centred training, participants come with an identified research problem that they then engage with using the new methods or techniques being taught. Participation emphasises small group learning that includes review and support from the instructors and peers. The goal is to have each participant leave the course with a coherent and clear research project which can provide the basis for a PhD application, doctoral proposal development and field work or a research funding proposal.

Uniqueness

PASGR training is unique in the following ways:

- It is the only social science methods programme that deliberately integrates a suite of inter-disciplinary methods while paying attention to engaging a variety of conceptual and methodological issues;
- Research is engaged from a clear policy-focus and is explicitly problem-based;
- Attention is devoted to explaining the underlying logic of methods and studies are examined from the perspective of the various methods in the suite;
- Participants are encouraged to develop mixed-method strategies for the next steps of their research; and,
- It brings a policy focus that is meant to provide a stronger evidence base for current public policy—an element that is often lacking in most PhD programmes and short-course trainings offered in the region.

Testimonials

"...you people have no idea how the training changed our research work and outputs. It dramatically altered the way we conduct research and write our projects."

Past participant/alumnus

"Some of us professors are complacent. We think because we're professors, we know enough! And so we stop learning. I'm really glad I came for these workshops."

A university professor from Kenya

"...my participation in PASGR's Advanced Research Design redeemed my academic career. The first two days were hard because the module challenged many of my assumptions about research. By the third day the design had become clearer. I want to make sure that all my research is designed for specific social impact. I am done with research for research's sake."

A lecturer from University of Ibadan

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+254 (0) 729 111 031 | +254 (0) 731 000 065

info@pasgr.org | www.pasgr.org