THE PASGR INSTITUTE

DEVELOPING AFRICANS FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL
& GOVERNANCE RESEARCH

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BACKGROUND

ABOUT PASGR

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent non-partisan Pan-African development 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 for knowledge generation and policy uptake;
- Enhancing the institutionalization of a research culture in Africa's universities and research organizations; and
- Coordinate a collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy and a Doctoral programme in Public Policy with universities in Africa.

THE PASGR INSTITUTE

The PASGR Institute enhances individual and institutional research capacity and the utilization of social and public policy research. It works with partners to:

- Design and deliver experiential professional development that builds skills and competencies for policy actors, researchers and academic leaders;

- Deepen delivery partners' institutional capacity to design, deliver and accredit distinctive professional development courses;

- Develop an active community of practice for excellence in social science research;

- Seek and offer fellowships for high quality training and capacity building.

OUR APPROACH

We have a suite of high level professional development courses for active and committed researchers and policy actors. The courses are designed to be adaptable for different research and policy audiences and is especially effective when bringing together participants from different organizations and disciplinary backgrounds.

Our 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 redesigned and reviewed using lessons and experiences obtained in the course of previous training for currency and relevance.

All courses have been reconfigured for blended learning delivery.

The training has two components:

(I)THE RESEARCHER-CENTERED COMPONENT

This training offers post-graduate students, doctoral candidates and early to mid-career social science researchers, activists and faculty a substantial opportunity to update and upgrade their skills in social science methods. Participants are walked through each phase and dimension of designing rigorous social science research.

It consists of a suite of twelve modules that are designed to provide alternative and innovative approaches to engaging with a research problem. The first four modules are foundational and introduce the theoretical and practical issues involved in the design and successful execution of a policy-engaged research project. They constitute the Advanced Research Design (ARD) course. 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.

(II) THE POLICY ACTOR COMPONENT

This training offers policy actors, activists 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.

Appendix 1 provides description of all the modules.

UNIQUENESS OF OUR COURSES

A key feature of our courses is the innovation in design and delivery of the programme, aimed at enriching learners' experience and maximizing impact and reach. This has been achieved through different approaches, they are:

1

PASGR's innovative pedagogy (PedaL) that is problem-based, utilizing interactive learner-centered techniques and Technology Enhanced Learning that provide exceptional learning moments for learners. All courses are configured for blended delivery.

2

A quality assurance mechanism that ensures that each training is different from the previous in terms of content and delivery

3

A committed team of highly motivated body of instructors involved in a continuous process of innovating to keep the programme current and relevant.

TESTIMONIALS

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PASGR offers excellent research method training which no serious researcher should miss. After undergoing the intensive training, I put what I learned in practice. The results were awesome and amazing. I have successfully written several grant proposals and got funding for one as the principle investigator. I have managed to write 3 book chapters for different books. One has already been published...My Gender project students ...were last year semester 2, 2016/17 rated as the best performed by the external examiner...Going by the above achievements, I can attest that PASGR offers practical skills and enhance dons' capacity to compete favorably in grants proposal writing and consultancy.

– KENYATTA UNIVERSITY LECTURER

"

Coming from a country that is devastated by civil war with limited educational facilities, I count myself lucky to have had the opportunity to attend three Advanced research method modules with PASGR . They were instrumental in reshaping my thoughts about research and increased my interest to learn more. In particular, the training increased my analytical abilities in the review of research and policy orientated papers, the use of multi- method approaches in research and survey, formation of clear and focused research questions. The networking experience and opportunity gained is an additional asset.

– GENDER ADVISOR, SOUTH SUDAN

"

As a Public Health Consultant, who is involved in designing interventions and evaluations, the training I have received from PASGR has enabled me design coherent, policy relevant research especially when designing evaluation tools. While applying for my PhD in Global Health Policy, I used the training and experiences from PASGR (the trainings are hands-on and you review actual concept papers to guide the research). I have received offer letters from 3 UK universities.

– PROGRAMME EVALUATOR
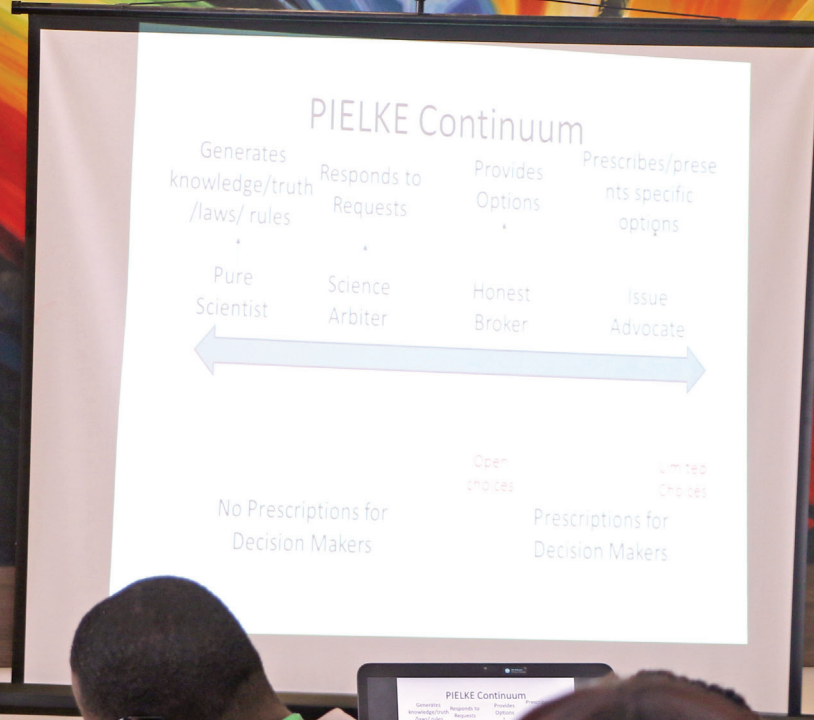
APPENDICES

RESEARCH MODULES

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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 and the empirical phenomena of their research concern by questioning widely accepted definitions of the problem, the categories or techniques used for its analysis, and the interpretations possible.

The module's second goal is to teach participants to turn ideas or assumptions into researchable questions. This involves making explicit not only one's own possible explanations or hypothesis, but also rival ones that exist in literature, or circulated through other media. An important part of this process is explicitly and carefully defining the key concepts in a study. The third goal is to introduce participants to advances in concept formation and illustrate how concepts can be modified, redefined, or created to capture with great accuracy 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 paradigm and its practical reach for policy engaged research.

It examines the basic assumptions of the mixed method tradition and its fundamental principles. The module further discusses processes of mixing and sequencing of methods within a mixed method research design.

The final sessions of the module provide hands-on opportunity for participants to critique selected mixed method studies while building skills to be able to apply the insight gained into working towards their own mixed method research.

3. CRITICAL POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Researchers engaged in policy-related work stand to benefit if they involve policy actors in the various stages of their research project, interest policy actors in the work they are doing and solicit feedback from them to enrich the research design.

This module aims to enhance the capacity of researchers to strengthen their relationship with research policy actors in order to improve on their research design and the chances that their findings will be used to influence 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, instruments, design, data and findings and equips them with skills to discern the most important message(s) they want to communicate to the relevant policy actors at critical moments in the research process.

4. RESEARCH ETHICS

What is the most important consideration in social science research? Ethics is. While a lot of emphasis has been laid on the importance of appropriate research methodology for validity and reliability of social science research findings, the ethical aspects of research practice has not been given adequate attention. Yet, valid and reliable methodology does turn out to be a danger to humanity in the absence of ethical practice: the essence of social research, as of all research, is to improve human life and any research that causes harm to human persons would not be justified. Indeed, bad science is bad ethics. This course is designed to (re)introduce both novices and experienced research practitioners to the theory and application of the three universal basic principles of research ethics: Respect for human persons, beneficence/non-maleficence, and justice. Further, participants will demonstrate appreciation of the negative implications of research misconduct (including plagiarism ad academic fraud) and demonstrate how to avoid these acts of misconduct.

Participatory teaching and learning methods will allow participants to learn and teach at the same time. By the end of this course, participants will possess a firm grasp of the importance of ethics in social research and the implications of research misconduct, and as well demonstrate skills in application of the universal principles of research ethics in specific contexts.

5. SURVEY DESIGN & EXECUTION

Designing an effective survey, one that captures what you are after, is an art. Moving from general hypotheses and research questions to specific and measurable concepts, and then to simple questions interviewees can understand and answer, is far from straight forward. 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. If done well, surveys let us find out what is going on with large groups of people in order to make generalization. For policy actors who want to tackle major social issues surveys can be a powerful tool. But it is easy to get surveys 'wrong' and produce unreliable data. That can lead to poor evidence for public policy. This module provides step by step guidance to designing and executing effective surveys, and how survey data is analysed.

6. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

Strategies for causal assessment in Small-N analysis are distinct from those in large-N quantitative studies. Causal inference plays an important role in generating evidence-based research that can influence policy decisions. Small N- research hinges on the criteria used for selecting cases thus this module examines different comparative case study designs and the types of causal claims and interpretive analysis they allow. It covers different strategies for defining what constitutes "a case" and for locating the case within a larger universe of phenomena. The module also explores how case study research contributes to theory development and concept formation.

Approaches such as quasi experimental template for case selection, how to address issues of validity, selection bias and the representativeness of cases are discussed.

7. 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, 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. 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 ethnography and anthropology; 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 will also practice coding and analyzing the data generated by these techniques.

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

8. SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Social network analysis is an analytical approach that allows researchers to analyse patterns of relations 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. Any research problem where relationships are important may benefit from social network analysis. In this course you will be introduced to the theoretical foundations and research methods used in social network analysis. The course will also explore the usefulness of social network analysis for the study of governance and public policy.

9. APPLIED QUANTITATIVE METHODS

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.

10. 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; Climate Change Adaption; etc. are used. The module will have three components: (1) Theory and practice of action research: exploring the literature on action research, its conceptual underpinnings and different models; (2) Case Studies of action research; (3) A live action research workshop where participants carry out a systemic action research process and collectively analyse it.

1. INFORMED RESEARCH CONSUMERS

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

2.CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS

Contemporary Political Economy Analysis approach has been gaining strength in academic and policy-oriented research, and is increasingly being promoted as a tool to improve public policy and programming. This course provides participants an introduction to contemporary political economy analysis (PEA), and to the research methods that can help you practice it. The course will employ a case-based pedagogy, aiming for a dynamic, experiential and participatory approach to the materials. This is aimed at familiarizing trainees with some key PEA approaches through introducing participants to the core components of the research design process and its applicability to studies on political economy.

3.GENDER AND PUBLIC POLICY TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA: UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE

This course aims at transforming both the understanding and practice of public policy in Africa by integrating gender dimensions in the policy process. The focus is on Gender Considerations in the Policy Cycle such as voice and agency in the Policy Process, equity and justice, participation, accountability and integrity. It looks at the historical process of policy making, theoretical perspectives of gender and policy formation, and then covers specific thematic and sectoral focus areas i.e. Public Finance, including budgeting, procurement, taxation and borrowing/debt, peace & conflict, climate change, citizenship and civic space (especially women, governance & leadership), among others.

1. IMPACT EVALUATION FOR POLICY

This module teaches elements of impact evaluation methods of welfare programmes in developing countries. It is designed for a mixed audience and is presented at a low-medium level of technical difficulty. The focus of the module is 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.

2. ENGENDERING SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS

What may a man do that a woman may not do and what may a woman do that a man may not do? This is a question on gender, a fundamental category in human life in society. Gender influences how men and women think, speak and act. Social research investigates human behaviour in society: how humans behave, when, and why. Understanding gender is therefore imperative to effectively understanding the social world. Therefore, all social science research should be gender sensitive.

This module emphasizes the need for rigorous mixed research methods and provides a step by step hands-on implementation of gender-sensitive data collection and data analysis. Ethnography and survey will be used to illustrate this. The module also examines issues in social research ethics and policy-engaged research with particular focus on gender analysis. Through a combination of presentations, applied learning (practical experience in field or simulated in class), role play, case studies, group work and feedback, participants will appreciate how to engender their research projects for gender sensitive evidence-based policy. By the end of this module delivery, participants will demonstrate knowledge and skills to interrogate macro and micro power structures from a gender and intersectional perspective, and demonstrate the use of basic tools to critically incorporate these approaches in their own social science research and policy work. It is assumed that participants taking the module will be a mixed audience comprising both novices and experts in gender-sensitive policy-engaged social research and practice. Through the participatory exercises, synergies will be developed for optimal learning across both groups.

3. WRITING SCHOLARLY PAPERS

This course is designed to help researchers gain new insights and strengthen their skills in writing, preparing and refining their scholarly paper to be a worthy article for publication in top journals. It takes a blended approach with an online introductory pre-workshop phase that helps refine draft papers with support and guidance of facilitators, followed by a write-shop and a post-workshop phase for follow up and mentorship.

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