# Advice on Policy Engagement for Research

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# Motivation for policy engagement

1. Instrumental reasons

2. Enable good research

3. Produce policy impact

# We will cover

1. Leverage interpersonal skills to support policy engagement

2. Structure and organize a productive engagement/collaboration

3. Why and how to influence policy

# Pasteur's quadrant
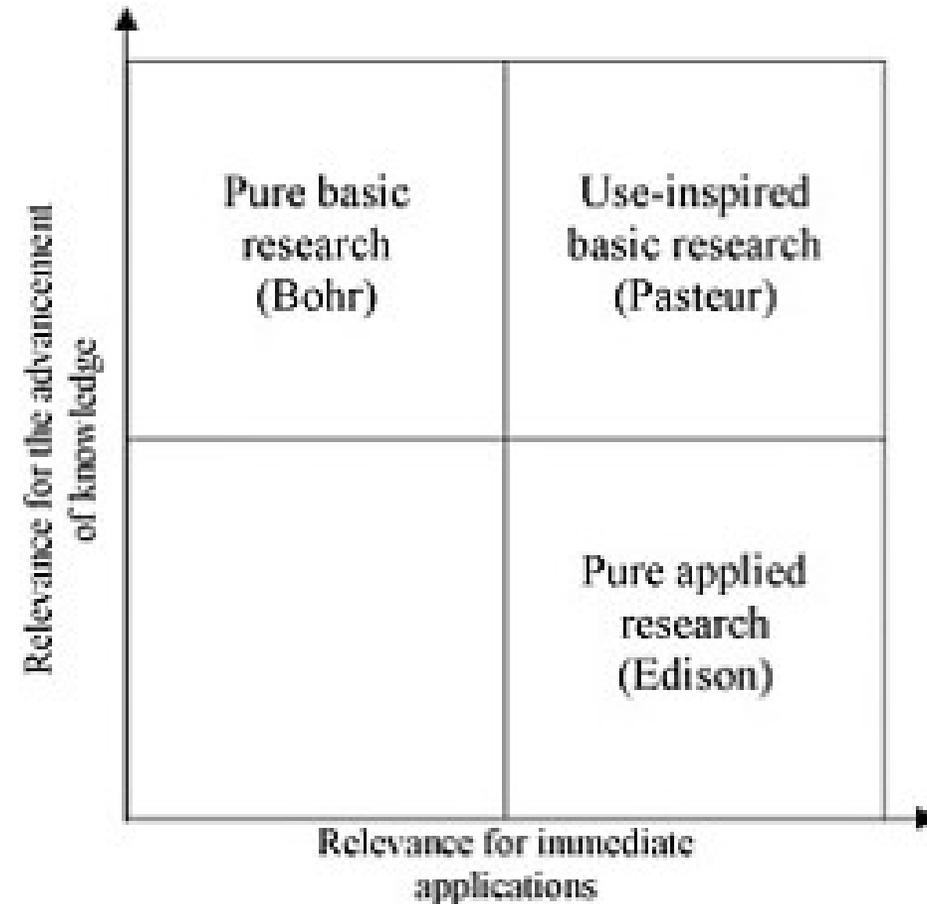
# Skills for policy engagement

- Communication and persuasion skills

- Organizational skills to structure and sustain an engagement

- Policy influencing skills (e.g. thought leadership, negotiation, coalition-building)

# Effective communication with policy actors

- establish your credibility
  - be honest – do no harm
  - find your voice

- start with their decision problem
  - highlight your value add

- talk to them
  - give examples
  - keep it simple

- focus on action points
  - avoid diversion
  - summarize

# How to develop these skills

- Thee are acquired skills which can be learnt
  - Benchmark, set goals, monitor, get independent view, learn

- Practice – active learning
  - Role play
    - deliver a 2 minute elevator pitch to your interlocutor/authoriser
    - incorporate shocks

- Learn from failures

# 2. Collaboration – why is it needed

- Enable good research
  - non-experimental
  - experimental

- Enable long-term partnerships
  - reduce transaction costs and uncertainty
  - create feedback loops

- Influence policy

# Addressing challenges to research-policy collaboration

- Value of analytics not clear

- Obsession with "big picture" (fix big problems first)

- World changing constantly

- Partisanship

- Mismatch of horizons and incentives

# Building partnerships

- Initiate collaboration
  - Focus but be flexible on the question
  - Find a promising entry point
  - Address horizon and incentive mismatch as much as possible
  - Build credibility over time

- Leverage Champions and Coalition
  - Stakeholder mapping

- Formalizing the partnership
  - Standard practices - anonymization
  - IRB and ethics approvals, MoUs and publication rights

# Sustaining partnerships

- Relationship management
    - Embedded
    - Honesty
    - Sustaining a partnership
        - Managing shocks
        - Coalition-building
        - Creating value – secondary by-products

- Negotiation, coalition-building and management skills

# Aside: Policy Influence and Grants

- Policy influencing increasingly important for donors, other actors

- Focus on the funder's objective function

- Match the macro ('big picture') with micro perspective

- Explore pathways of impact – Policy Influencing Plans/Reports

- Create compelling narratives

# Policy Influence Vision

- Addressing market failure in generation and use of knowledge/evidence

- Integrating supply and demand for research
  - Policy influencing becomes endogenous to the supply of research

- The African perspective!

# Policy Influencing

- Nature of engagement
  - Ex ante, Long-term relationship

- Leveraging policy windows
  - Focal points and policy entrepreneurs

- Building state capabilities
  - Organizational capacities, incentives, norms and culture

- Politics
  - issue bias and political bias

# Evidence and policy influencing

- Shaping research-policy environment and influencing thinking
  - building a community of researchers
  - building institutions
  - promoting evidence use in policy actors

- Promoting Learning
  - build a culture of evidence
  - create learning states
  - cogenerate knowledge

# Co-generation of Knowledge

**Scientific knowledge**
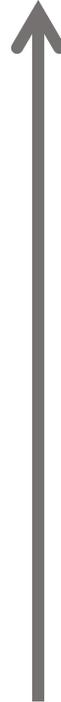
**Coming up with the Questions**

**Feeding into Policy all along the way**

**Feeding back into Research**

Academics   Policy Makers

# Conclusion

- Policy skills are important for productive and impactful research, and can be learned

- Policy skills can help build more promising and impactful research-policy collaborations