



PEP Annual Policy Conference

October 16, 2020

Coproduction of development research: Experience from PEP-supported projects

Knowledge coproduction: Working with research users to increase impact

The traditional model of scientific knowledge generation is evolving. For centuries, the onus was “on scientists alone to identify an issue, carry out the research, and then deliver the knowledge to society”. In recent decades there has been growing acknowledgement, including from the scientific community, that complex problems need broader perspectives to find effective solutions. This is especially true for issues relating to poverty alleviation, inequality, climate change and sustainability. “Researchers and practitioners are now turning to “knowledge coproduction” as a promising approach that can ensure scientific integrity while exploring solutions with those who need them”¹.

Research coproduction is a collaborative research model. Researchers work in partnership with the knowledge users who identify a problem and have the authority or ability to implement the research recommendations.

“By undertaking research with those who will use it, the relevance, usefulness, usability and use of research findings are optimized. For this reason, funders often promote research coproduction as a way to achieve research impact”². Indeed, when researchers have a better understanding of the users’ contexts and needs, the relevance of their findings improves. At the same time, it “increases the users’ understanding of the research process, awareness of the research, and appreciation for how and when it can be applied”².

However, knowledge coproduction is not easy. The practice presents a number of challenges and pitfalls. Even when working towards the same purpose, scientists and policymakers can have very different perspectives on the issues and how to address them. Tensions between the different interests involved can arise throughout coproduced research processes. These frictions may not only affect the research outcomes but can also pose professional and personal risks to the parties involved³. The precise nature and extent of these risks varies significantly, depending on the context.

Discuss and learn from recent PEP experiences

PEP research grant recipients have always been required to actively engage with policy stakeholders, and in 2019 PEP officially adopted the approach of research co-production. Two subsequent calls for proposals from mixed government-research teams were launched. A total of

¹ Blog post by Norstrom A. et al. “Principles for Successful Knowledge Co-production for Sustainability Research” – [online](#).

² Graham I.D., McCutcheon C., Kothari A. Exploring the frontiers of research co-production: The Integrated Knowledge Translation Research Network concept papers. In Health Research Policy and Systems, Vol 17, No: 88 (2019) - [online](#)

³ Oliver, K. Kothari, A., Nays, M. The dark side of coproduction: do the costs outweigh the benefits for health research? In Health Research Policy and Systems, Vol 17, No: 33 (2019) – [online](#).

20 projects, in 13 sub-Saharan African countries, were selected for support under two initiatives⁴ (2019-2021).

Research and government representatives from each these project teams will be invited to present their project findings and outcomes at the PEP Annual Conference in September and October 2020. The conference will be held as an online event due to the COVID-19 restrictions. In this context, PEP will organize a special public (online) event, on October 16 2020, to discuss the experience of the first cohort of PEP research co-producers.

Overall objective

Panellists and participants will aim to identify the conditions needed for successful collaborative research initiatives between local experts and government institutions in developing countries.

The program will feature

- A keynote presentation to review the current state of knowledge regarding the challenges and best practices for research coproduction.
- A panel discussion between representatives of mixed government-research teams supported by PEP in 2019 and 2020.
- An open, moderated, discussion and debate with the audience – see format below.

Details on page 3

Expected outcomes

A better understanding of:

- The complexity involved in harmonizing the distinct objectives and methods involved in the scientific research and policy advisory processes.
- The constraints faced by:
 - Policy advisors when integrating or using scientific evidence to inform the policymaking process.
 - Researchers when trying to address specific policy needs while conducting rigorous scientific research.
- How to adapt the “supply” of research-based evidence to respond to actual policy needs and considerations.
- Potential strategies that both sides can put in place to engage more systematically and collaborate productively with one another

⁴ Strengthening capacity for impact evaluation in East and West Africa – funded by Hewlett Foundation (www.pep-net.org/new-pep-call-eoi-iem-gov-east-west-africa), 3rd funding round of the Policy Analysis on Growth and Employment (PAGE II) initiative, funded by the IDRC of Canada (www.pep-net.org/page-ii-round-3).

Tentative program and format

UTC

- 12:00 – 12:15 **Welcome remarks and official opening**
- [Jane Mariara](#), Executive Director, PEP
 - [Fred Carden](#), Chair of the PEP Board of Directors
 - [Martha Melesse](#), Acting Program Leader, Employment and Growth, IDRC
- 12:15 – 1pm **Keynote presentation - (30 min), Q&A (15 min)**
- [Dr. Anita Kothari](#), Ass. Professor, School of Health Studies, Western University, Canada
 - [David Roger Walugembe](#), PhD Candidate, Health information science, Western University, Canada
- 15 min break
- 1:15 – 2:30 **Panel discussion - Chair/moderator: TBD**
- **Panelists presentations – 30 min:**
 - o [Dr. Binaté Fofana Namizata](#), Advisor, Gender and Research, Ministry of Women, Family and Children, Cote d'Ivoire
 - o [Dr. Sifiso Ntombela](#), Chief Economist, *National Agricultural Marketing Council, South Africa*
 - o [Dr. Chitalu Miriam Chiliba](#), Research Fellow, University of Zambia
 - o [Dr. Francis Mwajjande](#), Senior Lecturer, Public Policy and Social Science Research, Mzumbe University, Tanzania
 - Moderated discussions amongst panelists and keynote speaker – 20 min
 - “Interactive session” – 10 min
 - Open Q&A with the audience – 15 min
- 2:30 – 2:40 **Chair/moderator concludes on key takeaways**
- 2:40 – 2:50 **Concluding remarks from PEP leaders**