



Capacity Building for Think Tanks

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Toward an Innovative Approach to Think Tanks
Management**

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Think Tanks Definition:

A think tank (also called a policy institute) is an organization, institute, corporation, or group that conducts research and engages in advocacy in areas such as social policy, political strategy, economy, science or technology issues, industrial or business policies, or military advice.[1] Many think tanks are non-profit organizations, which some countries such as the US and Canada provide with tax exempt status. While many think tanks are funded by governments, interest groups, or businesses, some think tanks also derive income from consulting or research work related to their mandate.

There are different opinions about think tanks; supporters like the National Institute for Research Advancement hail them as "one of the main policy actors in democratic societies ..., assuring a pluralistic, open and accountable process of policy analysis, research, decision-making and evaluation". Opposing them, critics like SourceWatch have called them "little more than public relations fronts ... generating self-serving scholarship that serves the advocacy goals of their industry sponsors."]

Types of think tanks

Think tanks represent a variety of ideological perspectives. Some think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, are clearly aligned with conservative causes. Others, especially those focused on social and environmental reforms, such as the Tellus Institute, are viewed as clearly liberal. Still others, such as the Cato Institute, promote libertarian social and economic reforms.

A new trend, resulting from globalization, is collaboration between think tanks across continents. For instance, the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, collaborates with Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar for an initiative on West-Islam relations. Also in the area of West-Islam relations, Strategic Foresight Group, a think tank based in India, works closely with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament. The World Economic Forum has created a Council of 100 Leaders on West-Islam relations, which brings together heads of major global think tanks ranging from Oxford Islamic Centre at Oxford University to Strategic Foresight Group, Observer Research Foundation, CASS-India, CSDS, Centre for Policy Research, ETC in Delhi of India and Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

Capacity Building for think tanks:

We can increase the efficiency of think tanks via the following mechanisms:

First: Strategic Planning:

Which means: the process of taking decision about what we need to achieve in the future and how to reach it. We should take into our consideration the current situation and the availability of resources.

The strategic planning has many advantages:

- 1- Encouraging future visions: so we can prepare plans in order to face any challenges that could happened in the future.
- 2- Effective coordination: the strategic plan will help in coordination between the different activities that are related to each other.
- 3- Effective communication: the planning will enhance the communication in between persons that are want to achieve shared goals because planning will clarify this goals and how to achieve it.

Second: Interactive training:

This technique represents anew one and not traditional because it depend upon producing an innovative ideas and using techniques such as: brain storming, and simulation. These techniques proved that they are serious and adopted with changes that happened in international training market.

Third: Social Negotiation Skills:

Negotiation culture depends on a group of golden values in liberty such as: political pluralism, cultural diversity, and acceptance of others. Our world is in need to spread negotiation culture because it considered as a bridge of communication between human in which negotiation concentrates on 3 dimensions: power (visible and invisible) available information, available time.

Fourth: Networking: (using information networking):

This term is considered as a result of globalization phenomenon, it's the output of technological revolution in information and communication field. We mean by networking: we should gain from information networks in building a shared data base for think tanks concerns.

Fifth: Civic Education:

Civic Education becomes necessary because of globalization and its impact on the national sovereignty of states, the erosion of boundaries and vulnerability of educational and economical systems under the pressures of global market unification and American hegemony. As a result all of above

mentioned challenges, the response will be to protect cultural specialty by civic education.

Sixth: Crisis Management:

Crisis management is visible, visual, ethical and spiritual management. It is managing the continuous interaction which related to Quality of life and managing development whether for states or for organization according to the level in which this management operates.

Seventh: Future Studies:

Future studies are representing a new branch of social science because of its importance, so there are research centers in Egypt which specialized in this branch of social science.

Eighths: Public policy analysis:

(Scientific guide for public policy)

How do we make policy?

How do we implement policy?

Policy evaluation

Ninths: Six thinking Hats:

Dr. Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats approach is a popular discussion tool in groups ranging from elementary schools to some of the world's largest corporations (e.g. Prudential Insurance, IBM, Federal Express, British Airways, Polaroid, Pepsico, DuPont, and the huge Nippon Telephone and Telegraph).

The six "hats" represent six approaches to solving a problem. The hats should be used proactively rather than reactively. A key point is that a hat is an approach to thinking rather than a label for thinking.

The thinker can put on or take off one of the six hats to indicate what approach they will take. Changing hats is important to the process. When used in a group, more than one person may wear the same hat at the same time. It is essential for a speaker to identify which hat they are wearing prior to speaking.

- White hat (neutral, objective): Hard data. Facts and figures. Questions/suggestions about what data to collect.
- Red hat (emotional, intuitive): Hunches. Feelings. Unsubstantiated “soft” data. Emotional stuff (e.g. discussing something that makes the discussion participant angry, etc.)
- Black hat (logical negative): Criticism. Caution. Rationale for not doing something, why it may go wrong, legal limits, etc.
- Yellow hat (logical positive): Benefits. Advantages. Savings. Optimism.
- Green hat (creative): Proposals, suggestions, ideas, alternatives, provocations, what is interesting in an idea.
- Blue hat (meta-hat): Control, organization of the discussion process and use of the other hats. Blue hat use can suggest a particular structure to a discussion ("2 minutes of white hat, then 5 minutes of yellow, then..."). Or on-the-fly stuff - "we seem to be spending much more time on red hat than I expected - anyone else agrees?" Blue hat can also be used for conclusions.

Tenth: Measures of Globalization Pattern:

And this will contain:

- 1- Human development
- 2- Competitiveness
- 3- Quality of life
- 4- Corruption perception
- 5- The ability of state to perform its functions
- 6- Doing business
- 7- Information technology
- 8- Attractiveness for tourism and travel.