Partnering with Higher Education Institutions for Development Research:

Reflections from LASER PULSE

Yuehwern Yih, Ph.D
Academic Director, LASER PULSE
Professor, School of Industrial Engineering
Purdue University
The Urgent Need for Smarter Development - Research and evidence-based development to optimize the cost effectiveness and sustain system change

Source: Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020, PovcalNet - Note: Extreme poverty is measured as the number of people living on less than $1.90 per day. 2017 is the last year with official global poverty estimates. Regional nowcasts can be found here: https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/4517134/
Underlying Partnership Theory

Why academic-practitioner collaborations matter?

There is higher potential for the co-produced research to be relevant for practitioners to utilize/implement in practice or policy making.

There will be a higher likelihood for future collaborations, potentially influencing sustainability (Roper, 2002).
LASER PULSE

Convene and catalyze a global network of universities, local government, non-government organizations, and private sector for research-driven practical solutions to critical development challenges
Closer collaboration between academic researchers, development practitioners, policymakers, and donors results in new research that is readily translated into useful policies, products, and practices as evidence-based solutions to development challenges.
We operate in different worlds/views

- Terminology
- Work culture
- Timeline
- Communication
- Process/Procedure
- Ethics
- Priority
- Value
- Etc.

(a) academics
(b) practitioners
Delivering practical, research-driven solutions to global development challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Barriers:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Top Barriers:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. committing time and effort needed for ongoing collaboration</td>
<td>1. managing competing priorities and commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. managing competing priorities and commitments</td>
<td>2. managing differences in culture and values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Critical Success Factors:**

- Communication
- Trust and respect
- Planning, alignment & understanding
- Funding & Commitment
- Flexibility (of researchers)
- Stakeholder Engagement and Understanding Local Context
Q: Given the right circumstance, on a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to collaborate with counterpart in the future?
Academics perceive higher level of practitioner’s participation in research activities than how practitioners perceive their own involvement.

Academics perceive higher relevance of research outputs produced compared to practitioners.
Collaborative Development Research

Practitioner’s Involvement in research activities

Practitioner’s perceived Relevance of research products

Future collaboration
Process Map of Research

1. Development of research questions
2. Development of research design
3. Conducting data collection
4. Development of IRB
5. Participate as research subject
6. Data analysis
7. Dissemination of research outcomes
8. Development of research products
Inclusive & collaborative research process

To involve practitioners in each activity from start-to-finish throughout the research life cycle:

a. Reduce power imbalance between academics and practitioners
b. Co-produce research outputs that are relevant and useful for practitioners.
c. Academics being more flexible
d. Incorporate stakeholder engagement and contextual research design
LASER PULSE Efforts Towards Effective Academics-Practitioners Collaborations

LASER PULSE’s Embedded Research Translation Model is an iterative co-design process among academics, development practitioners and stakeholders where research is performed with the intent for use in evidence-based practice or policy making.

For more information, please visit: Laserpulse.org
Observations

- Expectation of “co-creation” process
- Right question ≠ Right research question
- Partners vs stakeholders
- Research translation
  - Translation products – production requires other supports
  - Target audience – non-academics
  - “So what” question – methods → data analysis → results → findings → ?
Smart Development

Individual

Team

Institution

Delivering practical, research-driven solutions to global development challenges
laserpulse.org
Recommendations - Institution

- Infrastructure to support development research
- Alignment of Incentive/recognition/promotion
- Ungated knowledge (open access)
Recommendations – Project team

• SWOT analysis in teaming based on success factors
• Creating a plan to optimize the success factors
• Operationalizing and executing the plan of collaborative approach (ERT)
  • Understanding research user’s journey map (transparency in decision-making process) - who, where, when, how
  • Complex problems → complicated answers
Recommendations - Individual

• Assess and continue to learn about our own blind spots and biases
• Open minded for continuous learning and improvement
• Commit to the problem/community, not to the solution/technology
Give special thanks to

- Priyanka Brunese
- Pallavi Gupta
- Ann Bessenbacher
- Min Lee
- Arvind Raman
- Margaret Henning
Thank You!

Questions?

Contact:
Dr. Yuehwern Yih: yih@purdue.edu