

# Recap: Day 3

SCHOOL FOR THINK TANKERS 2021

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# Discussion on Credibility

- ▶ Credibility is paramount to a think tank. It qualifies think tanks to be consulted on and invited to participate in policy processes. It makes them attractive to funders. Promotes engagement with the media as experts in their field; and facilitates access to reputable networks
- ▶ Main issue : What exactly is credibility? How do people assess it? What signals credibility to a think tank's stakeholders?
- ▶ Credibility as the believability of a communicator, determined by how the receiver evaluates its expertise and trustworthiness. Credibility is ultimately equated with believability. But, what makes someone or something believable varies, and depends on who is making the assessment. Context also plays an important role and can make some pieces of information more salient than others, affecting the assessment. Credibility is constructed by the interaction of the qualities and current circumstances of an organisation and someone who awards it.
- ▶ Salient questions discussed:
  1. Credibility is about the methods they use are scientific
  2. Credibility is about the reputation of an organisation
  3. Integrity: the motives. There is a lot of information, but you cannot analyse it. Who do the policy makers trust? who are the assessors of what is credible? It is always likely to skew towards power and vested interests
  4. Who has authority and who is giving authority?
  5. Independence, what issues you have control over, transparent you are with sources, expertise, how can you build trust,
  6. Gatekeepers of credibility and how does the organization break them



# Assessment of Credibility

- ▶ **Networks.** Connections, alliances, and affiliations that an organisation and its staff and board have.
- ▶ **Impact.** Any effect that a policy research centre has had on policy, practice, media, or academia.
- ▶ **Intellectual independence.** Independence on deciding their research agenda, methods, and actions an organisation undertakes.
- ▶ **Transparency.** Publicly disclosing funding sources, agenda, affiliations, partnerships, and conflicts of interests.
- ▶ **Credentials and expertise.** Collected expertise and qualifications that a think tank and its staff have.
- ▶ **Communications and visibility.** How and how often the think tank communicates with its stakeholders.
- ▶ **Research quality.** Following research guidelines to produce policy relevant research in which the quality is assured.
- ▶ **Ideology and values.** Ideology and values are the set of ideas and values that guide an individual or organisation.
- ▶ **Current context.** The current setting in which a think tank and its stakeholders are immersed.

# Papers on Credibility

- ▶ Whom Do Bureaucrats Believe? A Randomized Controlled Experiment Testing Perceptions of Credibility of Policy Research (May 2016, [Policy Studies Journal](#))
- ▶ Conclusion: The experimental findings lend evidence to the hypothesis that academic research is perceived to be substantially more credible than think tank or advocacy organization research, regardless of its content
- ▶ NewsGuard rates news and information websites based on nine journalistic criteria. The criteria assess basic practices of credibility and transparency.
- ▶ 0-100 trust score, indicating its credibility

# Transparency of Think Tanks

- ▶ Transparency is an essential requirement for policy processes as it allows citizens to know who influences who, how, and with what means.
- ▶ **Transparify**—an initiative that provides a global rating of the financial transparency of major think tanks and policy-relevant non-profit organizations
- ▶ In early 2017, Transparify conducted a workshop for thinktankers on how to manage reputational risks. Based on that workshop the tool was created: The Transparify Think Tank Integrity Check
- ▶ Situation based questions Checklist on Reputational risks
- ▶ Areas included:
  1. Compromise think tank's intellectual independence and integrity
  2. Presence of Systems, safeguards and processes to mitigate, monitor and manage all associated risks
  3. Compliance of staff and other collaborators aware