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## LINKING RESEARCH TO POLICY: THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK AS KNOWLEDGE BROKER

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AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

# **Linking Research to Policy: The African Development Bank as Knowledge Broker**

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## ABSTRACT

*The Medium Term Strategy (2008-2012) of the African Development Bank is seeking to position the institution to become the preferred development partner in Africa. Apart from providing development finance, the Bank is uniquely positioned and has the convening power to play a catalytic role in providing policy advice to Regional Member Countries (RMCs) by conducting high quality evidence based research and leveraging policy-relevant innovative knowledge that are aligned to the Bank's priority areas of operational policies and programs to generate a deeper understanding of the development challenges facing the continent.*

*The African Development Bank engages with RMCs at both the project and policy level and is well positioned to be a Knowledge Broker by linking different entities or individuals that otherwise would not have a relationship and have them connected to share and exchange*

*knowledge for development and structural transformation of African economies. The Bank possesses all the essential knowledge brokering characteristics in African policy space such as trustworthiness, credibility, political neutrality and subject expertise to take on this role.*

*This paper highlights areas of bridging the gap between research and development policy and practice and discusses some pertinent issues and relevant roles as well as the Bank's comparative advantage as a "Knowledge Broker" as it mainstreams knowledge management strategy to institutionalize knowledge and learning culture in the Bank by strengthening partnerships with National think tanks and policy research institutions that will facilitate knowledge creation, knowledge generation, knowledge management and knowledge utilization that anchors ownership at the country level .*

There is nothing a government hates more than to be well informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.

**John Maynard Keynes**

## **I. Introduction**

Since 2006, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has been positioning itself as a regional Bank for knowledge and ideas on African development. For the Bank, this will imply more creative use of knowledge products than previously to promote sustainable economic transformation and growth as well as reduce poverty in Africa.

As discussed in the Bank's Medium Term Strategy Plan 2008-2012 as well as the Bank's Knowledge Management and Development Strategy 2008-2012 and the Regional Integration Strategy 2009-2012 and the Capacity Development Strategy (2010-2014), the Bank is seeking to become the preferred development partner in Africa. The Bank is uniquely positioned and has the convening power to play a catalytic role in providing policy advice to Regional Member Countries (RMCs) by conducting high quality research and leveraging policy relevant innovative knowledge that are aligned to the Bank's priority areas of operational policies and programs to generate a deeper understanding of the development challenges facing the continent.

To enhance the Bank's operational effectiveness and efficiency, more and better quality economic and sector work and evidence based policy research and analysis in the development process will be required for research to inform policy. This can be facilitated by enhancing and mobilizing knowledge services both internally within the Bank and externally from networks of

African and non African institutions and think tanks. The Bank as a “Knowledge Broker” can actively translate, disseminate and share information to key stakeholders to provide timely and relevant advice to clients to complement its traditional lending activities.

This paper highlights areas of bridging the gap between research and development policy and practice and discusses some pertinent issues and relevant role for the Bank as a “Knowledge Broker” as it mainstreams its knowledge management strategy to institutionalize a knowledge and learning culture in the Bank. The structure of the paper is as follows. Section II explores the link between research and policy. Section III presents an analytical framework that has been used to analyze the link between research and policy. Section IV discusses the catalytic role of the AfDB as a knowledge broker and Section V discusses the different functions that the AfDB can play and Section VI discusses AfDB as a voice and knowledge platform for Africa and Section VII concludes the discussion.

## **II**     **Why Research to Policy?**

*African decision makers like other decision-makers across the world need to base their decisions on information from reliable sources. They need to learn from the best knowledge and experience available and they need to know what kinds of research could help them make the right choices.*

The impact of development research on policy action cannot be assumed but has to be consciously and concertedly developed. In the last few years, a number of development organisations have instituted research programs aimed at improving the linkages between

research and policy and to gain a better understanding of how research can contribute to pro-poor policies and improve the use of evidence in development policy and practice<sup>2</sup>. The AfDB does not have to reinvent the wheel and can leverage on the foundations of these studies which provide useful leads and evidence on the linkages between research to policy to practice to people (R2P3).

The idea of creating a direct link between research and policy is still controversial. Many researchers feel quite strongly that research should not be limited to or directed by the demands of society, but that more is accomplished when research is unfettered and free to follow its own discourse. All too often, however, research projects do not result in policy change, because they do not take into account the complex realities of a country or a sector and fail to involve the main stakeholders in the research process. Yet, better utilization of research and evidence in development policy and practice can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. (Court and Young, 2006).

In Africa, a wide gap exists between the producers and consumers of knowledge, and research could have a greater impact on development policy than it has had to date. Researchers as “knowledge makers” cannot understand why there is resistance to policy change despite clear and convincing evidence. Policymakers as “knowledge consumers” bemoan the inability of many researchers to make their findings accessible and digestible in time for policy decisions.

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<sup>2</sup>[www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)- strategic evaluation of IDRC supported research on public policy ;[www.gdnnet.org](http://www.gdnnet.org) – 3 year research program to explore research policy linkages;ODI’s Research And Policy In Development program ([www.odi.org.uk/rapid](http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid)); [www.research4development.info](http://www.research4development.info) and [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org) impact assessment; .

The World Bank in a recent publication on Research for Development (World Bank, 2010) highlighted that many researchers do not start with the key knowledge gaps facing development practitioners but rather search for questions they can answer with the field's current tools. The core problem in the research to policy gap is that despite the impressive set of data and analytical tools now available, it is not sufficiently anchored to the most pressing questions facing developing country leaders, advisers and investors. The WB paper advocates for a more strategic approach that is firmly grounded in key knowledge gaps for development policy. Looking forward it is the policy questions that should drive the research agenda, and not the researcher's disciplinary background or favourite method. Applying to policy and practice what is already known from research and analysis can close the know-do gap in Africa thereby enabling policies and interventions that reflect best possible current state of knowledge.

There are a number of gaps between research and policy that must be bridged such as (i): Limited policy relevant research; (ii) Insufficient access to research; (iii) Ineffective communication by researchers; (iv) An under-emphasised but very important area is the limited understanding by policy makers, politicians and incapacity of overstretched bureaucrats to absorb research and (v) improving the demand for evidence in a systematic and rigorous way.

The 2008 Research Strategy of DFID states that the critical issue for the future is how to improve researchers effectiveness in producing output that directly and indirectly change both policy and practice and truly relevant to poor people's needs and are effectively taken up. The strategy required DFID to commit a greater proportion of its resources to promoting the use and uptake of research in order to influence policy, an example that should be emulated by other development partners.

One clear conclusion is that there is no linear trajectory from research to policy outcome, and no single actor in that trajectory can determine a particular policy outcome. Each of the actors and institutions has a role to play and their relationships with each other are key to ensuring a successful outcome.

Knowledge creation is about undertaking policy research to generate state-of-the-art knowledge on leading development challenges facing RMCs, in order to inform policy makers and development partners within and outside the region. There are a number of activities that can facilitate the process of incorporating knowledge in policy:- communication, translation, interaction and exchange, using social influence and intermediaries.

Achieving increased relevance also requires a time-consuming commitment to approaching public and private officials and to developing relationships based on trust and reliability in the delivery of quality output that is timely and easily understandable to laypersons. Indeed, researchers are often criticised for producing lengthy reports in a language that is inaccessible to decision-makers. Even with the best of intentions, however, researchers' efforts may be stifled by governments' institutional cultures of secrecy and politically-motivated distrust of nationals who often play an active role in politics or whose political leanings are not evident. As a result, policy-makers may unwillingly deprive themselves of the services of experienced researchers when dealing with critical, yet sensitive issues, for which they may be ill prepared to tackle alone.

### **III. Research into Policy: context, evidence, linkages**

Policy processes are complex, multidimensional and unpredictable and there is an urgent need to find mechanisms to promote the use of research-based and other forms of evidence in development policy. If more were understood about the context within which researchers, policy makers and stakeholders are working, if the links between them were improved, and if high-quality research were disseminated more effectively, then better policy making might follow. Policy makers could make more constructive use of research and researchers could communicate their findings more effectively to influence policy (Court and Young; 2006).

There has been growing interest in evidence-based policy making and in how research influences policy in developing country context.<sup>3</sup> The World Bank (2010) advocates for a more open and strategic approach to research that is firmly grounded in the key knowledge gaps for development policy emerging from the experience of developing countries including questions that policy makers in these countries ask.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has been investigating the process of research uptake into policy and practice and they developed a wide range of inter-related factors which determine whether research based and other forms of evidence are likely to be adopted by policymakers and practitioners. They developed a simple analytical framework and practical tools that bridges the research policy gap, (Court, Hovland and Young, 2004). The ODI study attempted to address the complex question of “why are some of the ideas that circulate in the research/policy network picked up and acted on, while others are ignored and disappear”.

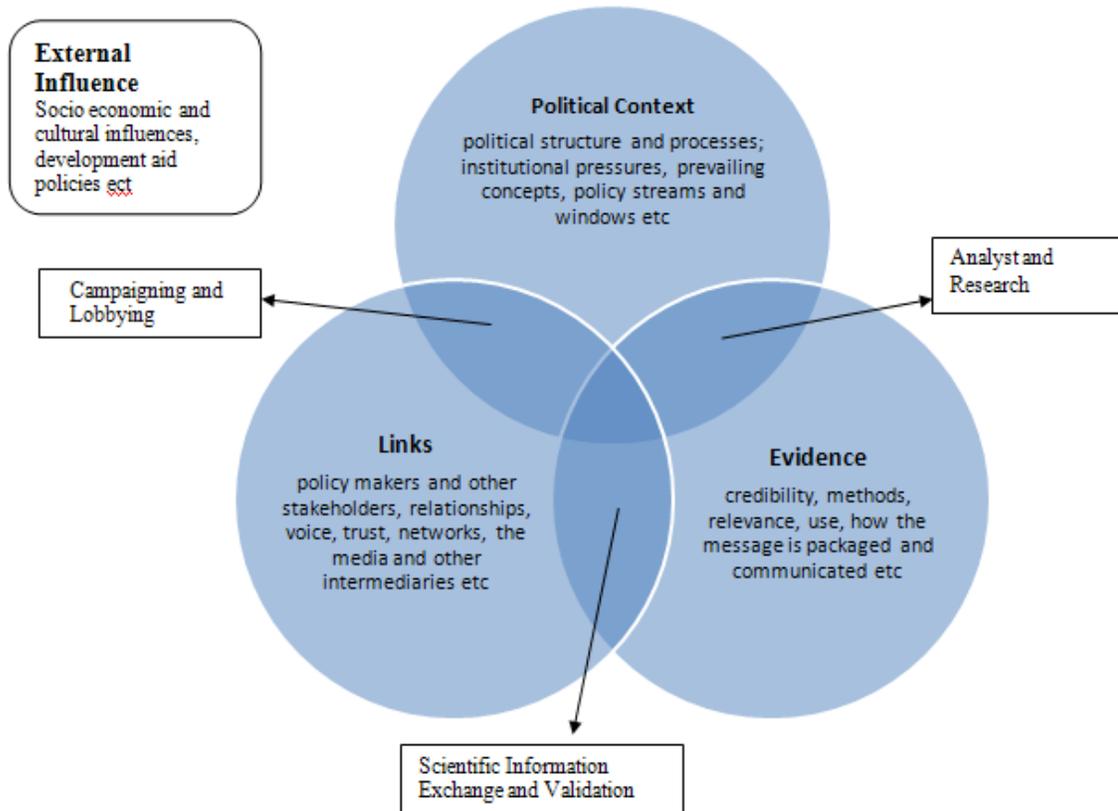
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<sup>3</sup> [www.research4development.info](http://www.research4development.info)

The ODI Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) framework looks at factors that contribute to, or limit, the roles that the different stakeholders play in the process, (Court and Cotterrell 2006; Crewe and Young, 2002).

Panos Institute (2010) used this framework to look at the media's capacity in developing countries to generate public debates using research to influence policy outcomes. These factors can broadly be divided into three overlapping areas (Court et al 2004): the political context; the evidence; and the links between policy and research communities; within a fourth set of factors: the external context. The interplay of these four areas is laid out in Figure 1 and Table 2. The framework should be seen as a generic perhaps ideal explanatory model. In some cases there will not be much overlap between the different spheres and in others the overlap may vary considerably. Yet, it provides clear and flexible guidance as to what researchers need to know, what they need to do and how they should go about it.

**Figure 1: The RAPID Framework— Context, Evidence and Links**



**Source: Overseas Development Institute: (Court et al, 2004)**

**Political context: politics and institutions**

Research-policy links are dramatically shaped by the political context. The political and institutional contract is the most important factor affecting how and why research is taken up by policymakers<sup>4</sup>. The key influencing factors include the extent of civil and political freedom, political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests and the attitudes, receptiveness and incentives among officials and power relationships. More open democratic political systems

<sup>4</sup> [www.panos.org.uk/relay](http://www.panos.org.uk/relay)

in general support evidence-based policy making because democracies imply greater accountability of government and therefore a greater incentive to improve policy and performance.

Democratic context also imply the existence of more open entry points into the policy process, and therefore there are fewer constraints on communications. The degree of representativeness of government is important in determining the likelihood that research will be taken up to influence policy debates and outcomes. In contrast autocratic regimes often tend to limit the gathering and communication of evidence and have weak accountability mechanisms.

**Evidence: credibility and communication**

Evidence including the quality of research is important for policy uptake. A critical issue affecting uptake is whether research has provided a solution to a problem. The other set of issues concern communication. Packaging of the research results for communication to different audiences is an important linkage between research and policy. Policy influence is affected by topical relevance and the operational usefulness of an idea. The sources and conveyors of evidence, the way the messages are packaged and targeted can all make a big difference.

**Links: influence and legitimacy**

Issues of trust, legitimacy, openness and the strength of relationship among the key actors have emerged as an important link in affecting policy change. Communities of practice, networks and intermediaries impact on formal policy guidance documents, which in turn influence policy.

**External influence:**

A synthesis of the RAPID framework emphasizes the impact of external forces and donors action on research – policy interactions. Historically, much of the research on African development issues was undertaken by Northern institutions. This has raised concerns of the relevance and beneficiaries' access to findings. A substantial amount of research in poor countries is funded by international donors, which raises a range of issues around ownership and whose priorities are being served and the use of external consultants and perceived legitimacy.

However over the past twenty years a quiet revolution has been taking place in terms of development of indigenous African capacity and expertise and think tanks to conduct policy relevant research. Two clear examples are the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). AERC has been building the capacity of African economists to conduct policy relevant research and ACBF has created independent African policy research institutions and think tanks to the extent that there is now in most countries in Africa at least one independent policy research institution. These capacity building efforts has proven to be very successful and some of these policy analysts have gone on to occupy high level decision making positions in Government.

The Bank will need to strengthen its partnership with these institutions to use these enhanced capacities for policy research to complement its limited in-house capability. This is particularly

important for the Bank's decentralization roadmap which acknowledges the limited capacity of Field Offices to conduct analytical work for policy dialogue and Bank operations. Partnering and supporting country level think tanks or policy research institutions results in country ownership of the policy processes and can substantially enhance the Bank's knowledge work at the country level. Therefore strengthening partnerships with local institutions can leverage country level think tanks and research expertise that are more familiar with the country context and that clearly understand the domestic development agenda, processes and priorities of the government. National and Regional level think tanks have a better understanding of the underlying political economy shaping their respective country policies that can be beneficial in providing intellectual country level knowledge for Bank operations. This will greatly improve results based CSPs, private sector analytical work and also underpin policy based lending.

What the RAPID framework indicates is that policy influence of research goes far beyond changing policies themselves. It includes building the capacities of those involved, both researchers and decision makers in using research in the decision process. It also includes expanding what we look at in the policy and research processes knowing that policy is not usually made within a narrow domain of study and that, researchers need to have a much broader understanding of society and must bring other factors to bear on the findings they are putting forward. More needs to be done to understand how the different institutions (including organisational structure, skills and the core processes of policymaking) influence effective demand for evidence.

#### **IV Catalytic role of the AfDB.**

Historically in African policy making circles there has been an under-utilisation of cutting-edge knowledge by those making decisions and this is a puzzle to academics and policy researchers alike. In both developed and developing countries research has been ignored for too long. There is an apparent gap between researchers and policymakers in Africa and bridging this divide calls for the role of a “**Catalyst**”. This is where the African Development Bank knowledge vision as the premier knowledge Bank for Africa can play a catalytic role of closing this divide by cementing its role as a leading change agent for sustainable socio-economic development on the continent.

The Bank has been lagging behind sister Multilateral Development Banks when it comes to the creation, generation, management and utilisation of knowledge for development.<sup>56</sup> The in-house analytical capacity was weak and therefore did not provide potential opportunities to engage recipient government policy makers. The linkage between conducting Research and Economic and Sector Work (ESW) has not been very well established in the Bank. Outreach and dissemination of policy based research was also not very well structured.

One of the main factors for the Bank lagging behind other MDBs could be attributed to the lack of awareness on the pivotal role knowledge can play in making the Bank more effective in

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<sup>5</sup> Based on research publication and citation by other researchers, the WB is the leading institution working on development economics globally in RePEc ranking. Bank authors have published 2000 other books and output in scholarly journals – 9000 articles to date. WB September 2010.

<sup>6</sup> The Asian Development Bank in 2004 established the Knowledge Management Center within the Regional and Sustainable Development Department that is responsible for coordinating and monitoring knowledge initiatives within ADB, and the action plans of the Knowledge Management Framework.

delivering its core mission. Another reason is the lack of institutional incentive system to drive knowledge work; especially against a background in which performance is governed by the delivery of project operations. The lack of understanding and awareness of the strategic importance of investing in knowledge management and communication was a huge problem. The lack of passion and interest among staff in issue based engagement around the AfDB's mission could have been another factor.

In the World Bank, Analytical and Advisory Services forms the knowledge base of the Bank and accounts for around 33 % of country spending.<sup>7</sup> This is broken down into three components: (i) Economic and Sector Work (ESW) that produces diagnostic reports; (ii) Non lending technical assistance (TA) that provides analysis on specific issues for recipient countries and (iii) Research that typically produces papers in peer reviewed journals<sup>8</sup>. The Asian Development Bank in 2011 developed The *Guidelines for Knowledge Partnerships* which offer a framework to enable ADB to strengthen its existing knowledge partnerships and develop new ones by enriching knowledge solutions through internal learning from operational practice, and external learning from long-term knowledge partnerships.

In 2006, the AfDB as part of its institutional reform strategy<sup>9</sup> created the office of the Chief Economist to complement financial services with knowledge to enhance development effectiveness. The creation of the office of the Chief Economist in 2006 constituted an

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<sup>7</sup> Using knowledge to improve development effectiveness: An evaluation of World Bank Economic and Sector Work and Technical Assistance, 2000-2006, IEG The World Bank 2008

<sup>8</sup> A. Banerjee, A Deaton, N. Lustig, K. Rogoff, E. Hsu (2006), An evaluation of World Bank Research 1998-2005, World Bank, Washington DC

<sup>9</sup> Enhancing the effectiveness of the bank – proposals for reform of the operations complexes, strengthening of the office of the chief economist and enhancing the human resource management and business processes – ADB?BD/WP/2006/18/Rev.1

opportunity to move the Knowledge for Development Agenda forward. The objectives of the economics complex are (i) giving greater visibility and prominence to knowledge, its dissemination and management; (ii) branding the Bank as a first port of call for knowledge on the African continent. (iii) ensuring an African voice in international development debates and the international agenda; (iv) helping to close the data and statistics gap in Africa and (v) contributing to RMC capacity development.

Although not clearly stated as an objective, linking research to policy is implicit in the Bank's knowledge strategy. Over the last few years, the Chief economist complex has been enhancing its in-house research capacity to strengthen the Bank's analytical capacity. However it will be useful for economists in knowledge enhancement department to be more integrated into the operations of the Bank's activities in a manner similar to sister MDBs. For the AfDB to emulate and even surpass the WB, it has to put its money where its mouth is and invest significantly in being a "knowledge Bank".

The challenge for the Bank of locating knowledge services under the Chief Economist Complex is that, it will be easy to privilege certain types of knowledge, likely to be western-style scientific knowledge. A crucial role for the Bank as a knowledge broker is to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and all types of knowledge are valued. This is particularly important if you are dealing with issues affecting the poor and marginalized.

The AfDB can fill a gap that will foster and support the production, dissemination and application of research results leading to policies and technologies that enhance the lives of people in RMCs. Bank staff face constant questions and decisions on how to fine tune their

development policy advice, and on how best to efficiently expend the Banks' resources. For the Bank to be able to respond to these key questions, it needs to seamlessly integrate research ideas into its day to day activities as there is no substitute for strong research that is deeply integrated into the Bank's decision making.

African economies have undergone successive crises, the most recent being the global financial and economic crisis and African countries are confronting emerging development challenges such as climate change and maximizing alternative sources of development financing. As with all crises, it provides a window of opportunity for reorienting government policies in order to influence the policy on poverty and development in the continent using evidence-based research. Unlike previous crises, this time round, the Bank has positioned itself to play a leading role in providing policy advice to policy makers in African Countries<sup>10, 11</sup>.

**V. Different kinds of functions which AfDB can play to improve the link between research and policy in RMCs.**

The benefits of utilizing intermediaries to broker understanding between scientists and policy makers have been widely touted. The intent of knowledge brokering for developing policy is to enable decision makers to acquire, value and consider expertise that they would not otherwise obtain or incorporate in their decision making, (Michaels, 2009).

One of the goals of The Bank is to assist RMCs in selecting the right policies that will enhance long term sustainable development and economic growth. Knowledge solutions underpin

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<sup>10</sup> The global financial crisis resulted in the creation of the Committee of Ten (C10) group of African Finance Ministers and Governors of Central Bank with the Bank playing a leading convening role.

<sup>11</sup> The far reaching banking reforms in Nigeria was made much easier because of the global financial crisis (Murinde 2010)

development effectiveness. The Bank works with decision makers who have competing external pressures on them and different individual learning styles that lead them to assign different weights to different forms of evidence and to have different preferences for acquiring, considering and using what they need to know.

The fundamental question this raises is how should the AfDB undertake the boundary work of communicating, mediating and translating research into policy and practice? By being “*knowledge broker*” – act as intermediary between researchers who produce knowledge and policy makers who are prospective consumers of that knowledge. Knowledge brokering is one means to lessen the information deficit of users that may result from particular information needs not being fulfilled or that potentially useful information exists that users do not know about (Michaels, 2009). The Bank as a knowledge broker can to some extent act as a facilitator, skimming through and synthesizing and passing on information. This role does not conflict with the knowledge generation ambitions of the Bank, instead, the two are complementary.

The comparative advantage of the Bank is anchored in its engagement with countries both at the project and policy level, whether in the public or private sectors. This provides the Bank with valuable insights into the workings of economies, and thus offers a comparative advantage when it comes to a broker’s role. The Bank has within its staff the ability to operationalise research. For instance, policy briefs produced by EDRE in the Bank are increasingly stemming from Bank operations. Knowledge creation in the department captures both the high-brow academic research as well as more down to earth policy recommendations<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The Zimbabwe flagship report on infrastructure and growth in Zimbabwe was grounded on solid academic research.

The intent of knowledge brokering is to encourage policy makers to be more open to making use of research finding and to encourage researchers to undertake policy relevant research and to communicate with policy makers such that policy makers value the findings (van Kammen et al., 2006).

Innes (1998) has emphasized that decision makers involved in creating knowledge are more inclined and better able to incorporate such knowledge into their deliberations than when they are not involved. When decision makers have the technical knowhow, then the capacity and willingness to act is enhanced by decision makers being able to interact directly with the raw data and not being reliant solely on the interpretation of others.

### **Strategies for Knowledge Brokering**

Michaels (2009) suggests six strategies which an intermediary or knowledge broker can use to link expertise into decision making: – informing, consulting, matchmaking, engaging, collaborating and building capacity (Table 2). Each serves complementary functions and is appropriate for different policy issues or for the same issues at different points in its evolution. Michaels (2009) list them in order of increasing intensity. Each strategy affords opportunities for knowledge brokers to intercede constructively.

Using Shaxton et al (2010) and Micheals (2009), Table 1 proposes a knowledge brokering framework for the Bank.

**Table 1: AfDB as a Knowledge Broker**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>The AfDB could ...</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Focused collaboration</b>	Beginning to construct formal relationships to focus on a particular issue, contracting people or organisations to provide knowledge on an as-needed basis. Examples include contracted research programmes, electronic knowledge networks, working groups, wikis, blogs ect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene knowledge networks or research programmes on specific issues.</li> <li>• Convene working groups on specific issues</li> <li>• Ensure that all stakeholders are represented in any such collaborative effort, including CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, ect.</li> </ul>	Extent to which innovative and emerging research areas and issues are integrated into the Bank’s operations. Peer review of selected research outputs (relevance; adequacy of methodology; innovation, value added and impact)
<b>Strategic collaboration</b>	Lengthening and deepening the collaborative process, strengthening relationships and moving to a situation where all sides jointly negotiate the questions to be asked. Examples include joint agreements where the emphasis is on equality in the relationships between actors such as MOUs, joint agreements, communities of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support (or even convene) inter -institutional research – ensuring that all stakeholders are represented including the relevant CSOs, NGOs and local organizations</li> <li>• Support national or international Communities of Practice, regional research networks, AERC, PEP-NET, African Association of Ag Econ, Africa Population and Health Research Centre, le Reseau Ouest et Centre Africaine de Recherches en Education ect</li> </ul>	Policy actors and other stakeholders are consulted in relation to the Bank’s knowledge and research agenda; explore the demand side of policy research. Bank becomes a market place for innovate ideas on Africa’s development challenges. Co production of knowledge
<b>Building sustainable institutions</b>	Deepening the collaborative relationship to the extent that all parties jointly frame the issue; broadening institutional capacity of institutions to respond to several issues simultaneously. The focus is on co-production of knowledge and joint learning from doing; the arrangements are self sustaining in terms of both funding and functions, with all sides contributing resources. Examples include co-management arrangement, local enterprise partnerships, self sustaining consortia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local enterprise partnerships (eg innovation hubs, business clusters, support to centers of excellence, think tanks ect)</li> </ul>	Providing financial resources to institutions with the mandate and expertise in building sustainable institutions (support to ACBF, Think Tank Initiative, ect). Provide direct support to national level policy research institution to conduct studies relevant to the Bank’s area of operations

## **VI. AfDB: African voice and knowledge platform on development issues.**

The Bank Group has been repositioning itself to become a stronger development bank for Africa; its voice in domestic and international fora, its preferred knowledge institution and the lead development financing institution in a number of strategic priority areas. The Bank is using its convening power and playing a more consistent role as a broker of knowledge, convenor of experts and policymakers and a facilitator of African voice/consensus. This is an important part of stimulating African demand for evidence from the top. The Bank uses this niche to advance the voice and interests of African countries in the international discourse on global issues affecting the continent, the most recent being the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on African countries and climate change adaptation and mitigation in Africa.

The Bank has taken a leadership role in informing African policy makers and has demonstrated its capacity to provide timely knowledge based advice to the continent. This niche earned the Bank the role of coordinating the position of African countries in preparation for the 2008 Accra Summit on development effectiveness, which led to the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). It has also enabled the Bank to take the lead in coordinating Africa's responses to the global financial and economic crisis, working closely with other pan-African institutions such as the African Union Commission (AUC) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). In response to the financial crisis, the Bank hosted a meeting of African Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors in Tunis in November 2008, which gave rise to the Committee of 10 Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors (the C-10), set up to monitor the crisis and coordinate

Africa's response at various levels. The Bank fully exercised its convening and honest broker roles to galvanize both African and international opinion in addressing the crisis. The Bank's knowledge products provided analytical underpinning of discussions and policy options in the wake of the crisis. Together with its partners, the Bank has played a key role in providing input into Africa's position at the G20. As a continent, Africa was able to speak with one voice and the global community has taken the Bank's views very seriously.<sup>13</sup>

The AfDB Eminent Speakers' Program, launched in March 2006, is part of a framework to enhance the Bank's visibility as a knowledge institution. It is designed as a platform on which African leaders and World renowned persons can share views on daunting development challenges facing the continent. The African Economic Conference is another avenue that provides a platform for experts on Africa to reflect and dialogue on new directions for growth policy on the continent in order to determine the best approaches to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), achieve the objectives of NEPAD and accelerate Africa's sustainable development<sup>14</sup>.

Even as the Bank becomes a more relevant knowledge broker in and on Africa, down the line one will have to address the continental institutional division of labour in particular with the UNECA that also provides knowledge products. There is considerable proliferation, wastage of resources and mission creep as everyone tries to be more relevant in an already crowded

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<sup>13</sup> AfDB Policy Brief on the financial crisis, No.1 January 2010.

<sup>14</sup> In addition some other knowledge products includes the flagship publications of notably the [African Economic Outlook \(AEO\)](#), [African Development Report \(ADR\)](#), the [Africa Competitiveness Report \(ACR\)](#) and [African Development Review \(ADRev\)](#)

landscape. It could be that in all of this, the AfDB should focus on the internal dimension – linking its operations with better knowledge management.

Another dimension which is critically as important is the capacity of RMCs to engage with and manage knowledge better. One way of assisting RMCs is for the Bank to deepen synergy with ACBF and other existing capacity building initiatives like the “Think Tank Initiative” on this dimension.

## **VII. Conclusion:**

The critical importance of knowledge in strengthening policy is increasingly recognised in development circles. While there is considerable value in academic knowledge in terms of shaping thinking of policy actors, policy research can also have far reaching impact on program design and budget allocation with tangible impact for the poor (Jones, Datta Jones, 2009). Knowledge platforms and sharing of experiences should be playing a key role in African economies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The African Development Bank can be a conduit for cutting edge innovative knowledge on African development challenges as well as a knowledge broker of choice in the continent. The Bank should not be seen just as an institution for providing development finance in the form of loans and grants but also about sharing knowledge on African development on new and emerging development challenges.

Research will influence policy making only when it is policy-relevant. The problem is that we do not know when something is likely to be policy relevant. Policy goals change sometimes

unpredictably, and so does the definition of what is policy relevant. One way in which the Bank can play a facilitating role is to be proactive in exploring the demand side for policy research and providing adequate financial resources like sister MDBs (or set up a division for knowledge management like the ADB) to fund policy relevant research in the priority pillars identified in the Bank's Medium Term Strategy. Soliciting the views of the different policy stakeholders will lead to policy-relevant research being undertaken, whose results could be useful input into the policy-making dialogue.

However for the Bank to play this role effectively, policy-makers must take ownership of the development problems. Before proposing new policies, top policy-makers must see that a problem exists and that it is important to them. Usually, this means showing that the problem is now or potentially a political risk. If policy-makers clearly recognise the problem, they will support the search for solutions. This isn't enough on its own – it is not only the top policy makers who need to recognise this, but mid-level ones who do much of the 'grunt work'.

The Banks should position itself as a market place for innovative ideas on African Development. We are living in a world that must be open to competition of knowledge and ideas. The Bank should be seen as thinking ahead of the curve when it comes to identifying knowledge gaps and challenges to development in Africa. Knowledge creation, knowledge generation, knowledge management and knowledge utilization should not just be based on responsive research but should also be forward looking. To achieve this, the Bank needs to be convening key knowledge

experts in identifying key development challenges to impact policy making at all levels. The Bank needs to be generating good ideas that get translated into action.

The Bank's internal research capacity will not allow it to address all the key knowledge gaps on Africa's development. Going forward and to strengthen research to policy and practice, the Bank need to do the following:-

- (i) Allocate more resources both financial and human to drive the knowledge management agenda of the Bank.
- (ii) Invest in building stronger in-house analytical capacity. Having analytical staff in-house helps transmit knowledge within the organization, ensures that the analytical capacity can be drawn at short notice and provides potential opportunities to engage recipient government policy makers.
- (iii) Strengthen partnerships with local institutions that can do research and analysis needed by policymakers (policy research institutes, think tanks). Public policies work best when they are designed and implemented by local actors. Without locally generated information and analysis, well intentioned programs will not respond to realities on the ground.
- (iv) Provide increased financial resources to country level think tanks and policy research institutions and regional research networks with emphasis on supporting and leveraging knowledge at the country level by partnering with country level policy institutions to conduct country specific ESWs that will feed into Bank's policy dialogue with countries as well as the development of country strategies especially within the framework of the Bank's decentralization roadmap..

- (v) The Bank should institutionalize a competitive visiting researchers program (for young scholars) as well as a visiting senior researchers fellows program for (senior experienced academics) where scholars of African development will be invited for one year or less to undertake and strengthen research and analysis on development policy issues that addresses key priority areas of Bank's intervention and to disseminate their findings.
- (vi) Making use of ICT, E-Learning and Video Conferencing to convene policymakers and experts to discuss topical and relevant policy issues.
- (vii) Optimizing its tacit and formal knowledge to improve and enhance the ability of Bank staff by drawing on all the rich knowledge that the Bank generates. This could be done by making use of knowledge management tools, methods and approaches to better capture and store its wealth of implicit and tacit knowledge.
- (viii) Encourage more south-south exchanges and global learning of best practices.

This paper has clarified at a conceptual level some ideas that the Bank should need to start thinking about what an AfDB 'knowledge brokering' strategy might look like and how such a strategy might be operationalised. As a next step it would be necessary for Management of the Bank to tease out what would be the key elements and products. How and in what ways would the Bank's capacity need to be augmented/ reconfigured. How to ensure the role is not balkanised and instead becomes core to the bank's ways of working.

For the AfDB to formalize its role as a knowledge broker, its policy research and development activities should be complementary and need to be linked closely together rather than being separated by administrative and operational distinction. A new approach that focuses on embedding research in general development and strengthening the capacity to innovate- should really take root and the AfDB is well positioned to perform this role In Africa.

The African Development Bank is well positioned to be a Knowledge Broker by linking different entities or individuals that otherwise would not have a relationship and have them connected to share and exchange knowledge. The Bank possesses all the essential knowledge brokering characteristics in African policy space such as trustworthiness, credibility, political neutrality and subject expertise to take on this role.

**Table 2: How to Influence policy and practice**

What you need to know	What you need to do	How to do it
<p><b>Political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who are the policy makers?</li> <li>• Is there policy makers demand for new ideas?</li> <li>• What are the sources/strengths of resistance?</li> <li>• What is the policy making process?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know the policymakers, their agendas and their constraints.</li> <li>• Identify potential supporters and opponents</li> <li>• Keep an eye on the horizon and prepare for opportunities in regular policy processes.</li> <li>• Look out for – and react to – unexpected policy windows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with policymakers.</li> <li>• Seek commissions.</li> <li>• Line up research programmes of high profile policy events.</li> <li>• Reserve resources to be able to move quickly to respond to policy windows.</li> <li>• Allow sufficient time and resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the current theory?</li> <li>• What are the prevailing narratives?</li> <li>• How divergent is the new evidence?</li> <li>• What sort of evidence will convince policymakers?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish credibility over the long term.</li> <li>• Provide practical solutions to problems.</li> <li>• Establish legitimacy</li> <li>• Build a convincing case and present clear policy options.</li> <li>• Package new ideas in familiar theory or narratives.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build up programmes of high quality work.</li> <li>• Action research and pilot projects to demonstrate benefits of new approaches.</li> <li>• Use participatory approaches to help with legitimacy and implementation.</li> <li>• Clear strategy and resources for communication from state.</li> <li>• Face to face communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key stakeholders in the policy discourse?</li> <li>• What links and networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know the other stakeholders.</li> <li>• Establish a presence in existing networks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership between researchers, policymakers and communities.</li> <li>• Identify key networkers</li> </ul>

<p>exist between them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the intermediaries and what influence do they have?</li> <li>• Whose side are they on?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build coalitions with like minded stakeholders.</li> <li>• Build new policy networks.</li> </ul>	<p>and sales persons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use informal contacts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>External Influences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the main international actors in the policy process?</li> <li>• What influence do they have?</li> <li>• What are their aid priorities?</li> <li>• What are their research priorities and mechanisms?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know the donors, their priorities and constraints.</li> <li>• Identify potential supporters, key individuals and networks.</li> <li>• Establish credibility.</li> <li>• Keep an eye on donor policy and look out for policy window.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop extensive background on donor policies.</li> <li>• Orient communications to suit donor priorities and language.</li> <li>• Try to work with the donors and seek commissions.</li> <li>• Contact (regularly) key individuals.</li> </ul>

Source: ODI. 2004. [www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/159.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/159.pdf)

Table 3- Brokering for Knowing: spectrum of strategies for tapping expertise to use in decision making

Strategies	Intent	Examples of brokering techniques	Examples of how brokers can intervene
Inform	Disseminate content	Fact sheets; Web sites	To targeted decision makers; disseminate fact sheets, circulate addresses of websites with a brief explanation of their potential utility
Linking	Seek out known experts to advise on problem delineated by party seeking counsel	Meetings; Solicited assessments	Identify which decision makers would benefit from talking with the experts and facilitate the appropriate form of communication; Work with decision makers and those with the needed substantive expertise to frame what should be included and how to present the findings
Match make	Identify what expertise is needed, who can provide it and the best ways to make the connections	Introduce people to each other who would not otherwise meet	Identify sources of information, locate or create materials useful in decision making and pass it on.
Engage	One party frames the discussion and for the life of the required decision making process, involves other parties in the substantive aspects of the problem on an as needed basis.	Royal commissions; Technical committees; Secondments	Identify who needs to be engaged and how.

Collaborate	Parties jointly frame the process of interaction and negotiate substance to address a distinct policy problem.	Joint agreement	Facilitate collaboration
Build capacity	Parties jointly frame process of interaction and negotiate substance with intent of addressing multiple dimensions of a policy problem while considering what can be learned from doing so that is applicable to implications of the issue, future scenarios and related concerns.	Co-management; Joint fact finding; Co-production of knowledge	Steward long-term professional relationships; Ensure institutional relationships.

Source: Sarah Michaels (2009)

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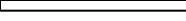
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