

A study of factors affecting think tanks efficiency

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ABSTRACT

Think tanks are public policy research institutes involved in public policy research. Think tanks work on various topics and involved many departments & expertise. These think tanks work in accord with external entities such as government departments, civil societies and institutions as well as various internal departments. To work in harmony with these entities they find various challenges, these challenges are nothing but various internal as well as external factors, which affect the overall efficiency of think tanks. In this paper, the key efficiencies and factors studied and listed.

Keyword - Think Tanks, Efficiency, Factor, Measures.

Objectives of the Paper - to study the factors that affect the overall efficiency of think tanks.

1. INTRODUCTION

Think tanks play a major role in building nation, society, acting as a policy knowledge broker, centers of research, and incubators of new ideas. They play an important role of being a link between scholars, policymakers, governments, and civil societies. Think tanks perform extensive research on a wide variety of topics, formulate theories, prepare policies, build insights for a wide variety of stakeholders such as governments, businesses, civil societies, non-government organizations, public and government policy makers, institutions etc. Think tanks' importance has grown in developing countries to the extent that many research & policy-making responsibilities rely on them.

Think tanks classified under various topics such as ideological perspective, topical emphasis, prospective consumer, conservative principles, partisan in purpose (cause/ person), interest groups, policy research think tanks, independent civil societies, government or state sponsored, corporate created, business affiliated, political party, political players, global or regional, based on sheer size of think tank.

Think tanks work on vast number of topics such as Defense, Peace, Security, Education, Environment, Climate Change, Food, Agriculture, Gender, Equality, Governance, Transparency, Health, International Affairs, Development, Law, Justice, Human Rights, Media, Culture, Sports, Natural Resources, Energy, Private Sector Development, Social Policy, Technology, Innovation, Trade, Economics, Finance, Transportation, Infrastructure. Defense/ Peace/ Security, Defense studies, Violence, Peace promotion, Education, Education models, Strengthening the education system, Environment, Climate change, Rain forest, Adaptation and mitigation of climate change, Biodiversity, Forests, Food/ Agriculture, Value chains and agribusiness, Food Safety, Sustainable agriculture, Gender, Women's rights, Gender Violence, Governance/ Transparency, Citizenship, Democracy, Transparency, Decentralization, Health, Infant nutrition, Drugs, International affairs /Development, International relations, Law/ Justice / Human rights, Discrimination, Trafficking, Media/Culture/ Sport, Religion, Language, Natural resources, Energy, Energy efficiency, Fossil fuels, Private sector development, Business, Entrepreneurship, Social policy, Poverty, Protection of children and adolescents, Social inclusion, Trade/ Economics, Commerce, Macro economy,

Fiscal studies, Technology/ Innovation, Information Technology, Sustainable technologies, Transport / Infrastructure, Engineering, Road policy.

For numerous reasons think tanks play a key & vital role in society, think tanks possess vast resources based on affiliation. Several factors affect the overall efficiency of think tanks. The objective of this paper is to list the factors and how these factors affect the overall efficiency of the think tank.

2. EFFICIENCY

From the viewpoint of think tanks, there are several key efficiencies, and they need to track, standardize, maintain and improve during the day-to-day activities and during the overall functioning of the think tank.

The key efficiencies from view of think tanks are as below:

- Allocative efficiency
- Productive efficiency
- Dynamic efficiency
- Utilization efficiency
- Technical efficiency
- Economic efficiency
- Social efficiency
- Collaborative efficiency
- Network efficiency
- Management efficiency
- Operational efficiency

Analyzing the efficiency of think tanks is a very important means of evaluating the performance of think tanks. It helps to handle and improve over various factors that affect efficiency.

Allocative efficiency

The efficient allocation of resources is a crucial part of the think tanks operation. The majority of resources such as funds, people, technology, time, and network comprises the elements, which need to allocate efficiently and address from time to time so it leads to improving the overall performance of the think tank.

Productive efficiency

The people involved & working with think tanks play a crucial role in making their work as productive as possible. They can learn from the past and create strategy, standardize process & procedures so it can help to improve productivity with available resources.

Dynamic efficiency

It is crucial for the think tanks to be as dynamic as possible. This helps think tanks to absorb changes & make decisions on the go, and adapt & improve with changing time, circumstances and difficulties. When there is a resource crunch, think tanks need to prioritize the most important aspects.

Utilization efficiency

The think tanks utilize time, people resources, technology, network etc. While doing so it is in benefit of the think tank to utilize resources as efficiently as possible. This leads to saving costs, so the right people can work on the right project.

Technical efficiency

The world is witnessing technological advancement with passing days. The think tank adopts the technology for functioning. Various tools & technologies were being used by think tanks. The tools & technologies need to be used efficiently so it can help think tanks to improve their efficiency.

Economic efficiency

Most of the time think tanks are government or public funded. They are oblique to answer the funder, who funds the think tank for specific work, research, and objective. It is a think tank's moral duty to utilize the fund efficiently so it will lead to draw visible results.

Collaborative efficiency

In today's digital world, communication is happening at lightning fast speed but without collaboration, it is of no use. The collaboration between various departments and teams is crucial. This helps departments and teams to work in cohesive fashion, which will lead to improving the overall performance of the think tank.

Network efficiency

In a world of think tanks, network is the most crucial aspect, where think tanks have a wide network between think tanks and external entities such as government (officials, departments, and institutes), public & private institutes, organizations and various departmental bodies, political parties, policymakers, civil societies, businesses etc. It's the most crucial aspect of the think tanks to build a vast network.

Management efficiency

For the success of any organization, the people managing the institute play an important role. Success of organization defines how management runs and utilizes available resources. The more streamline management utilizes the resources better; it affects the overall performance of the organization.

Operational efficiency

Running operations such as day-to-day activities and research projects are crucial parts of the think tanks. These operations were where think tanks and its resources were most occupied and where they paid most attention. The operations running successfully pay off the think tanks in terms of improving utilization.

3. FACTORS

Several factors affect the overall efficiency of think tanks. Factors are internal and external variables, which have a direct impact on efficiency of think tanks.

The factors are listed below:

Resources

Several resources need to be tracked and standardized with success focus. It is been observed that the think tanks, which do not put focus on utilization of the available resources, are not able to lead as an institution. Resource utilization is crucial and think tanks work on resource utilization.

Collaboration

Think tanks need to have continuous collaboration between various organizations such as governments, civil societies, businesses, and other institutes. It has been observed that deep collaboration is required between various departments to get things done. Many times for research project purposes collaboration is required so various departments can work in harmony.

Failure to adhere to collaboration leads to spending more funds on projects, uneven resource allocation, research results and impact of study we cannot see to come in reality. It also affects various parameters, which have direct connection to the efficiency of the think tanks.

Communication

As think tanks are public & policy focus institutes, they are required to have ground rooted communication with people, institutes & governments. As research outcomes take shape into public policy, communication and discussion need to happen between all parties such as the government & its various departments, civil societies, institutes, and academics.

It has been observed that communication is one of the key elements for think tanks to reach a larger audience.

If communication channels are not in place, it directly affects policy advocacy and measuring impact and ultimately on policy adoption.

Collective intelligence

Gathering intelligence nowadays is not art rather its science, for this many institutes are adopting new generation mediums such as advanced computer technologies, machine learning, sentiment analysis tools & technologies, analytics frameworks for generating intelligence. This intelligence gathered from working in sync with various data sources from internal as well as external data sources.

Think tanks need to have a systematic approach & plan to deal with various data sources collected from various sources. These insights are crucial for making impact through systematic research conducted by think tanks.

Appoint experts from field

For any organization & institute to thrive & success need experts from various fields & departments, think tanks are no exception on this parameter. As think tanks, works on various topics, and for various tasks & for research purpose think tanks need to hire experts from various backgrounds.

Today in the fast-paced world, there are multiple opportunities available in various fields and think tanks are facing an expert crunch.

Measuring effectiveness

This is one of the most debated and challenging topic for the think tanks, for most of the times think tanks produce intangible outcomes and those geographical spread. Measuring research or policy outcomes are challenging. To tackle this challenge think tanks are adopting advanced methods and procedures to measure effectiveness.

Data security

Think tanks collect sensitive data regarding people, defense strategies, warfare, advanced technologies etc. protecting it from misuse is crucial. Data security is the most talked about topic in the world of data collectors.

Fund management

Think tanks run on funds collected from government, individuals and civil societies. The management & audit is an important aspect of think tanks. Think tanks faced various challenges on utilization & allocation of funds. They are liable & answerable to fund raisers & fund providers.

Networking channels

In the late 20th & 21st century there are advances in networking channels and mediums, but adaptation of their new generation networking channels is lacking in think tanks. As a working framework for government, business and institutes are changing and they are adopting more secure and efficient networking channels for growing networks.

Data collection technology for primary research

Think tanks main task is to conduct research and for that, they collect primary data. The span of research is large and contains vast geographic areas. Data collection is a crucial step in conducting research and most of the resources and funds are allocated for this. As technology, adaptation is slow paced in think tanks. Think tanks face challenges in conducting efficient primary research.

This affects economic, productive and operation efficiency of the think tanks.

Impact analysis

Most thought and debated topic after measuring effectiveness is impact analysis in the world of think tanks. The policies are researched and advocated for various topics and geographies where quantitative data is not available for impact analysis.

If impact analysis is not in place, it affects productivity and economic efficiencies.

Analytical systems to process huge amount of data

Many think tanks work on huge amounts of data to conduct research, generate insights and advocate policy. The data processing for massive data sources is challenging and resource intensive. The systems involved are proprietary as well as open source. Choosing between these systems is difficult as proprietary software are expensive and if considered an open source system, getting technical people to run systems are difficult to find.

Advance real time/ near real time data analysis system

Some projects contain advanced real time and near real time data analysis systems. When we need to challenge anti money laundering, nuclear & power grid projects, when think tanks work on such projects, they need to develop solutions, which work in real time or near real time. To develop such solutions think tanks need to advocate most sophisticated solutions and for that think tank itself need to have prior experience and expertise.

Idea generation bank and idea management

Think tanks continuously in search of various topics and ideas to work on, what nation or society is facing challenges? These ideas need to be manage and work based on priorities.

Availing required resource to work on idea

As we discussed previously, resource crunch is not new in any field. Think tanks are no exception. Availing and deploying resources is a major task for management. Due to the lack of computerized management systems, think tanks are facing challenges on this front.

This directly affects various key performance parameters of the think tanks.

Enable dialogue with variety of stakeholders

World is divided and most people agree. Think tanks' most crucial job and responsibility is to enable dialogues between stakeholders such as governments, civil societies, institutes and people. Dialogue creates an environment where stakeholder identifies the challenges, opportunities and solutions. Enabling dialogue with stakeholders who have different views on issues is challenging for think tanks.

Forecasting systems for policy impact

Policy impact analysis is challenging and crucial for think tanks. Many a time think tanks need to study and evaluate policies and solutions based on historical data. There are many variables, which need to be considered while doing so, and these variables enable forecasting systems to evaluate the policy impact.

Information management system

Think tanks need to manage information from various departments. The challenge is managing this information in a computerized system is important and for this specific system needs to be adopted. The challenge is to adopt sophisticated information management systems.

The lack of such a system affects productive, allocative, utilization, collaborative, operational efficiency of think tanks.

Analytics strategies

For any organization or institute to thrive in a challenging environment, they need to formulate strategies and need to adhere to a defined path. Think tanks facing challenges to implement analytics strategies.

Project Management

Project management and research management are crucial parts of think tanks. Think tanks need to closely monitor and align project and research tasks. Many organizations and institutes are using different project management tools. Failing to implement this lead to hampering the productivity and technical efficiencies of the think tanks.

Public facing work

The think tanks core group does public facing work; they are in touch with various entities from society. Think tanks need to deliver outputs and the public need to be aware using various communication channels. With advances in social media and internet reach, it is easy to reach masses, but at same time, content delivery is art and science.

On this front where think tanks get recognition and identity, think tanks face various difficulties to deliver content to right user groups.

Customer Relationship Management

Think tanks work with various stakeholders and these stakeholders are customers for the think tanks. Managing relationships with stakeholders such as governments, civil societies and the public is a challenging part.

CRM tools available but adaptation in think tanks are less, as most of the think tanks are subject specific, and they do not consider the need of such tools, which directly affects the efficiency of think tanks.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this systematic review was to examine the range of technical and non-technical factors. The majority of the study focused on the identifying efficiency indicators and various factors impacts on the overall efficiency of the think tanks. It has been observed that various technical and non-technical factors have direct impact on the think tanks overall efficiency.

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