Knowledge-Based Development Assistance

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Methodology

The Standard Theory-in-Use

The problem is that of a development agency trying to help some group, the "doers of development,"[1] in need of development assistance (e.g., policy-makers and government officials in a developing country). The agency is attempting to provide knowledge-based assistance (in contrast to only financial or material aid). One prominent case in point is the vision of the World Bank operating as a Knowledge Bank.

The main problem in knowledge-based development assistance is the standard, default, or naive theory-in-use (regardless of the "espoused theory"[2]) that the agency has "development

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[1] Quoted from President Mkapa of Tanzania in Wolfensohn 1999.

[2] See Argyris and Schön 1978.

knowledge" in the form of answers encapsulated in standard core courses that need to be taught, transmitted, and transferred to the target population of trainees. That methodology is taken as so obvious that the focus is simply on how to "deliver" the knowledge, how to "scale up" the knowledge transmission in the client country, and how to measure and evaluate the impact of these efforts.

This "standard view" of knowledge-based development assistance is based on the pedagogy which sees the learners as essentially passive containers into which "knowledge" is poured. It is the theory that Pablo Freire called the "banking" theory since teaching was seen as depositing knowledge into a bank account [1970]. The standard theory is also captured by the old Chinese metaphor of help as "giving out fish."

Some of the main problems with the standard view will be considered. But in each case, it is incumbent on us to try to see why and how this view is the received theory-in-use in spite of considerable espousal of quite different theories. In short, we must try to understand why "talking the talk" does not lead to "walking the walk."

Ownership Problems

In accordance with the principle of people owning the fruits of their labor, the doers will have ownership when they are in the driver's seat (indeed, the description as "doers" would not be accurate if they had a passive role). In the standard view of knowledge-based assistance, the helpers are teachers or trainers taking the active role to transmit "knowledge for development" to the passive but grateful clients. "Development" is seen almost as a technical process like building an airport or dam with the agency having "technical social engineering knowledge" to be transmitted to the clients.

Since this "knowledge for development" is offered below cost or for free as an "international public good," it is quite tempting for the developing countries to accept this sort of knowledge-based development assistance. There are even positive incentives such as extensive travel, pleasant accommodations, generous per diems, and other vacation-like benefits offered to those who undergo the training. From the agency side, management pushes task managers or trainers to "show results"—particularly results that can be observed and evaluated back at headquarters (such as the head count in training programs). The task managers need to show that they have "given out a certain number of fish" or even better that they have helped set up a "fish distribution system" to scale up the delivery of the knowledge to the client country. Thus the managers need to "take ownership" of the process of assistance in order to "show results" and the clients are agreeably induced to go along.[3] This is tutelage, not active learning; it develops dependency, not autonomy or self-direction.

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[3] McClintock [1982] tells the story in a broader historical context that "as passionate causes wracked human affairs,...people found it hard to maintain restraint, they ceased to be willing merely to help in the self development of their fellows; they discovered themselves burdened, alas, with paternal responsibility for ensuring that their wards would not falter and miss the mark....Pressures–religious, political, social, economic, humanitarian pressures–began to mount upon the schools, and it soon became a mere matter of time before schools would be held accountable for the people they produced." [60; quoted in Candy 1991, 32]

Self-Efficacy Problems

The standard view of delivering knowledge for development leads to an impairment in the self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy of the clients. The message behind the "main messages" is that the clients are unable to organize their own learning process and to find out these things in their own way. They need to be "helped"—to be shown the way. But the way in which the standard methodology "shows them the way" only reinforces the clients' passivity and perceived lack of self-efficacy.

Economists think of an "externality" as an effect that one party has on another outside of a market interaction–like an interaction a person might have with family members, relatives, or friends. But there is another use of the word "externality" in psychology that is also relevant. "Externality" is the psychological condition of seeing whatever happens to oneself as having external causes. The locus of control over one's life is external; one's own actions are seen as being ineffectual. At best, there is only a highly circumscribed sphere of personal or mental life where one might be able to exercise some internal locus of control. Externality leads to a condition of learned helplessness, apathy, and fatalism. In contrast, "internality" is the condition of seeing one's actions as having a real effect–of having an internal locus of control over what happens to oneself.[4]

The conditions of externality and internality each tend to be self-reinforcing. Externality leads to resignation and fatalism so individuals will not make a concerted effort to change their condition, little will thus change, and their fatalism will be confirmed in a continuing vicious circle. If, however, individuals believe their efforts will make a difference, then they are more likely to make a concerted effort and thus they are more likely to succeed so their internality may be confirmed in a virtuous circle.

Cognitive Dependency Problems

Self-efficacy or the lack of it is usually considered as a matter of volition but a similar problem arises with cognition. A party might lack self-confidence in their own intelligence, judgment, and other cognitive skills in addition to lacking self-confidence about the efficacy of their actions. In an extreme state of dependency, they might be like a marionette not only in their "actions" but also in their opinions, views, and "knowledge." This cognitive aspect of dependence is clearly very relevant to understanding the detrimental forms of "knowledge-based development assistance."

With the standard methodology of knowledge-based assistance, the "best learners" are often the most marionette-like (or perhaps simply the most ambitious) trainees who quickly learn the new jargon to parrot the main messages. Those "best learners" are then qualified to staff the local missions or missionary outposts that are the staging areas and repeater stations for scaling up the transmission of the main messages to others in the target population. Those local mission organizations might also be the gatekeepers for other aid and resources flowing from the development agency to the client country.

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[4] See Chapter 14 on "Localness" in Senge 1990; Chapter 9 on "Self-attribution: market influences" in Lane 1991; or Bandura 1995.

A version of this scenario has played itself out in the debacle of Western aid to Russia and the other CIS countries during the decade of the 90s. The most ambitious and "quick learning" of the old elite or near-elite rapidly acquired the ability to parrot the main messages and thus to qualify as the gatekeepers for great wealth flowing into the countries as loans and aid. While this created a state of extreme dependency and disempowerment on the part of the country as a whole, it was enormously empowering to the small clan of gatekeepers whose real powerbase was not in the country but in the sources of the external resource flows. For an example of an all-too-similar phenomenon, one might ironically consider the role of the Communist parties installed in the Central European countries occupied by the Soviet Army after the Second World War.

The cognitively dependent recipients of the main messages will also play a role in perpetuating the dynamics of stifling critical reason in favor of bureaucratic "reason" in the development agencies. As such clients have become cognitively dependent, they would be distressed if they should hear the "authorities" arguing among themselves about "development knowledge" and development strategies. They are accustomed to being told the "best practices" to follow, so it weakens their faith in the prestigious authorities with the global purview to determine "best practices" if there is any public disagreement. How can the patient have faith in the doctors if the patient is exposed to arguments among the "warring doctors" about the best treatment? Thus the complaints (real or imagined) of the cognitively dependent clients are used as arguments within the agencies to keep any real debate about development strategies well behind the closed doors of the major development organizations. Only when there is sufficient "agreement" in the domain of bureaucratic reason does the agreed-upon policy go public and receive the financial and intellectual backing of the prestigious agency.

The obvious corollary of this mode of operation is that there will be very little learning in the sense of correcting mistakes at the agency level. Once there is a public commitment of the agency to a certain view, then the agency's prestige and "brand name" is on the line. Any untoward consequences of the policies must be due to flawed implementation on the part of the clients. Criticism from outside the agency can usually be ignored, and criticism from within the agency must be suppressed because it would weaken the franchise value of the brand name. The spectacle of "warring doctors" would just create anxiety among the patients. None of this however should get in the way of the agency having the espoused self-perception of being a "learning organization." After all, the agency is listening to and learning from the cognitively dependent "cue-seeking"[5] clients who just want to be told the "best treatments" for their ailments.

Moral Hazard Problems

The problem of reinforcing a perceived lack of cognitive and volitional self-efficacy is closely related to what are called the "moral hazard" aspects of traditional aid and charity. The possibility of moral hazard arises when people are shielded from the effects of their own actions as when over-insurance leads people to act carelessly failing to take normal precautions.

Benevolent charity in the form of knowledge-based assistance as well as other forms of charity softens the incentives for people to help themselves. This problem is only a part of a much

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[5] See Candy 1991, 60 for various descriptions of cognitively dependent students.

larger problem, namely the possibility that the modern development assistance effort from the developed countries to the developing world has created a massive moral hazard problem (quite aside from any non-benevolent self-serving neo-colonial motives of the developed countries). The conservative and isolationist response to this moral hazard aspect of conventional aid is disengagement and termination of assistance. Then the poor would have no alternative except helping themselves (without any assistance). While this form of "tough love" might be a useful "shock therapy" strategy to jar a country out of a state of dependency (that is comfortable at least for the aid-supported elites), our goal is to seek methods of assistance that are compatible with the autonomy of the clients–that help them help themselves.

If one analogizes between "taking normal precautions to prevent accidents" and "taking normal actions to help oneself" then morally hazardous over-insurance is analogous to forms of assistance that soften the incentives of self-activity and impair autonomy. In the insurance example, the limit case of no insurance (which means complete self-insurance) certainly "solves" the problem of moral hazard since the individual then has full incentives to take precautions to prevent accidents. Yet the "no insurance" option is not optimal; it amounts to throwing out the baby of risk pooling and diversification in order to get rid of the bathwater of moral hazard. Nor is there any first best solution of complete insurance without moral hazard. There are partial solutions in the form of co-payments and deductibles so that the insured party retains some risk and thus incentive to take normal precautions.[6]

In a similar manner, the extreme of "no assistance" could be seen as the limit case of autonomy-compatible assistance. It certainly "solves" the problem of softened incentives for self-help but it foregoes forms of assistance that might be autonomy-compatible. The idea of co-payments and deductibles carries over to the idea of partially matching funds from the clients as a commitment mechanism to show that they are committed on their own account to learning programs.

Pseudo-Solutions and Other Gaming Strategies

Standard Courses

It will be said that surely there is some basic knowledge that international development agencies could usefully deliver to developing countries. But passive acquisition of basic knowledge sets the stage for increased dependency in the future on the part of the client country. From the agency side, it is the foot in the door for ever larger programs with the well-known supply-driven dynamics outlined above. Thus the game of applying the standard methodology of knowledge-based assistance only to "basic knowledge" in standard courses will more likely set up the dependency dynamics to eventually create the problems outlined above.

What then is the solution? The problem is that any specific suggestion will more likely lead to a new "gaming strategy" on the part of those on *both* sides who benefit from the standard methodology.

For instance, how might the purveyors of "knowledge for development" insure that their programs are less supply-driven? The idea, of course, is that the "doers of development"

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[6] There is an enormous literature on the economics of information from the work of the pioneers such as Arrow and Stiglitz (see Eatwell et al. 1989 for introductory articles) to a number of recent textbooks such as Campbell 1995.

undertake their own learning programs and then, as appropriate, request outside assistance–for instance in the form of a letter requesting a specific training program. Aha! A specific suggestion: give training programs in response to client requests so the programs will then be "demand-driven." Of course, the specific suggestion can be gamed. The most cognitively dependent client can still put together a letter of request or, at least, can sign a letter drafted by the training agency.

Training of Trainers

Perhaps the solution is to get beyond just "training" to "capacity building." But "capacity building" strategies lead to a new set of games. By far the simplest game is to essentially rename the trainees as potential "trainers" so that the program can be called "training of trainers" and presented as a form of capacity building. Anyone who attends a course "could" train others in the future. Indeed, often the agency might hire their best trainees as trainers in the agency courses–all of which directly competes with and crowds out any local training institutes that cannot afford to pay participants to come or to hold their courses in resort locations, and so forth. This form of "capacity building" in fact damages local training capacity.

The justification given for these programs is that independent local training organizations might have "low quality" programs and send the "wrong messages" so the agency needs to keep control of the "indigenous capacity building" process. It is an enduring "problem" that autonomous training programs might go "off-message." Since the post-socialist countries were only recently freed from the bad thought control of communism, it is incumbent on the agency to exert good "quality control" to see that they don't stray down the wrong path again. "Quality control" is a frequent rationale for this sort of enlightened control of training programs and (wherever possible) of the intellectual agenda in developing and transitional countries.

Training Networks

Another simple "capacity building" strategy is to continue the usual program of training courses but to relabel every individual who has attended a course as a "member" and every group that provided a classroom and coffee as a "partner organization" in the "(insert agency name) Training Network." Every training course held by the agency can then be described as a "meeting" of the "Agency Training Network" (ATN). Eventually some of the alumni-trainees can be hired as consultants to repeat the standard courses without a task manager from headquarters being present! Thus "local knowledge capacity" is created and leveraged by the "Agency Training Network" to broadcast the main messages on a wider scale in the client country (all paid for by the agency in competition with local training institutes trying to run their own courses on an indigenous basis without foreign subsidies). To publicize such capacity-building successes, brochures describing the work of the ATN are designed and printed at the agency headquarters to be distributed by the proud task managers and their superiors. Sometimes specialized networks or organizations are created of the professionals who received training in the agency's courses on the topic (all ignoring and in competition with local professional organizations who might have "low quality" programs sending the "wrong messages"). Such games are ways that knowledge-based development agencies get beyond mere training to "genuine capacity building."

Fees For Service

To help insure that the standard courses are not supply-driven, an agency might put the courses to a market test by charging fees. Often the courses are given in Washington, Paris, or Vienna, and then many top officials and policy-makers are able to find the time and money to quench their thirst for knowledge in these locations. What is wrong with this picture?

One of the hardest tasks in building the capacity of training institutes in developing countries is finding the money for them to be self-sustaining. The countries have no domestic sources of philanthropic funds, and government officials are not accustomed to paying for training courses or seminars (junkets to foreign cities may be another matter). When a prestigious development agency (or an institute associated with a top university) offers courses for fees in cities of developed countries, then that deprives the local training institutes of potential income. Their local offerings are easily crowded out by the prospect of such a prestigious educational experience in an elite setting. This practice is bad enough for organizations in advanced countries which do not pretend to be concerned with capacity development, but it is especially pernicious for agencies with a clear capacity-building mission.

If an agency must approach capacity-building by teaching standard courses, then the courses should at least be taught in the partner training institutes of the developing countries. The fees for service should go to the local institute to get them started along their own way.

Evaluations

Won't these problems show up in the evaluations? Suppose there is a program costing tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to train a certain set of business people in the rudiments of running a market-based business. The agency needs to evaluate the program and to learn from its mistakes. Naturally, the evaluation needs to be "scientific" so the business results of the group of trainees is compared over a period of time to the results of a "control group" that received no training. And, sure enough, the trained group would get better results than the untrained control group! Thus the training program could be classified as a success, and the training managers and their supervisors could get a "pat on the back."

Or suppose that government officials and other policy makers are given full-expense-paid trips to attractive foreign cities or resorts to attend training programs or conferences. Naturally, the evaluations will show that the participants "learned a lot" and that they want to "repeat and deepen the learning experience" in the future. From the agency side, such junkets are justified to "attract high-level officials" and thus to "leverage the impact of the training expenditures."

Such evaluations leave much to be desired. Even though development training agencies are often run by economists, such an "evaluation" ignores one of the most basic concepts in economics, the notion of opportunity cost. The economic cost of plan A is the benefit foregone by not applying the same resources to the best alternative plan B. The pseudo-evaluation described above compares the results of the resources applied to plan A to the results of applying no resources, and, lo and behold, plan A usually seems to win. A real evaluation would compare the benefits of plan A to the benefits of the best alternative plan B using the same resources. The nature of that "best alternative" plan B is usually quite controversial and subtle.

Since in theory an evaluation of plan A is a comparison of its benefits with those of the best alternative plan B, the attempt to delineate such a plan B cannot be ruled out on the grounds that plan A gets positive "evaluations." An evaluation of the direct training programs, international mega-conferences, and junkets would mean considering how the same resources might be used in capacity building in the client country itself. The multitude of people who might have benefited from such a plan B are, of course, not around to fill out evaluation forms for the "scientific evaluation" of plan A.

One of the great benefits of competition (in the sense of rivalry, not price-taking behavior) is that some alternative plans are actually carried out so "plan A" is thus subjected to more of a real evaluation. Since the training programs of the development agencies typically do not take place in a competitive environment, their "evaluations" will tend to confirm the efficacy of the standard forms of knowledge-based development assistance–as compared to no training [see below in the role of devil's advocacy in outlining competitive alternatives within an organization].

Public Relations and Other Influence Activities

Thoreau said that firewood warmed him twice, once when he cut it and once when he burned it. Publicity-conscious task managers and their supervisors also design "training programs" to warm themselves twice, once as events in the field and again in the publicity generated from the event back at headquarters in nicely produced reports, photo/video opportunities, and scientific evaluations. In the economic theory of agency, these are "influence activities" by the agents to better the image of their work in the eyes of the principals. Eventually these influence activities become "the tail wagging the dog" as the training event becomes the occasion for a self-advertising campaign ("the Show") within the bureaucracy about what a great job is being done. Top managers who "take pride" in "the Show" will nonetheless be "surprised" if and when they discover that the training events are not designed to promote genuine capacity building.

Influence activities might exhibit increasing returns to scale due to lumpiness in the schedules of the top agency managers. Suppose for a given amount of budget, 10 or 15 capacity building activities could be held in developing countries. The top managers cannot split their scheduled visits into 15 small parts, and each single event will not warrant their attention. Hence the events would not appear on the radar screens of the top management. The top managers might remark that they "don't see the training agency doing anything" (i.e., not showing on their radar screen). This would throw the middle management into a panic; "How can their activities become visible on top management's radar screen?" If the same budget is rolled into one mega-conference, then that will warrant a place on some top manager's schedule to visit the mega-event and perhaps deliver an important address. That in turn will help build the attendance (often subsidized) at the mega-event to make it a big success. Informative talks and seminars coupled with general networking and schmoozing will yield a good time for all. Evaluation forms will be filled out enthusiastically by all attendees in the hope of "doing it again next year." All the foregone small capacity-building events in the local institutes will be quickly forgotten amidst the general self-congratulatory euphoria and back-patting. All the people who might have benefited from that alternative use of the mega-event budget will not be filling in evaluation forms so there will be little or no dissent from the brilliant new strategy. "The Show" will go on.

One could go on to describe other ingenious ways that the standard methodology of "knowledge transmission" can be relabeled, repackaged, and gamed to better suit a rhetoric of "local capacity building," "indigenous knowledge development," "autonomous development learning," and the like. The reader should not expect to find here some foolproof rules that cannot be gamed. If the agency managers want to play their own games in the "development business" rather than provide autonomy-promoting assistance, then there is little hope in forcing them.

Types of Development Knowledge
Universal versus Local Knowledge

So far the focus has been on the standard methodology of knowledge-based assistance (transmitting development knowledge from agency to clients) and how that methodology undercuts the ownership, self-efficacy, self-direction, and capacity-building efforts of the developing countries. The standard methodology is, however, also flawed in its implicit assumptions about the nature of crucial development knowledge.

Can a money bank also function as a "knowledge bank"? Money travels better than knowledge. General knowledge is knowledge that holds across countries, cultures, and times; local knowledge takes account of the specifics of place, people, and time. "Every man is mortal" is general knowledge, while "Every vegetarian is a foreigner" is local knowledge in Mongolia. A "best practice" might work well in some countries but fail miserably when recommended in other contexts. One size may not fit all. In questions of institutional development, it is very difficult to know *a priori* just how general is a "best practice." Global "best practices" usually need to be locally reinvented.

> The significance of this point of view is that contrary to the simplistic use of the term by many economists, there is, in principle, no such thing as diffusion of best practice. At best, there is only the diffusion of best practices, practices that evolve in the course of their diffusion. Contrary to popular wisdom, there are times when it pays to reinvent the wheel! [Cole 1989, 117]

Prudent counsel is to scan globally for best practices but to test them locally since local adaptation often amounts to reinventing the "best practice" in the new context. Scan globally; reinvent locally. Many foreign experts have painfully discovered that the "devil is in the (local) details." It is the local component of knowledge that requires adaptation–which in turn requires the active participation of those who know and understand the local environment. Local adaptation cannot be done by the passive cognitively dependent recipients of "development knowledge"; it must be done by the "doers of development" in the course of their self-activity.

There are two points here that need to be teased apart: the necessity that knowledge be made locally applicable and that the adaptation be done by the local "doers of development" (not given as a gift or imposed as a conditionality from the outside). It is by the local selection, assimilation, and adaptation of knowledge that local doers "make it their own." Even by taking a machine or device apart and putting it back together again, one can more "make it one's own" even if there is little adaptation or redesign. Thus it is not a matter of being "open" or "closed" to outside knowledge; it is a matter of being open to outside knowledge in a way that reaffirms

one's autonomy. For Gandhi, this was intellectual *swaraj* (self-rule or autonomy). "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet" [Quoted in Datta 1961, 120] Only by remaining "on one's feet" from an intellectual standpoint can the local doers have the self-confidence to select, assimilate, and adapt the external knowledge–instead of being overwhelmed and rendered intellectually dependent and subservient.

Considerable effort is required to adapt development knowledge to local conditions and culture. Policy research institutes (think tanks) are examples of local institutions that can play that important role. In the developed countries, think tanks have proliferated and have become important agents to introduce and adapt new policy initiatives. Think tanks or similar research institutions are no less needed to transplant social innovations to new contexts. The Japanese use a metaphor based on the gardening technique called *nemawashi* of slowly preparing and wrapping each root of a tree in order to transplant it.[7] Some of the old soil is kept around each root to protect the fine root structure as the tree is replanted in the new soil. The chances of a successful transplant are much larger than if the tree is pulled up in one place and planted in another–as if it were a fence post that could just be pulled out of one hole and planted in another.

Development institutions might try a "quicker" transplant method. Experts come in (physically or electronically) to give a senior policy seminar to local government officials, and then the experts return home hoping that their sound advice will take root. The policy advice might even be backed up by conditionalities on policy-based lending to motivate the country to implement the best-practice recipes. Yet, this policy reform process is designed to promote neither active learning nor lasting institutional change. As these reforms were externally imposed rather than actively appropriated by the country, there would be little "ownership" of the reforms. Compliance might be only perfunctory; the "quick" transplant might soon wither and die.[8]

Local think tanks can be seen as *nemawashi* institutions who carefully adapt and prepare a transplanted policy initiative to survive and perhaps thrive in the local environment. It takes longer, but the roots are better prepared for the new soil. The political process of changing policies and implementing new ideas is usually rather messy and in need of "high maintenance" support. The officials or parliamentarians constantly need more information and advice–more "backup" and "hand-holding"–in order to carry out the policy reforms. As a result of this process of adaptation which often involves virtually reinventing the idea, the government officials see the policy reform not as a foreign imposition but as a local product which addresses their needs and which they can sponsor.

When advocating a certain type of organization (e.g., local policy research institutes), it is necessary to indicate what is *not* being advocated. In the relationship between the center (e.g., multilateral development agency) and the periphery (e.g., developing country), there may be certain organizations in the local country that are "legitimized" not by their role in the country but by their role as local gatekeeper for the central authority. The center judges the local

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[7] See Morita 1986.

[8] This is a variation on the Chinese story of the farmer who pulled up the stalks of his plants a few inches to help them grow faster and taller, but found them all withered the next morning.

organization by its ability to faithfully clone or parrot the "universal" messages from the center, not by the organization's ability to adapt the experiences of others to the local situation and to thus earn an embedded legitimacy in the country.

If anyone in the center should doubt the applicability of the central messages, then the local accommodating elite will always be more than willing to supply positive "local feedback" about the applicability of the central messages–which also serves to vouchsafe the intermediary role of the local counterpart elite as "gatekeepers" for the resources and influence emanating from the center. This mutual reinforcement locks in the relationship so the center ends up having little transformative effect on the more embedded and indigenous local structures, all the while receiving positive feedback on "the wonderful job it is doing." In some cases, the international agency even hires (directly or through the local counterpart) a public relations firm to publicize "Potemkin villages" so that the rest of the world will also hear about "the wonderful job it is doing."

Those in the center who are legitimated in their expertise, prestige, and privileges by the "universality" of their messages are disinclined to recognize limitations or subtleties in the local applicability of their "technical expertise." Novel complexity, genuine uncertainty, conflict of values, unique circumstances, and structural instabilities are all down played or ignored since they might diminish the perceived potency of the center's expertise and undercut the client's faith in that potency. The client often wants the child-like security and comfort of being in the hands of the professional expert who will solve the perplexing problems.[9] Thus the center and periphery may well agree on establishing a "transmission belt" between the "wholesale" source and the local "retailers" for all the universal expert messages and best practice recipes, i.e., the standard knowledge-transmission methodology. These are some of the strong institutional forces to under-appreciate the subtleties of local knowledge, to hamper the growth of autonomous client ownership, and to stymie the development of indigenous local knowledge institutions.

Codified versus Tacit Knowledge

Explicit or codified knowledge is knowledge that can be spoken, written, and codified to be saved on a computer disk or transmitted over a telephone line. But we know more than we can say. We know how to ride a bike, to recognize a face, or to tell a grammatical sentence in our native language, but we would be hard put to turn this knowledge into explicit or codified knowledge to archive in a database for dissemination over the Internet. Michael Polanyi [1962] pioneered the distinction between tacit (or personal) and explicit knowledge in philosophy of science, and the distinction has since proven important to understand problems in the transfer of technologies, not to mention the "transfer" of institutions.[10]

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[9] See Schön's treatment [1983] of the technical expert in contrast with reflective practitioner.

[10] See Ryle 1945-6 for the earlier distinction between knowing how and knowing that, Oakeshott 1991 for a treatment of practical knowledge versus technical knowledge, Schön 1983 for a related treatment of professional versus instrumental knowledge, Marglin 1990 on *techne* versus *episteme*, and Scott 1998 on *metis* versus *episteme/techne* (see p. 425 on the terminological differences with Marglin's usage). The tacit/codified distinction looms large in Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, and they note that Squire 1987 gives a dozen labels for similar distinctions.

There is much more to a technological system than can be put in an instruction book. The same holds *a fortiori* for "social technologies" or institutions. In a codified description of a "best practice" case study, the uncodified tacit knowledge is often "the rest of the iceberg."[11] Some tacit knowledge might be transformed into codified knowledge [see Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995] so that it could be transferred by conventional methods. But the remaining tacit knowledge needs to be transmitted by special methods such as apprenticeship, secondments, imitation, twinning relations, and guided learning-by-doing. These methods of transferring tacit knowledge will be called "horizontal" methods of knowledge transfer–in contrast to "vertical" methods where knowledge can be codified, transmitted to a central repository or library, and then retransmitted to students.

The tacit component in local or general development knowledge is best learned through "horizontal" methods such as study tours, cross-training, and twinning. International development agencies have the perspective to know the success stories and thus to fruitfully play a match-making, facilitating, and brokering role in horizontal learning–not a training role.

A development agency may be in a good position to "scan globally" to identify good practices, and then it can play a brokerage role to facilitate a horizontal learning process between developing countries facing similar problems and the successful practice. Due to the tacit component in the practical development knowledge, few of the real reasons for the success might be captured in the codified knowledge of the "best practice" case study that might be written up and "taught" by the development agency to the developing country (not to mention *Rashomon* effects, academic predilections, and ideological precepts in the best-practice case studies). For instance, government officials, law-makers, and business people from an African country may better learn directly and horizontally from a nearby East Asian country which faced similar problems not too long ago than from any number of codified and "stylized" case studies from a development agency.

Centralized versus Decentralized Experimentation

A central organization often determines policy solutions and then faces the problem of translating the results to the peripheral units of the organization. The units might not appreciate the genuine breakthrough embodied in the central solution, or the center might not realize the inapplicability of its pet ideas. The problems of the center-periphery relation are described by Donald Schön in a context close to a development agency's work.

> [The standard approach] treats government as center, the rest of society as periphery. Central has responsibility for the formation of new policy and for its imposition on localities at the periphery. Central attempts to 'train' agencies at the periphery. In spite of the language of experimentation, government-initiated learning tends to be confined to efforts to induce localities to behave in conformity with central policy. Localities learn to beat the system. Government tends to bury failure or learn from it only in the sense of veering away from it. Evaluation, then, tends to be limited to the role of establishing and monitoring the extent of peripheral conformity with central policy. [Schön 1971, 177]

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[11] Even the codified part may suffer from the "*Rashomon* effect" described in Schön 1971.

But social learning can take place in a decentralized bottom-up manner. In large multi-plant companies, innovation may take the form of new ways of socially organizing and structuring productive processes, e.g., quality circles or self-managed work teams. Separate plants might perform pilot experiments to find out "what works and what doesn't." Headquarters frames the experiments, detects the successes, and plays the knowledge-broker to help other plants cross-learn from the successful ones. Schön described a similar process between the government and the periphery of local units trying to carry out a certain social reform.

> Government cannot play the role of 'experimenter for the nation', seeking first to identify the correct solution, then to train society at large in its adaptation. The opportunity for learning is primarily in discovered systems at the periphery, not in the nexus of official policies at the center. Central's role is to detect significant shifts at the periphery, to pay explicit attention to the emergence of ideas in good currency, and to derive themes of policy by induction. The movement of learning is as much from periphery to periphery, or periphery to center, as from center to periphery. Central comes to function as facilitator of society's learning, rather than as society's trainer. [Schön 1971, 177-8]

Social learning is often very different from laboratory learning. The aforementioned novel complexity, genuine uncertainty, conflict of values, unique circumstances, and structural instabilities mitigate against "laboratory conditions" for discovery and learning. Decentralized experimentation with centrally-sponsored framing and quality benchmarking followed by cross-learning in the periphery is a more appropriate model than classical "normal science" research at a central facility followed by the teaching-dissemination of the (sometimes impractical) results.

Implications for "Knowledge Bank" as Storehouse or as Brokerage

Every consulting firm faces a basic question of strategy: to focus on codified knowledge or on tacit, practical, and how-to knowledge.[12] Should the firm operate in a "library mode" providing clients with access to the right codified knowledge, or should the firm focus on tacit knowledge by choosing staff members with an eye to scarce practical how-to skills or by specializing in arranging horizontal cross-learning between clients and benchmark companies?

A development agency as a Knowledge Bank faces a similar choice. Should it pursue the *library-storehouse model* or the *knowledge-brokerage model*? In the brokerage model, knowledge still needs to be catalogued but it is primarily the second-order knowledge of where to find the how-to knowledge. To analogize with web terminology, the storehouse model stores the documents while the broker model stores the pointers. Since the storehouse model focuses on documents, it specializes in codified knowledge available at the agency while the broker model focuses on codified pointers to sources of knowledge and experience (which could be codified or tacit) throughout the world (including the agency itself). In terms of pedagogy, the storehouse model sees the agency as the teacher transferring knowledge from its storehouse to the passive student/client. The broker model sees the client in the more active role of scanning

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[12] See Hansen, Nohria, and Tierney 1999 on the contrasting strategies.

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for knowledge and relevant experience, and the agency in the more intermediary midwife role of assisting in that search.

The difference between the models should not be overdrawn. The storehouse model would not suppress other knowledge sources or rule out referrals, but there is a very real difference in emphasis. It will make considerable difference which model is the actual working model providing the strategic direction for the development agency as a Knowledge Bank.

The approach of bureaucratic reason is to "do both models" and thus to implement poorly or not at all the more difficult brokerage model. As the information revolution rolls into the 21st century, codified knowledge will more and more approximate the theoretical limit of a free non-rivalrous good. Clients will have access to vast storehouses of codified knowledge, and the agency's own storehouse will increasingly pale in comparison. The scarce knowledge will be that of the reflective and experienced practitioners wherever they are around the world. On the broker model, the Knowledge Bank would be a central clearing house in that subtle form of professional expertise (which cannot be downloaded over a phone line). It would play a key global role in putting those who have acquired practical development knowledge at the disposal of those who are willing and able to learn.

Inappropriate Institutional Knowledge and "Cargo Cult Reforms"

In addition to the problems of general/local knowledge and codified/tacit knowledge, there is the whole question of "appropriate" institutional models. The idea of "appropriate technology" also needs to be applied to institutions. There is a certain self-reinforcing vicious circle that leads to attempts to "install" inappropriate "advanced" institutions in developing and transitional post-socialist countries. Let us begin with the supply side of this unhappy transaction.

People from developed countries are, in effect, "born on third base and think they hit a triple."[13] Often such "natural-born development experts"[14] are graciously disposed to teach developing countries how to "hit a triple." The developing country should redraft its laws to describe the institutions seen from the vantage-point of "third base" and then after passing these new laws, everyone should wake up the next morning well on their way "to third base." Unfortunately for this "third-base strategy," societies tend to operate on the basis of their *de facto* institutions, norms, and social habits, not their formal laws–and particularly not the formal laws "pulled out of the air" with little relation to past experience. When such a gap between formal and *de facto* institutions is introduced, then the bulk of the population can rarely "jump over the chasm" to suddenly start living according to the new formal laws–so the rule of law is weakened. Semi-legal ("gray") and illegal ("black") activities become more prominent as the connection between legal and actual behavior is strained to and beyond the breaking point.

The advice from the natural-born development experts thus becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution. More relevant institutional information could be provided by people

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[13] The baseball metaphor was used by the Texan politician and political commentator Jim Hightower to describe President George Bush.

[14] This seems to be a particularly American affliction. But one might include people born in developing countries whose whole intellectual formation has been in the United States or in their former colonial powers.

who were only on first or second base since they might actually know how to hit a single or a double.

We now turn to the demand side–the demand for impossible jumps to institutions copied from technologically advanced developed countries. The people and the politicians of the developing and the transition economies are constantly bombarded by the mass media with images of life in the "First World." They want to get there "tomorrow." Consultants and academics from elite universities with no real development experience–and thus with only a third base perspective– badger the government officials to have the political courage to undertake a shock-therapy-style change in institutions–to jump over the chasm in one leap (i.e., jump directly to third base). Those locals who caution against radical leaps are dismissed as only trying to protect their privileges and "rents" from the past regime. The idea is to "escape the past" (not to study the past to better design incremental change strategies). If the "scientific" experts from the First World, who after all know what it is like to live on third base, give this advice, who are the "benighted" officials from the Third World or the post-socialist countries to resist?

The role of American academic economists from elite universities is a particularly unhappy chapter in the history of the transition [e.g., Wedel 1998]. Prodigies are typically in activities based on abstract symbol manipulation (e.g., mathematics, music, or chess) where subtle and often tacit background knowledge obtained from years of experience is not so relevant.[15] As economic theory has become more mathematical, there is now the phenomenon of *wunderkind* professors in economics who are then unleashed (with the compounded arrogance of youth, scientific credentials, and elite associations) into the real world of policy-making as "experts." As the post-socialist government officials had little or no practical experience or track record, the western *wunderkind* 'experts' had a key role to establish credibility. Any local reformers who cautioned incrementalism were undercut by the radical institutional shock therapy advice of the western professors on how to jump over the chasm from socialism to capitalism in one great leap.

There were also local dreams of waking up tomorrow "in the West." For instance in a Southeast European post-socialist country that had been particularly isolated in the past, government officials wanted to jump to modern corporations "like in Europe." They found a European foundation that was willing to fund an "adaptation" of the corporate laws of a West European country. The new draft laws were quickly passed by the Parliament so that the government officials and legislators could brag that they now had "European corporate statutes." All they needed now was a few lawyers, a few judges, a few accountants, a few regulators, a few business people, and a few decades of institution-building experience so that the new statutes could actually be used. Any attempt to get the country to adopt laws similar to neighboring countries that had evolved towards a market economy for several decades was angrily rejected. "Why do you try to get us to use these second-best or third-best laws when we can adopt the best European statutes?"

Thus the government officials demand that they do not want some "halfway house," some "first base" or "second base" model; they want the very best for their people–like in the advanced

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[15] See James Scott's discussion of "metis" in his wonderfully relevant book *Seeing Like a State* [1998].

countries. The third-basers in the international aid bureaucracies then can reap the seeds they have sown by "listening to the clients" and "responding to the clients' desires" by trying to set up "public joint stock companies in Albania," "stock markets in Mongolia," "401K plans in Kazakhstan," and "excellent self-enforcing corporate laws" in Russia. Thus the circle is completed; supply responds to demand in a self-reinforcing vicious circle to waste untold aid resources on the attempted instant gratification of a non-evolutionary and imitative "Great Leap Forward" to First World institutions.

Autonomy-promoting assistance starts from where the doers are, not from the helpers' or doers' fantasies. As an institutional change strategy, this is incrementalism as opposed to a shock therapy or blitzkrieg strategy of jumping over an institutional chasm in one leap. Those who promote a shock therapy approach are given to the self-serving misinterpretation of the debate as being about gradual versus rapid change. But incremental change can be quite rapid (e.g., the Chinese agricultural reforms), and it can take quite a long time to climb back out of the chasm after failing to jump over it in one leap (i.e., the Russian reforms under the Gaidar/Chubais group). Reform should start from people's experience, and people "need a bridge to cross from their own experience to a new way" [Alinsky 1971, xxi].

The failed attempts at utopian social engineering might be usefully viewed from an anthropological perspective. Many of the First World institutions such as "The Stock Market" have a certain totemic or symbolic significance. The "Wall Street" mentality found in the post-socialist world is reminiscent of the cargo cults that sprung up in the South Pacific area after World War II. During the War, many of the glories of civilization were brought to the people in the southern Pacific by "great birds from Heaven" that landed at the new airbases and refueling stations in the region. After the War, the great birds flew back to Heaven.   The people started "cargo cults" to build mock runways and wooden airplanes in an attempt to coax the great birds full of cargo to return from Heaven.

Post-communist countries, with hardly a banking system worthy of the name, have nonetheless opened up Hollywood storefront "stock exchanges" to supposedly kick-start capitalism. Government officials in East Europe, the FSU, and even Mongolia and Albania proudly show the mock stock exchanges, complete with computers screens and "Big Boards," to western delegations (with enthusiastic coverage from the western business press) in the hope that finally the glories of a private enterprise economy will descend upon them from Heaven. An earlier generation of misguided development efforts left Africa dotted with silent "white elephant" factories, and the present generation of misguided reforms in the post-socialist world left the region dotted with dysfunctional "cargo cult" institutions.

Knowledge-Based Development Organizations
Introduction: A "Church" versus a Learning Organization

In the modern world it is now commonplace to accent the importance of "intellectual capital" and "knowledge management." Most organizations want to be seen as "learning organizations." Yet many old habits persist that are directly opposed to learning and to the advancement of knowledge. The new rhetoric of "learning" is applied as a veneer onto a church-like organization proselytizing its own dogmas.

We have so far considered questions about the methodology of knowledge-based development assistance and the subtleties introduced by different types of development knowledge. Now we focus on the organization or agency involved in knowledge-based development assistance.[16] How can such an agency function as a learning organization? The question will be approached by considering some of the major roadblocks in the way of organizational learning.

Roadblock to Learning #1: Branded Knowledge as Dogma

To put it simply, the basic problem is that in spite of the espoused model of a "learning organization," the theory-in-use of a development agency is often a model of a "development church" giving definitive *ex cathedra* "views" on all the substantive questions. As with the dogmas of a church, the brand name of the organization is invested in its views. Once an "(Agency) View" has been announced (substitute for "Agency" the name of the relevant development institution), then to question an Agency View is an attack on the Agency itself and on the value of its franchise, so learning is strongly discouraged. If the collective memory of an Old View has sufficiently dimmed, then perhaps a New View can be announced with minimal embarrassment, but there can be no public debate within the Agency on its Current Public Position.

The reasoning behind this strategy is standard: parents should not argue in front of the children; doctors should not debate in front of the patients. The church model fits perfectly with the standard default methodology of knowledge-based development assistance. The Agency has the best "knowledge for development" and it is to be transmitted through various forms of aid-baited proselytization to the authorities in the developing world.

A university, at least ideally, is an open learning organization which does not set itself up as an arbiter of truth, but as an arena within which contrary theories can be examined and can collide in open debate. When an agency takes Official Views on questions or considers its views as branded knowledge, then the genuine collision of adverse opinions and the rule of critical reason will tend to give way to the rule of authority and bureaucratic reason within the hierarchy of the organization (e.g., the "Soviet Theory of Genetics" or the "University of Utah Theory of Cold Fusion"). The authorities in the organization naturally decide "the official views" of the organization that are expressed to the world and would tend to shut off or "embargo" any feedback loops that might question the previous "official views" and thus might subtract from the "franchise value" of the "brand name." Learning from errors which involves changing "official views" and modifying "branded knowledge" is minimized so the organization tends to function more as a secular church than as an open learning organization–regardless of the label.

The church model of proselytizing directly contradicts autonomous or self-directed learning in the client countries. The project manager from the agency wants the clients to "learn" so long as they learn "the right thing." The gardener wants only her own seeds to grow; all else are weeds. Any genuinely self-directed learning process in the client country might veer off in the "wrong direction" which the project manager could not support. The project manager would return to headquarters as a failure without a project. Therefore the flow of knowledge must be

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[16] See also Ellerman 1999.

"managed." The clients must be kept from being "distracted" by alternative views. Knowledge-based development assistance should not transmit unsound views to the clients. The standard methodology is a corollary of the church model.

Roadblock to Learning #2: Funded Assumptions as Dogma

Why is it so necessary for a development agency to take an Official View on the One Best Way to solve a development problem? One common answer is that a development agency is not a university; the agency puts money as loans or grants behind projects based on various assumptions. University professors do not "put their money where their mouth is" so they are free to debate questions forever. Once an agency has committed significant resources to certain assumptions, then it is time to "fall in line" and support the funded assumption.

This remarkable doctrine is one of the marvels of bureaucratic reason. There are obvious bureaucratic reasons why individual project managers and their superiors would like a funded project assumption to be treated as "gospel" but they are not reasons why the whole institution should take such a stand. The commitment of funds and prestige even seems to alter perceptions.[17] For instance, subjective assessments of winning probabilities tend to increase after bettors at a race track have placed their bets. But horses do not run faster when bets are riding on them. Theories are corroborated by evidence, not by commitments of funds. Many businesses have come to grief because managers would not revisit strategies after initial costs were sunk. In view of the record of international development aid, there is little support for the similar practice of seeing project assumptions as hardening into gospel because of the commitment of funds.

Roadblock to Learning #3: "Social Science" as Dogma

Today, "science" has long since replaced religious authority (the "Church") as the source of dogmas that one can appeal to without further reason or corroboration. That style of argumentation completely misrepresents the scientific method, not to mention the role of critical reason, but it is none the less quite common. The all-too-human factors that previously led to an appeal to church dogma have not suddenly disappeared in today's scientific age so one should expect the appeal to "science" to be thoroughly abused. This is nowhere more true than in the social sciences [see Andreski 1972]. Economics is the "rooster ruling the roost" in the social sciences, so one should expect much to be passed off in the name of "economics."

It is particularly unfortunate when a Tayloristic "One Best Way" (OBW) mentality creeps into development policy-making in the name of "science." The problems of the developing and transition countries are much too complex to yield to formulaic "best practices" and "magic bullets." Many different approaches need to be tried on an experimental basis, so when a major development agency stakes its reputation on the "One Best Way" then the development effort as a whole is impoverished.

Consider, for example, the problem of fighting corruption. Economists might approach the topic by trying to minimize government-imposed discretionary regulations which present rent-seeking

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[17] When predictions fail, then skewed perceptions and rationalizations are a likely outcome. See Festinger et al. 1956, Festinger 1957, Part II in Lane 1991, and Elster 1983. See Akerlof and Dickens 1982 for an economic treatment of cognitive dissonance.

opportunities to officials who might offer to relax a restriction for appropriate consideration. Accountants might emphasize transparency and uniformity of data and the independence of auditing. Civil servants might emphasize codes of ethics and disclosure requirements. Lawyers might encourage civil discovery procedures and criminal sanctions. Others will promote a free and independent press, a high standard of public ethics, and a vigorous civil society. There are clearly many ways to approach the topic and there seems to be no One Best Way so a multi-pronged approach seems advisable. Yet the dogmatic mentality might express "alarm and dismay" when different groups from an international development agency take different approaches to fighting corruption and these different views are aired at international conferences. How can the passive cognitively dependent clients put themselves in the hands of the international experts if the latter cannot agree on the One Best Way to fight corruption?

The church approach has implications for the question of client-centered versus paternalistic approaches to learning. What would be "wrong" with two different parts of an international development institution expressing at an international conference two different views on a complex question? What would be "wrong" with the listeners or readers realizing that affiliation with an elite institution is not the touchstone of truth just as publication in an elite journal is not the imprimatur of infallibility? Indeed, such a realization might have the rather positive effect of leading the listeners or readers to think the matter over themselves and thus to take some responsibility in forming an opinion for themselves. In short, it would foster active learning rather than promote passive acceptance of the "truth" promulgated by a church-like organization.

Another reason offered for an agency to have Official Views is that the views are the result of the agency's research department. Yet this clearly cannot be the real reason since universities do not feel obliged to adopt as Official Views the opinions that are predominant in their research faculties. Moreover, a research department housed deep within a large development bureaucracy is probably not the first place one would expect to find independent and critical thinking about development issues. Its views might be more the reflection than the source of Official Views. If critical thinking is found there, the individuals involved should be doubly commended because all the forces of bureaucratic reason push in the other direction. The researchers need to fit into and to be advanced in the broader organization that marches to a rather different drummer. When official policies lead to untoward consequences (e.g., voucher privatization in the transition economies), this will probably be recognized by independent researchers outside the agency first and only later by the agency's researchers.

The Open Learning Model

Surely much has been learned about economic development. What is wrong with espousing the best practices from successful development as well as promoting the underlying guiding principles? Should international development organizations just be agnostic on the questions of development and treat all opinions as having equal weight? To approach these questions, it is useful to consider the methodology of science. Science as a loosely structured international open learning organization is hardly agnostic in any given area. All opinions are not given equal weight. Certain theories are the "received" or current theories in a field. The difference from a "church" lies in the methodology used to sustain or overturn the hypotheses. In mathematics, it is proof, not authority, that is the basis for theorems. In the empirical sciences, hypotheses are

developed on the basis of intellectual coherence and factual cues, and are then openly subjected to experiments that can be intersubjectively verified and reproduced.

This methodology of science shows, at least in general terms, how an open learning model of a knowledge-based development agency might operate. The important thing to teach a client country is not the "Truth" but the active learning methodology to find and corroborate or disprove "truths" (i.e., hypotheses and theories). For instance, if a knowledge-based development organization wants to promote the OBW of reforming or changing certain institutions (e.g., the "best" model of fighting corruption or the "best" form of privatization), then it should be willing to share the source of that "knowledge," to promote some experiments in the country to corroborate such a hypothesis or to validate a local adaptation, and to encourage horizontal cross-learning from similar experiments documented in the organization's knowledge management system—all before the reform is accepted as a "blueprint" for the country as a whole. The message to policy-makers is:

> To the best of our accumulated experience (which we deem to call "knowledge"), here is what works best in countries like yours. Why don't you study these principles together with their corroboration to date (best practice success stories), take a look at these case studies, contact these people who designed those reforms, set up horizontal learning programs with those best practice cases, and try some experiments to see what works in your own country? After carrying out this learning process on your own, you might call us back if you feel we could help by partially but not wholly funding the reform program you have decided upon.

The most important thing is to get away from the model of "teaching" as the transmission of knowledge from the development agency to the developing country. In a slogan: "Stop the teaching so that the learning can begin!" As George Bernard Shaw put it: "if you teach a man anything he will never learn it." [1962, 174] Ortega y Gasset suggested: "He who wants to teach a truth should place us in the position to discover it ourselves." [1961, 67] To impose a model without this local learning process would be to "short-circuit" and bypass the active learning capability of the local policy-makers, to substitute "authority" in its place, and thus to perpetuate the passivity of tutelage.

Competition and Devil's Advocacy in the Open Learning Model

How can a large bureaucratic agency advance from the church model towards an open learning model? One way is for the agency to take some of its own medicine in the sense of fostering competition in a marketplace for ideas within the agency. For instance, the defendant's right to an attorney in an American courtroom takes away from the prosecutor the monopoly right to present evidence and arguments. A judge may not go to the jury before both sides of the arguments have been heard, and a patient should not go to surgery before getting a second opinion. Even the Roman Catholic Church, when considering someone for sainthood, has a "devil's advocate" (*Advocatus Diaboli*) to state the other side of the story. A development agency should not pretend to greater authority or infallibility when it canonizes a good practice success story as the OBW. Thus devil's advocacy might not only be tolerated but fostered in a

development agency functioning as an open learning organization.[18] The political scientist Alfred De Grazia recommends such a countervailance system as a part of any large bureaucracy. "The countervailors would be a corps of professional critics of all aspects of bureaucracy who would be assigned by the representative council of an institution to specialize as critic of all the subinstitutions." [1975]

Devil's advocacy might provide a constructive alternative in addition to negative criticism of the proposed policy. In economics, the opportunity cost doctrine evaluates an option by comparing its value to the value of best alternative. If plan B is the best alternative to plan A (and the plans are mutually exclusive), then the opportunity cost of choosing plan A is the value foregone by not choosing plan B. Plan A is preferable if its value exceeds its opportunity cost (assuming both can be quantitatively measured). The application of the opportunity cost doctrine requires the analysis and evaluation of the best alternative--and that is the more general role of devil's advocacy even when quantitative values are not available. By eliciting plan B, devil's advocacy generalizes the opportunity cost doctrine from cost-benefit analysis to general policy analysis. In a rivalrous market, competition provides the B plans so organizational devil's advocacy could be seen as an attempt to provide benchmark competition within an organization.

The general case for a more systematic devil's advocate or countervailance role in an organization is much the same as the case for genuine debate and open discussion. The *locus classicus* for that argument is John Stuart Mill's 1859 essay *On Liberty*. If little is known on a question, then real debate and the "clash of adverse opinions" are some of the best engines of discovery. If "partial truths" are known, then the same is necessary to ferret out a clearer picture and to better adapt theories to new and different contexts. Mill argued that even in cases of settled opinions, debate and discussion serve to disturb the "deep slumber of a decided opinion" so that it might be held more as a rational conviction rather than as an article of faith.

> So essential is this discipline to a real understanding of moral and human subjects, that if opponents of all important truths do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them, and supply them with the strongest arguments which the most skillful devil's advocate can conjure up. [Mill 1972, 105]

Intellectual liberty and tolerance is fundamental to the heritage of the Reformation and Enlightenment. Rather than a "Church" to protect "Truth" and suppress "Error," free discussion and debate fueled by the collision of opposing opinions is the best security against error. These principles of philosophical liberalism were first hammered out in the battle for religious freedom. Jefferson asked that his tombstone record only three deeds. In addition to the Declaration of Independence, he was the author of the Virginia's 1779 "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" which argued in part that truth "is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has

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[18] Devil's advocacy [see Schwenk 1984] is interpreted broadly to include a number of related techniques to better elicit the main policy alternatives. A *Cassandra's advocate* [Janis 1972, 217] is a person who emphasizes alternative interpretations of data and focuses on all the things that can go wrong ("Murphy's Law-yer"). The *Rashomon* effect [see Schön 1971, 210] illustrates that the same set of circumstances and events can be interpreted very differently by different people. Discussion organized as a debate between the proposed policy and the best alternative has been called the *dialectical method* [see Schwenk 1989; or Tung and Heminger 1993]. *Multiple advocacy* [Haas 1990, 210] and *double visioning* [see Schön 1983, 281] refers to the practice of not only allowing but fostering the presentation of two or more policy options.

nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them."[19] The toleration for dissent and debate is fundamental to the spirit of a university, not to the spirit of a church. The third deed was being founder of the University of Virginia.

Towards an Open Learning Agency and Autonomy-Promoting Assistance

The idea that a development agency has to always have an Official View (rather than house competing views) is about as scientific as the "scientific" socialism of the Communist Parties of the past. John Dewey quotes the English Communist John Strachey's statement that the communistic parties' "refusal to tolerate the existence of incompatible opinions ... [is] simply asserting the claim that Socialism is scientific." Dewey goes on to comment that it "would be difficult, probably impossible, to find a more direct and elegantly finished denial of all the qualities that make ideas and theories either scientific or democratic than is contained in this statement." [1939, 96] Critical reason and scientific methodology go in quite the opposite direction of fostering the

> willingness to hold belief in suspense, ability to doubt until evidence is obtained; willingness to go where evidence points instead of putting first a personally preferred conclusion; [and] ability to hold ideas in solution and use them as hypotheses to be tested instead of as dogmas to be asserted;...[Dewey 1939, 145]

This part of the scientific attitude is translated into the policy domain with such suggestions as multiple advocacy [Haas 1990, 210] and double visioning [see Schön 1983, 281]. It is not some wanton perversity that prevents this scientific attitude from being implemented in a large organization such as a major development agency. There are quite human impulses that push for conformity and rigidity.

> To hold theories and principles in solution, awaiting confirmation, goes contrary to the grain. Even today questioning a statement made by a person is often taken by him as a reflection upon his integrity, and is resented. For many millennia opposition to views widely held in a community was intolerable. It called down the wrath of the deities who are in charge of the group.... Baconian idols of the tribe, the cave, the theater, and den have caused men to rush to conclusions, and then to use all their powers to defend from criticism and change the conclusions arrived at. [Dewey 1939, 146]

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[19] Jefferson echoes John Milton's defense of intellectual freedom in *Areopagitica* (1644). "And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?"

If development agencies are to promote knowledge-based development as education writ large, then they might learn organizational lessons from educational institutions such as universities about the need to foster open debate and competing theories within the organization. The scientific method demands no less. On the cutting edge of development and transitional practice, there are always competing theories. Decentralized departments or units within a large agency could "compete" in the sense of working with different models to see what works best. That would allow learning to take place (as it happens in a university) without besmirching the name of the agency since the agency would *not* have taken an Official View that one of the models was the OBW.

If the development agency can move beyond the church (or science-as-dogma) model to an open learning model, then it can also move from the standard knowledge transmission-belt methodology towards autonomy-promoting assistance.

> The aim of teaching is not only to transmit information, but also to transform students from passive recipients of other people's knowledge into active constructors of their own and other's knowledge. The teacher cannot transform without the student's active participation, of course. Teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their own learning, individually and collectively. [Elmore 1991, xvi]

That activist pedagogy adapted to developing countries as the learners would constitute autonomy-promoting knowledge-based development assistance.

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