

## 2007 EADI Meeting of Directors

# What is the Next Level for Development Research Institutes? Trends, Challenges, Emerging Governance and Managerial Issues

On 18 and 19 October 2007 the directors and heads of research institutes and think-tanks came together at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. In this Newsletter, Caroline Wiedenhof and Rob Visser from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and John Young from the Overseas Development Institute contribute "learning stories" based on the speeches they gave at the meeting. This article summarises the overall discussion and the main results of the meeting. The meeting was preceded by a consultation on the training needs of the generalist development practitioner, which Charlotta Heck summarises in her article. Jean-Luc Maurer comments on the results of the Directors' Meeting from an EADI President's perspective.

### Report from the 2007 Meeting of Directors of EADI Member Institutes

After a warm welcome by the host Louk de la Rive Box from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and from the EADI President Jean-Luc Maurer, Thomas Lawo, Executive Secretary of EADI, gave a presentation of EADI's current activities .

Simon Maxwell from the Overseas Development Institute in London opened the first session on "Trends, Challenges and Emerging Governance and Managerial Issues for Development Research Institutes" by saying: "If we don't keep changing, we won't be at the forefront. Changes are constant". The 3 C's - coverage, capacities, communication - are essential for think-tanks to cope with change, and think-tanks also have to rapidly adapt to changes that imply a different kind of research base and a new research agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have

been a good vehicle for research, and have provided a framework. But they no longer serve as a guide for the next five years. Moving to a new research agenda will need new skills, the ability to find a way to shift to completely different topics, which is a human resources challenge, and to think about the fact that more and more think-tanks are going to be established in developing countries. "We in Europe have to think about what we could do to add value to that, and build networks internationally. A persistent challenge is how we can better manage relationships between Southern and Northern research institutes," Maxwell said. On the communications side, which is a management issue, institutes need to think about how to introduce training and technologies to communicate better; skills and competencies need to be developed.

In the discussion it was stressed that there is also a risk in the trend towards networking at international level. The question was raised of how we can go more global without losing touch of the local dimension, which is seen key to development studies. A new networking

solution might have to be found.

Jürgen Wiemann from the German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn presented the Institute's experience of a recent evaluation by the German Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat). One of the main questions that was examined was: "Is the policy advice that the institute is giving based on sound research?" The institute fared relatively well in the evaluation, but the evaluators recommended linking it to German universities. The institute was linked very well at international level, they said, but on the national level there seemed to be a deficit. The DIE is also faced with a doubling of research size that has occurred over the past four years. With regard to EADI, Jürgen Wiemann said that because institutes and think-tanks are growing, there is a huge demand for in-career training, which could be offered or organised by EADI.

Steve Morgan from the the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the UK's leading research funding and training agency



Louk Box, Jean-Luc Maurer, Thomas Lawo

## Results of the 5th Director's Meeting of EADI in The Hague

By Jean-Luc Maurer, President of EADI

The 5th annual Meeting of the Directors of EADI Member Institutes, which has become one of our association's key events, took place this year in The Hague. The event was hosted by the ISS, one of our oldest and most faithful member institutes, during a week in which various events were held to mark its 55th anniversary.

As usual, this yearly meeting was very fruitful. The current directors were able to share their thoughts on the future of research institutes and training research in the field of development. It became clear that most of our institutes are faced with the need to redefine their place within the social sciences and their relationship to the field of technical sciences by means of various institutional reorganisations. Some institutes, like the IDS in Sussex or ISS in The Hague, have to negotiate a strategic partnership with a neighbouring university. The IUED in Geneva has been obliged to merge with its neighbouring institute the HEI to create the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID). For others, the solutions were different again. Some consider all of this institutional change to be a sign of the weakening of the field of development studies or even worse that it will soon disappear. But we do not share this point of view. We believe that development studies, such as emerged from decolonisation and evolved until the end of the Cold War, must redefine its place and role in this new era of accelerated globalisation. But rather than reducing itself to studying and solving the problems faced by the poorest countries, it seems that the scope of action has expanded to cover all societies around the world whatever their development level. Indeed, all are faced with serious problems regarding sustainable development, at the social level, with the emergence of forms of poverty or exclusion and the explosion of social injustice, as well as at the ecological level, and there is a need to act to limit the effects of climate change that is forecast. Development studies seems to have reached maturity and can "positively contaminate" the other social and technical sciences, encouraging them to tackle development problems that they are not used to dealing with. Just one look at the list of the major problems that face our humanity and pose a threat to its survival is enough to show that they are mainly development problems which can only be grasped and solved by taking a multidisciplinary approach. But it is precisely on that which the field of development studies has built its tradition and legitimacy. In brief, the current institutional reorganisations might imply the closing of some development institutes founded in the 1950s and 1960s. However, it also means that they are opening a new promising era of change and broadening towards development studies themselves.

Following the tradition established at previous meetings, the year's Directors' Meeting of EADI Member Institutes finished with a joint workshop with the heads of "sister associations" which are members of the network ICCDA (CODESRIA, CLACSO and APISA). The main result of this discussion was that the North-South scientific partnership remains a key factor for development studies, but it must be rebuilt on more symmetrical and fairer relations. This is certainly not the responsibility of our field of studies, although it may be proud to set a good example to the other sciences.

addressing economic and social concerns presented a model of "World System Research". He sees the need to identify a framework for development research, which could be a role for EADI, especially within the context of ICCDA. He also sees a niche role for EADI in terms of information policy.

In the ensuing debate, the need was seen for a discussion on possible institutional models for development research and policy in Europe. It was agreed to follow up on this issue with a series of panels entitled "Planning for the Future and Managing Change in Research Institutes and Think-tanks" at the 12th EADI General Conference in 2008 (see page 4). It was pointed out that there is an increasing gap between European development research institutes and, for example, the way African colleagues perceive development research.

### Will we achieve the goal? Strategies for impact and policy relevance

The second day of the Directors' Meeting was inspired by an introduction by Louka Katseli, who sketched the "knowledge pool" as a fishpond and asked the question of whether we actually need intermediaries and, if so, where they should stand. Rob Visser from the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs focused on the question of building trust between research and policy-making (see his article in this Newsletter).

In his contribution Paul Engel from the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) continued the allegory of the knowledge pool by asking what was in the pool and he stressed the fact that evidence

delivered by practitioners must be taken into account. He went on to elaborate on the triangle policy-research-practice, with the media in the middle of the triangle. He concluded by arguing that capacity and quality of research, rather than content, need to be improved. A way to do this is to link development research with international relations research. ECPDM is in the process of founding an EU Africa Policy Research Network which incorporates these aspects.

In the debate the need to address the issue of "how we as EADI member institutes work together" was formulated. EADI's European Development Co-operation to 2010/2020 project was seen as a vehicle for tackling the issues. Another idea of an EADI Summer Programme on "Managing Development Co-operation and Policies" was raised by Louka

Katseli and was further discussed in a working group.

## What models for managing co-operation with Southern research institutes?

In their speeches Emir Sader from CLACSO, Hari Singh from APISA and Adebayo Olukoshi from CODESRIA emphasised the fact that investments in institutions in the South are key elements in co-operation between North and South. Capacity-building is seen as essential for harvesting the fruits of collaboration. Emir Sader sees a decrease in Latin America research in Northern countries, except on countries like Mexico and Brazil. He called for an international fund for balanced research co-operation to be established. Adebayo Olukoshi elaborated on the South-South collaboration between CLACSO, CODESRIA and APISA, called the South-South Summer Institute. With regard to North-South collaboration he criticised the fact that the impact of collaboration is often not sustained and the Southern institution is - after the project is over - often left weaker than before.

Hari Singh elaborated on various models of co-operation and its structural inequalities. He concluded that: "We need to move away from the 'National Geographic and Discovery models' that depict how the North looks at the South, and which has resulted in a reaction where the South also would like to emulate these models and look at the North instead. The North-South pigment of the imagination must be transformed into a North-South figment of the imagination."

Adebayo Olukoshi emphasised that development studies can no longer carry on "business as usual". Some re-thinking would have to be done. CODESRIA especially calls on the African social research community beyond the parameters that have informed development thinking in and about Africa to date, including the more recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the MDGs and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), at a time when there is a widespread feeling that the contemporary development debate is characterised by a deep-seated poverty of imagination<sup>1</sup>.

## Planning for the Future and Managing Change in Research Institutes and Think-tanks

Europe has a wide range of research institutes and think-tanks working on international development: from large to small, from specialist to multi-disciplinary, from research-oriented to policy-oriented, and from fully core-funded to zero-funded. Despite the diversity, however, we all face common institutional challenges:

- To ensure that our programmes and workstreams are forward-looking, relevant and adapted to an international agenda which is constantly in flux;
- To ensure that we acknowledge the range of capacities in the sector in Europe, but more importantly among the growing research and think-tank community in developing countries; and
- To ensure that we are communicating effectively for policy impact, using new technologies as they become available.

These challenges are practical, not theoretical. Should we have new programmes on urbanisation, or migration, or security? How do we respond to the new dilemmas of globalisation set by India and China? How do we respond to climate change and other emerging challenges at global level? As we answer these questions, how do we take account of growing capacity in developing countries, and of the need for new partnerships? And as our work programmes develop, how do we adjust to the shift in communication towards shorter and often more ephemeral outputs, whether they be briefing papers, blogs or video clips on Youtube?

The leadership teams of research institutes and think-tanks constantly confront questions like these as they think about the future. Specific decisions need to be made about staffing and the competencies of staff, about partnership arrangements, about institutional structures and infrastructures, and about the business models which underpin change. How do we make these decisions? Even more challenging, how do we implement them? What can we learn from our own experience of planning for the future and managing change?

This EADI workstream will be led by the Directors and senior management teams of EADI Member Institutes. They will collaborate in a series of short case studies describing change management processes in different kinds of institutes. Some of the cases will be institute-wide. Others may deal with more specific episodes of change - for example, introducing a new workstream or changing the format of communications. In all cases, the emphasis will be on the same core questions: Why was change thought to be needed? How was it planned? What were the opportunities and constraints? How was change delivered? Was it successful?

The plan is to create an electronic discussion group which will exchange ideas about frameworks and hypotheses - but briefly - and structure a set of case studies. It is hoped that there can be up to 12 of these, to be presented in three panel sessions at the EADI General Conference in Geneva in June 2008. It is hoped that the case studies can be grouped, for example by the type of change being discussed. A plenary session will bring the main conclusions together. There will be a book or journal special issue at the end of the project.

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As a result of the ensuing debate it was agreed that a series of sessions would be held during the 12th General Conference devoted to the topics presented above.

<sup>1</sup> See also CODESRIA Bulletin, No 3&4 (2005), [http://www.codesria.org/Links/publications/contents\\_bulletin/bulletin\\_3\\_05.htm](http://www.codesria.org/Links/publications/contents_bulletin/bulletin_3_05.htm)



Jean-Luc Maurer, Emir Sader, Adebayo Olukoshi, Hari Singh

# On Building Trust - The Knowledge Agenda of a Large Policy Organisation

Rob Visser and Caroline Wiedenhof

Any improvement in the co-operation between the worlds of policymaking and academic research would require changes being made on both sides.

The changes we would like to see in the academic world can be summarised as the need to have more so-called mode 3 research: research carried out in dynamic knowledge networks, stressing the linkages between participants and allowing them to exchange information and attach meaning to it<sup>1</sup>. For policymakers, co-operation with scientists would be facilitated if this type of research were not an add-on to scientists' 'regular work', but was also appreciated in their academic records and based on fundamental science.

We will, however, here be focussing on the changes needed in the policy world and on how the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) is taking up that challenge.

Policy organisations have to become learning organisations, which presupposes taking greater interest in knowledge and science. That has been our aim for several years. Our knowledge agenda consists of elements of our research policy, knowledge management, training and personnel policy, as well as efforts to improve relations between science and policy.

## What progress has been made on the knowledge agenda?

If we look at the formal structures in place as regards knowledge policy, the picture is gloomy. The Ministry's Unit for Strategic Planning, for example, has been abolished. On the other hand, there are informal coalitions of colleagues working on specific aspects of the knowledge agenda. Do the gains made in terms of informal structure sufficiently mitigate the loss of a formal infrastructure? A proper (and quite difficult) evaluation would be needed to provide a reliable answer.

Let us assess progress made using the knowledge management self-assessment tool developed by Chris Collison<sup>2</sup>, which consists of five criteria and five levels.

### *Knowledge Management Self-assessment Scheme: The Five Criteria*

- Knowledge management strategy
  - Leadership behaviour
    - Networking
- Learning before, during and after
  - Capturing knowledge

The first criterion is whether an accepted knowledge management strategy exists. The highest level is a knowledge management strategy embedded in an organisation's business strategy. We are far from achieving that level. We deserve a level two ranking: People do use some tools to help with learning and knowledge sharing. In the area of leadership behaviour we have even reached level three: there is visible support from the top.

We have also seen some ad hoc networking arising; here we have reached the second level. The picture as regards "Learning before, during and after" is mixed. For a minority of our colleagues, knowledge sharing is routine (level four), but most of them do not consider it to be a priority (level one).

We conclude that in terms of intentions we have made real progress, but we are nevertheless not yet halfway to the ideal situation.

The main bottlenecks have to do with personnel policy, corporate culture and the strong focus on control and results, which reduce the scope for open knowledge development. These factors are based on a persistent but outdated vision of the role of the government.

While recognising the structural limitations in terms of further progress, we are optimistic that further improvements will be made. We expect that the national debate on knowledge

and innovation will influence our agenda in a positive way. Furthermore, while development co-operation becomes ever broader in scope, knowledge sharing becomes ever more important. And, thirdly, we expect to harvest more and more from some home-grown innovations like the IS Academy<sup>3</sup>.

## Some practical do's and don'ts

In our experience, special attention must be paid to a number of practical aspects.

Firstly, we should not have high expectations of traditional tools like discussions about research papers. That is just not enough to break through the barriers between the two worlds. We should go further.

Secondly, policy officials should not ask scientists for recommendations for practical policies; and scientists should refuse to write them. It is almost impossible for outsiders without policy experience to write useful recommendations, as this can only be done well if one has the tacit knowledge that



Rob Visser

everybody within the organisation has. Practice shows that scientists become vulnerable when they disappoint policymakers with irrelevant recommendations; it easily overshadows the quality of their research.

The third lesson is that science needs free scope. The policymaker should provide it; scientists should lay claim to it. Terms of reference which are too strict run contrary to the nature of scientific work.

The last lesson is the most important one, namely mutual tolerance for each other's habits. A policymaker who does not publish does not necessarily lack knowledge, to refer to just one of the various disdainful notions of some scientists.

There should be mutual awareness that, for the policymaker, a publication marks the start of a process, whilst the scientist is inclined to see the publication as the final step. We all know that dissemination does not work very well. (It certainly is worthwhile looking to see when it does work; William Easterly's 'The white man's burden' was intensively discussed at our Ministry. A rare case of successful dissemination!) Lack of insight into policy practices on the part of a scientist does not mean he is foolish. Another example: policymakers love procedural comments, even if these are not asked for. (Question put by scientist: "What do you think of my research proposal?" Answer: "It is up to the advisory committee to give an assessment.") A striking habit of scientists, on the other hand, is that they overestimate the value of scientific knowledge in relation to other types of knowledge.

## IS Academy

The IS Academy is our most innovative and potentially most effective tool for improving relations between science and policy. It is a virtual academy consisting of partnerships between divisions in our ministry and in a university, made up of a number of interconnected activities around a policy theme. The partners share the costs. Under this framework, students and young researchers get the chance to work at the ministry, civil servants provide guest lectures and publish articles, and joint workshops are organised.

In this way, policymakers participate actively in academic activities, and academics become



involved in policy work. The short-term benefits of such co-operation are manifold: joint efforts save time, policymakers gain direct access to research capacity, and academic institutions gain an insight into development programmes and networks.

In the longer term, more policy-relevant knowledge is generated, the pool of development researchers is rejuvenated, policymakers broaden their horizons, development co-operation receives increased attention in academic research, and mutual commitment becomes more self-evident. IS academies are not only full of potential, they are also quite vulnerable. Some academic partners are more interested in the progress of research than in the mutual benefits of the scheme, whilst some of the civil servants tend to be too keen on services that are directly beneficial. It is much too early to make an assessment, but so far all parties concerned are positive. There are even signs of spontaneous reciprocal services, clearly built on the new relations of trust. That's the proof of the policy-science pudding!

<sup>1</sup>Louk de La Rive Box (2001), To and Fro, Inaugural lecture at the Maastricht University, <http://www.fdcw.unimaas.nl/personal/WebSitesMWT/Box/toandfro.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Chris Collison (2004): Learning to Fly: Knowledge Management from Learning and Leading

<sup>3</sup>Internationale Samenwerking (Dutch for international co-operation)

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# Strategies for Impact and Policy Relevance

John Young

ODI's RAPID programme in the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has been studying how to maximise the impact of research on policy and practice for the last five years. Here is what we have learned in six simple lessons.

The first lesson is that policy processes are fantastically complicated. They are very rarely linear and logical. Simply presenting research results to policymakers and expecting them to put them into practice is very unlikely to work. While most policy processes do involve sequential stages from agenda setting through decision-making to implementation and evaluation, sometimes some stages take a very long time, and sometimes several stages occur more or less simultaneously. Many actors are involved: ministers, parliament, civil servants, the private sector, civil society, the media etc., and in the development sector, also the donors. All busily seeking to engage in the process directly, and trying to influence each other. While Clay and Schaeffer's 1984 book *Room for Manoeuvre*<sup>1</sup> describes "the whole life of policy as a chaos of purposes and accidents", we prefer to use the terms complex, multifactorial and non-linear.



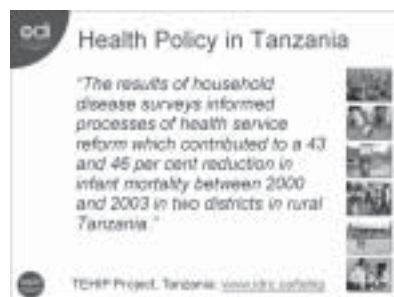
The second lesson is that research-based evidence usually plays a very minor role. A recent ODI study of factors influencing chronic poverty in Uganda found that only two out of 25 were researchable issues<sup>2</sup>. In a talk on evidence-based policymaking at ODI in 2003 Vincent Cable<sup>3</sup> said that policymakers are practically incapable of using research-based evidence because of the 5 Ss: Speed - they have to make decisions fast; Superficiality - they cover a wide brief; Spin - they have to stick to a decision, at least for a reasonable period of

time; Secrecy - many policy discussions have to be held in secret; and Scientific Ignorance - few policymakers are scientists, and don't understand the scientific concept of testing a hypothesis. At another ODI meeting, Phil Davies, then Deputy Director, Government and Social Research Unit, UK Cabinet Office, described how policymakers tend to be more heavily influenced by their own values, experience, expertise and judgement, the



influence of lobbyists and pressure groups and pragmatism based on the amount of resources they have available. He went on to describe how researchers and policymakers have completely different concepts of what constitutes good evidence. Researchers only consider their results to be reliable if they are proven scientifically, underpinned by theory, are reluctant to say anything until it is, and then wrap it up in caveats and qualifications. Policymakers will take more or less anything that can help them to make a decision which seems reasonable and has a clear message and is available at the right time<sup>4</sup>.

The third lesson is that it is possible. Research-based evidence can contribute to policies which can have a dramatic impact on people's lives. Household disease surveys undertaken by the Tanzania Integrated Health



Improvement informed processes of health service reform which contributed to a 43 and 46 per cent reduction in infant mortality in two districts in rural Tanzania between 2000 and 2003.

The fourth lesson is that researchers need a holistic understanding of the context they are working in. While there are an infinite number of factors which affect how research-based evidence does or does not influence policy, it is possible to get enough understanding to be able to make decisions about how to maximise the impact of research on policy and practice relatively easily. ODI has developed a simple analytical framework identifying four broad groups of factors<sup>5</sup>. The first group, which we call external influences, are those factors outside the context you are working in which affect what happens within it. Donor policies, for example, can be hugely influential in highly indebted countries. The second, the political context, includes the people, institutions and processes involved in policymaking. The third are around the evidence itself, including the type, quality and contestibility of the research and how it is communicated; and the fourth,



which we call links, includes all of the other actors and mechanisms affecting how the evidence gets into the policy process. If researchers want to maximise the impact of their research or promote a particular policy they need to know about the key external actors: What is their agenda, and how do they influence the political context? They need to have a thorough understanding of the political context you are working in: Is there political interest in change, is there room for manoeuvre, how do policymakers perceive the

problem? They need to decide if you have enough of the right sort of evidence to convince them of the need to change, and how best to present it; and they need to know who else can help them to bring it to the attention of policymakers: Who are the key organisations and individuals, are there existing networks to use?



The fifth lesson is that to influence policy, researchers need additional skills. They need to be political fixers, able to understand the politics and identify the key players. They need to be good storytellers to synthesise simple, compelling stories from the results of the research. They need to be good networkers to work effectively with all the other stakeholders, and they need to be good engineers to build a programme which pulls all of this together. Or they need to work in multidisciplinary teams with others who have these skills. ODI's RAPID programme has assembled a wide range of toolkits<sup>6</sup>, including well-known and often straightforward tools to do these things.

The sixth lesson is intent - researchers need to really want to do it. Turning a researcher into a policy entrepreneur, or a research institute into a policy-focused think-tank is not

easy. It involves a fundamental reorientation towards policy engagement rather than academic achievement; engaging much more with the policy community; developing a research agenda focusing on policy issues rather than academic interests; acquiring new skills or building multidisciplinary teams; establishing new internal systems and incentives; spending much more on communications; producing a different range of outputs; and working more in partnerships and networks. It may also involve looking at a radically different funding model.

It's not easy, but it's not impossible, and it can make a huge difference to the lives of people in the developing world.

<sup>1</sup>Clay & Schaffer (1984), Room for Manoeuvre. An Exploration of Public Policy in Agricultural and Rural Development, Heineman Educational Books, London

<sup>2</sup>Kate Bird et al (2004), Fracture Points in Social Policies for Chronic Poverty Reduction, ODI WP242

<sup>3</sup>Dr Vincent Cable, MP for Twickenham, in "The Political Context", Does Evidence Matter Meeting Series, ODI, May 2003, [http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Events/Evidence/Presentation\\_3/Cable.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Events/Evidence/Presentation_3/Cable.html)

<sup>4</sup>Phil Davies in Impact to Insight Meeting, ODI, October 2005, [http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Events/Impact\\_Insight/Presentation\\_1/Davies.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Events/Impact_Insight/Presentation_1/Davies.html)

<sup>5</sup>Bridging Research and Policy in International Development: An Analytical and Practical Framework. RAPID Briefing Paper 1, October 2004. [http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/RAPID\\_BP\\_1.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/RAPID_BP_1.html)

<sup>6</sup><http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Tools/Toolkits/index.html>

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## Focuss.info

With the release of [www.focuss.info](http://www.focuss.info) a unique co-operative initiative has been established by 27 organisations in the development arena, including EADI. Practitioners, researchers and students in the area of global development studies now have a specialised search engine with regard to development matters.

Focuss.info provides a content-specific search engine in the area of global development studies. In contrast to generic search engines, Focuss.info indexes electronic resources selected by librarians, researchers and practitioners working in participating institutions on the one hand, and the bookmarks of individual researchers, students and practitioners on the other. As an individual participant, you can easily share your bookmarks by using one of the many social bookmark platforms on the Internet, like <http://del.icio.us/>. More information can be found by clicking on [Your content] at [www.focuss.info](http://www.focuss.info).

Focuss.info currently indexes over 6,300 websites. Each site has been selected by information professionals working in one of the co-operating development institutes. In addition Focuss.info indexes sites that have been added by your peers and colleagues: Active professionals, researchers and PhD fellows in the sector.

Focuss.info offers a search functionality based on the powerful Google Customised Search Engine. The ease and speed with which resources can be found plus the high-quality subject-matter make focuss.info your access point on the Internet.

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Paul Engel

# Consultation on Training Needs for a Generalist Development Practitioner

Charlotta Heck<sup>1</sup>

A consultation on training needs for the generalist development practitioner took place on 17 October 2007 at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands. It was jointly organised by EADI and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton (UK).

There were two reasons for organising the event: The EADI Secretariat had planned to undertake a survey on the development training landscape to complement its 2006 survey on development research. At the same time, IDS had collaborated with the MacArthur Foundation and the Commission on Education for International Development Professionals<sup>2</sup> to conduct a series of consultations on the issue of whether graduate programmes in development studies are responding to the needs of development professionals, and on the nature of the ideal training programme for the generalist development practitioner.

In order to join forces, EADI and IDS therefore agreed to collaborate on the consultation which was preceded by EADI's survey among its institutional members.

## Survey outcomes

The survey was sent out to some 140 institutional members of EADI that are active in training, research, consultancy and field work. While institutes providing one- or two-year graduate courses (providers) were asked about their programme and the "ideal" programme, we wanted to know how institutes not providing such courses judge existing courses, what an ideal programme would look like and whether they can find the staff they need. We received 19 responses from providers and 12 responses from non-providers. Even though, the sample is limited we decided to use the survey outcomes as input for the training consultation.

The most striking outcome of the survey referred to the question of whether existing programmes meet the needs of the generalist development practitioner. While 87% of

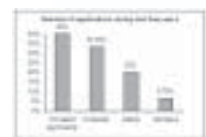
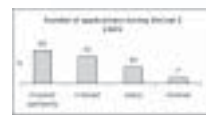
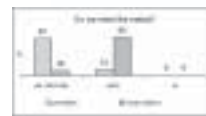
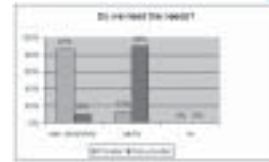
training providers were convinced that their programmes meet these needs, only 10% of non-providers were of the same opinion. Seen from a human resource perspective, only 30% of non-providers stated that they have no problem finding qualified staff for their organisation. They wanted courses to focus more on skills in facilitation, participation and writing of policy briefs and not to focus so much on social sciences and economics as prerequisites for the intake of students. Only 60% of the courses provided require their students to do any fieldwork and even fewer require them to do internships. Teachers in training programmes seem to be mostly social scientists and economists and only few are practitioners and policymakers. Seen overall it became clear that there is a growing market for development studies as there has been a steady increase in applications over the last five years.

## Critique of our survey

After an initial presentation of the survey results, an open discussion was held with 20 invited participants, mainly directors of research and training institutes.

First, the discussion touched on some critical issues concerning the survey. For example, the question was raised of whether the sample was broad enough. Participants were concerned that the "non-providers" of training programmes might be considered an appropriate proxy for the demand side, as EADI's member institutes, being non-providers, were considered basically too similar to the training providers to give a general "employer's view". Therefore, the survey was considered more appropriate as a pilot than as a definitive study, with doubts being raised about taking the results forward to the international level.

Second, despite the survey's shortcomings, some outcomes surprised our participants, most notably the fact that many technical skills



are less valued by non-providers than providers and that the ability to facilitate and concepts of participation were very much more valued by non-providers. Furthermore, only little importance was attached to project planning and evaluation, trade and development, data and research skills. Understanding and responding to processes of change were considered important abilities by participants of the consultation but were not mentioned in the survey at all.

## A generalist programme?

When addressing the task of constructing the ideal programme for the generalist practitioner it turned out that, on a broader level, many doubts were raised about the concept of the "generalist development professional" itself: Does this figure exist? Is it desirable to be working on this basis? There was discussion about the appropriate relation between common elements of a general core and subsequent (or prior) specialisation. Participants agreed that the diversity of development practice demands a diversity of training opportunities. One example mentioned was that students with a Bachelor's degree in a field other than development studies

would need a more general programme, while those with a more general education would tend to need specialisation. However, some participants suggested that a general introduction to development studies should form the basis of all specialist courses in order to build common ground on which to work.

Participants also highlighted the fact that globalisation creates a need for a wide range of specialists capable of working in development contexts. This is caused by the involvement of new stakeholders in the field of development, such as environmental ministries interested in the global dimension, security organisations working in post-conflict reconstruction or health agencies dealing with global issues. In addition, development agencies are increasingly administered by managers without a specific understanding or experience of development.

These current trends suggest an increasing need for development studies training as an add-on to existing specialisms. It was mentioned that, for example, DANIDA (the Danish development agency) offers courses as in-career training programmes.

## Core elements of development studies courses?

Although one of the objectives was to discuss what concrete curriculum elements should form part of training programmes, the discussion focused more on necessary attitudes and capabilities. First and foremost, the participants agreed that a major task should be to educate students to be critical and to have a critical approach to the international challenges the development sector is facing at the moment. They should acquire the ability to work with complexity and/or in changing contexts, to communicate with multiple agents who speak different languages and to understand collective action problems. In addition, participants saw a strong need to ensure that students understand and apply interdisciplinary approaches and that they are able to manage new aid modalities, harmonisation and alignment. One of the participants referred to a recent article by Michael Woolcock<sup>3</sup> which called on courses to teach three key competencies: being 'detectives', 'translators' and 'diplomats'.

The fact that people specialising in

development have not always gained experience in developing countries was seen as a big problem. A learning trajectory involving practical exposure was considered extremely important, preferably out in the field with partners, and internships were mentioned as a valuable opportunity.

## Other important factors

Alumni often report that the opportunity to study in a group with diverse backgrounds, origin and experience is just as important to their learning as the training curriculum. Various geographical backgrounds, age differences and career experiences are esteemed values in the learning context. For instance, one institute described its student intake as having a high proportion of Southern participants and various working backgrounds. While some students have a general development background and need a grounding and specialisation, others come with very local or specialised experience which they want to put in a wider and more theoretical context. The institute confirmed that the learning experience benefits from the juxtaposition and groups working on broad group-defined problems.

This aspect was valued as very important by the participants stressing the need to work more systematically to exploit the described cross-fertilisation efficiently. It also led to the question of whether selection processes should be directed to building a student body with this diversity of background, experience and origin.

## The demand side

In this context it became evident that greater effort should be put into discussing who should actually form part of the demand side and thus be satisfied through the training programmes discussed. The role of ministries or agencies working in development, NGOs, students and alumni should be discussed regarding their influence on the curriculum. In any case, representatives from the North and the South should be included.

But there was also concern about simply satisfying the market. Participants stressed the fact that the end users are none of the above, but the population of developing countries. Moreover, if institutes have a transformation

agenda, they cannot limit themselves to responding to existing development agents. However, the survey results give cause for concern when one compares the degree of satisfaction of providers and non-providers with existing courses: of those who responded to the survey, only 10% of non-providers said that existing courses meet their needs, given that 87% of training providers were convinced that ongoing programmes meet the needs of practitioners.

## Taking the issue forward

At the end of our fruitful and in parts controversial discussion the question arose of how to proceed further with the survey and consultation results. Summing up, EADI President Jean-Luc Maurer said:

"Whatever we decide to do concerning the follow-up to the survey for the MacArthur Foundation and the Earth Institute, I think that the rich discussion we have had today shows that we should take this issue on-board within the EADI Training Sub-Committee and maybe organise our own survey with our own concepts, for our own needs."

There were several suggestions that EADI should take this discussion further in its Education and Training Committee and perhaps organise its own survey. It was suggested that EADI is well placed to study this market, which should be looked at from a European and from an LDC perspective. The next occasion which will provide a broader audience for this topic will be the EADI General Conference (24-28 June 2008) in Geneva.

Some also showed an interest in finding out more about the Commission on Education for International Development Professionals and feeding a European perspective into the wider discussion. Lawrence Haddad (IDS) was asked to provide information about the wider initiative, as well as to channel feedback.

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<sup>1</sup>This article is based on a report written by Peter Clarke (IDS) and various other contributions.

<sup>2</sup>The commission is led by the Earth Institute at Columbia University in the US

<sup>3</sup>Woolcock, M. (2007). "Higher Education, Policy Schools and Development Studies: What Should Master's Degree Students be Taught?" in *Journal of International Development*. 19 (1), 55-73